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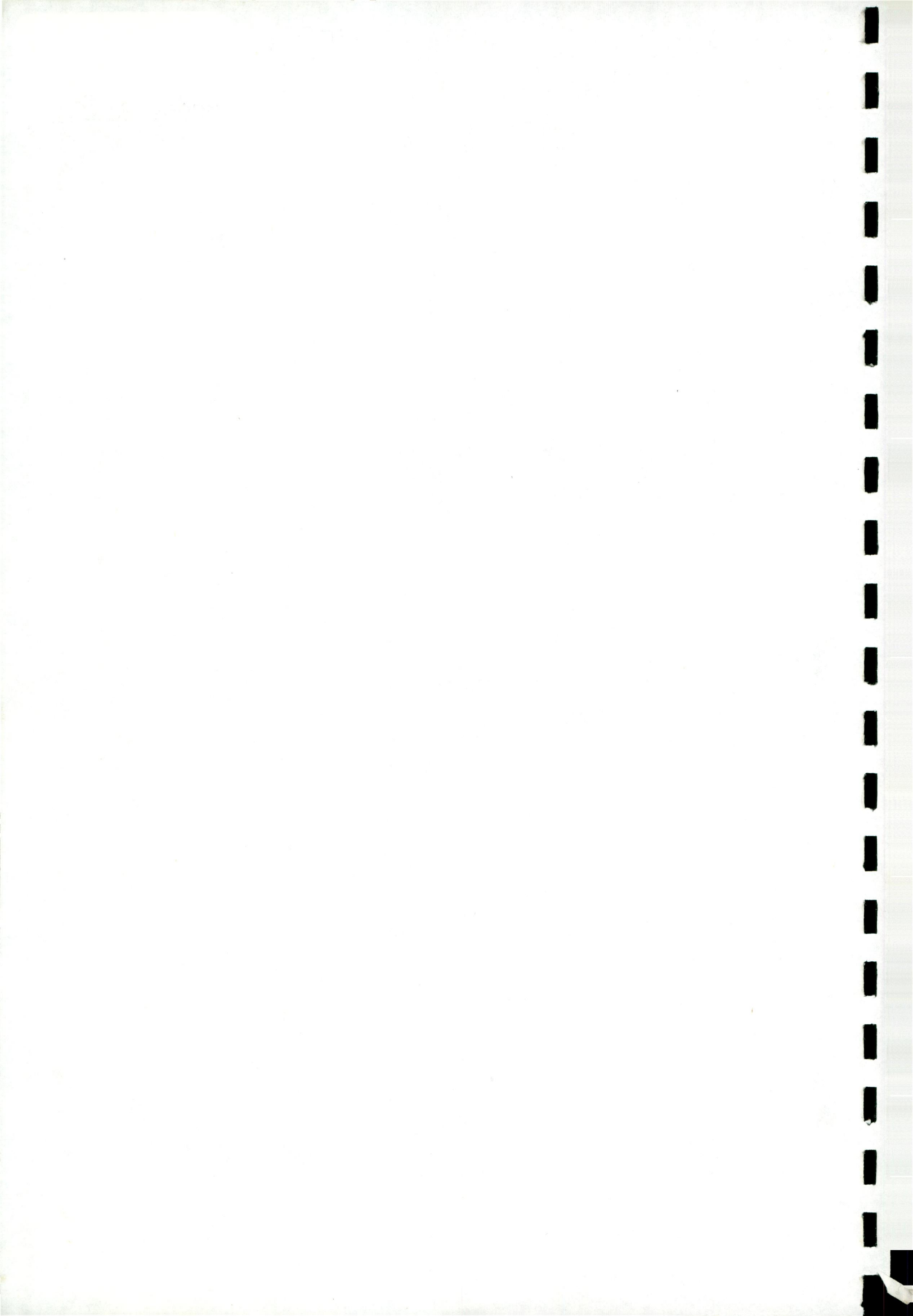
Jannis Kounellis

By

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JANNIS KOUNELLIS

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JANNIS KOUNELLIS

INTRODUCTION

"To talk about history, we do not mean the desire to keep everything the same, we are talking about a condition about a way of being and a way of comprehending reality, to think through life and things in general and to rediscover them harmoniously and consistently. I live in a country whose metalogical and linguistic roots go back to humanism and I share in that as a citizen." (C:2, p.p. 80,81) This may be seen as the basic thread of Kounellis' journey, a journey which he undertook in 1960 which may be seen as one into the real world. To evaluate the experiences Kounellis had, the places he touched in the imagination, the instruments he used and their archetypal nature this journey may be seen as a return. But not as a return to the obscure organic instinctive origins of life nor as a voyage into the profound abyss of the unknown, preferred by the romantic instinct, but as a return towards the light of restored consciousness towards the lost scale, unity and totality of man.

Kounellis' development came under the banner of Art Povera. Art Povera tended towards a linguistic procedure that consisted of "the removal and supression reduction to a minimum and impoverishment of signs by reducing them to their archetypes". (D:1, p.74) This ideology expressed some of the Utopia's of the day, like that of the return to the natural state, the nostalgic Utopia of Pier Paolo Pasolini that predicted a production system based in a direct relationship between man and the object of his work, between man and nature or that which proposed a new semeiology based on the language of gestures or actions. Art Povera was a working of an ideology that exploded in 1968 in the

1872

1872

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cultural revolution of the student protest which with the ideal slogan "Power through Imagination" advocated the need for art to be free from a productive system and capitalistic power. Kounellis' image is often associated with Art Povera as is natural because of its political commitment and its constant use of natural materials or rather his way of working inside nature using its elements and its simplest products.

But like all true artists Kounellis cannot be confined within the limits, however vague they may be, of a single movement.

The door for Kounellis' journey was opened by artists such as Malevich, Fontana, Klein and started by rejecting representation in order to find a real concrete objectivity. Looking at his work first I was struck most predominantly by the concrete reality of what I was looking at. It felt like the reality of a dramatic experience. The more I look at Kounellis' work the more the metaphorical content of his language opens up. There is a reality in Kounellis' work that is imbedded in history but seems to make the present seem that more real.

CHAPTER 1

THE INERTIA OF STYLE

At the time Kounellis was a student in Rome the predominant stimulus was that of the Italian Modernists. Kounellis pulled from the two strains of modernism that ran at the time. There was the work of Kasimir Malevich whose transcendental modernism dealt primarily with an approach to the sublime and absolute through art. Also, there was a critical modernism dominated primarily by the art of Marcel Duchamp who sought to de-mystify art and base it on earthly existence. Kounellis refers continually to Malevich's black square. Malevich sought an absolute reality beyond form. This was not a political or critical notion but a transcendental one. Taking that nature was conquered in art through representation, now according to Malevich, it was to mask the sublime and the absolute through non objectivity. "This was no empty square I had exhibited but rather the feeling of non objectivity. The contours of the objective world fade more and more and so it goes step by step until finally the world becomes lost to sight". (A. 14, p.88) This was by, according to Malevich, a historical progression but it may also be seen as anti-historical as it led away from the world of form and it is in this world that history takes place. This contradiction may be seen as basic to the ambience within which Kounellis' work developed. Kounellis talks of Malevich's square as a pointer, as a step towards the future, dialectically based in history. "As far as Malevich is concerned the square is far from being a discovery, like the invention of the electric lightbulb for instance. No, it springs from the medieval Russian tradition which as far as the symbolist movement is concerned clashes with the Russian 19th century landscape painting, so the square refers to tradition, it

is dialectically related to the history on which it touches and to which it points. The likes of Picasso, Matisse, Delacroix, Masaccio, Mondriaan, Malevich are the fruit of tradition and children of their time." (C:2, P.81) Lucio Fontana, another dominant influence in the late 1950's wanted to take painting beyond the canvas to open up space, Fontana wanted to direct the object to open up space, to point to space itself. Malevich wrote in 1927 "The artist is no longer bound to canvas and can transfer his compositions from canvas to space". (A: 15, p.7) Fontana wrote "I do not want to make painting I want to open up space, what must I do to go beyond. I make a hole in the canvas and the infinite comes through." (A:15, P123-124) Kounellis talks of Fontana in the same context as Malevich; as a basis in the historical context of their work. As if theirs is a historical circle built up through art, through the object which is inescapable and brings a continual fragmentation of the past, of history, to the present.

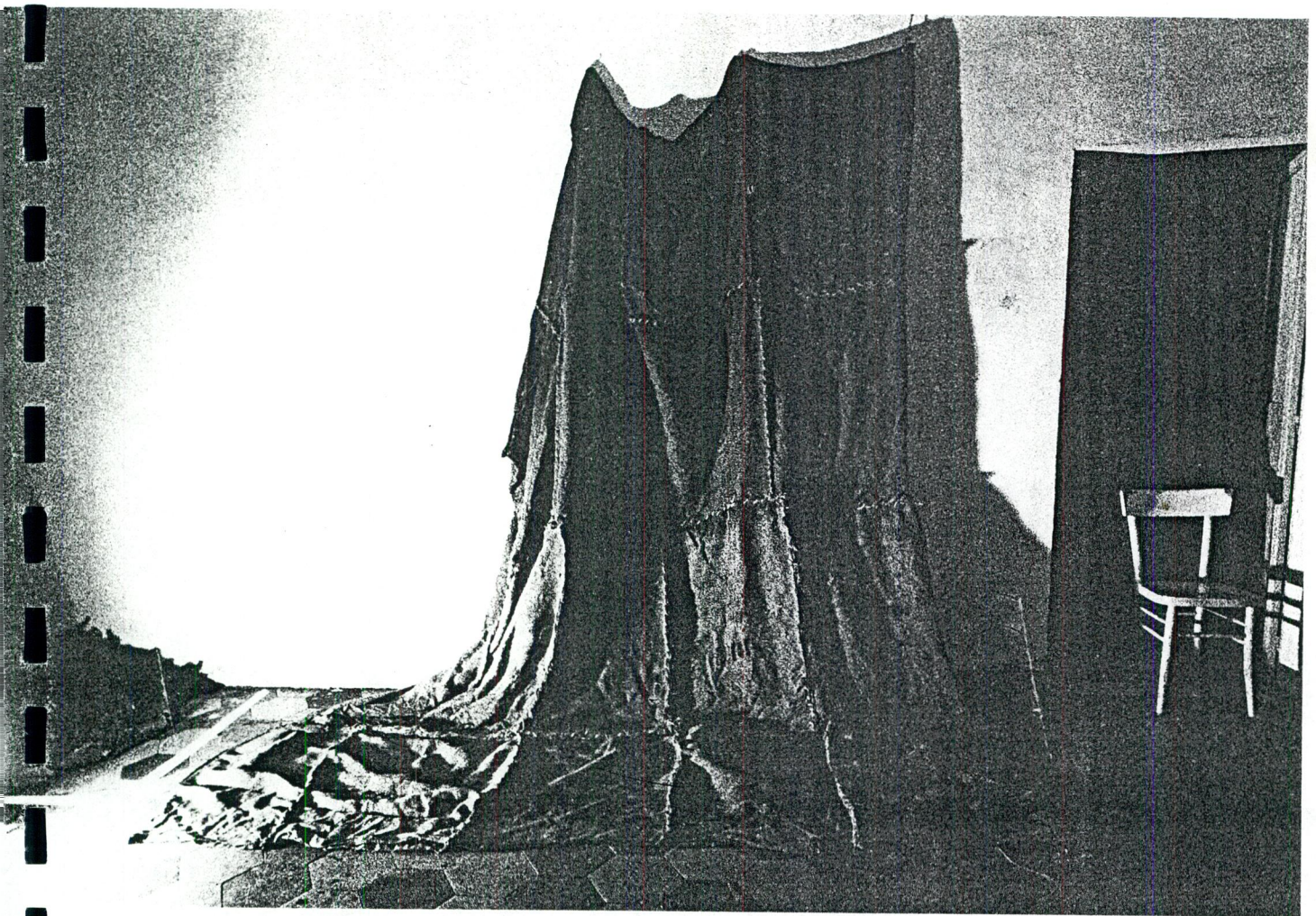
"There is a Caravaggio in an East Berlin museum of the apostle Thomas I think, which depicts Christ with the wound in his breast. And Thomas is putting his finger in the wound. By this I want to give a certain sort of a idea of sorrow, because it is a indication, a limit, it is a very real presence in the Catholic world, this sort of anguish. So Fontana's cuts are no different. You can imagine no more, you can depict no more, but you can present and whether you picture physical figure of Christ with the cut or you stab through the unity of the surface and the abstract unity and the depiction of a canvas it is the same. You can't paint Christ with a wound any more yet the canvas with the wound is still a Christ." (C:2 P. 82) I think what Kounellis is saying here is that the metaphorical content of an object or of space still maintains a basis in history.

In 1967/68 Kounellis did a number of untitled pieces using burlap sacks. They were sewn together and stretched as canvas, piled on racks or trollies. The burlap sacks are as much the passage they have made as containers for distribution, as just coal sacks. (PL:1) As a reference to Alberto Burri use of burlap in such materials. Fontana and Malevich echoed the past and in the context of this relationship they were pointers to the future.

Burri was another great influence at the time, and like Fontana, was taking painting into a sculptural context. Burri used industrial materials such as burlap, this instigated Art Povera's emphasis on non-art materials. Burri and Fontana were pointing beyond the limitations of traditional painting. As Pollock was pointing beyond to an infinite expansion of space, to an "epicness".

In the late 1950's and early 1960's artists such as Kounellis were looking away from the expressionism of 'le informale'. They were looking beyond, as Fontana, to a new space, to a form based in reality. Painting was being seen as a negative ethical activity divorced from reality, seen as an imitation of the real rather than the real itself. Franz Klein, a transcendental constructivist, reduced his painting to monochromes using fire, gold, raw pigment and objects and his own body. He created paintings, mixed with installations, sculpture and performance. But still Klein was seen by the Italian artists as being involved in a metaphysical history, an antique ritualism which worked away from the concrete reality sought by these young artists. Manzoni incorporated real world signs, stencil letters and objects into his canvases. He was trying to work the painting away from representation and into real objecthood.

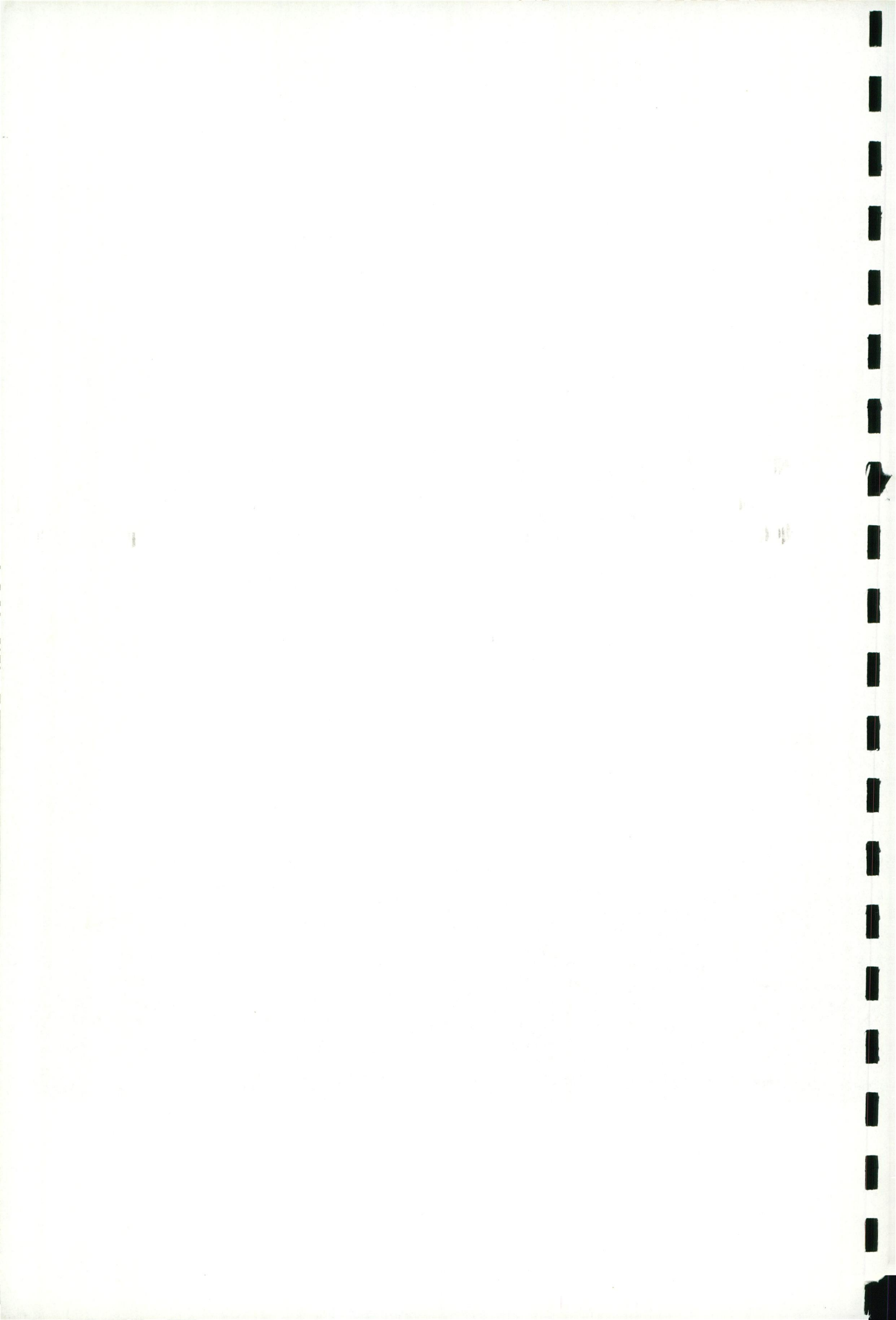
1966 P.L:1

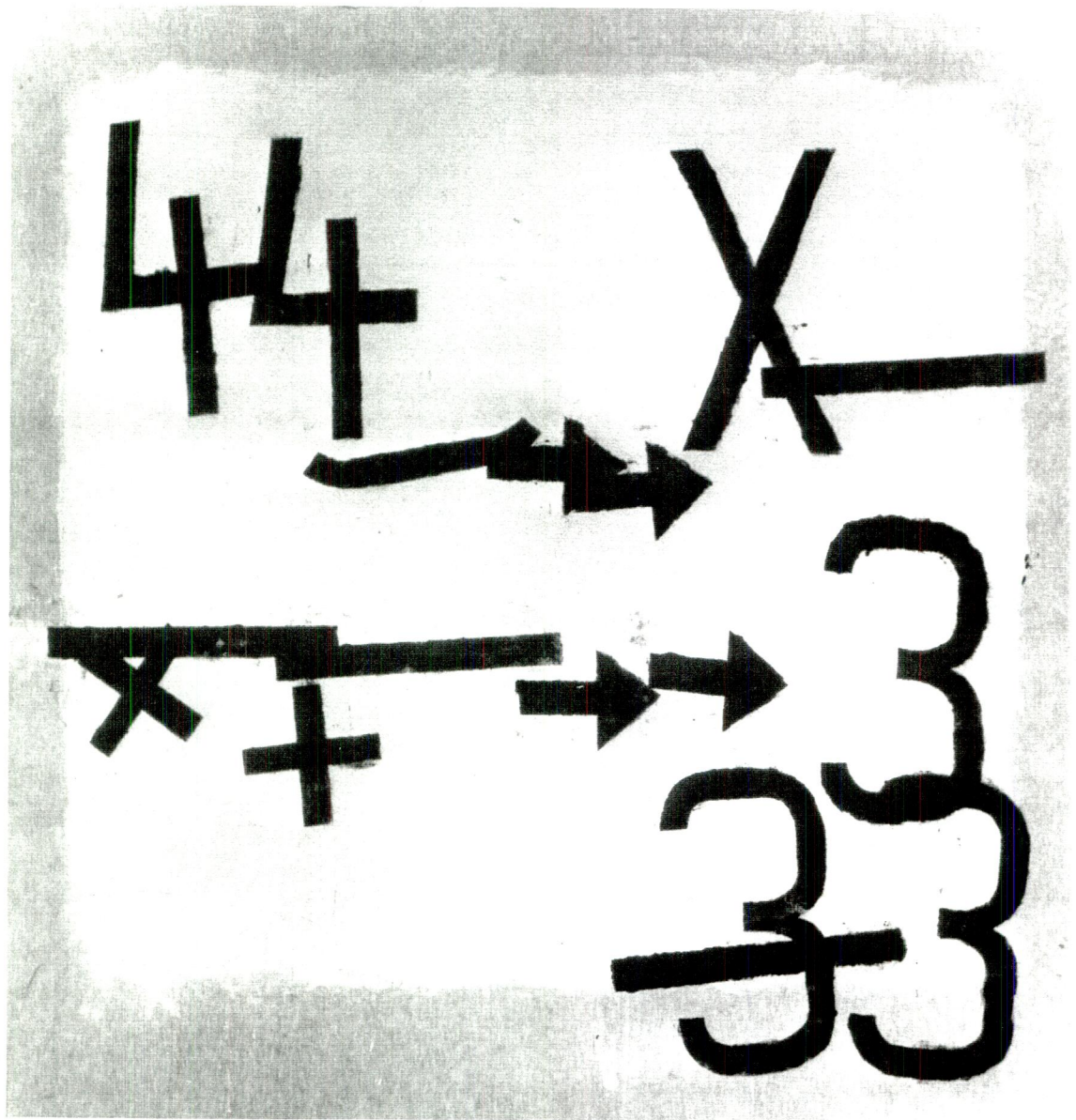


Kounellis' first show in 1960 consisted of large white canvases with stenciled letters or numbers or simply black signs which had no other meaning other than the meaning inherent in them, which intended to demonstrate the recognisable in its most elementary expression and thus establishing, in the most immediate and obvious way, a real contact with the surrounding world. (PL:13) He used found street signs such as Tobac (tobacco) and Ole (oil) (PL:2), he was desperately trying to anchor these works into the real world. But inevitably, they were inherently caught within the structure of the picture frame. The letter and alphabet paintings could be real but finally are not. Kounellis, like many other artists was trying to come out of abstraction while being careful to remember the lessons that abstraction was so insistent about teaching. The concept of truth to materials and respect for the picture plane maybe seen as rich with metaphor. But to be conscious of dealing with metaphor while actively engaged in the making of a work of art loosens the grip of the metaphor and pushes the work toward a mannerism. This is a development towards a mannerism or "inertia of style" which Kounellis and the other Italian Povera artists sought to go against. Kounellis number and letter paintings had become a settled style for him, a style which would inevitably become an ossification around a design concept, which would in time lose whatever content it might once have possessed and become an empty decoration or signature without meaning.

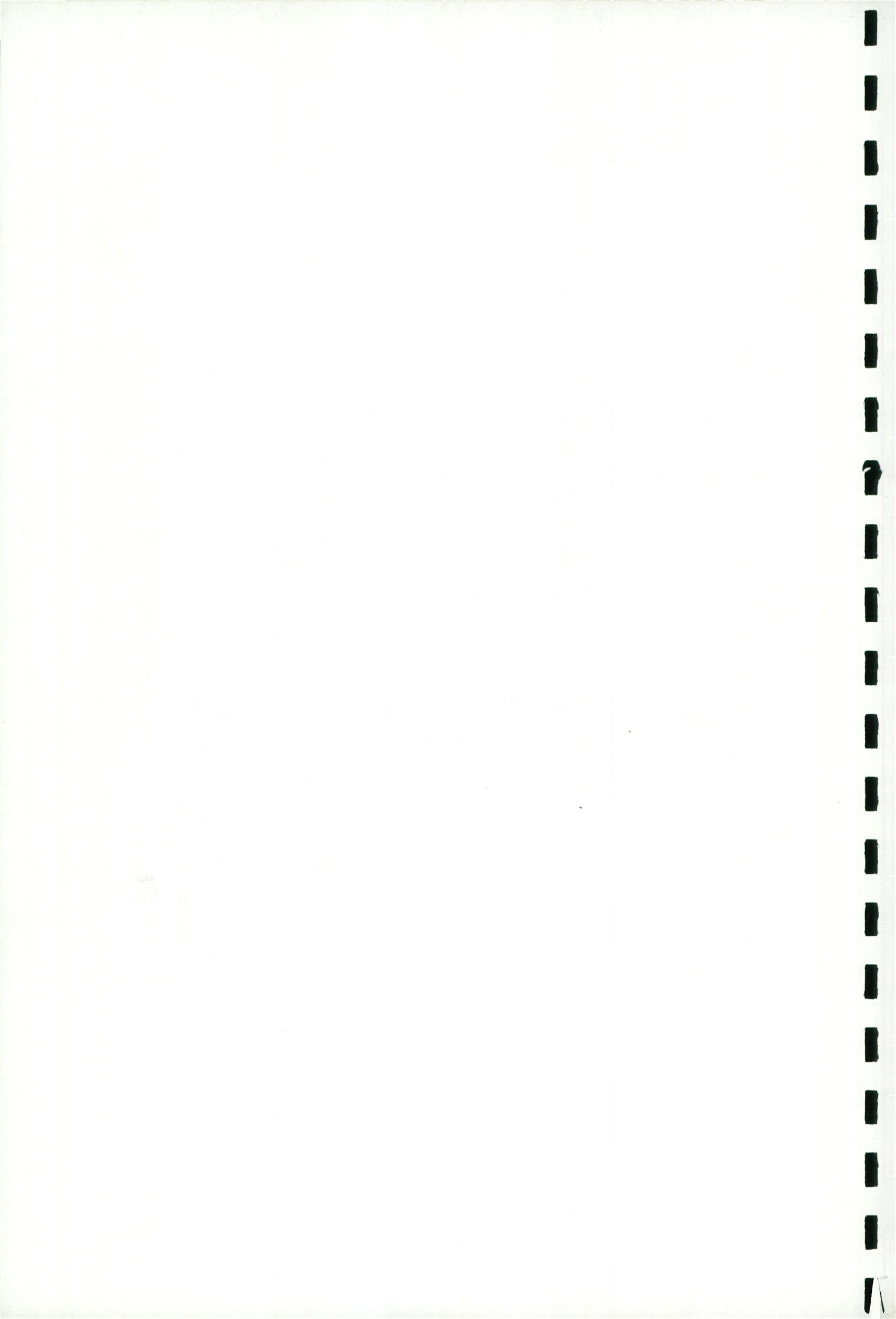
In 1957 many European artists including Klein and Manzoni signed a manifesto against style. At the time style meant primarily 'le informale', Pascal wrote "Our nature consists of movement and that absolute stillness is death".

VOLIO ACETU
OLIO





1959 P.L:3



Kounellis talks of and indeed his work deals with a human past in which a "synthesis" or a totality mortality was in effect. This being a culture in which the different or various functions of its society are integrated into a synthesis. Such functions operate without significant inner contradictions. The basis for such a synthesis is "measure". Kounellis sees this "measure" as an indefinable inner comensurability that prevails among all elements and aspects of a system. Kounellis and the artists of his generation were born into a post-war Europe. A society in which the totality of a synthesis was lost. A society in which measure is fragmented. Man may be seen as a measure, a measure of humanity. Kounellis argues that in a society where fragmentation reigns, as in post-war Europe, where society is dominated by contradictions, an artistic synthesis is a falsehood. To Kounellis 'le informel' was a kind of deception an illusion of unity. It presented a stylistic unity that masked the fact that social unity was gone. Kounellis argues that painting presents a centrality, thus gives the impression of a synthesis, of a totality. For him, along with stylistic unity, social unity was gone. "You have to look at our situation, the space we have at the possibility of offering a centre, once there is a central point there is a painting, without a focus there can be no painting. It is a question of the centre which is lacking. Potentially guaranteed centrality of the status to create a centre. That is why a painting is impossible right now." (C:2 p.84) A painting was a social synthesis that was not valid in a predominantly fragmented society. So one must look again at the measure to create a new measure and a new unity. The measure is not simply a personal act of self-expression, but is the basis on which society will cohere, and on which a new synthesis will grow.

Kounellis felt that this ideology necessitates an art that will base itself primarily on practices other than painting. He sought to accept the fragmentation, deal with it as a material and work with it to reveal the measure of the future.

The first work Kounellis did in two years, from 1965 to 1967, was a large stretched canvas with three cut out canvas fragments resembling roses, but glued to the surface, containing close analogies to Manzoni's and Fontana's canvas fragments. On each side of the canvas Kounellis placed 12 small bird cages each containing a bird. (PL:4) This was his first work with live animals. The bird is held within the cage as the confines of the canvas hold reality from the real. Kounellis began to delve further into real space. These works may be seen as literalistic attempts to convert painting, or single specific paintings into a sculptural principle. One work in 1968 was inspired primarily by Pollock's painting Blue Poles. Kounellis saw in a two dimensional situation, the sense of epic space, that he sought in three dimensions in his own work.(PL:5) Kounellis placed poles tufted with wool around the room, for me this seems a little pointless as this space created by the poles in Pollock's painting created an all over space of two dimensions, why create this space again in three dimensions when it works in the context of two. But these works, I feel, were just the stepping stone for Kounellis into the nature of real space.





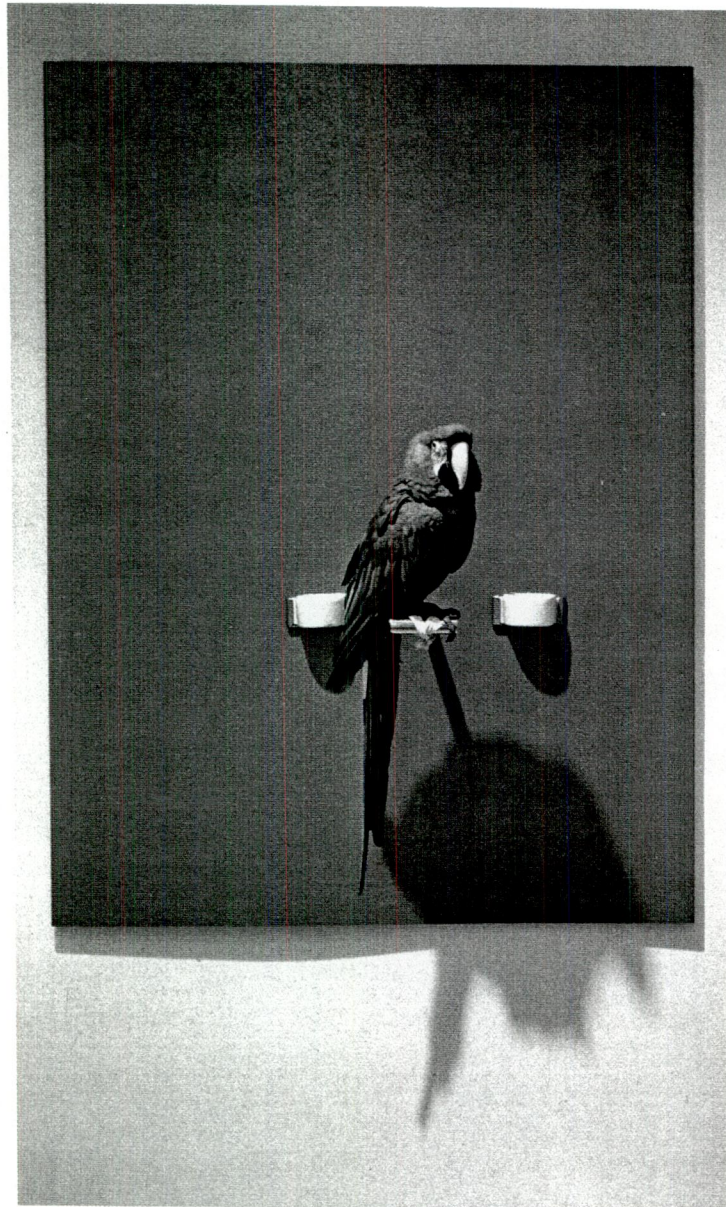
1968

P.L:5

CHAPTER 2

EXPERIENCE

Art must have something that makes it feel real. It is argued that the function of art is to mediate between nature and culture. The reality of art is taking it out of the context of the unreal and placing it in reality by anchoring it into the natural. In his work of the early 1960's Kounellis holds greater truth to his materials than before, but he brings his materials into a freedom unknown in the works of the 1950's. The reality of his materials expresses the true substance and in many cases the subject matter of his work. But they do not get laden down with an expressive presence, they are free elements. Kounellis faces you with an unavoidable reality. A truth to nature and to the nature of his materials. He takes the elements out of their natural context but they maintain a reality of the past and present. Some of his first works to break from his painting of this earlier period are his works with real live animals. He works originally with birds. He places them or sets them on a perch, still within the confines of a pictorial frame. (PL:6) The bird just sitting there with the backdrop of a frame is intensely real. The bird is part of living nature. There is a piece of cardboard underneath the bird covered in shit. Kounellis presents you with an unavoidable sense of living in reality. The bird possesses the power of flight. It has the potential to fly free, but it cannot. Flight's beautiful poetic freedom that man cannot attain in any real sense of the experience which man has battled to attain, both physically and mentally, is presented in front of you, sitting passively meditating on its perch within a frame. The overwhelming feeling is that of human presence,

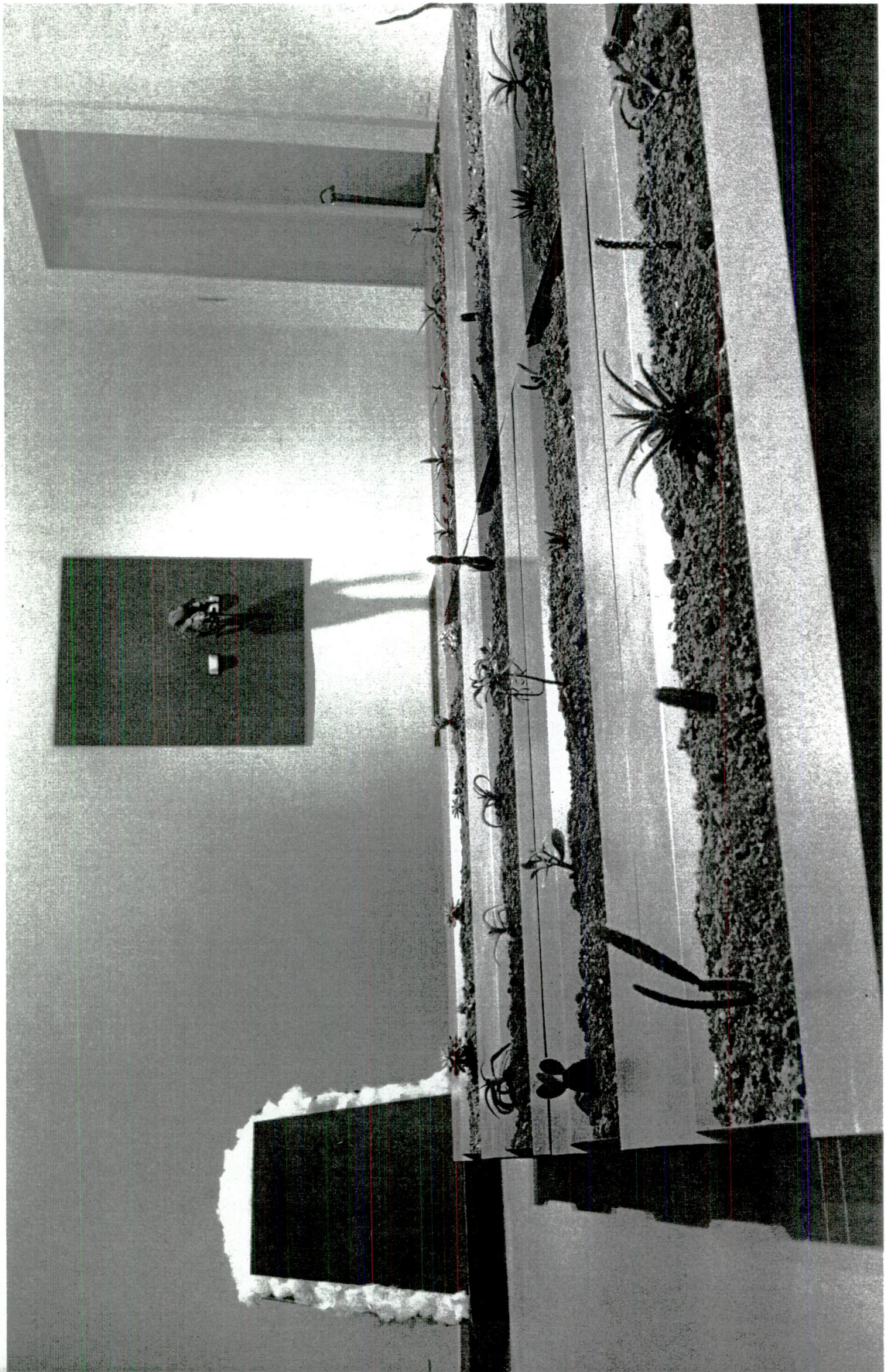


1967 P.1:6

the reality of being human. Looking at the bird, the reality of your own presence is that more real. In the same exhibition, 1967, Kounellis produced a work entitled "cacti". The piece consisted of 8 steel bins filled with earth, each bin containing five cacti of varying shapes and sizes. (PL:7) Here again Kounellis presents you with a living experience.

Another piece in the same year, again entitled 'cacti' consisted of 6 cacti of varying varieties sprouting up through a metal surface of a low platform in which they were contained. The roots of the cacti were planted beneath sheet metal appearing as though they have been cut off. The cacti seemed to float on the metal surface. The cacti are alive without the presence of their roots, without the source of their existence. They float upon a metal sheet in an obscure sense of detachment. The obscure sense of this experience can appear surreal, but in fact it emphasises the real.

These works also involve a dialectical interplay between two aspects that Kounellis refers to as "structure" and "sensibility". Kounellis combines an element of inorganic form which he calls structure and an element of organic presence which he calls sensibility. A little parrot "sensibility" sitting on a perch, fixed to a rectangular sheet of steel "structure". Within the same space Kounellis impressed a ball of soft cotton wool (sensibility) between four steel plates (structure). (PL:7) But more than anything these works enhance the sense of the real; as much the reality of a bird or a cactus as the reality of oneself.



In Rome in 1967, Kounellis occupied a new space in the Gallery Lialto with a show entitled horses. The space consisted of two rooms, one larger than the other. The larger, the first room, one entered had an extremely heavy tiled floor, the second room, half a story higher looked down into the first room through windows. (PL:8) The show at the time was seen as a contestation against the general chique atmosphere of art.

This is true to a certain extent as it did reflect a new sense of freedom that was not present in the popular art world. But to view this piece, as a symbolic criticism of the system is a limited appraisal of the work. Kounellis talks of this piece in relation to the reality of the perception of space "the gallery in so far as it is a public space, like the museum, is in fact a theatrical cavity. Unique events take place, time after time. Take the horses. They were not free, but bound within the confines of the gallery, or the public area called the gallery, that was a unique event. In the reality the perception of public space was the relevant element of the 1969 exhibition." (C:2, p83) Kounellis put eleven rings into the walls around the gallery and to each ring he attached a horse. The floor was spotlessly clean, there was no hay laid out for the horses, or water, just eleven horses standing there confined within a space. They occupied this space with an immense strength. They smell, they shit, they make noise, they are truly alive, truly real. Kounellis presents you with an experience wrought with the anxiety and tension of a dream. You are dominated by the single opaque fact of their presence. Their sheer strength as animals, their spiritual and physical feeling is contained within the four walls of the gallery. But as Kounellis says the space that they are confined in, or rather the perception of

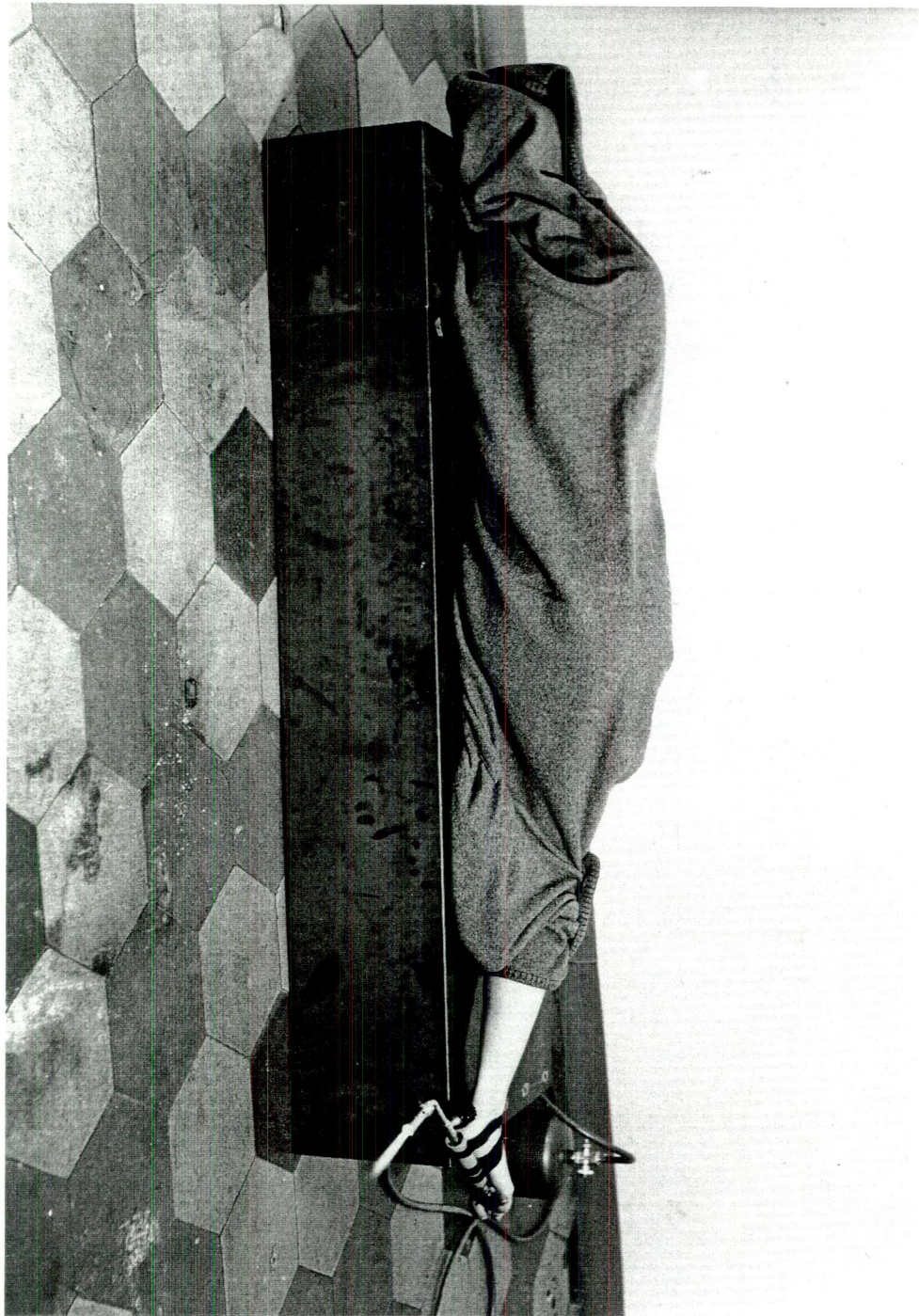
1969 P.L:8



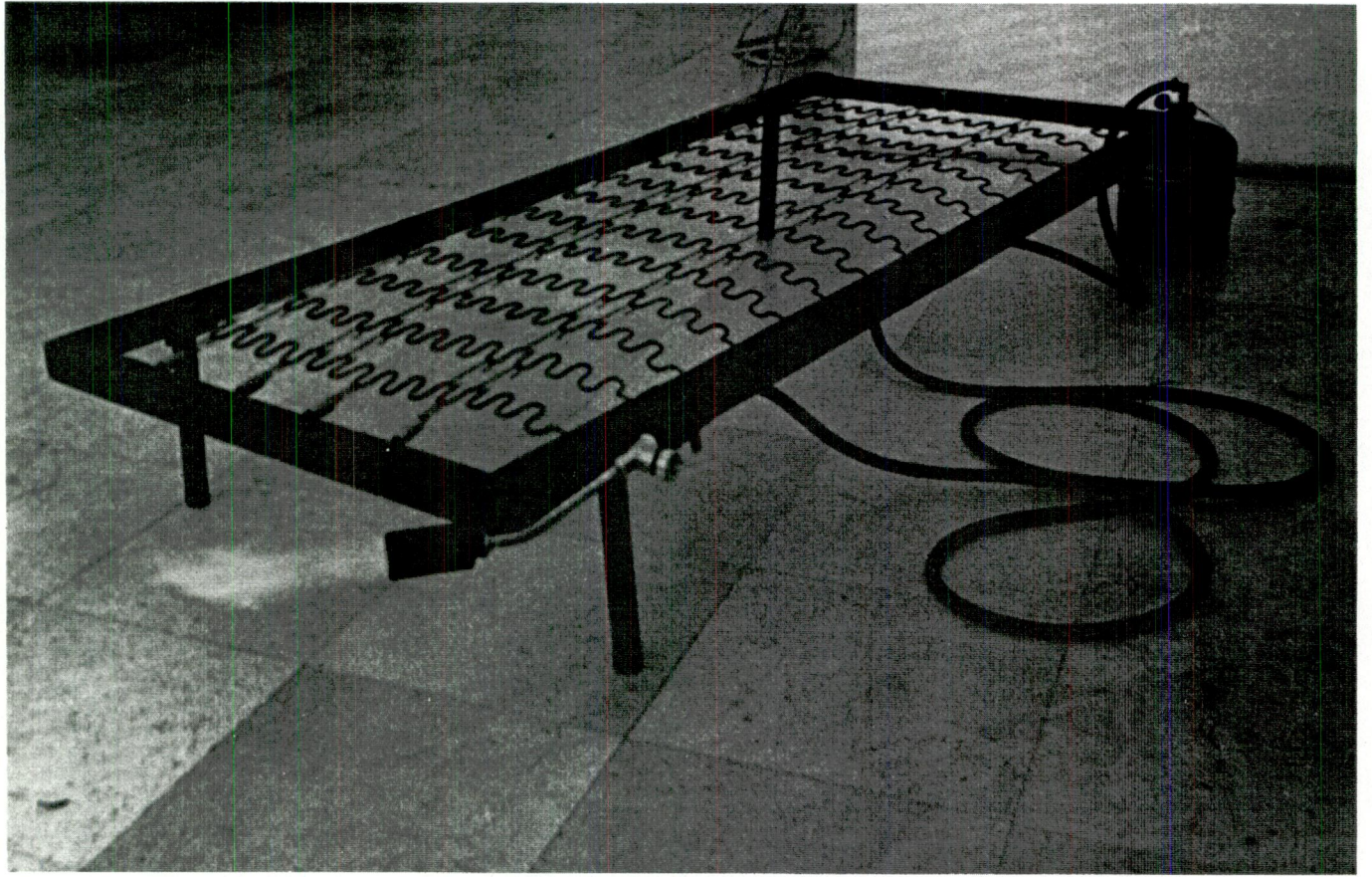
the space they are confined in, the four walls as the walls of the gallery, instead of the four walls of the stable, as in a stable there would be no tension, there would be no anxiety. To see this work within the confines of this interpretation is to limit it. This experience must be taken and understood. To accept it, would be to accept the immediate obvious perception of space that the piece itself actually attacks.

The gallery or our perception of it becomes the physical and spiritual strength of humanity, this is the strength which humanity seems to impose on nature. The horse is the ally of man in war, travel and agriculture. In the history of art, the horse occupies an aesthetic position, second only to the image of man. The horse stands within an historical path. The horse brings the now depressed history of its heroic past into the gallery. Their heroism is past, left in memory.

Around the early 1970's Kounellis begins to introduce people. This further strengthens the experience which Kounellis presents. He depersonalises the figures by covering their faces. The intensity of this confrontation is further emphasised by the stillness of the figures. He places the figures perfectly still so they become like objects, physical forms. In 1970, at Monte Ciano, Kounellis placed a woman wrapped in a blanket lying on a metal sheet with an acetylene torch attached to her foot. The only part of the woman's body that was visible was her foot. (PL:9) There is a strong, cold detachment from the figure. The blanket detaches the woman even further, makes the situation even more anxious. The acetylene torch taped to her foot is dangerously intense. There is a constant hiss sound of the burning torch. There is a deathly obscurity an energy, a stressful energy that perforates the experience.



1970 P.L:9



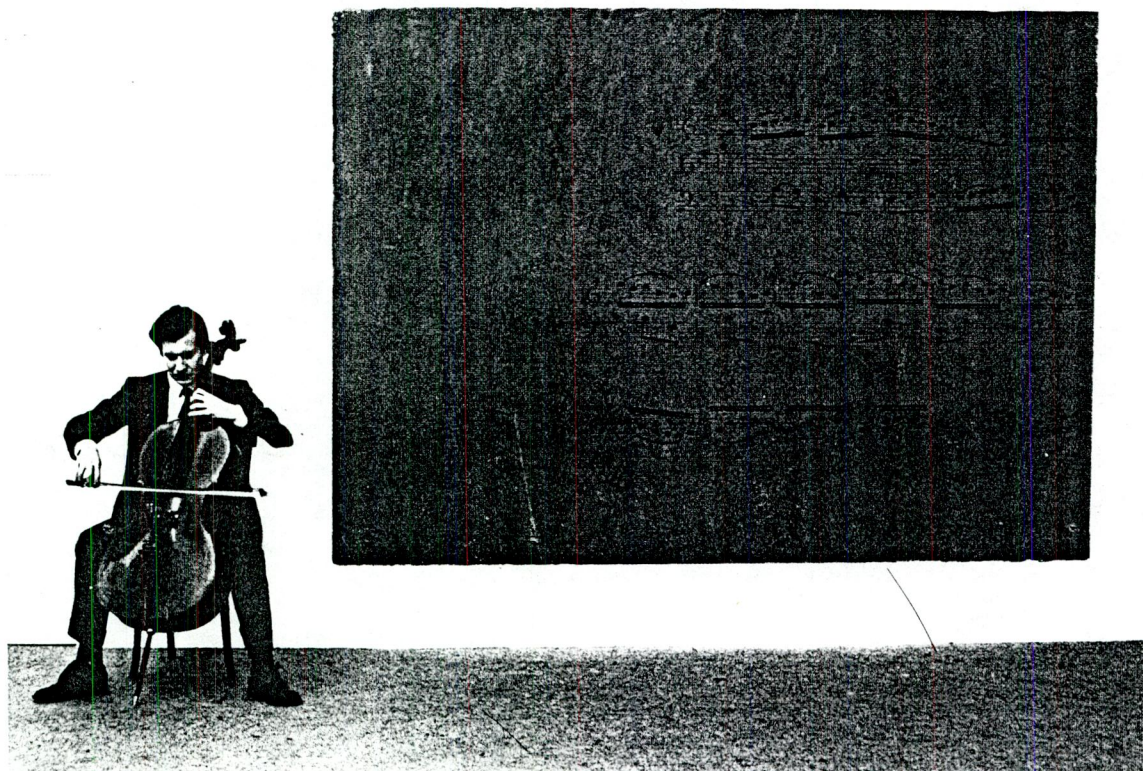
1969 1969 P.L:12

In December of the same year, Kounellis presented the piece entitled "Motivo Africano". The piece consists of a pregnant woman seated on a tall stool with a piece of black cloth over her face. There was honey smeared across her belly, and a number of large cockroaches were set free in the room on the floor around her. They inevitably found their way across her body and to the honey. This piece has the same anonymous quality as the previous one. Obviously because of the cloth across her face, but her body is intimate, detached but intimate. The honey is obscurely warming, emphasising her pregnant belly. This woman is carrying a child in her stomach covered with honey, sweet and sticky. The cockroaches almost defiantly obscure. They are cold and repulsive. They are parasites feeding on a pregnant belly. Kounellis presents you with this situation, this experience. It is obscurely real, too real. The fertility of her body is unavoidable. Humanity too is a parasite, feeding off the honey of nature's fertility.

In Rome in 1970 Kounellis took part in an exhibition entitled "Vitality of the Negative". He placed a large concert grand piano in a corner of a large room and sat down at the keyboard and played it. For the entire duration of the show, he played a section of 'Nabucco' by Giuseppe Verdi. (PL:10) This piece encapsulated the same sense of loss as the horses did. The horses were once the pride of art, in a social context they expressed nobility, but now only memories of the lost glory. Verdi's Nabucco opened in La Scala in Milan on 9th March 1842. Prior to this Verdi after the loss of his wife had vowed never to write another piece again, and with the persuasion of some friends he wrote Nabucco. It was a sad lament. At its opening it achieved great success. The famous choir of hebrew slaves sitting down at the Rivers of Babylon, their freedom lost and only dreams to live by "Va pensuro



1970 P.L:10



1971 P.L:11

sul ala traito." The music and those words, really a common symbol in romantic poetry became almost overnight the freedom song of the oppressed and the distressed Italian people. More than 100,000 mourners sang Nabucco at the Master's funeral in 1901.

Kounellis's Nabucco is a dramatic reflection of the past, a mournful tribute, it is an ode to the strength of a cultural era. This piece is also about the true role of art. Verdi's Nabucco as an artwork can cut deep to the centre of a consciousness and elevated true meaning. But the impact of this work has evaporated. Now the opera has become a commonplace, an elegant evening out with friends. This work may be seen then as political, as political as the horses in recalling a great hope which was lost.

CHAPTER 3

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF ICONOCLASM

Many elements of Kounellis's work appear repeatedly throughout his career. Kounellis contains these elements in different contexts. Thus these varying contexts draw on a different understanding as they reappear in varying metaphorical narratives. In 1967 Kounellis produced a work entitled "Margrietta" (Daisy). The piece consisted of a metal flower like shape, about 1 m. in diameter, emitting a jet of hissing gas from its centre. Kounellis refers to this fire as signifying "punishment" in a somewhat medieval sense. This punishment is seen as a requirement for transformation to a totality. It constitutes a justice or necessity. For Kounellis this work recalls the philosopher, Herculatis dictum, that "all things are changed for fire, and fire for all things". This work is also part of a transition from the structure and sensibility relationship in the earlier works. Fire is more than a sensibility. Fire has a metaphysical relationship in connection with destruction, process and change. It is directly related to the process of a social and cultural change, through which the measure of a civilisation is burnt away and a new one is fired into existence.

Although fire had been used by Klein and other artists, Kounellis made it a particular material of his own. Kounellis used it without aesthetising it, or concealing its apparatus. In 1969, Kounellis combined fire with the use of metal bed frames as a material. The bed frame may be seen as a measure, as a measure of a human. They are made to the size and proportion of the human frame. The measure of a human, the measure of humanity. The bed frames lie bare, uncovered, some covered with fire pellets, some covered with wool.

They refer to the creation of a new measure. A project of creating a new form. Thus a new form of sensibility. The bed is a measure of a human but is subject to the fire of change. Kounellis places two beds side by side, one with 40 burning fire pellets, the other piles of cottonwool. (PL:13) The tension here is obvious. This work speaks to a balance between birth and death. The wool is soft and inviting, the fire bed hard and dangerous, reflecting the two measures of a human, of the contradictory relationship that exists within ourselves and thus our sociological structure. These works are tense and anxious which I feel embody the anxiety of a fragmented age.

In another work of the same year, Kounellis leans a metal double bed frame against a wall. From a bar attached to the centre of the bed frame, hang five measuring pans, like those used to weigh commodities and commercial scales. On each pan burns a small fire. Here again fire burns the measure of man, in his attempt to procreate the future.

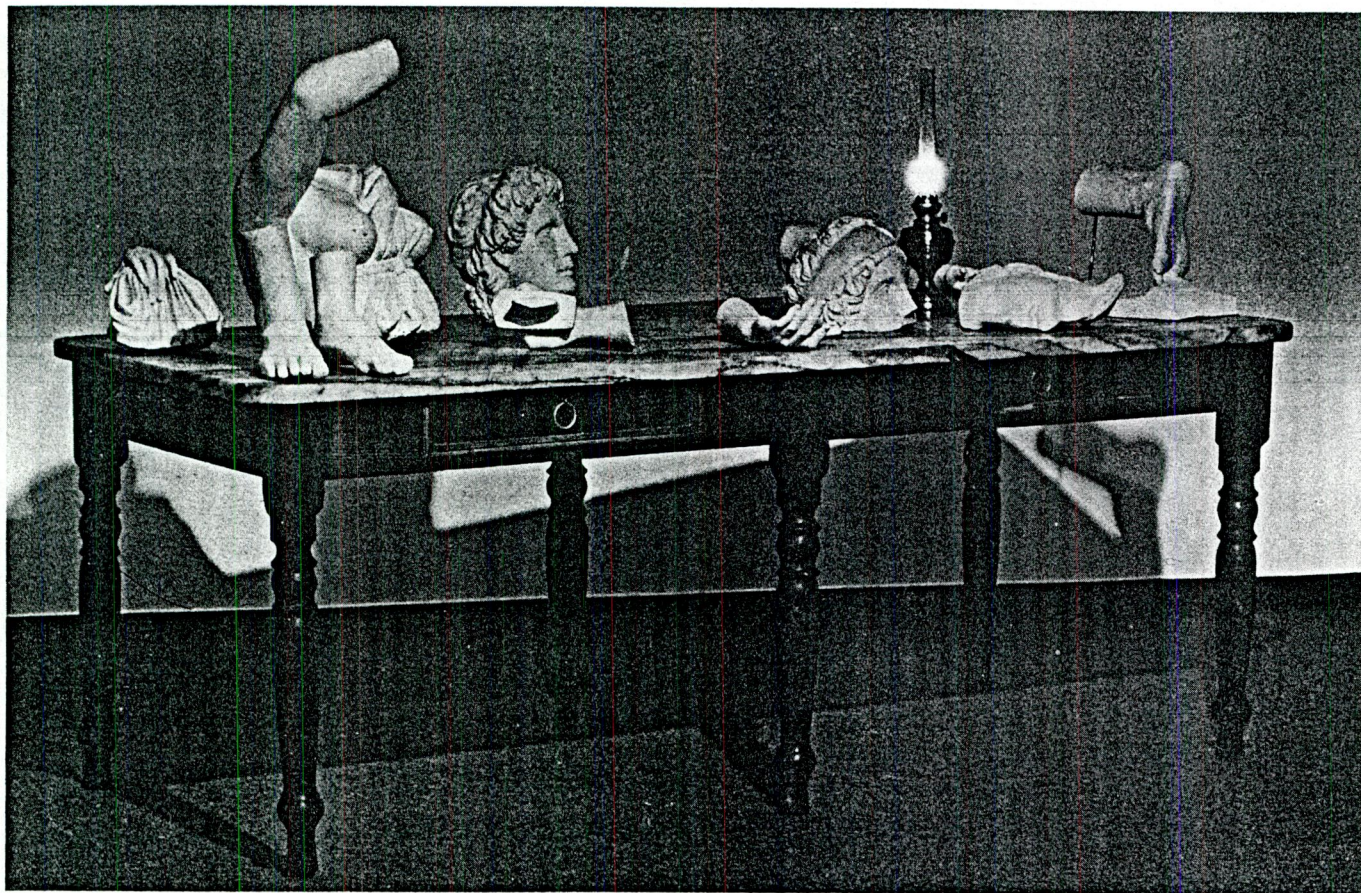
In 1976, Kounellis installed a brick smoke stack in th gallery Salvatore Alla Milan. The ceiling was blackened by a fire that once burnt in the furnace. The smoke stains have left traces along the walls. The fire has been burnt out, but the smell still perforates the room. The air is heavy with memories. (PL:14) The chimney stack can be seen as an allegory to progress, like a dead tree its strength is still visible, but its life has gone. Kounellis sees the chimney as a castle "the chimney looks like a castle". (C:4, p59) The castle is like a medieval totality. A lost totality. The smoke is like a metaphor for time, the ghost of an age. "Smoke creates ghosts". (C:4, p59) But the chimney is more than this again. The fire can be lit again, and is ready to be used, just as ancient art can again be part of our language. The chimney can be the furnace of creative invention, like the mind. The



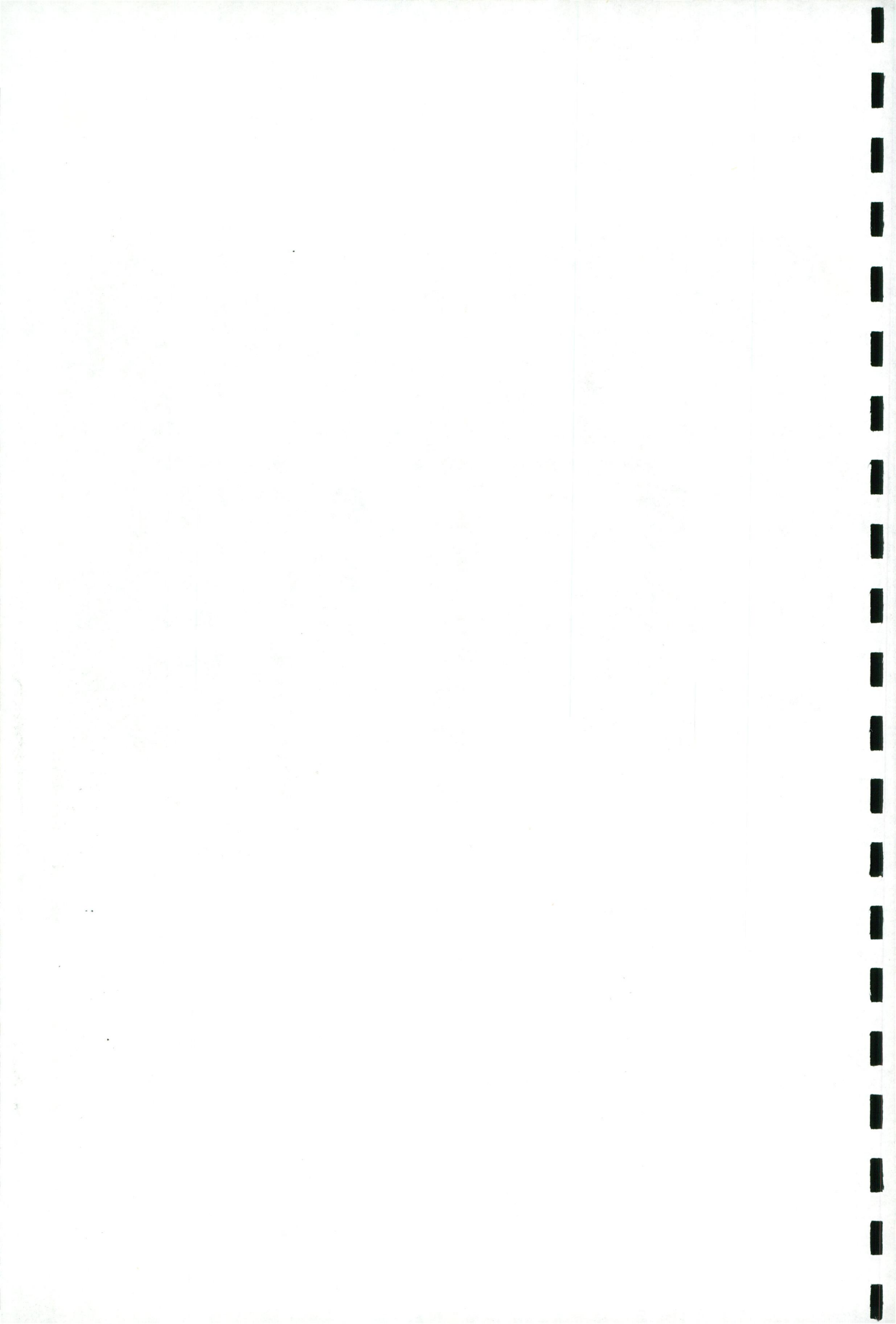


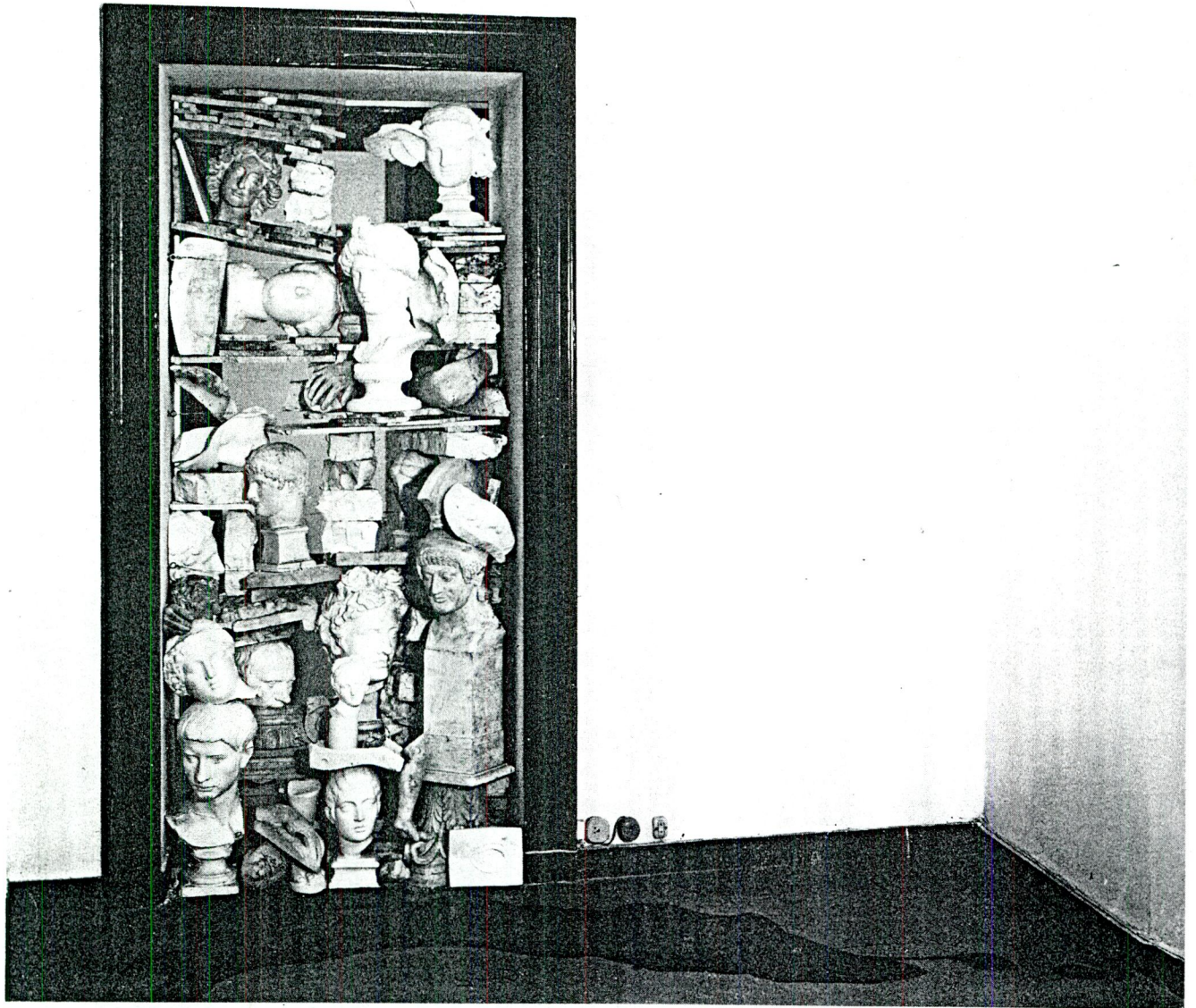
The chimney is like the mind that rests and in the traces of smoke lie the mystery of lost conditions, that will make possible a new configuration.

Another repeated element of Kounellis's iconography is his use of pieces of fragmented Greek/Romanesque classical sculpture. Born and raised in Greece, the sculpture of his past flows through into this fragmented reflection of the past. In a piece made in 1974 entitled "Tableau" Kounellis arranges plaster fragment pieces of classical sculpture on a marble top table and places an oil lamp among them. The broken mournful pieces are an art passed, they lie hopelessly in despair. There is no hope of salvation, they are lost to the epic, of their heroic age. (PL:15) Kounellis worked a number of shelf pieces with similar analogies to the past. He takes up a space, a doorway, a window sill. He clutters the space with again fragments of plastic classical sculpture - busts, limbs, etc. (PL:18) The pieces are lost to the full sense of their individual force. They are brought together in a cluttered and empty space. They are like Kounellis's Nabucco - fragments of history re-embraced. The origin of their original intensity or majestic power does not remain. They are in the literal sense placed upon the shelf, peacefully restrained in dreams of their past. Although the past shapes the future, without the past there is no sense of present or the future. The pieces stand holding this empty space, claustrophobic in their intensity in a cluttered piled arrangement as they hold the space which is normally free, they are fragments of the past occupying space in the present, which holds a disintegrating mark in time. They are oppressively claustrophobic in their number. The space which these fragments occupy is as the bed frame a measure. With Kounellis it is always the measure or the person, it is an object of framework made to human dimensions and proportions.



1974 P.L:15



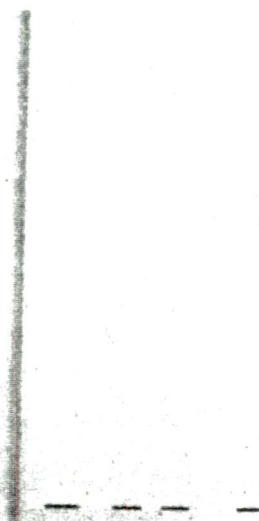


1980 P.L:18

Windows and doorways are a modern measure, a measure from one age. These broken fragments of classical sculpture are a different measure, a measure of a more ancient one, compressed together they constitute yet another image of a complex of interlaced ideas, including the changing of the measure with the flow of history; the loss of measure and the need to regain or rather re-shape a new one. But they are also the blockage of space, they are claustrophobic. A space that is normally open is now closed. Critically these works have been seen as a protest against the gallery, against separation of art from life. This interpretation is rejected by Kounellis.

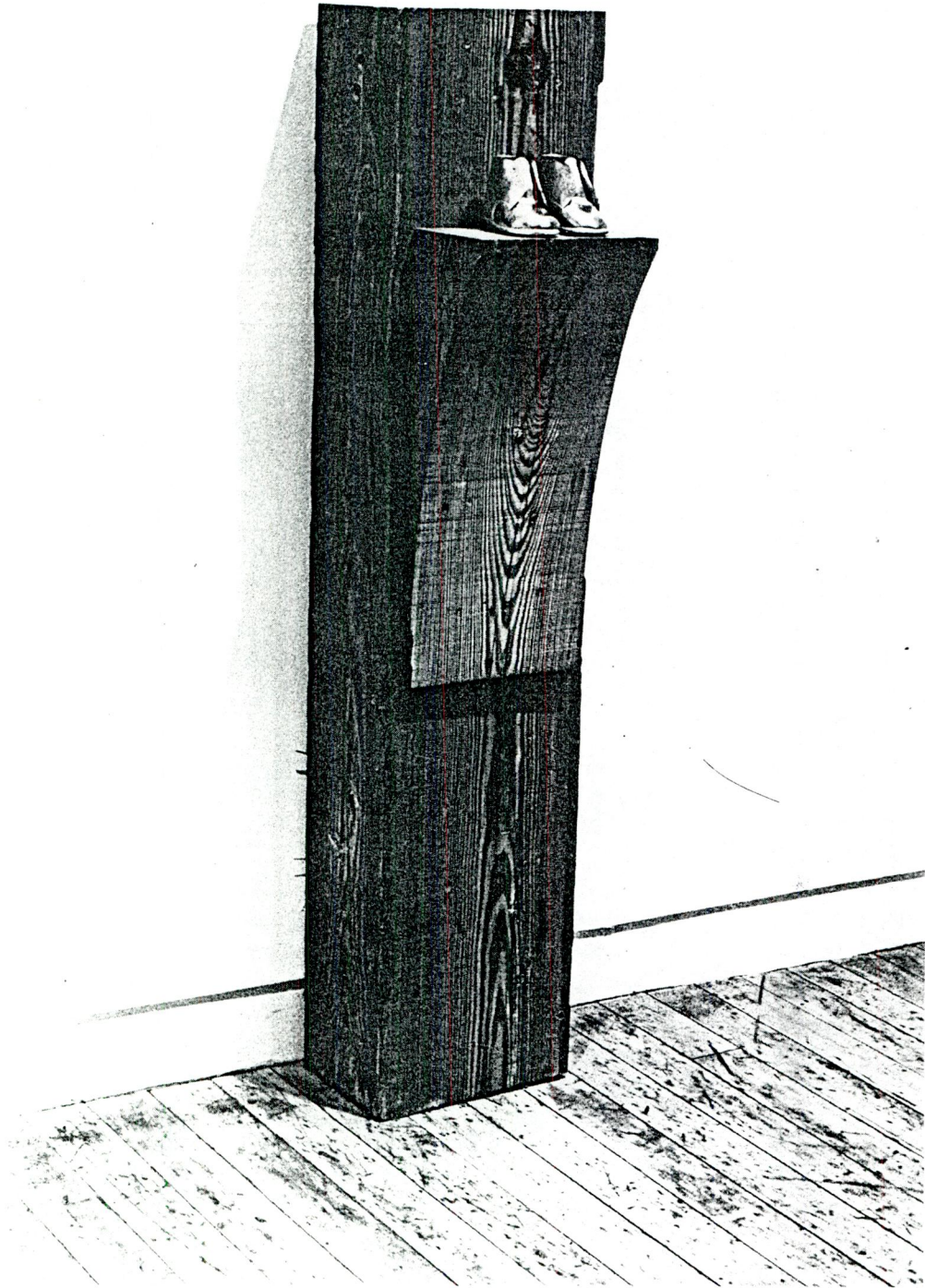
As well as using fragments of classical sculpture, Kounellis blocked up doors and windows with stones in a peasant style of masonry. (PL:17) Christos Lazos, a Greek critic, has asserted again a different interpretation of his work which was rejected by Kounellis also. The assertion is that these works characterise Greek countryside and village culture. They echo the terraced hillsides and the abandoned buildings whose windows have been blocked by stones to protect the interior from weather. From a modern Greek point of view, his works express feelings of closure and isolation. One cannot ignore the relation these walls have to the Greek countryside and its antiquities. I feel these works must be viewed in the complex culmination of varying metaphorical content which varies in interpretation from viewer to viewer. Although one must regard the artist's intentions as somewhat circumscribing the meaning of the work, one can't allow this to be the closure of its interpretation. I feel these works are to some extent a culmination of these varying ideas. The underlying feeling is that of claustrophobic tension. They underline an attitude to history and speak again to the fragmented anxiety which I feel monopolises our age.

1969 Pl:17

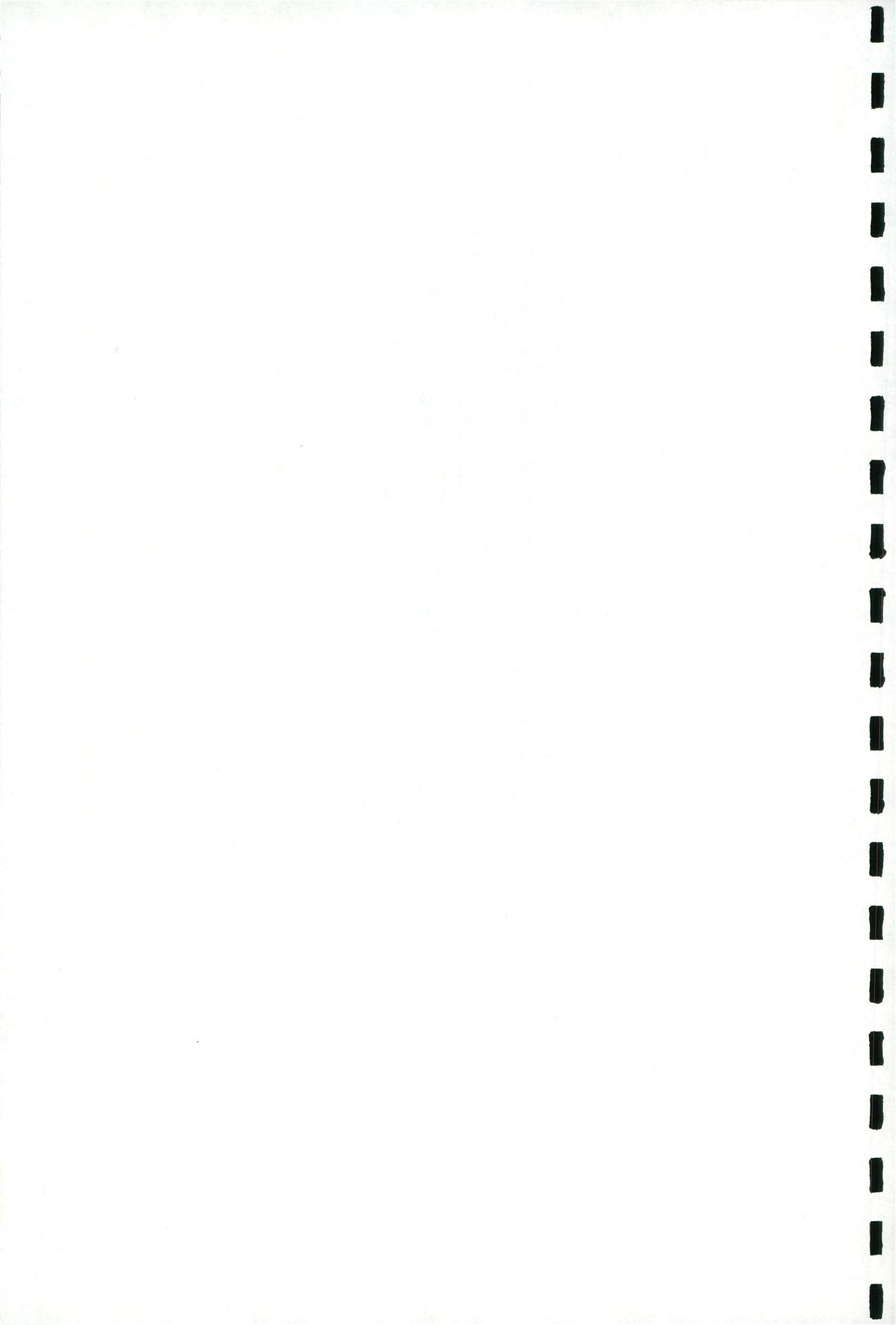


This I feel may be seen in either an attitude towards art, or rather its inadequacies, or a loss of Greek cultural heritage or just a loss of cultural heritage. This is also quite relevant in relation to Kounellis's works which involve the use of the Latin cross. Kounellis's cross signifies an attitude towards history. He sees the cross as part of his cultural history, an inherent element that one must accept and thus realise that one belongs to history. In 1972, Kounellis placed cast gold replicas of his baby son's shoes on the foot support of the trunked vertical member of a large wooden cross. (PL:19) The work is a kind of testament; Kounellis leaving history to his son, or a process by which each generation leads to the next, its crucifixion upon a certain intersection of time and space. The gold shoes enhance the sacredness of this condition and accepting it is one's responsibility.

One of Kounellis's most evokative and poetic installation is a piece entitled Tragedy Seville (Seville Tragedy). (PL:20) This piece was produced first in 1973 and has been repeated three times since then. The piece consisted of a gold leaf wall, in front of which stood a benton wood hatrack with a hat and coat hanging upon it. The gold wall is a direct reference to the gold background in Byzantine art. The gold background in Byzantine art seeks to eternalise the figure in the foreground, predominately either royal or divine. This was to assert the eternality of the human soul. In Kounellis's work there is only a hat rack and a hat and coat left on it. Kounellis associates this hat and coat with middle-European cafe scenes, especially those of Vienna. For him the hat rack, in between the viewer and the gold wall signifies the culture of Vienna which he says is a bridge to Byzantium. He is refering to Gustav Maliere, Franz Kafka and other authors whose theme

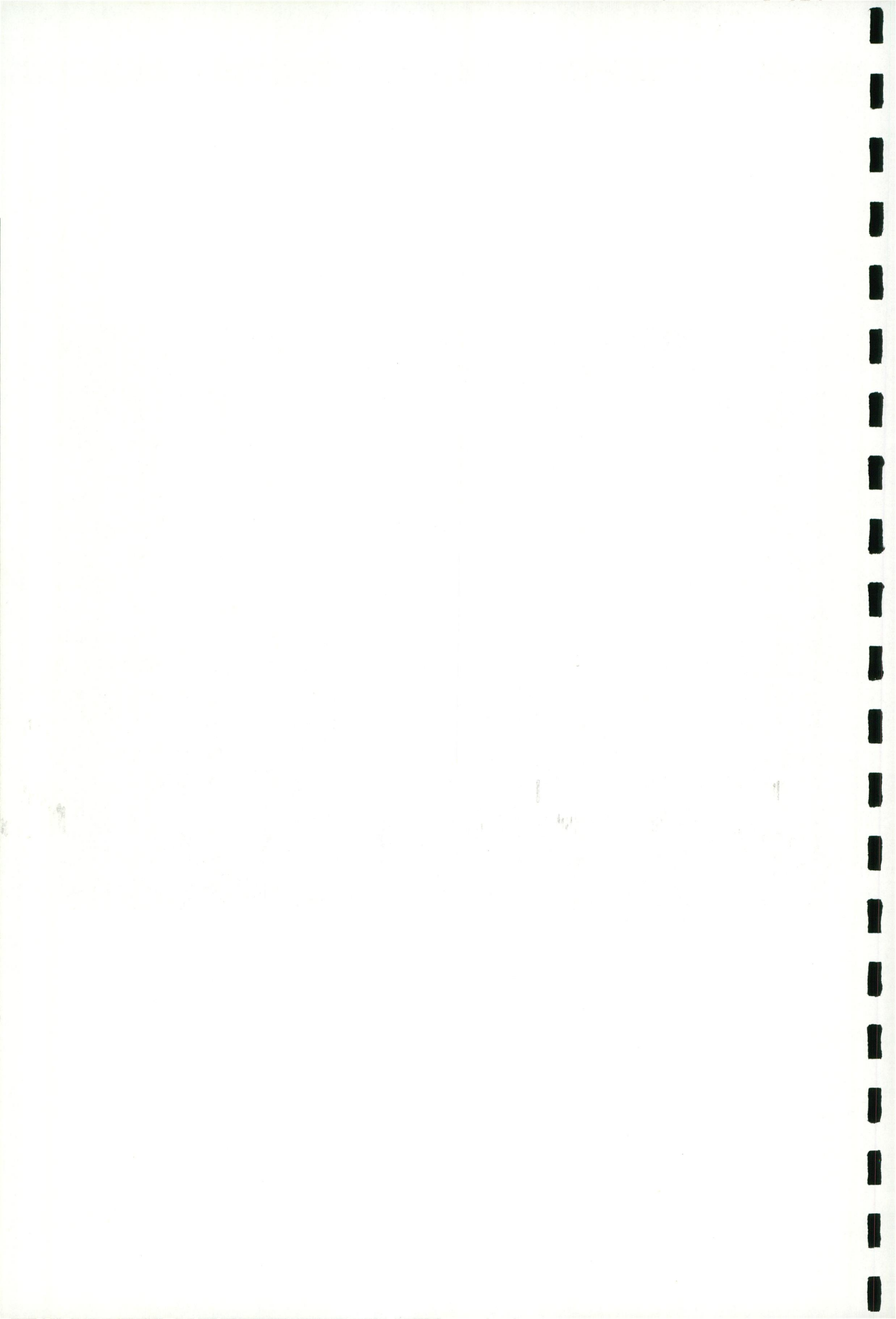


1972 P.L19





1975 P.L: 20



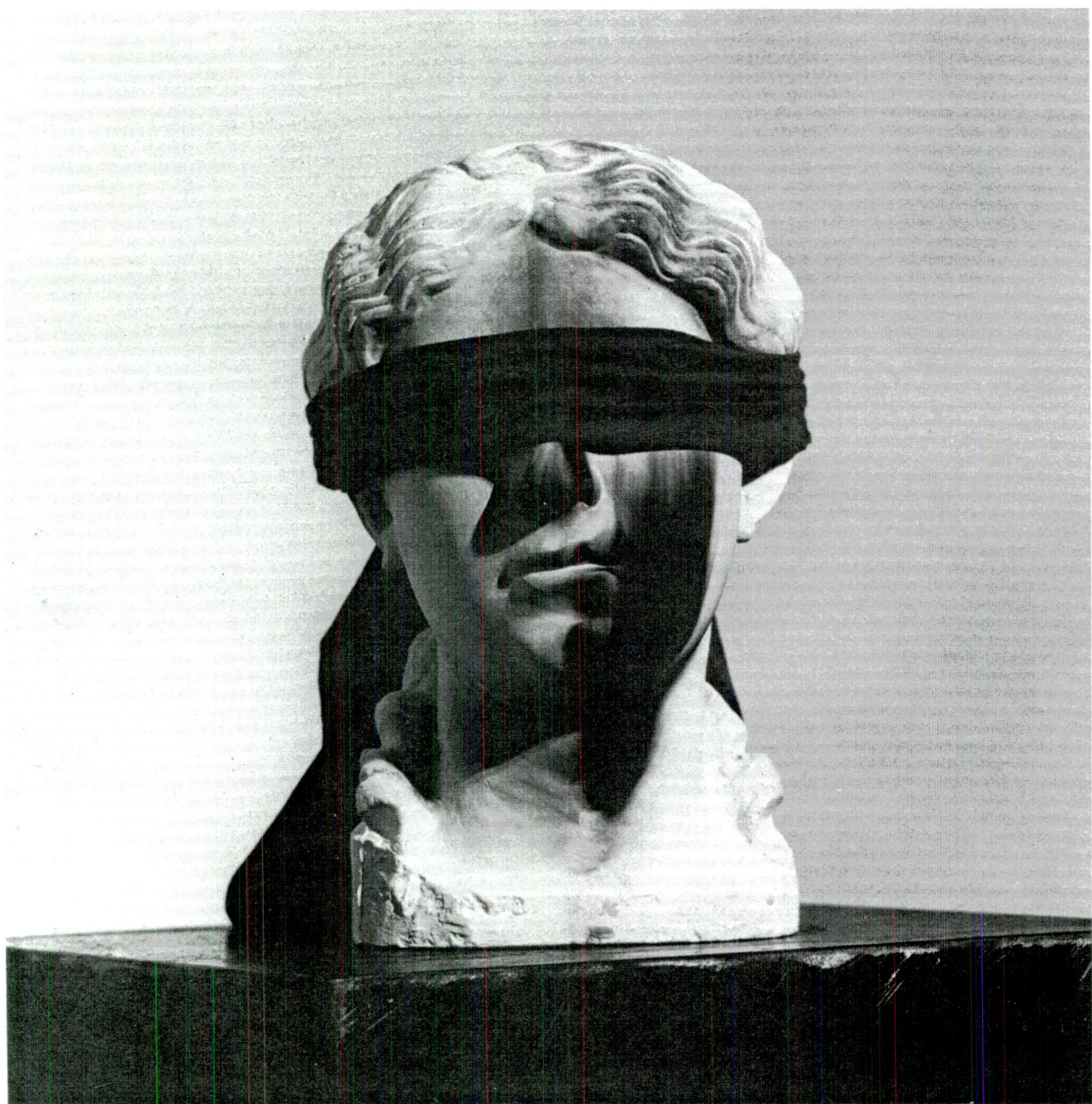
was a lack wholeness in modern selfhood. A selfhood lost after the first World War. The hat and coat lie waiting for a return, for the return of a culture in which synthesis prevails.

The image of containment and isolation which began with the blocked windows and doors pieces is an image which repeatedly re-occurs in Kounellis's work. He blindfolded a head of a classical statue, (PL:21) panelled windows with steel instead of glass, (PL:16) remade a set of doors in lead, all this signifying a blockage of sight. A sense of restricted viewing, a sense of restriction. For Kounellis's this work is a contestation against the superficial process of seeing embodied in an easy to like pictorial art. It is a need to see beyond the illusionistic picture surface, seeing that is blocked by a superficial and fragmented world of vision. Kounellis feels that to see wholly and clearly is possible only within the context of a social synthesis.

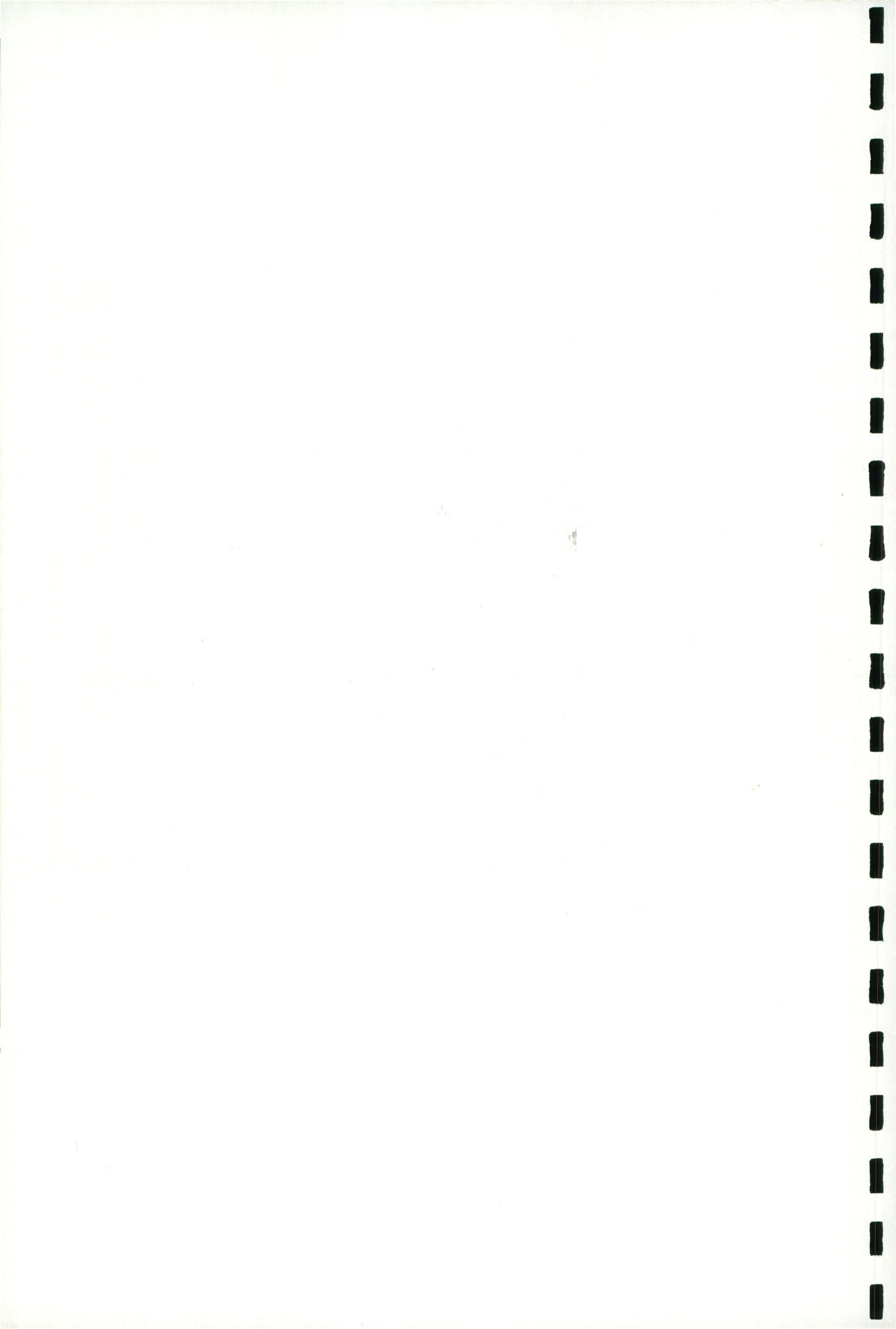
Kounellis's works with burlap sacks, coffee beans, grain, etc. deal with this diffusion of cultural synthesis through fragmentation. These sacks filled with coffee beans, and various kinds of grains, are a common measure, a unity. But this common measure has been fragmented. The objects used to transport goods from country to country, they embody the theme of the diffusion of civilisation, as the goods or measures of various cultures are exchanged. For Kounellis coffee "is something that is linked to harbours". (C:4; p60) Coffee or more its measure signifies import and export diffusion. These works speak continually to the fragmentation and diffusion of cultures and civilisations. This theme of cultural fragmentation seems to be relevant in all Kounellis's work; fragmentation that has dominated post-war Europe. This is the underlying politics in Kounellis's work.

1985 P.L:16





1978 P.L.:21



He has called his work "the iconography of iconoclasm". (C:2 p 83) It is the iconography of the broken image. Kounellis's politics speak continually to the loss of this totality. But the artist cannot regain such a synthesis, to try would be to create a false centrality. The artist is only a pointer. Kounellis's work points continually to this loss, and a need to regain it within history.

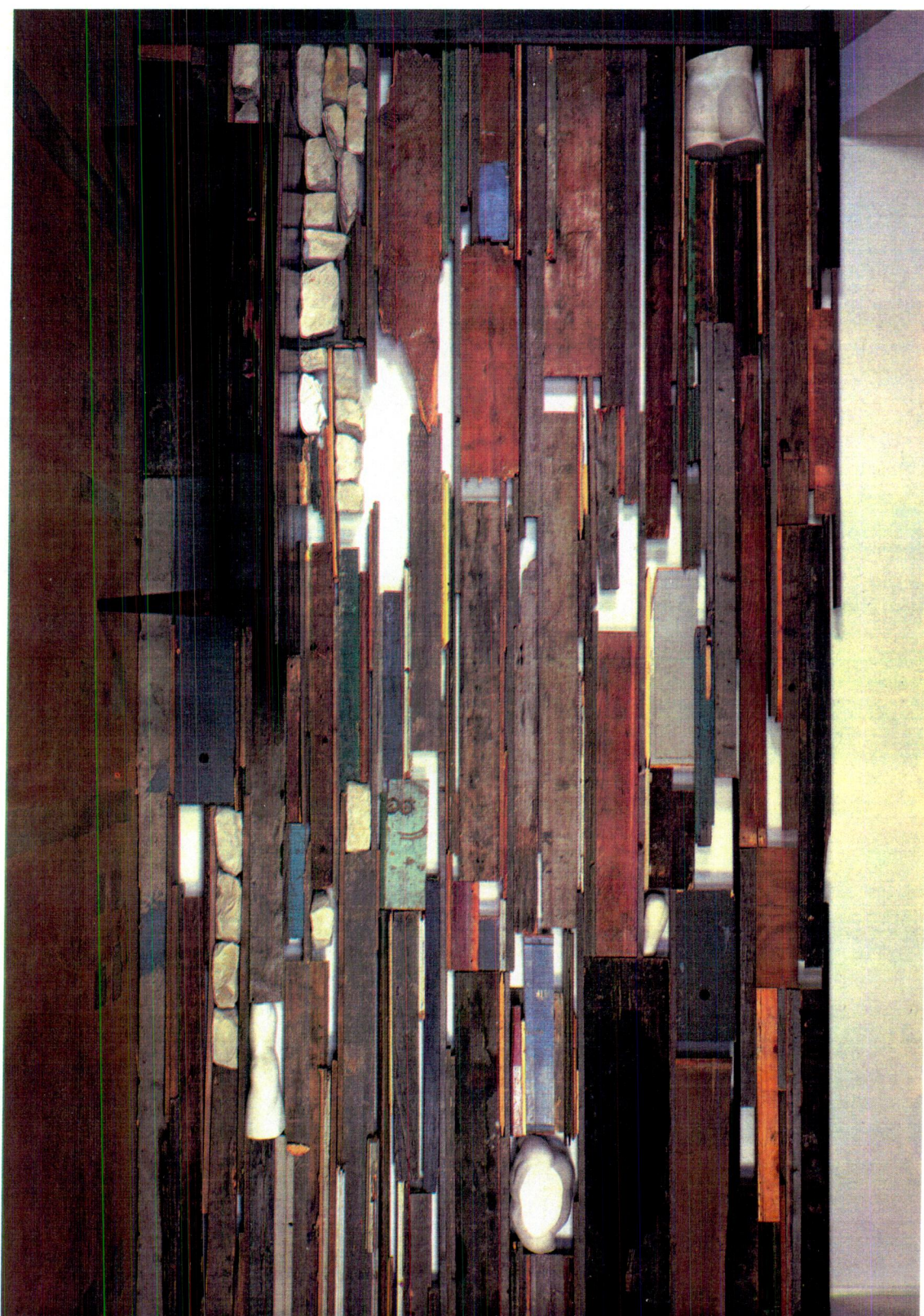
In 1978 Kounellis produced a piece entitled the Apollo Belvedere, it was a cast of the Apollo Belvedere. A cast of a classical head and hand tied together with a piece of household string. (PL:22) It appears as a somewhat inane attempt to tie these two fragments back together. The hand is pointing upwards giving a sense of direction.

In 1979, Kounellis began to group these fragmented objects which previously cluttered the space of a doorway or windowframe onto steel shelves. They gave a great sense of historical accumulation, groups of stone, fragments of sculpture, pieces of wood, are made briefly iconic. These accumulations line the peripheries of the space, shelves and objects becoming the wall. These are fragments of the past, shelves surrounding a space, but leaving the central space open. (PL:32) They are the basis of the peripherals of the future.

In a work of 1971, Kounellis placed four musicians playing the same fragment of music by Mozart around the gallery in different rooms and on different floors. This temporal fragmentation of music was complimented by the fragmentation of the three dimensional space. Each musician was in comparative isolation from one another, but from any one room, the other musicians could be heard ghostly in the distance.



1978 P.L:22



1984 P.L:32

One year later Kounellis produced another piece with similar analogies. He stood in a steel booth with two mirrors behind him, holding an Apollo mask to his face. In a second steel booth beside this, a flautist sat on a stool playing a fragment of Mozart continuously. Kounellis took Mozart's music as a cultural wholeness which it represents as a material and broke it into fragments. Again here the sense of loss is grave.

1973 Kounellis performed a piece in the Galleria di Saliotta Rome untitled, in which he sat at a table with fragments of plastercast of classical sculpture and held again the Apollo mask before his face. Through this was repeated a fragment of Mozart's music by a Flautist about 30 seconds long, with pauses for 2 minutes or so in between repetitions. Perched on one of the casts was a stuffed blackbird. The blackbird is generally seen as representing tragedy. (PL:23)

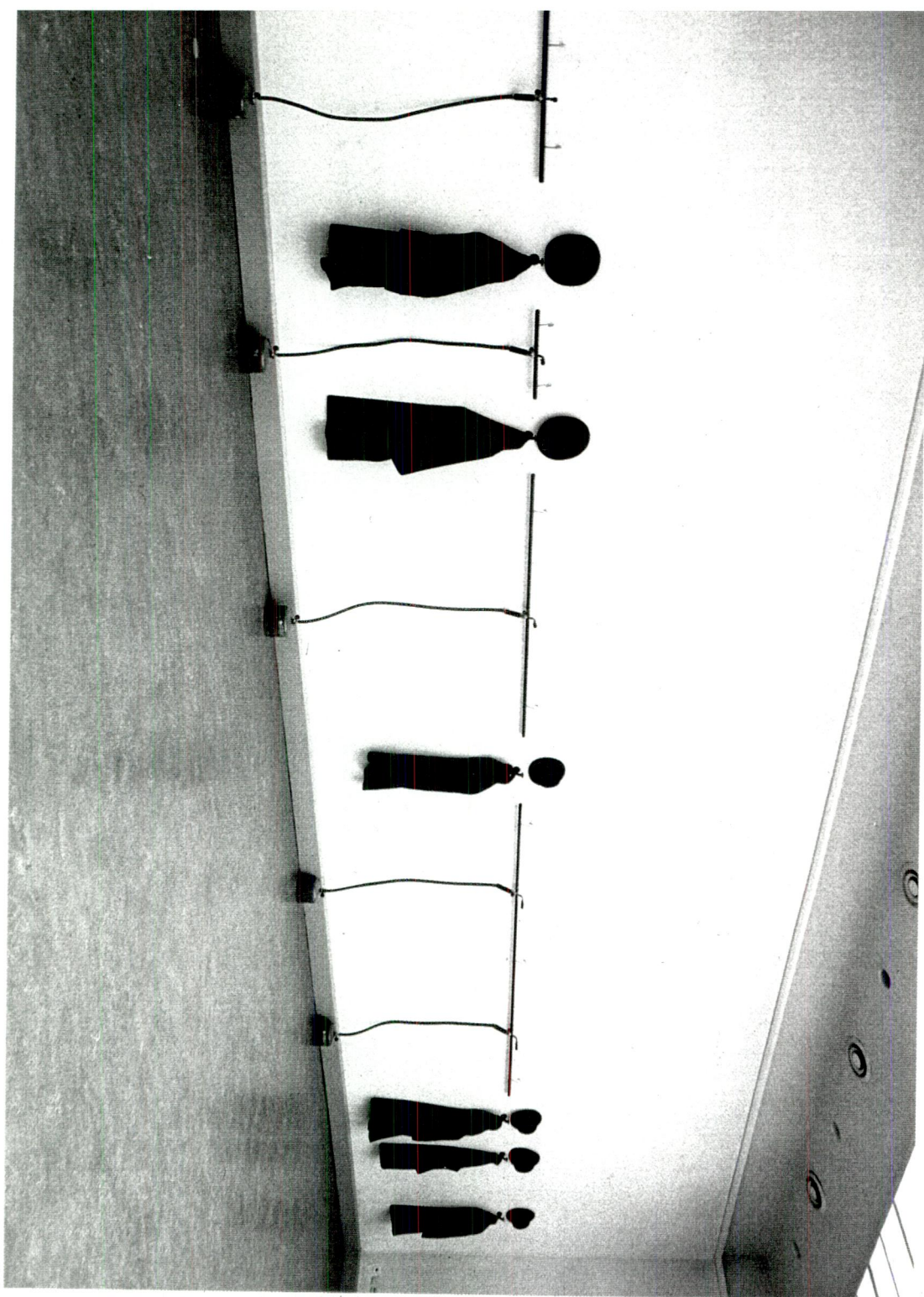
According to Kounellis this work is a "request for identity". An attempt to "regain the holy, sacred and secular historical sense". (C:2 p85) Kounellis views the artist's world as one which must attempt to regain the sacred without sentimentality. This concern can be seen even more clearly in Kounellis Gold Lips 1972. Kounellis stood silent with his lips painted gold. Indicating again the role of the artist as an instrument of prophecy, but of a prophecy that can not be articulated due to the lack of totality.

Around 1975 Kounellis began to introduce the concept of "interruption". Kounellis places a series of similar objects in many cases neat combinations of earlier separate pieces in a series, and interrupted them by use of some symbol of human expressiveness. In a



1973 P.L:23

piece of 1977 in Lucerne Kounellis hung a set of blow torches on the wall at eye height pointing outward and interrupted them twice by a painting by Chaim Soutine and again by a man in an Apollo mask. In 1979 he interrupted another fire series with a piano, and then again a cello. These works are quite mournful in the sense that the pieces, Apollo, the piano, the cello, paintings by Chaim Soutine all seem quite lost, lost and fragmented among this fire. These works of human expressiveness appear fragmented, even broken. There is a tragic sense of loss. Kounellis made another series, later in 1985, with the same oxytelene torches broken this time by the hat and coat he used before. (PL:27) The hat and coat now appears timid, intimidated by the fire. It seems almost like this interruption shall be burnt away or either taken away. It seems temporary and lost. When it is gone, what is left but a structure?



CHAPTER 4

POETIC DISTILLATION

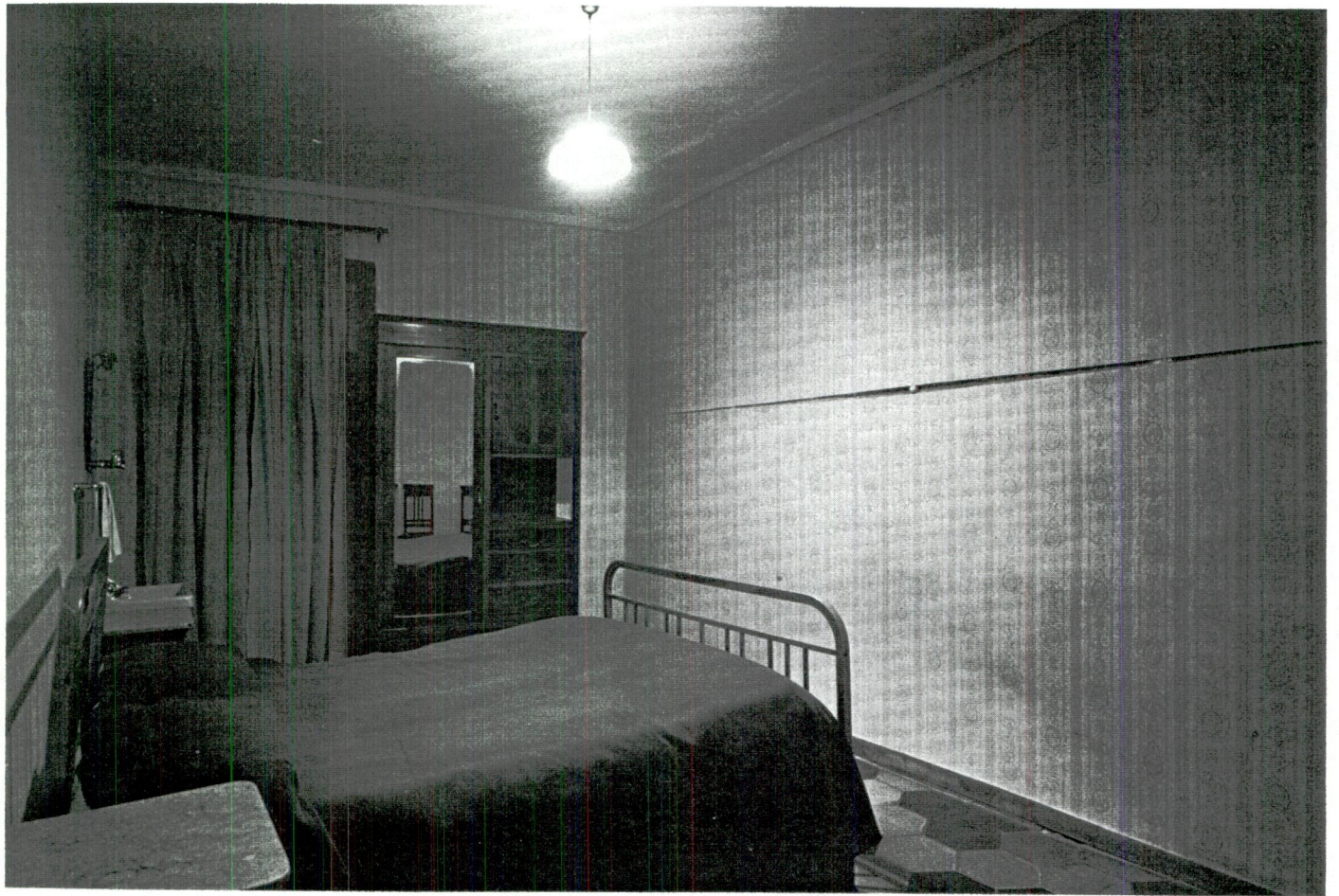
To gain a greater understanding of Kounellis's iconographic language one must look more deeply into the metaphorical poetic context of the experience Kounellis presents. I feel that the metaphorical content of this language although embedded within a certain intellectual alphabet can vary from context and experience. This I feel predominantly from his use of fire. In a work made in 1969 Kounellis presents a bare wiresprung bed with a gas bottle and lit blow torch attached to one end. (PL:12) Although the previous fire pieces deal with anxiety, contradictions and punishment, I feel in this piece it is anxious in quite a different context. There is an intense atmosphere of erotic isolation, there is an intense sense of physical unease. There is a violent force that is implicit in male sexual desire. The philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, wrote in his essays on the metaphors of 'sexualized fire', "Masculine fire the object of meditation for the lonely man is considered to be the most powerful fire. In particular it is the fire which opens bodies", As well as the sexual implication of this piece, the physical intensity of it relates to the mutability of flesh. It relates again as previous fire works do to the spectra of death and reverts again to the concept of punishment. D'Annunzio has asserted that "In human life and love, death and fire are united in the same instance".

The work also unsets the feeling of "limit". Limit in the sense of a human limit, but also in the context of the fire. Fire burns so long, and then stops, there is only so much gas in the bottle. I think this limit further emphasises the anxiousness of the situation. These works are both

positive and negative. They speak of life and death. They are murderous and anxious. They are in one context rejuvenating, life giving, but at the same time destructive.

The works seem to present themselves as carefully contrived contradictions, open and simple. But it is within these contradictions that the beauty of Kounellis's work lies. Kounellis submerges his objects within a poetic distillation. It is an intuitively poetic attachment to an object, greatly magnifying its significance and turning it into an image to be used. The object is lubricated by all of its potential meaning, by a mental ingestion, a poetic imagination. "The poetic soul has no option but to respond to the demon he finds most attractive and must go to obey the call of a wickedly charming image". (A:17 p38) It is an ability to imbue objects, the quality of absolute singularity. But as well as the simplest and most direct images, the work is poetic through linguistic elaboration can become infinitely extendable, capable of carrying huge diversity of material. This is what makes Kounellis's metaphor so enjoyable, it is definite, yet open. Kounellis's work presents itself as being simple, beyond the submissive experience of presentation, here lies Kounellis's vocabulary and its metaphorical fluidity which is embedded in the history of its usage. The same objects appear over and over again, at different times and at different locations, carrying with them their own accumulated genealogy. They carry through traces of a larger history. This I feel is the defining quality of Kounellis's work. Kounellis originally took from the fragments of history, from the past, from broken iconography, metaphors in a poetic history. These fragments were the tools, materials with which to create anew. As he took originally from history, he now takes from the fragments of his own history, brings them to the now, with all their fragmented analogies and search again for a new poetic synthesis.

At the quite recent show in Moscow, Kounellis presented two large opposing assemblages. The works contained second hand furniture, clothes, cupboards, chests, drawers, wardrobes, distressed piles of veneers, while incorporating into this fragmented collection whole works from previous years. The furniture refers to a piece Kounellis made in 1976 in the Hotel Luenetta in Rome. The installation consisted of two adjacent rooms, identically furnished, fully made double beds with carefully positioned pairs of chairs and matching mirrors. Kounellis split the wall, separating the two rooms, the slice was just big enough to hold a ping pong ball. The ball was positioned in the direct centre of the room. (PL:25) This work was uncomfortable. The mirror seemed to emphasis the fact of viewing, emphasised by the repeated uncomfortable pairs of objects. But here the furniture is cut and broken, strewn along the wall, an assemblage incorporating steel plates, sacks of coal (a piece from the early 1980's), and a complete work from 1976, a split container filled to the brim with virgin cotton white fibre. (PL:13) The work seemed to be forced into a very uneasy relationship to each other. The geometric steel flower of 1967 sandwiched between an assemblage of coal sacks, and a line of black overcoats hung from a metal rail by meat hooks. It is hard to distinguish boundaries in this work, where one work stops and another begins. The mirror on the doors of the cut wardrobes evidently catch one's eye make you aware of yourself, but not in the same context as the Hotel Luenetta installation. Here it is quite unexpected. At the Moscow installation there is a sense of uncomfortable fragmentation, a tensity and uneasiness that the relationship between the objects enforces. There is a savagery about this relationship. Kounellis has re-opened the objects to a transformation by poetic relocation. To let them sit, to let them become comfortable and stagnant. In Baudelaire's 'les Fleurs du Mal' he describes the "poetic object" as being chiefly recognisable in a persistent quality of "fixed dissatisfaction" a quality which "both causes anguish and reflects it".



1976 P.L:25

Thus a poetic object appears never to be entirely at ease with the meaning ascribed to it by its present situation. This I feel is apt for Kounellis. His work seems to be constantly working towards a resolution in a search for a new meaning.

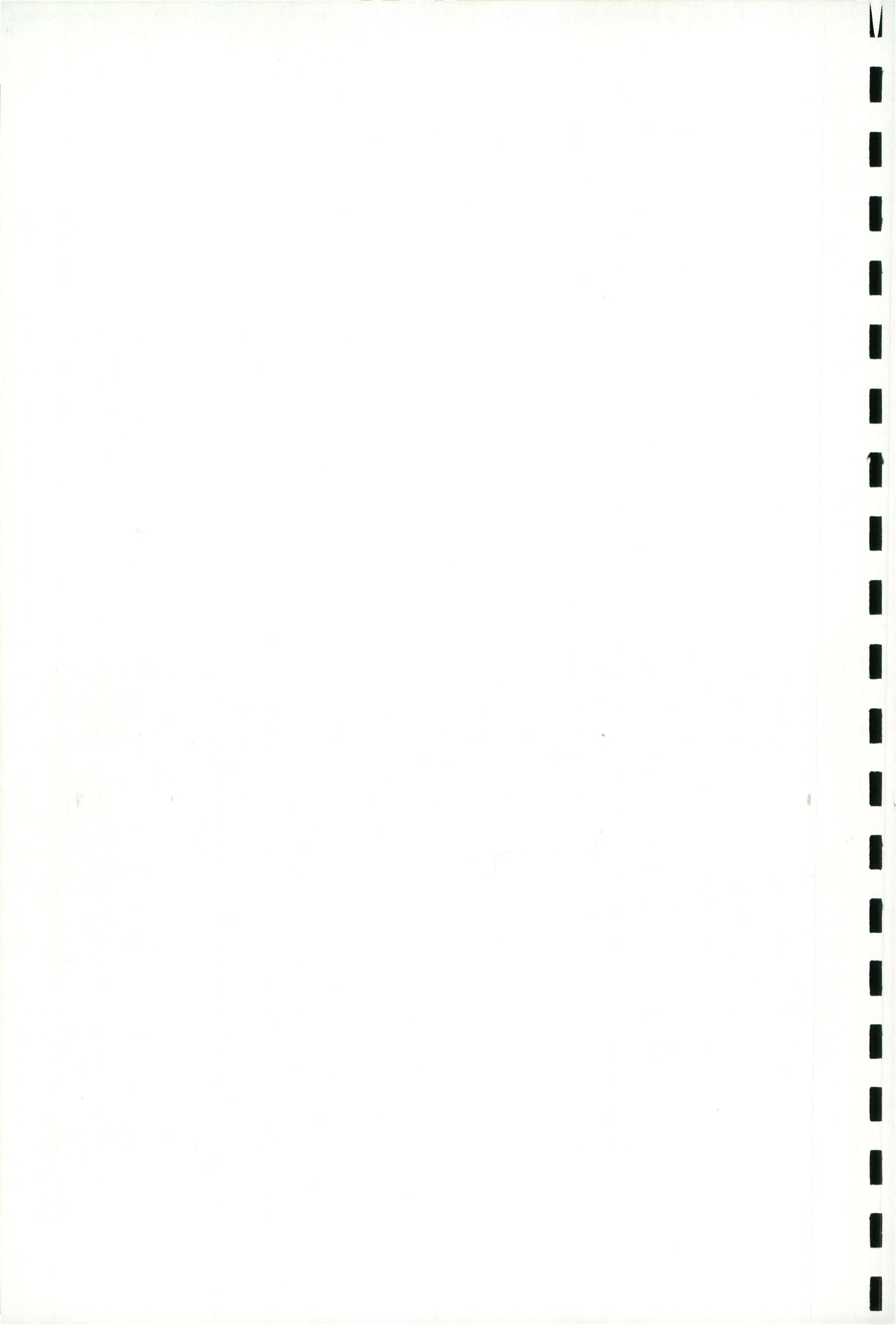
In Barcelona in 1989, Kounellis made a work using carcasses of meat, hung from steel poles and steel plates along the wall. (PL:26) The wardrobe of the Moscow show are cut like lumps of meat and are hung on meat hooks. It is like a death of something, death of the installation in the Hotel Baretta. They are like urban carcasses. The black coats and hats are hung on meat hooks, deathly reminiscent. It seems as if Kounellis is heading towards an edge, as if there was a continually reverberating anxiety putting the work towards an ever increasing tension, to tension's edge it is like the screaming pitch that keeps rising and rising. Kounellis worked towards an outer boundary to mark out and record the limits of poetic utterance.

In a performance in the Modern Art Agency in Naples in 1973, Kounellis performed a piece where he stood against a steel shoot with a gas torch in his mouth. In one hand Kounellis was making visual the audible in a sense the image speaks "I think from image to literature not vice a versa. That is to say that the image creates literature, because I am someone who manipulates space, I cannot start from literature. It is the difference between iconography and iconology. Iconology concerns the literary aspects of the image, iconography doesn't. It is directed at the direction of the image." (C:2, p85)

1989

P.L.: 26





CHAPTER 5

AN INDUSTRIAL IDEOLOGY

In a project for art form 1988, Kounellis underlines his directives in the context of history and the poetic object.

"My mother is Ithaca, a mouth is Ithaca, my old age is Ithaca, my death is Ithaca.

Well then, what does a can of beer represent?

Steam locomotives are multiples, as a can of beer.

Singer sewing machines are multiples, as is a can of beer.

Borsalino hats are multiples, as a can of beer.

Sacks of coffee that have marked an epic are multiples, as is a can of beer.

Beds in hospital wards are multiples.

Identity cards are multiples.

Prison registers are multiples.

Bar glasses are multiples.

Newspapers are multiples.

Consequently in my frenzy for travel, I love the can of beer because it resembles a steam locomotive, knowing full well that it can't ever represent the globality that a work from the past imposes on me.

The cost of one train ticket, Cologne to Berlin, is 15 cans of beer.

The cost of one Volkswagon is 13,000 cans of beer.

The cost of one race horse is 2,000 cans of beer.

The cost of an apartment is 1,000,000 cans of beer.

The cost of one pair of shoes is 100 cans of beer.

The cost of one coat is 500 cans of beer.

The cost of one picture by a young painter is 2,000 cans of beer.

My wool works, which reflect the Arcadia lost from sight and cut from day, I have come to learn can be had for 150,000 cans of beer.

Ithaca, visionary Ithaca.

Two world wars were necessary in order to give this can such a privileged position within my heart.

We have killed the king and with that we have eliminated the sacred.

The secular, as we wanted, triumphs and rightly so.

But one cannot help but feel the lack of spirituality now, the spirituality that just one African statuette represents.

On the life or death of a can of beer depends the life or death of art.

And so, against the wind, toward the port of harmonies and paradises, knowing full well that this destination, just and desired, (B:23,p123-125) is distant."

1940

General

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The cans of beer are multiples of industrialised humanity. These multiples are parasites of humanity stripping itself of its spirituality, stripping humanity of its individual poetic freedom. Is this the new synthesis of an age? A synthesis which is based primarily upon economics, humanity is an economic multiple. These multiples of industrialised society are insubstantial but at the same time the pressure which is forced upon individuality. In the Emne street installation, in the site specific pieces of the Chicago show of 1988, Kounellis addresses this destructive multiplicity with reference to the locomotive.

The site is the top floor of a warehouse. Natural light illuminates the low woodbeamed ceiling of the structure. There are 42 thick wooden beams supporting the ceiling. Around each beam is a circular plate of steel. On which a miniature electric train circles round and round on its track. The trains chug furiously around with the hum and buzz of their little electric engines. The trains are named New Haven, Reading, Arkinsaw, Pennsylvania and so on. (PL:29) The trains refer most obviously to the great American railroads. The railroads signified the discovery of a new American age, the discovery of the American dream. This mythological ideology characterises the optimism of that golden age. The trains circle incessantly going nowhere. It is a comical theatrical analogy to the optimism that once adhered to the images of the railroad. The toy trains in a way hold the same metaphorical content as a can of beer, they both represent a modern globality. But a globality that is not based on culture, or really anything except economics.

In 1977, in Forence, Kounellis placed a single train on a track running around a single stone column of the Santa Maria Novella. This train evokes

1947

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the confrontation between the religious and the secular, the eternal and the temporal. The work was dwarfed by the church and appears somewhat comical in relation to European spiritual heritage.

In the same year Kounellis produced another two train pieces, one the steel rim around the pillar was spiralling upwards, the other was the same as before just going around in a circle. This work presents allegorically two views of humanity, one of effort moving upwards towards a culmination, the other of motion in a circle getting nowhere (post and or pre-modernism Greece).

The Emne Street installation was one of three site specific in a large retrospective show of Kounellis work, in Chicago. The theatricality of Kounellis work breaks through here, the buildings in which he chose to exhibit were ruined parts of American industrial history, the work seemed to envelope this sense of urban decay. Within the sites themselves there is a great sense of nostalgia of the origins of their past. These site specific pieces work like a pilgrimage to the American industrialised past possessing the remains of the beginning of the hope and glory of America's new age. All the sites were turn of the century buildings in various states of disrepair, three of them light manufacturing lots.

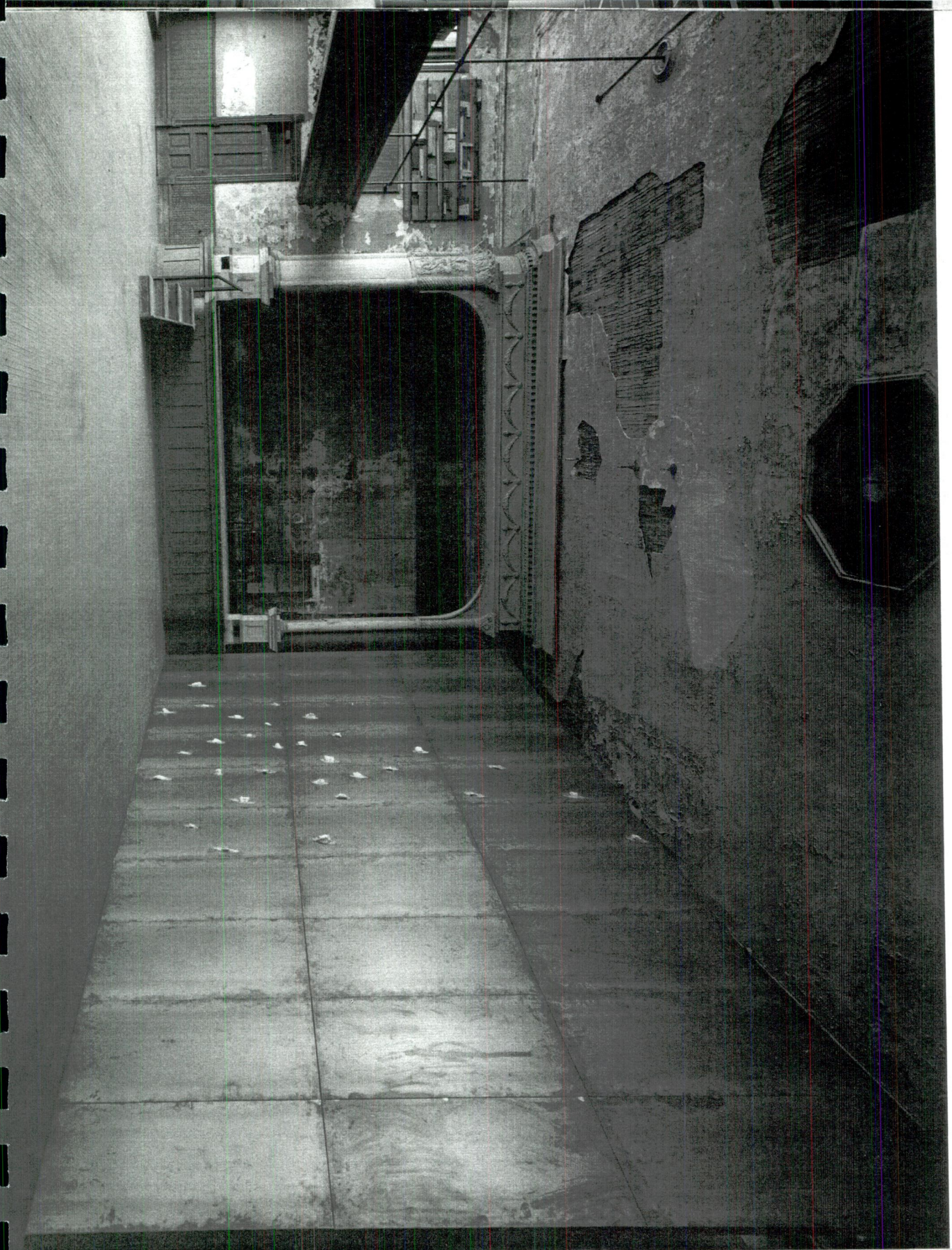
The first site was Yondorf hall built in 1887 housing various shops, a theatre, a music hall and mens club. In the theatre a relatively small space with a stage to the right and a balcony running above with 4 large windows to the left, Kounellis installed a large free standing wall piece. The piece consisted of 30 pieces of steel plates welded together. The wall stretches the full length of the room, and full height, splattered randomly across the surface of these pressure sheets are pieces of

classical plaster fragments embedded in the steel along with splatters of lead. (PL:30) High in the balcony, almost out of sight, Kounellis placed a steel shelf, cluttered with wood fragments dipped in red paint. I feel this work characterises American disregard for history and continuity. There is a most definite relationship between the dilapidated theatre and which reveals traces of a back drop depicting a terraced garden draped in palms and vines, faintly seen through the mouldy green of the alabaster. Kounellis steel wall embedded and lead was like a fossilised condensing of the social ecology of an entire era.

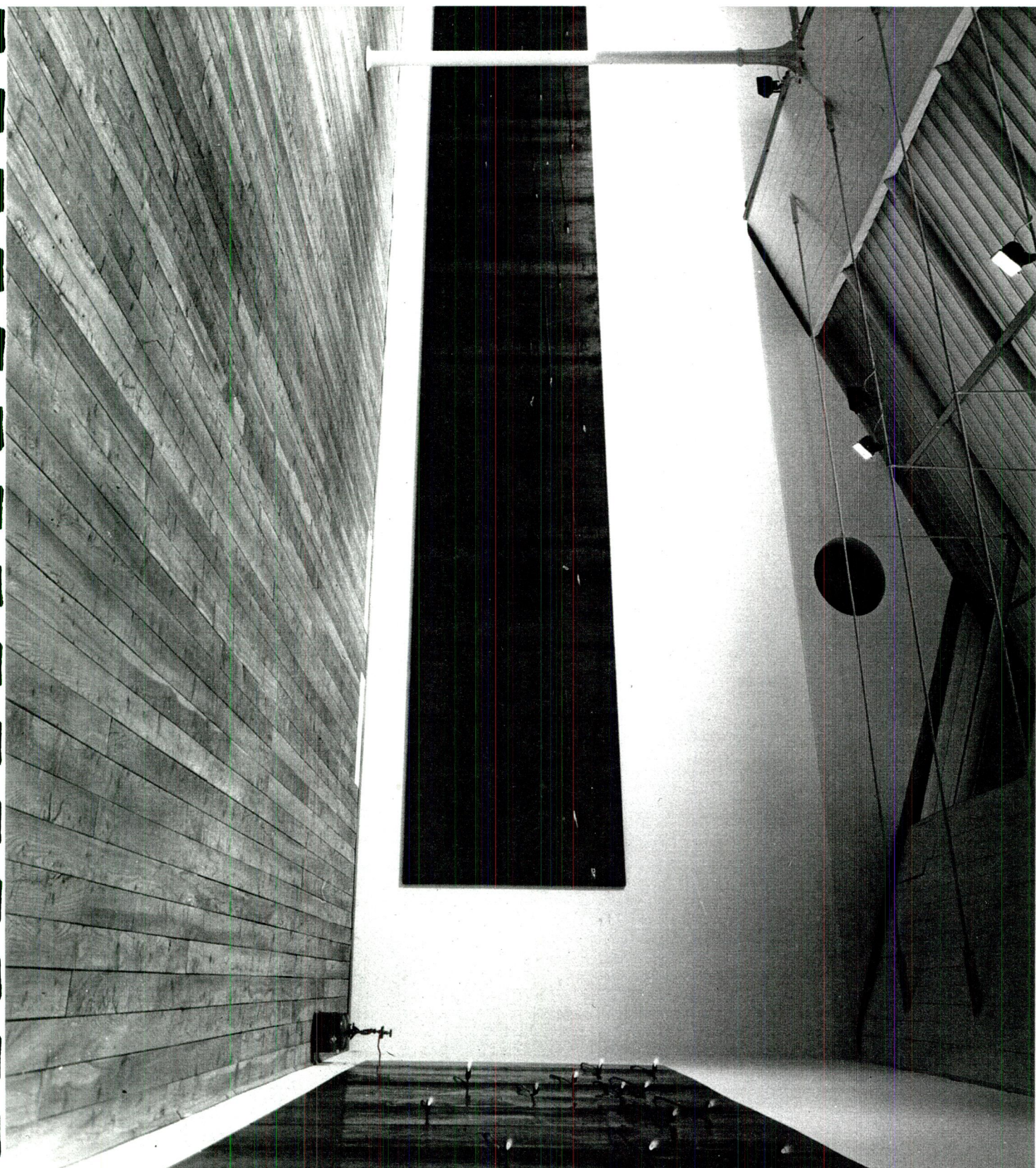
Kounellis installed this piece firstly in 1986 in Europe in the theatre of Auto Wagners Ames Steigne off a mental asylum built in 1905 on the outskirts of Vienna. In that context Kounellis steel panels were an act of aggression. He used them to seal off the stage, redirecting the focus of its local onto its subject.

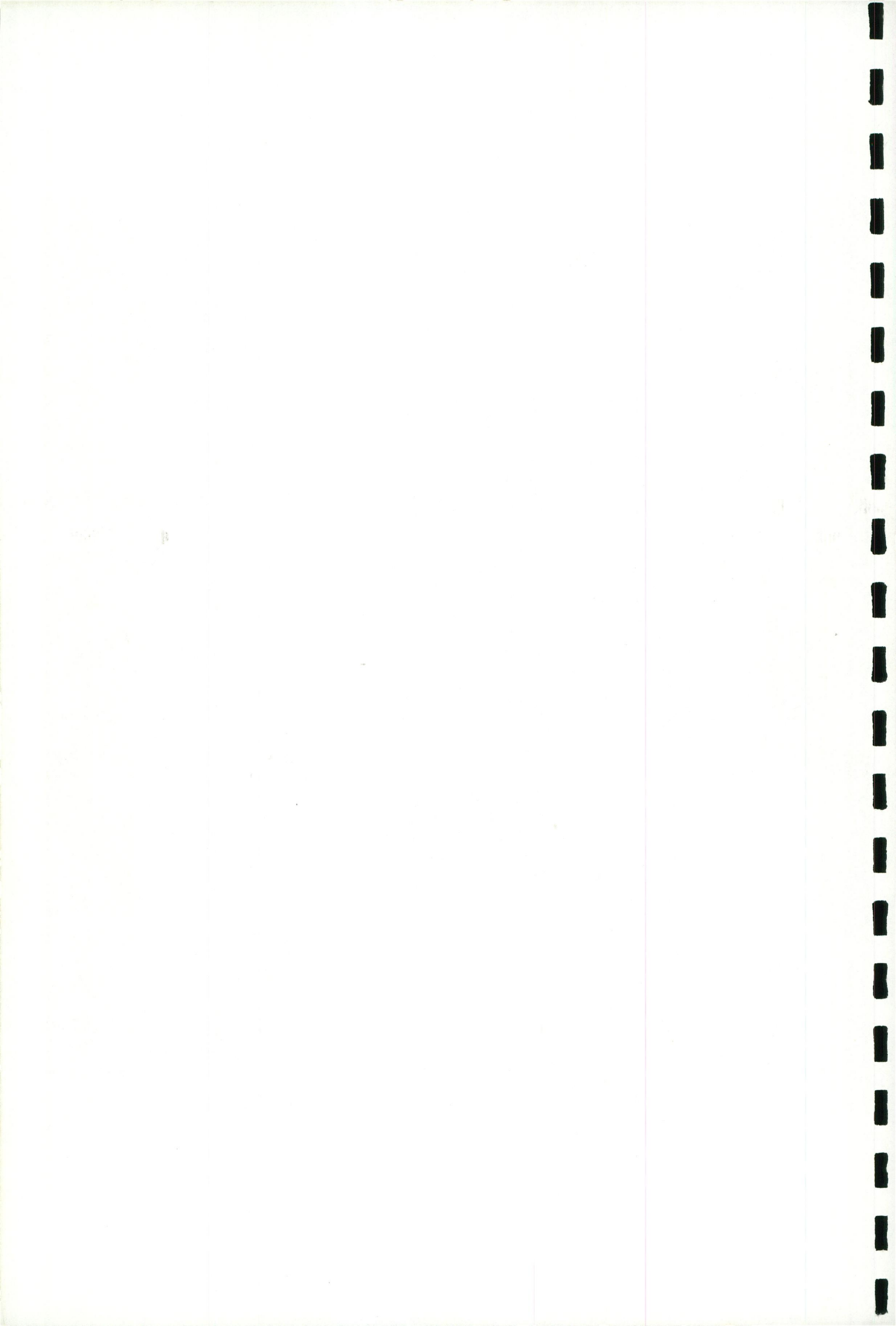
The third site was a ground floor space on West Orentoro street. Here, Kounellis recreated the 'Civil Tragedy' and in addition to this there was a huge section of steel shelving, tightly packed with folded burlap. These 3 site specific pieces may be read as inter-related episodes in a metaphoric capsulation of European immigration. Kounellis encapsulated an image of commercial desolation.

Referring again to this metaphoric flux, is Kounellis's use of fire. In a piece in 1971 in which he placed 20 bottles of acethaleon gas with long snake like hoses from each canister connected to a torch strewn randomly across the floor. There is no form to this arrangement, each torch burns with the same hissing sound as previous pieces. Here Kounellis speaks to the same deathly multiplicity of the multiple as he does in his essay to



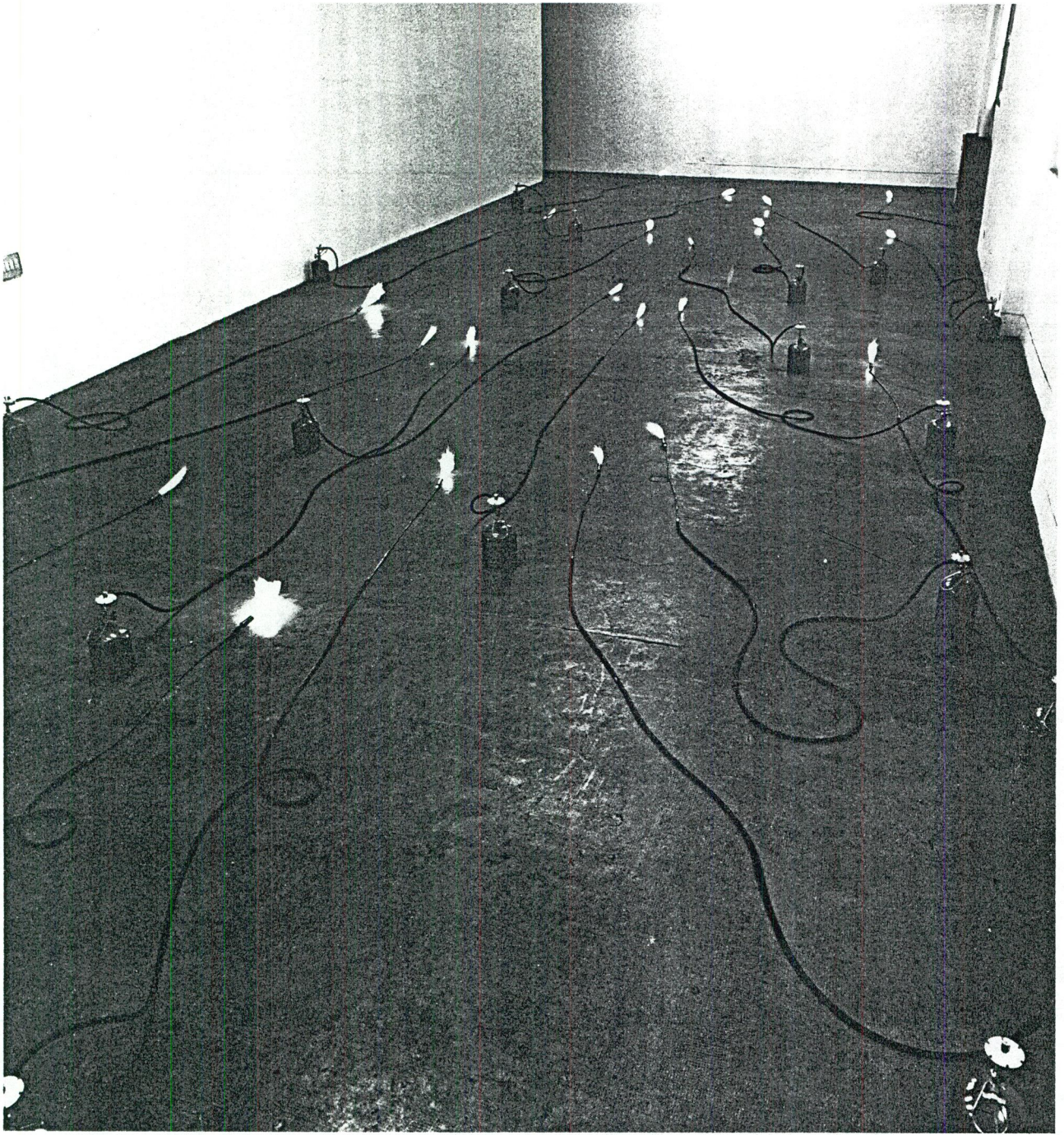
1985 P.L:31





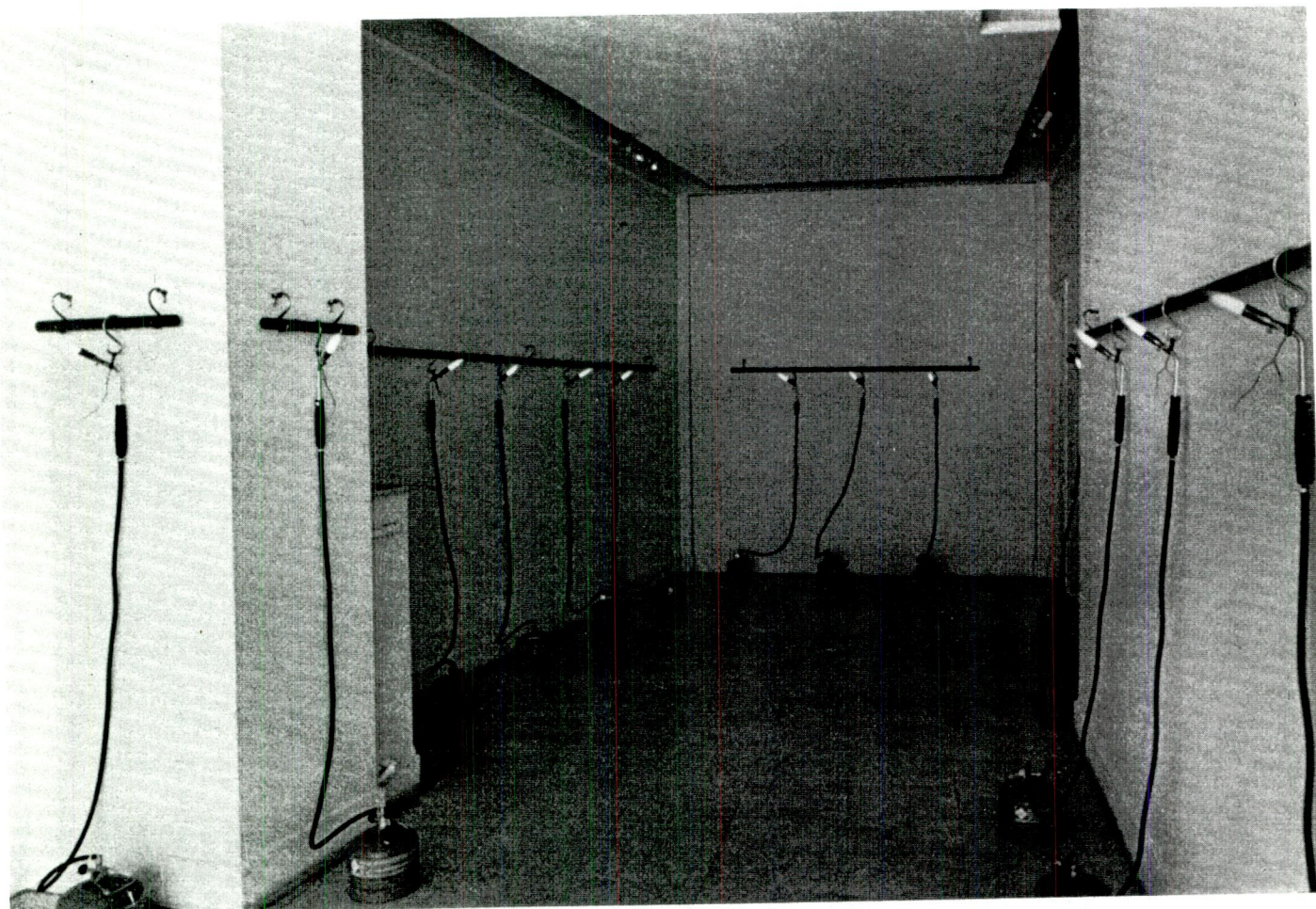
Art Forum. The gas canisters are multiples as a can of beer is, as a train is. Each bottle, each hose, each torch, each flame identical. Kounellis's flame here is destructive, intense and industrially claustrophobic. He uses the gas canisters and the torches as a metaphoric multiple. A multiple that is leaving burning, spirituality of expressive freedom to ashes. (L:24)

Kounellis's use of steel further emphasises this oppressive, anonymous, destructive industrialisation of humanity. In the Stedelick Museum in Amsterdam, in 1989, Kounellis constructed a piece consisting of 3 large welded sheets of metal stretching the full length of 3 walls of the gallery. Each piece stretching between 20 and 30 feet long and 5 ft. in width, running across the surface of each sheet of metal were random lines of nails. Running across in a floating horizontal pattern, the nails are lit from behind by gas torches once again. The nails burn red hot creating luminous red lines floating across the full metal grey steel. Huge sheets of steel oppress the wide space of the gallery. Kounellis's steel panels hold within them a poetic resonance of an industrialised society. But at the same time this work holds an aesthetic seductiveness but it can be said "melancholic can be a drug, a destruction, a decorative motif." (B16:pp119-127) But to find aesthetic beauty in the signs in destruction and distress for one's own culture, it is in this, the poignancy of these works lie. Here one must look through the metaphorical circle of Kounellis's vocabulary and at the inverted direction and implications to which he points.



1971 P.L: 24

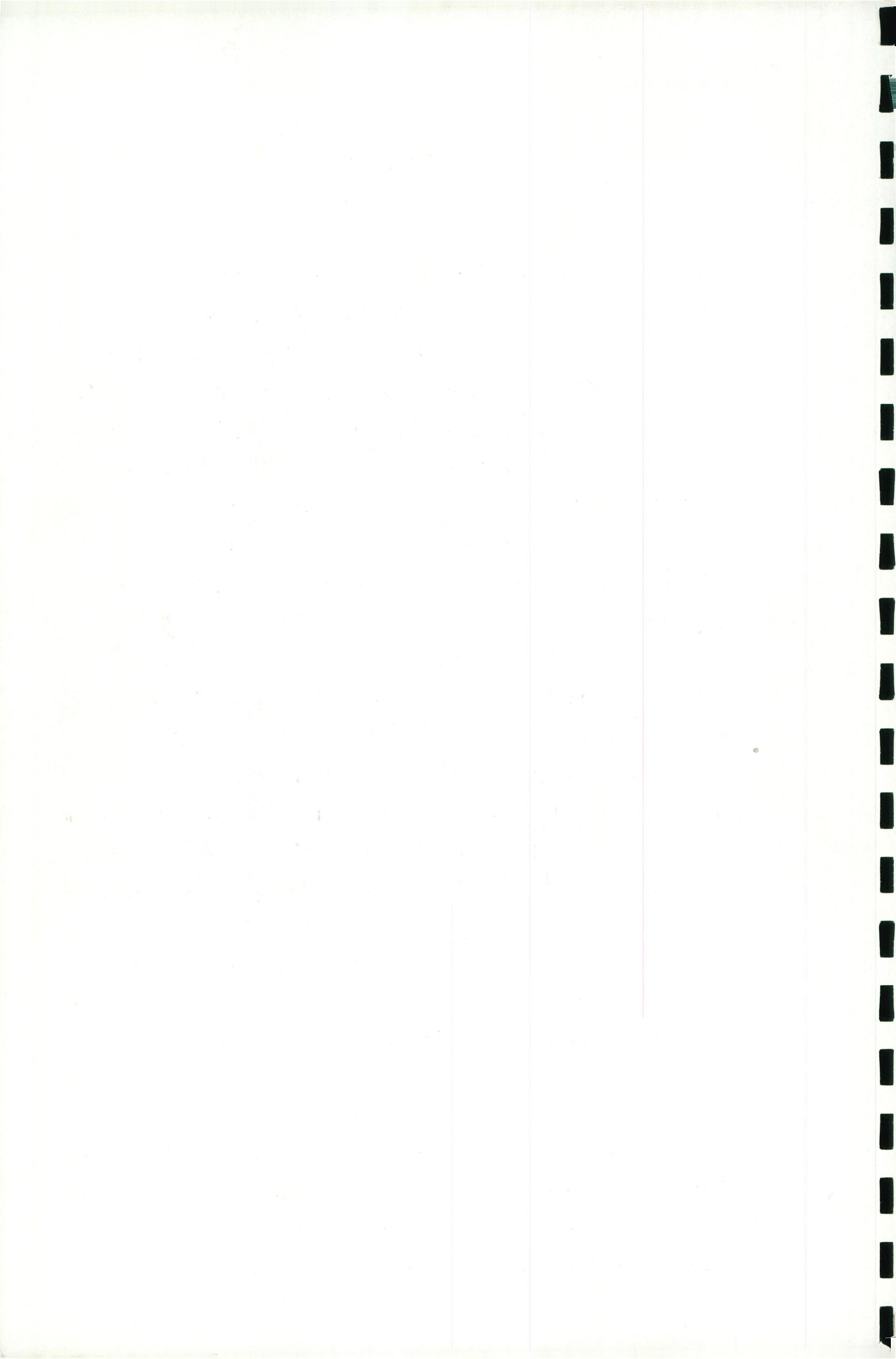




Untitled .

1969

P.L:24



CONCLUSION

There is a constant sense of despair to Kounellis's work. To the loss of a poetic culture, to the loss of an individual wholeness. This loss reflects the degradation of modern society and the moralism of an industrialisation of both physical and mental. Kounellis presents modern culture as ruined, lost within the debris of a shattered, historical consciousness. His work engages you into a melancholic contemplative sensuality. Within Kounellis's language there is a definite line of thought, a need for historical perspective which in an artist becomes a knowledge of art history, or art in history. It is the line of thought that traces the course of his individualisation.

In Kounellis's work there is a poetic evocation of a timeless, or archetypal nature. The work expresses less a visual aesthetic than a visual poetic and works continuously to recapture cultural independence and to establish a relationship with life that passes through the history of forms, which in turn embodies the elements of his language with a real but metaphorical fluidity. His impassioned journey has been sustained primarily by his awareness of the greater power of poetry, by the notion that content, in whatever means is expressed, has a meaning in art only if it originates from poetic intuition and appeals to offer poetic receptivity. In this way the artist acts as a mirror of the world, as a guide for the conscience. It is a role that cannot be modeled on a world full of contradictions where scale has been fragmented and dispersed and which leads the artist to destroy the icons of the contradictory fragmentation in order to rebuild. It is the reality of the experience which Kounellis creates further opens the iconographic, metaphorical content of his work to individual experience.

The elements of Kounellis's work combine and recombine to create a cumulative methodology, thus the works don't seem to be forced into a pattern of expressive burden. It is this relationship between object and metaphor, poetic distillation that creates the openness of Kounellis's poetic language. While at the same time one cannot ignore the underlying thread of Kounellis's politics.

Kounellis's continuous search for a new totality. A new measure of humanity is also the need for an individual unity. A syntheses that must be sought firstly within oneself and thus humanity as a whole. This is a syntheses I feel Kounellis is working for within himself, and through the experience of his work one is injected with the same sense of fragmentation, of broken unity both sociological and personal.

"The most sublime task in poetry is to give feeling and passion to unfeeling things. It is characteristic for children to take unfeeling things into their hands and talk to them as if they were living people. This philological or philosophical product is proof that men who live in a young world are sublime poets", Giambattista Vico's, principles of new science (C:19)

From the early works using real animals, classical fragments, burlap sacks of coffee, steel beds, furniture, fire, Kounellis combines and recombines poetic suggestion and in evocative language in a dramatic dialogue with time. Kounellis sets free an archaic pastoral feeling, an ancient and terrestrial simplicity, a natural nobility. In an indescribable way, they evoke eternal themes, a feeling of pain, the thought of death, childhood memories, essential nature of the archaic world, nostalgia for a loss wholeness evocative sexuality. Kounellis's work seen as a whole threatens a luminous example of consciousness. The content is profound, hidden and

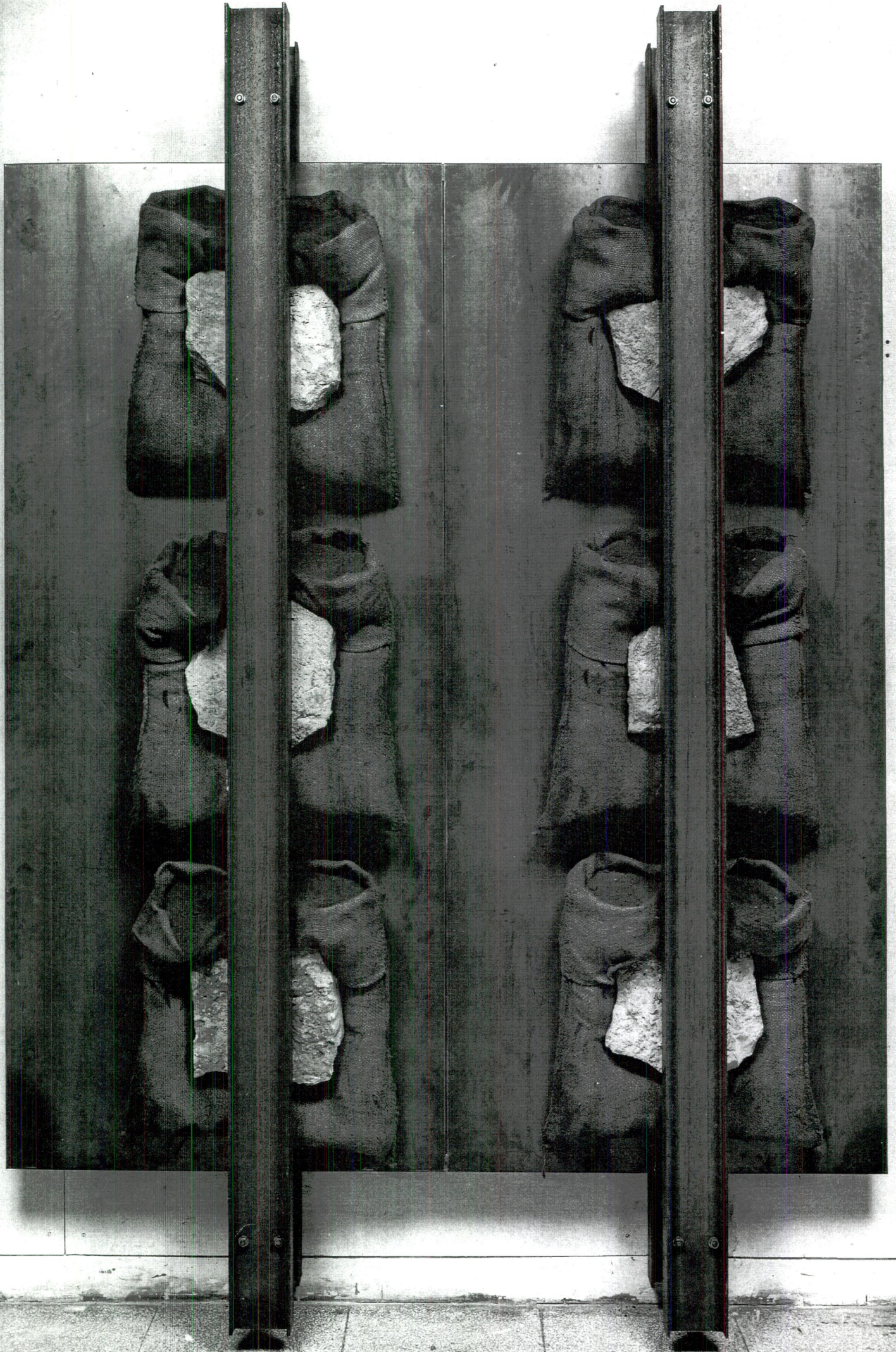
wholly inexpressible in a literary sense. They inhabit the space of symbols, and the symbol is neither allegory nor sign, but the image of a content which transcends conscience and can only be expressed as "poetry".

"The poet makes himself a seer by long gigantic and rational derangement of all the senses. All forms of love, suffering and madness, he searches himself. He exhausts all poisons within himself and keeps only their quintessence.

Let him die as he leaps through unheard of and unnameable things, other horrible works will come. They will begin from the horizons where the other one collapsed.

Therefore, the poet is truly the thief of fire. He is responsible for humanity, even for the animals. He will have to have his invention smelt, felt and heard. If what he brings back from the down there has form he gives form, if it is formless he gives formlessness. A language must be found. Moreover, every word being an idea, the time of the universe and language will come. One has to be an academican, deader than a fossil to complete a dictionary in any language whatsoever. Weak people would begin to think where the first letter of the alphabet and they would soon rush into madness. This language will be of the soul for the soul, containing everything, smell, sounds, colours, thought holding onto thought and pulling. The poet will define the moment of the unknown awakening in his time in the universal soul. He would give more than formulation of his thought than the annotation of his march toward progress. Enormity becoming normal, absorbed by all he would really be a multiplier of progress."

Arthur Rimbaud, 15th May, 1871.



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Section A: Books

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- B:2 Blistene, Bernard. "Kounellis: Galerie Durand - Desert Paris"
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- B:4 Bonito Oliva, Achille. "Art, Tragedy and Comedy."
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- B:6 Calas, Nicolas. "Madness in The Arena"
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- B:7 Casademot, Joan. "New York: Jannis Kounellis, Sonnabend Gallery"
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- B:18 Grott, Paul. "The Spirit of Documenta
7, Rudi Fuchs Talks about forth coming show."
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- C:6 Sharp, Willoughby and Jannis Kounellis
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List of Reproduced Works

- Plate 1. Untitled, 1966. Burlap Sacks
Installation Artists Studio Rome 600 x 500 cm
- Plate 2. Untitled, 1958. Oil on Wood
Installed Artists Studio Rome
60 x 280 cm
- Plate 3. Untitled, 1959. Oil on Canvas.
Collection in guild stocker, Munchen
200 x 200
- Plate 4. Untitled, 1967. Cloth mounted on canvas and
live birds in cages.
Collection of the artist Rome.
- Plate 5. Untitled, 1968. Wood/wool Artists Studio Rome, collection
Musse National d'Art Moderne, Pompidou Paris.
- Plate 6. Untitled, 1967. Parrot.
- Plate 7. Untitled, 1967. Varnished steel plate, cotton, earth,
cactus, parrot. Installation - Galleria L'Altico Rome.
- Plate 8. Untitled, 1969. 12 horses installation, Rome.
- Plate 9. Untitled, 1970. Woman, wool blanket, steel plate, gas
holder, rubber tube, gas jet. Artist Studio, Rome.
- Plate 10. Untitled, 1970. Pianist playing Verdi's "Nabucco". Palazzo
dello Quadriennale, Rome.
- Plate 11. Untitled, 1971. Cellist playing a portion of Bachs
"Passion according to St. John" in front of green painting of
musical notes.
- Plate 12. Untitled, 1969. Steel bed frame with gas blow torch, tube
and bottle. Installation Artist Studio Rome.
- Plate 13. Untitled, 1969. Two steel bed frames, one with cotton
and other with steel plates, each with a solid fuel tablet
on it. Installation Artist Studio Rome.
- Plate 14. Untitled, 1976. Chimney stack and furnace made in brick
installed Galleria Salvatore Ala, Milan.
- Plate 15. Untitled, 1974. Marble table, plaster classical sculptor
fragments, oil lamp.
- Plate 16. Untitled, 1985. Windows with steel plates, installed
Munchen.
- Plate 17. Untitled, 1969. Walled door installed San Benedetto del
Tronto, Tronto.
- Plate 18. Untitled, 1980. Plaster classical fragments, blocking
doorway.

- Plate 19. Untitled, 1972. Wood and gold shoes. Installed Sonnabend Gallery, New York.
- Plate 20. Civil Tragedy, 1975. Gold leaf on wall, hat rack with coat and hat and oil lamp. Installed Modern Art Agency, Naples.
- Plate 21. Untitled, 1978. Plaster classical Bust/Head, with black blind fold.
- Plate 22. Untitled, 1978. Plaster fragments bound together with twine, head painted black, hand painted violet. Collection of professor Jung, Dachen, West Germany.
- Plate 23. Untitled, 1973. Kounellis seated at table with fragments of plaster casts and a stuffed raven, holding a mask, and a flautist playing a selection by Mozart. Performed at Galleria La Salita, Rome.
- Plate 24. Untitled, 1971, gas torches on floor, installed Galleria Gion Enzer Sparone, Turin.
- Plate 25. Untitled, 1976. Two adjacent hotel rooms, both doors open and one ping pong ball in the centre of a line chiseled out of the wall. Installed at the Hotel Luneta, Rome.
- Plate 26. Untitled, 1989. First part steel plate, fresh meat, metal hooks rod and tube, burning oil lamp, second part, window group with one yellow and one blue pane. Installed Spai Poblenou, Barcelona 1989.
- Plate 27. Untitled, 1985. Steel pipes with propane gas torches and coats and hats. Installed Stedelizk Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, Netherlands.
- Plate 28. Untitled, 1988. Steel plate, girders, stones, sacks and coal.
- Plate 29. Untitled, 1986. Moving electric trains and steel plate, installation Chicago.
- Plate 30. Untitled, 1986. Steel plate, chalk lead, installed Chicago.
- Plate 31. Untitled, 1985. Steel panels, gas torches. Installed Galleria Christian Stein Milan.
- Plate 32. Untitled, 1984. Steel shelves, table, wood and fragments of plaster casts.

Biography

- 1936 - Born in Piraeus Greece.
 1956 - Moves to Rome at the end of Greek civil war.
 1956 - Studied at the Academia di Belle Arti.
 1991 - Still lives and works in Rome.