

1951-1993

Visual Art

The Michael Snow Project

Art Gallery of Ontario | The Power Plant

1951-1993

Visual Art

Exploring Plane and Contour

The Drawing, Painting, Collage, Foldage,
Photo-Work, Sculpture and Film of Michael Snow

from 1951 to 1967

by Dennis Reid

Around Wavelength

The Sculpture, Film and Photo-Work of Michael Snow

from 1967 to 1969

by Philip Monk

Embodied Vision

The Painting, Sculpture, Photo-Work, Sound Installation, Music,
Holographic Work, Films and Books of Michael Snow

from 1970 to 1993

by Louise Dompierre

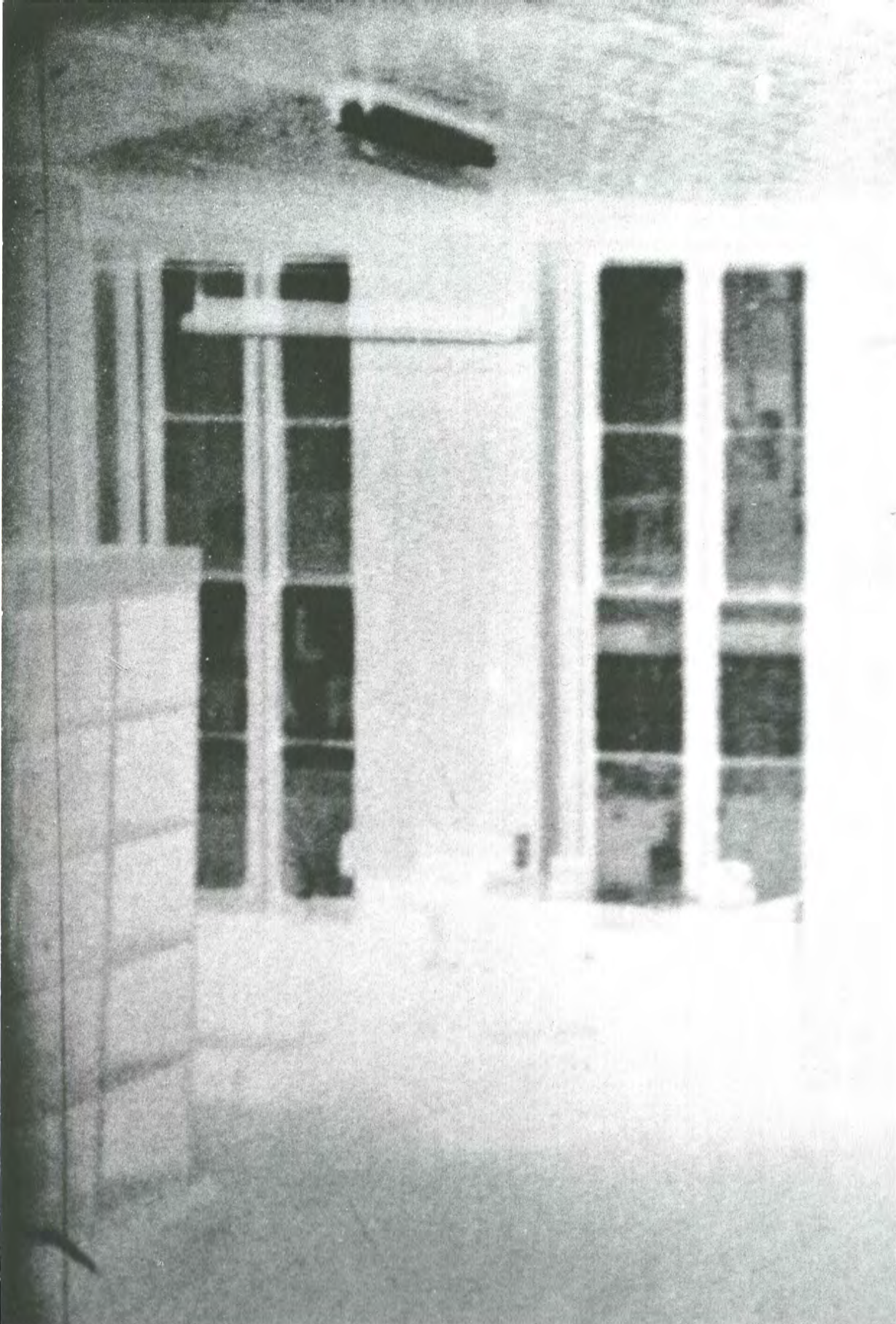
Art Gallery of Ontario | The Power Plant

Alfred A. Knopf Canada

Around Wavelength

The Sculpture, Film and Photo-Work
of Michael Snow from 1967 to 1969
by *Philip Monk*

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Philip Monk

Around Wavelength

The Sculpture, Film
and Photo-Work of Michael Snow

from 1967 to 1969



Around Wavelength

Philip Monk

I. Side Seat: A Retrospective Look at Michael Snow

In late 1969, stimulated by the occasion of a retrospective of fifteen years of his work at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Michael Snow reviewed his career by producing the catalogue as an artist's book. *Michael Snow/A Survey* "was an attempt to use the records of my life and work which I had (in the form of snap-shots, family photos and photos of and texts about my work) to compose a *new work*."¹ This notion of a retrospective look using the materials of past productions was further playfully exemplified in Snow's 1970 film *Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film* as a complement to the catalogue.² The film "reproduces" a typical artist's slide lecture on Snow's paintings from 1954 to 1965, which one sees as if arriving late (one always arrives, historically, late) and so is afforded only an oblique view — the "side seat" of the title. The film, of course, is not only this dry review; it is a transformation of one medium and set of works into another made of the elements composing the title: "What especially interested me was the transformation of media: painting to slide projection to sound-film and that the core 'raw' material was something that I had already 'personalized' for another purpose. The intention was that the transformation should put the spectator in the present experiencing the sound-film 'through' the past of the paintings and slides."³

The intervening period between Snow's last "painting" of 1965 (the quotation marks are his) and its duplication in *Side*

Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film is the subject of this exhibition. The film exemplifies two concepts operative in the present exhibition and catalogue: the retrospective look of *Side Seat* is not only a looking back, it is also a looking through one medium into another, which already individually interweave levels of presentation and representation. In the present case, the look back is ours, not Snow's, but we reproduce that initial gesture of Snow's at a greater distance; and the looking through is not the transformation of one body of material into another, but a retrospective seeing of works through each other's shared structures and mutual influence. (Our looking back is different still in that the presence Snow writes about — experiencing the past through images in the present — cannot be recreated here simply through the offering of past works to our current view, for there is no actual transformation of medium here. Representation in writing is one thing, which the catalogue attempts; re-presentation in exhibition is another. In the latter, we are dealing with the presence of the original works outside of their own time of making and first presentation. This complicated play of presence and absence, though, makes up many of the challenging dilemmas and subjects of Snow's works and writings.)⁴

Looking is circumscribed, nonetheless. While the 1994 exhibitions at the AGO (apart from that at The Power Plant) virtually replicate the one of 1970 in terms of the period of the works, if not number,

shown, those specifically from 1967–69 are now separated from the presentation of the earlier works by the very gestures we find in the sculptures, films and photoworks of that period themselves.⁵ In its narrow scope, *Around Wavelength* functions as an aperture to separate its works from the wide concerns featured in the comprehensive exhibitions that bracket it, while acting at the same time as a hinge between them. Focusing on its moment then, the current presentation narrows attention to the limiting conditions of work produced by Snow for his 1968 exhibition at the Poindexter Gallery in New York and his 1969 Isaacs Gallery exhibition in Toronto where new works supplemented those of New York. (The 1970 AGO exhibition added the rest of the sculpture, photographic works and films of the current exhibition.)

This notion of the aperture defining the exhibition within the Michael Snow Project as a whole mirrors what took place in Snow's work of that period. These works concentrated their apparatus on the function of viewing in order to make sight visible. They effectively put an end to the images of the Walking Woman, filtering perceptual and conceptual themes to their more purified essence, before Snow's themes broadened out again to wider image practices during the 1970s.

Sculpture played the dominant role in these commercial exhibitions, but while those two exhibitions are the core of this one, sculpture was not conceived apart from Snow's concurrent work in film and interest in photography, which themselves defined the shape sculpture would take. Prior to Snow's main activity in photography evident during the 1970s, sculpture assumed the role of perceptual investigation. At that time, Snow focused the

apparatus of his work on the actual acts of viewing: reducing the figurative element (yet actively incorporating the body of the spectator) by using the camera as a model and the frame as a principle device. This was sculpture to be seen through as much as to be looked at.

While the camera and its framing device offer the model for sculpture, the camera's product — the still or "moving" image — found its analogy in the viewing experience of the spectator. Photography proper was not part of these exhibitions in 1968 and 1969, with the exception of that integral to the sculpture *Atlantic*. In our case, each photographic work has been chosen to indicate a type of investigation consistent with Snow's sculpture of 1967–69 but which differs from his subsequent investigations initiated from 1970 on.

The absent presence in the space of exhibition here, and speculative hinge of the exhibition, is Snow's filmwork, particularly the film that made his fame, *Wavelength*. The planning of *Wavelength* during 1966 signalled the Walking Woman's demise (although *Wavelength* could be thought the last Walking Woman work) and set out the complex themes that would be explored, in the cases where they were more apt (or perhaps led to more interesting transformations), in the specific media of sculpture or photography. While the original exhibition contexts seem to highlight sculpture in the concept of this exhibition, film is integral to it: hence the title *Around Wavelength*. This title can be read as what spatially, in the case of the present exhibition, groups itself around *Wavelength* or as what sets the historical context ("around the time of *Wavelength*"), even as what succeeds it in time, as if influenced by it as well. Around the time of



Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film 1970
20 min., colour
Art Gallery of Ontario

Wavelength, moreover, should remind us also of the durational effects *Wavelength* introduced to Snow's work.

If *Wavelength* is the key to the demise of one body of work, and the initiation of another, an artist's thinking is too complex to let one work stand as the determination of all that follows. Working in a variety of

media, Snow was enough of a modernist to let each medium determine its own effects. Nonetheless, *Wavelength*, in its devotion to the insubstantialities of time, light and sound, plays an inordinate role in this catalogue and exhibition in that it is the counterpart to everything that is stable and static in museum presentations.

II. "See it my way."

Michael Snow: Sculpture, Poindexter Gallery, New York
January 27–February 16, 1968

Michael Snow, together with Joyce Wieland, both already established on the Toronto art scene, in 1962 moved to New York City. Although they continued to visit Toronto and exhibit at the Isaacs Gallery there, the cultural milieu of New York would provide the background for Snow's work as an artist and his orientation towards filmmaking. Snow's stay in New York from 1962–1971 coincided with the breakdown of the Abstract Expressionist aesthetic and the rise of the competing ideologies of Pop and Minimal art, the latter fully consolidated as a new aesthetic with its Postminimal and Conceptual offshoots by the time of Snow's 1968 Poindexter exhibition. Snow's two bodies of work produced during his residency in New York, then, would roughly coincide with

and perhaps be influenced by Pop art (the Walking Woman Works) and Minimal art (the predominantly sculptural works under consideration here). Yet, the first series was started by Snow in Toronto, with the important proto-conceptualist photographic *Four to Five*, 1962, being one of the last works produced there, and his own film *Wavelength* was seen to have contributed significantly to the Minimalist aesthetic of duration. (In fact, the shape of temporality would be recognized as one of Snow's contributions to film practice.)

In reality, the period was not as clear as its justified paths of development make it appear to be retrospectively. Donald Judd, one of the major proponents of the "reductive" art of Minimalism that was to become so dominant in influence, sug-

A note on the illustrations: In keeping with the re-presentational nature of the exhibition, I have chosen to document the works in this section of the catalogue only by photographs contemporary to the works' making. As much as these documents allow, they are used to recreate the original presentations (the Isaacs Gallery exhibition) and to "re-enact" some of the works' perceptual effects (the Poindexter Gallery presentation). In the latter case, the camera is the perfect observer of these self-enclosed systems, documenting the effects its own apparatus inspired.

gested in 1964 rather how productively messy (and open) the situation actually was. On the perceived dominance of a by then exhausted Abstract Expressionism in New York, Judd wrote: "In 1960 there were several unpredicted shows, and things began to be complicated again.... The history of art and art's condition at any time are pretty messy. They should stay that way. One can think about them as much as one likes, but they won't become neater; neatness isn't even a very good reason for thinking about them. A lot of things just can't be connected.... The change from the relatively uniform situation of 1959 to the present diverse one did not suddenly occur with pop art in the 1961–62 season."⁶ And so Michael Snow's *Walking Woman Works* should be seen not as an unpolished variation of American Pop art but as his own response to the situation of painting in the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁷

In the text "A Lot of Near Mrs." written in 1962–63, Snow noted: "Problem of originality: invent a subject."⁸ In the aftermath of the grand existential themes of Abstract Expressionism, young artists (painters still) asked themselves this same question, one of content, and ultimately, an issue of what to paint. The young Jasper Johns provided one influential solution in his mid-to-late 1950s paintings of flags and targets, with their co-existence of image and object, which would so strongly inflect the developments of both Pop art and the Minimalist serial painting of the 1960s.⁹ Donald Judd's answer to this problem of *painting* was a turn to a three-dimensional art that was neither painting nor sculpture, a shift in art practice that would lead to Minimalism and which he began to describe in "Local History" and more fully articulated in the complemen-

tary article "Specific Objects."¹⁰ The *Walking Woman* would be Snow's obvious solution, a closed form whose content is an open-ended series of transformations of media and investigation of perception through art's presentational formats and representational practices.

The dimensional form that some of Michael Snow's *Walking Woman Works* took — such as *Torso*, 1963, which Judd earlier had reviewed in 1964 ("I like the three-dimensional pieces best."¹¹) — ensured his inclusion in Judd's list of artists whose works shared some of the characteristics of the new art he was defining. "The new work obviously resembles sculpture more than it does painting, but it is nearer to painting."¹² So starting with painting, the jump to Snow's abstract sculpture from 1967 on should not seem so radical, if we think that the *Walking Woman Works*' real subject was perception, whether confined within a two-dimensional representation or concretized in a three-dimensional object. The concerns of the *Walking Woman* series actually had more in common with the phenomenological and perceptual issues of Minimal and Conceptual art as they later developed than their painterly appearance and Pop association suggest.¹³ The aim here is not to review the *Walking Woman* series, only insofar as certain works specifically prefigure the apparatus and concerns of the later sculpture. For example, framing is the dominant device in *Morningside Heights* and *Sleeve*, while the zoom of a camera is implied in *Test Focus Field Figure*, all paintings and constructions of 1965, the last year (until 1978) Snow devoted to painting.

The Pop art exhibitions of the 1961–62 exhibition season mentioned by Judd were followed by a second assault of younger

generation artists on the aesthetics of Abstract Expressionism in the first exhibitions of what generally became known as Minimal art, in 1963–64. Snow's first New York exhibition at the Poindexter Gallery took place in this context, opening right after the closing of Donald Judd's first Minimal works displayed at the Greene Gallery. Robert Morris's monochrome primary forms followed at the Greene Gallery later that year.¹⁴ These two exhibitions by Morris and Judd can be taken really as the defining moment, not just for Snow's work, but for the development of art of the period as a whole. Between his first Poindexter exhibition in 1964 and his third in 1968 more than Snow's art would change. Minimalism became the name for what could only be called a cognitive-aesthetic shift in the thinking about and practising of art. The broad, epoch making movement of Minimalism, which included and transformed the practices of sculpture, film, music, and dance, is the proper milieu of Snow's work. The period provoked an intense dialogue between art and theory, the latter which was written mainly by the artists themselves. To Judd's already mentioned "Specific Objects," we note Robert Morris's "Notes on Sculpture I & II" of 1966 and Robert Smithson's "Entropy and the New Monuments," 1966, among others, and the critic Michael Fried's counter-article "Art and Objecthood" of 1967 attacking the confrontational, theatrical, and durational qualities of the Minimalism Fried labelled literalist art.¹⁵ Fried's article was published a month after the first screening of *Wavelength*, and that film and Snow's succeeding sculpture of the Poindexter exhibition would surely have come under Fried's strictures for provoking these very characteristics.

It is no wonder, then, that P. Adams Sitney, when in 1969 attempting to situate Snow's filmwork in the intellectual milieu of its time, would place Snow firmly in the context of the new temporal arts:

"A constellation of 'performing' artists, working out of New York, share a broad aesthetic base with Michael Snow. A brief *résumé* of the formal concerns they have in common might illuminate a context for Snow's art and lead us to a definition of his achievement in the cinema. I am thinking of the musicians La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass, the dramatist Richard Foreman, and the dancers Yvonne Rainer, Meredith Monk, and Deborah Hay... These artists tend to use *duration*, repudiate psychology, and retard and elongate the few actions they employ. Their materials are consistent (not diversified); extensive repetition is common, and where it is not found, one can expect stasis."¹⁶ (While Snow has expressed his interest in Johns and Oldenburg, his friendships and associations were with artists of another milieu, aesthetically and artistically — filmmakers such as Ken Jacobs and Hollis Frampton, musicians/ composers Roswell Rudd, Steve Reich and Philip Glass, sculptors such as Carl Andre and Richard Serra. Snow's first associations were more with the film and music world ["The real influence on Joyce and me after we moved to New York {'62} was just Jonas {Mekas} and the amazing existence of the Cinematheque."¹⁷] and his lasting influence and recognition in New York would be within film and not art, although his films were documented and debated and were of influence in the artworld.)

While Snow's last *Walking Woman* painting was *Test Focus Field Figure* of 1965,

the image that ended his *Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film*, the actual last Walking Woman work, contemporary with the making of *Wavelength*, was the outdoor sculptural ensemble made for the Montreal World's Fair (Expo 67). *Expo Walking Woman* consisted of eleven stainless steel figures in various dispositions and perceptual distortions spread through the grounds of the Ontario pavilion, partly as directional devices. The nature of this large commission extended the themes of the Walking Woman longer than they were actually effective:

"I gradually stopped using the Walking Woman exclusively after I did a big sculpture exposition at Expo 67, which I worked on in '66 and showed in the summer of '67. That was something that was finished before it was done in the sense that it was a designed thing and a summation of certain ideas of *objectness* that I'd been thinking out. It was a big sculptural composition in stainless steel. It had a lot to do with reflections; so it really had an image aspect." But in the context of this comment, he continued: "I was thinking over *Wavelength* for a long time. It was really quite important to me."¹⁸

Expo Walking Woman brings full circle and closes the book on the idea of dispersal initiated and documented in *Four to Five*. In substantiating the notions of sequence and seriality, it is a compendium of a number of the perceptual and representational themes explored in the Walking Woman series. Given it was Snow's summation of certain ideas of *objectness* should make us think that it shares characteristics with the purely sculptural works he would exhibit less than a year later at the Poindexter Gallery. Yet, it is still the shape and outline of the Walking Woman that determines the

sculptural effects as that shape solidifies space as it is "moved" from one position to another to objectify a mass or as it is subtracted in the same way from a solid mass. The reflective nature of the stainless steel, which gave the sculptures their other "image aspect," and the movements of the spectator in the ambient space offering itself for reflection, however, were taken up by Snow as material and content for his Poindexter sculpture.

The 1968 Poindexter exhibition consisted of only four sculptures, but each tells of the changes not only to Snow's work but to the ambitions of the period's art in general. The installation photographs show the pressure the new sculpture began to put on architecture, taking the architectural container of the gallery to be part of the context of a piece and its larger framing device. By consequence, the spectator is absorbed in the process to which all the ambient conditions of display contribute such as space, light, and movement. Robert Morris's description of this new sculptural aesthetic in his "Notes on Sculpture," published in *Artforum* in 1966, established some of these conditions that apply to Snow's sculpture as well:

"The better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision. The object is but one of the terms in the newer aesthetic. It is in some way more reflexive because one's awareness of oneself existing in the same space as the work is stronger than in previous work, with its many internal relationships. One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial context. . . . Some of the new work has

expanded the terms of sculpture by a more emphatic focusing on the very conditions under which certain kinds of objects are seen. The object itself is carefully placed in these new conditions to be but one of the terms.¹⁹ Of course, theory here is also a means of justifying one's own work as much as arguing against other sculptor-theorists: Donald Judd and Robert Smithson, for instance, come to mind. Nor is the description of new practices complete. Nevertheless, Morris sums up some of the conditions of Snow's sculpture without exhausting his special contributions. He recognizes, as well, in an insight not peculiar to him alone, that "the experience of the work necessarily exists in time."²⁰

The sculptural objects in the Poindexter exhibition are hybrid: they are as much to be looked through as to be looked at. Thus, they literalize the "emphatic focusing" Morris mentioned, not only by directing the conditions under which objects are seen but by making the objects themselves into viewing machines, literally incorporating the view of the spectator into their form and scopic apparatus. The movement of the spectator in Snow's sculpture is as often displaced by sight through a piece as much as physically around it. The view of the spectator is regulated, even constrained, making the sculptures the reverse of those of the *Expo Walking Woman*, which were stable while the viewer was mobile.

Each of the works — they are all from 1967 — is more than a conventional sculpture, being an apparatus of sorts that directs vision and complicates its procedures. Simply described, *In Place* (later titled *Site* for the 1969 Isaacs exhibition and finally *Sight* for the 1970 Art Gallery of Ontario exhibition, under which name it is

now known) is a type of view finder. *First to Last* and *Scope* function basically as periscopes while *Blind* is a complex focusing device.

First to Last had already been exhibited (under the title *First, Last*) in Toronto in 1967 in the outdoor exhibition *Sculpture '67*. In an interview for the catalogue, Snow said: "For the last three or four years [i.e., from the period of the making of his 1964 film *New York Eye and Ear Control*], I have been influenced by films and by the camera. When you narrow down your range and are looking through just that small aperture of the lens, the intensity of what you see is so much greater."²¹ What is seen is something that the artist sets up but does not control, much as in the taking of a photograph, a process Snow had earlier described and documented in *Four to Five* as the "development of events-for-capture."²² Unlike photographs, what is captured here is not fixed, rather what is registered for view is the chance flux of events. This mechanism of aperture and view parallels Snow's continuing interest in the dualism of activity and stasis that runs through his work and is "iconically" evident as early as the painting *Lac Clair*, for instance.²³ This duality is not rigidly framed as an either/or opposition. The frame's function here is not to draw limits defining the border of an artwork so as to ideally separate it from the world by its frame, but to break down those hierarchies between, for instance, inside and outside. Here the frame itself is a tool to place the formalized space of the art gallery in question as happened in Conceptual art and to an extreme in Earthworks. (The photograph is an exemplary model: by its indexical nature its makes reference to an outside.) The range of what is seen or its

seeing *procedures* are varied in Snow's works, however, for what is the point of producing more than one sculptural apparatus that functioned like the camera's aperture, itself a simple optical mechanism?

The sculptures for the Poindexter exhibition had to be carefully planned for the space (the Poindexter Gallery being an uptown brownstone) and the gallery was measured to determine sizes and relationships. Nowhere is this clearer than in *In Place*, which had to be designed to fit the window facing the street. The polished aluminum side of *In Place*, seen from the street, blocked the view into the gallery. Its interior face of a scored black plastic sheet, acting like a viewfinder, directed a view, so that the flux of events outside the gallery became part of the work's contents. The changes in the title of this piece (the double homonymic inflection inherent in "site," more so than in "Sight" especially) reflect its nature as a sighting device that functions only in a locale. (Snow toyed with calling this piece *56th St.* after the location of the gallery.) Moreover, the piece cannot be taken in at a glance: one must pass from outside to inside to fulfill its function. Even the two sides of its surface emphasize that constraint, opening and closing itself to a view, as Annette Michelson wrote: "The aperture totally absorbs the tiny fraction of wholly extraneous visual material through it; it is all somehow drawn into the total composition of the surface, absorbed into its linear pattern, its accident and irregularity tamed, as it were, to the uses of geometry. Turning around to the other side of the surface, peering through the slot which breaks its even, unarticulated, glistening aluminum surface, punctuated only by occasional bolts, we perceive the total

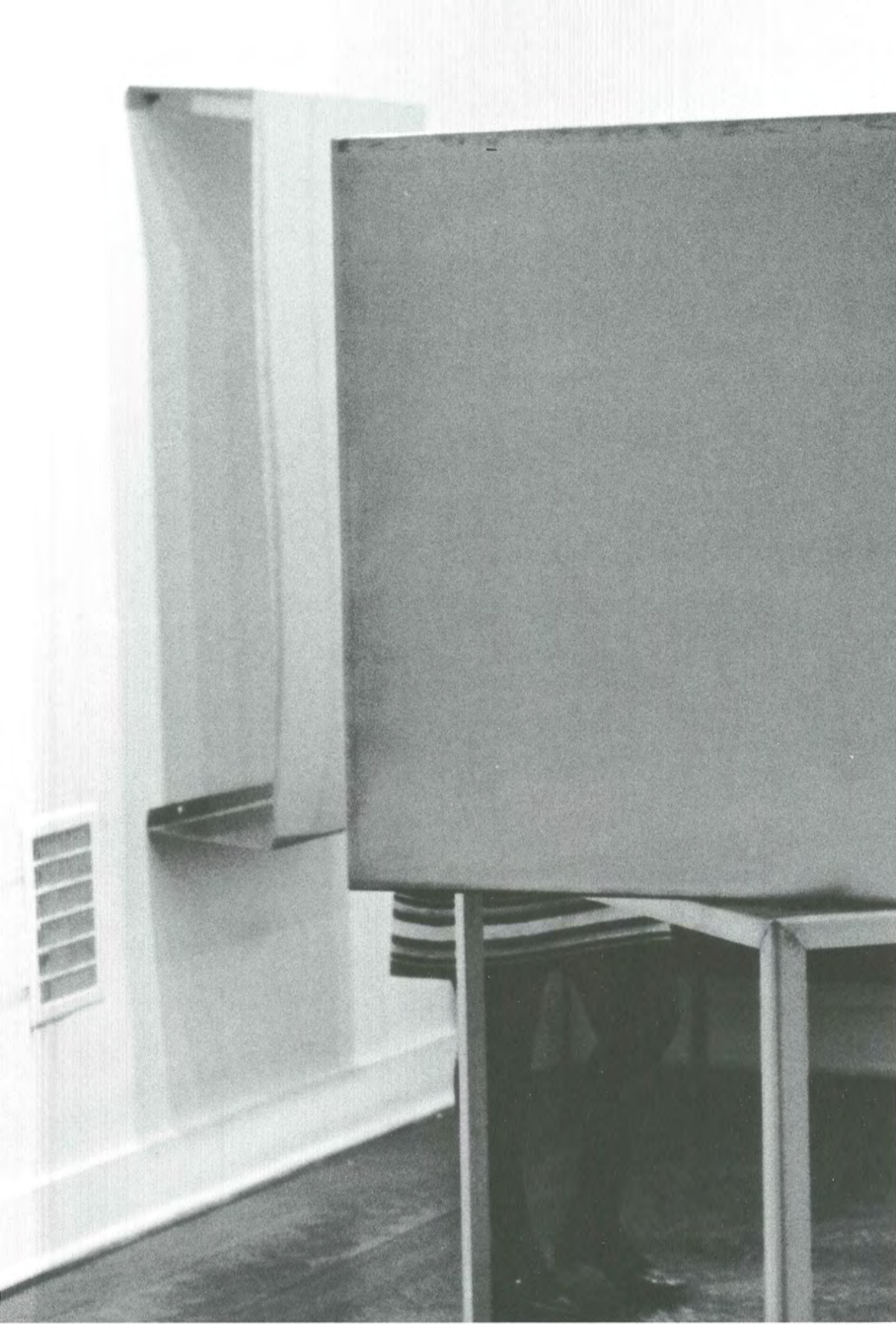
unassimilability of the scene beyond it."²⁴

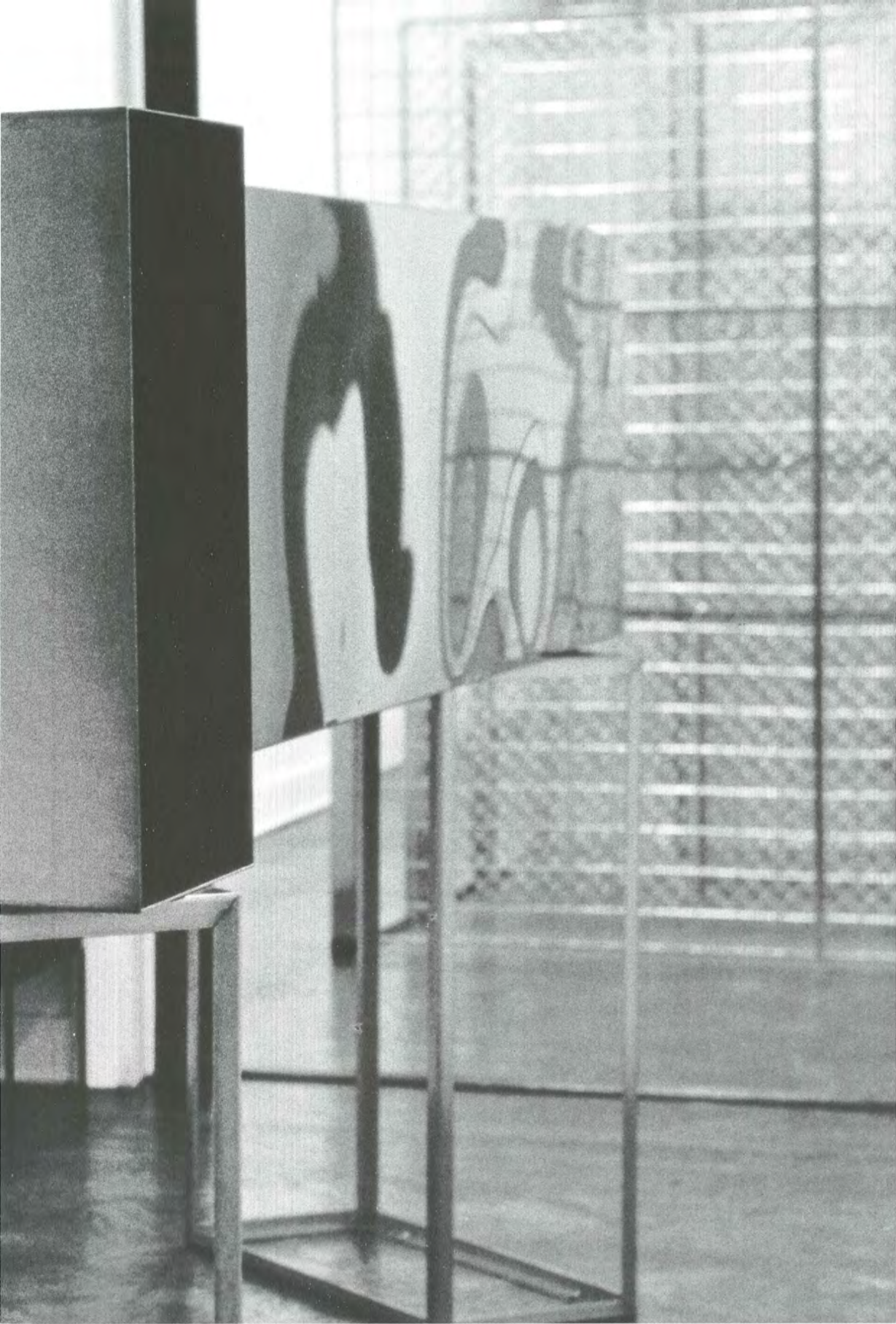
Dealing with eyesight alone and not the body, *In Place*, nonetheless, frustrates viewing, as the unassimilability that Michelson mentions. But as the bolted aluminum and slotted eyehole bring to mind armoured vaults and trucks, so the body is brought into play by negation. This association — and latent threat — is not fortuitous. Coupled with the work's other constraints, it makes of *In Place* a highly charged psychological situation that theatricalizes seeing. Hilton Kramer, reviewing the show in the *New York Times*, said Snow's works made the space reminiscent of a "chic concentration camp," and such terms filter through all the contemporary journalistic reviews. Michael Snow himself thought of calling the succeeding Isaacs exhibition "Protective Measures" and his notes show him running through possibilities of titles along these lines that add psychological overtones to what seem merely playful perceptual pieces.²⁵ While *In Place* opens itself to the outside by bringing it into the gallery by the operations of the aperture, ironically, at the same time, it seems psychologically to protect us from the street.

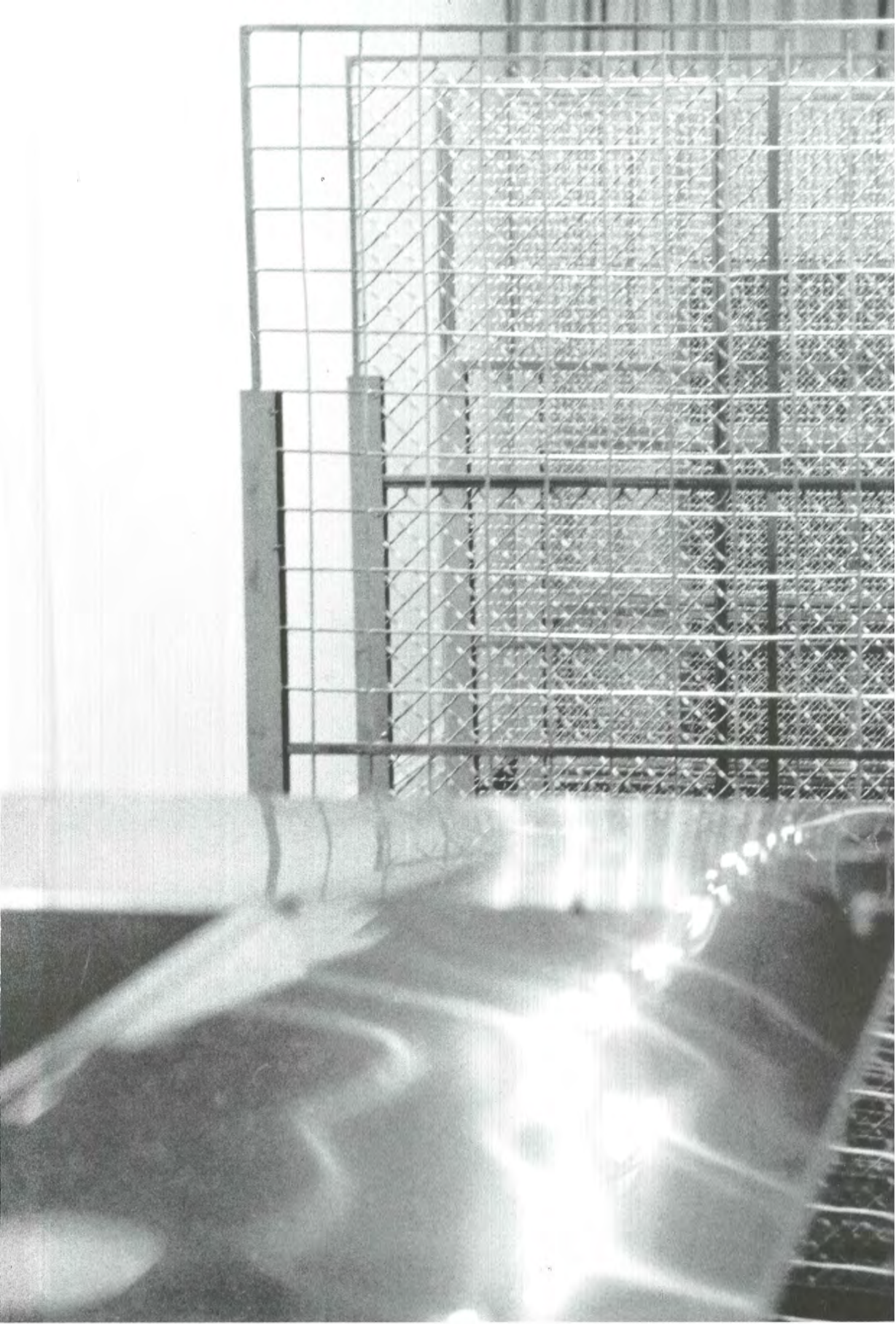
Entering the gallery and engaging these "playful" sculptures that invoke the participatory spirit of Happenings, we perhaps leave ourselves vulnerable, but from what on the street do we need to protect ourselves? As much as we are subject of our own look, we are also subject to these viewing machines, to the views that they allow. When we peer through them, blind to what else is around us, we are also the subject of *another's* look. *Scope*, for instance. *Scope* operated much like a periscope laid on its side, and is constructed as such. Its stainless steel and mirror fabrication,





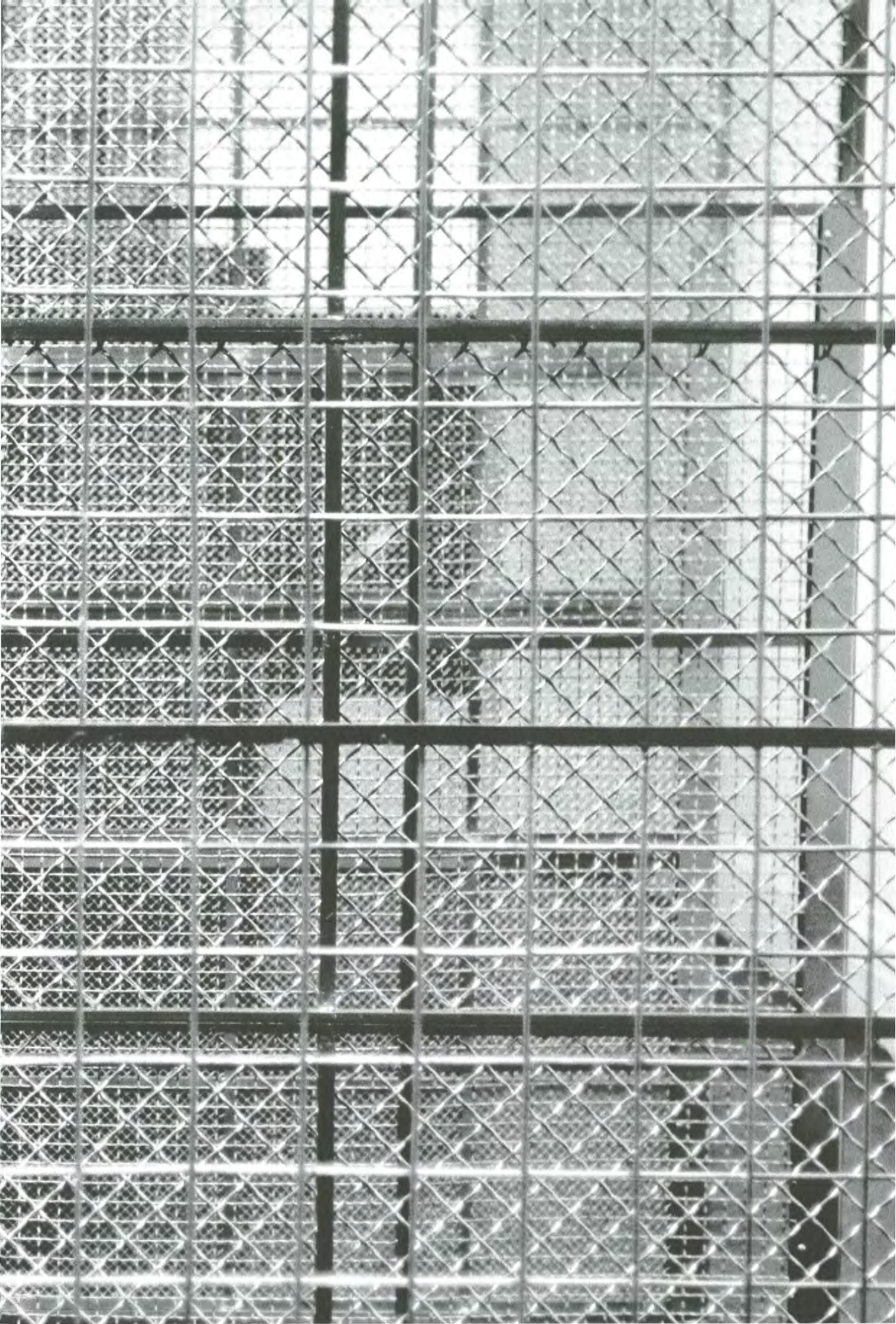


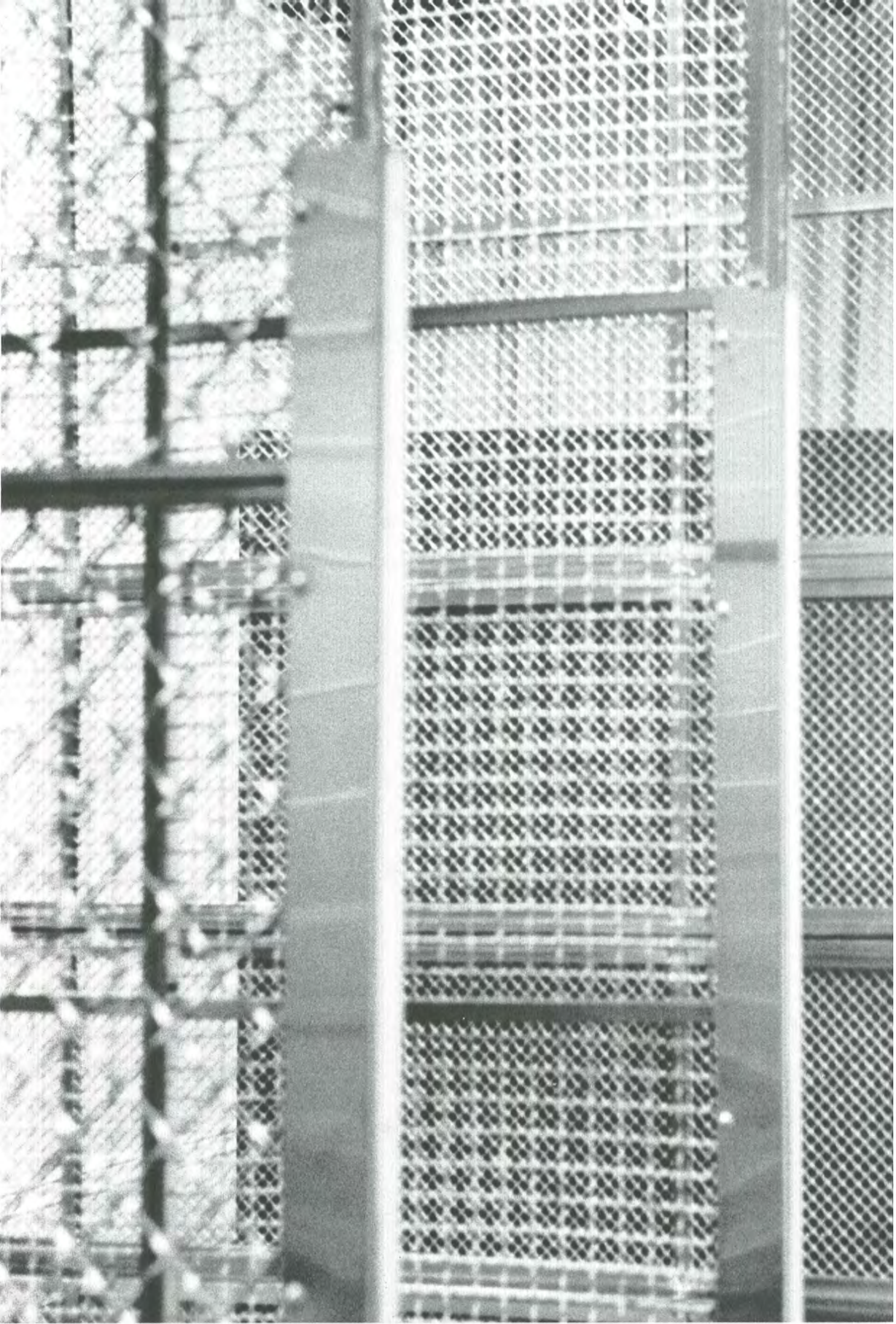


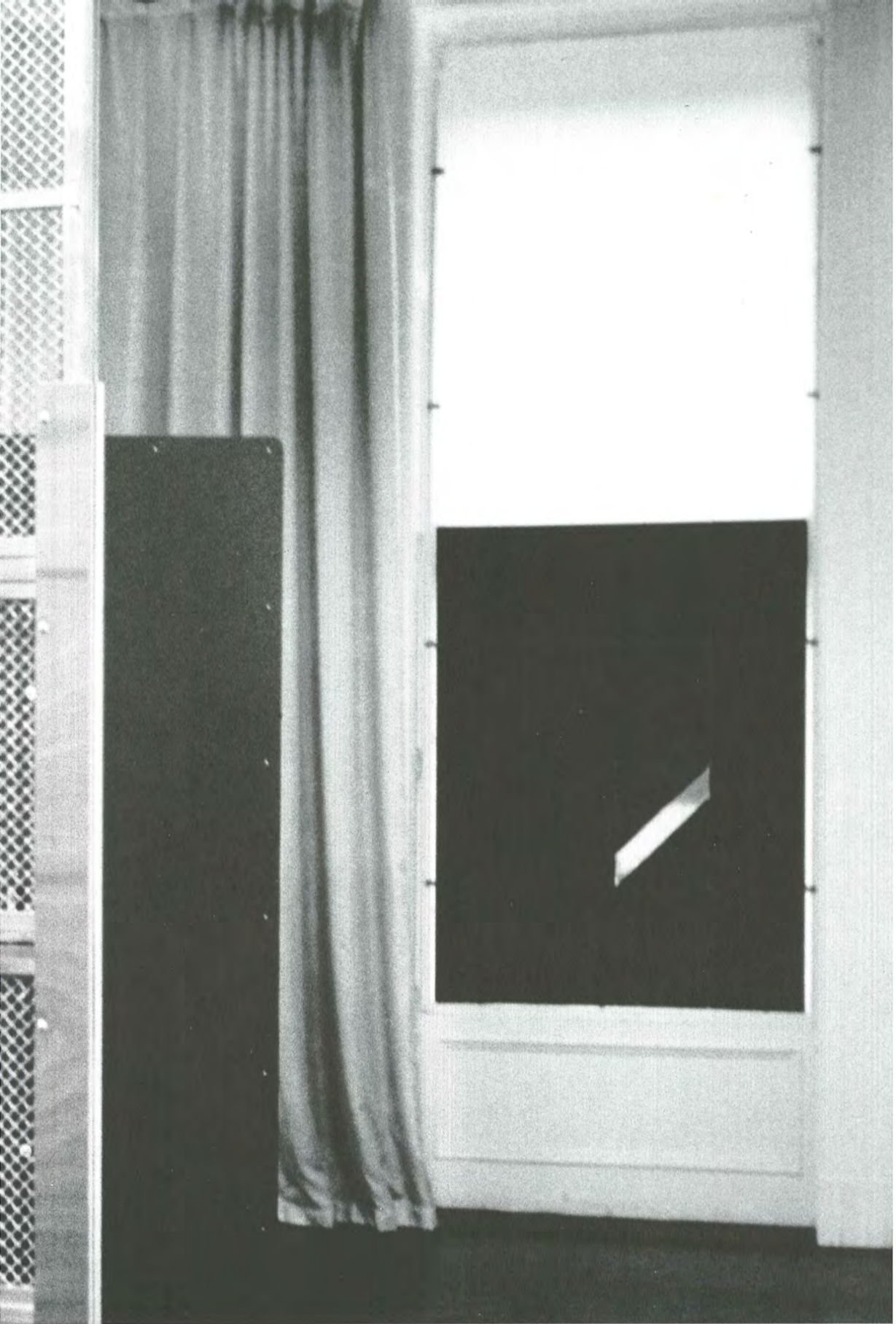






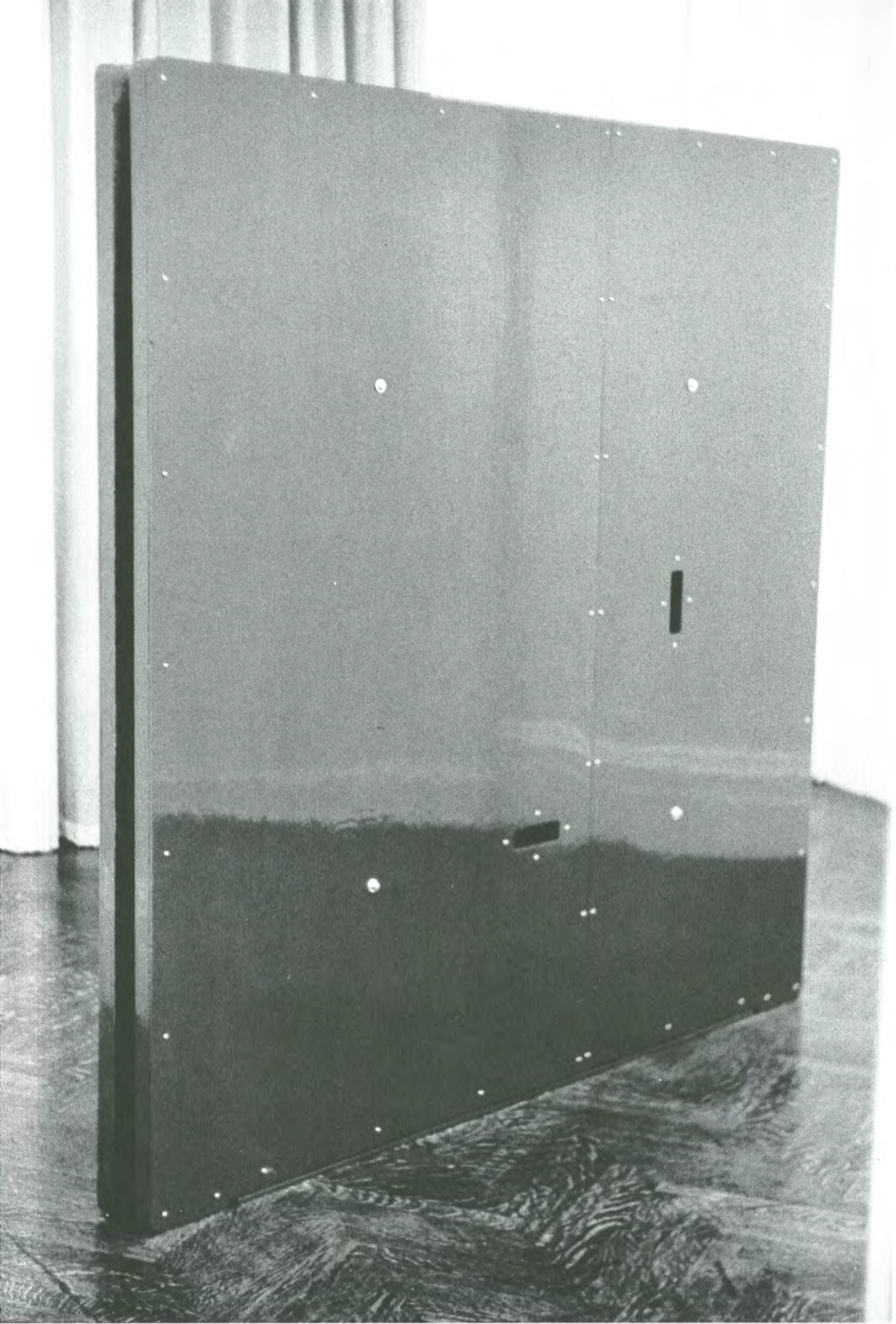


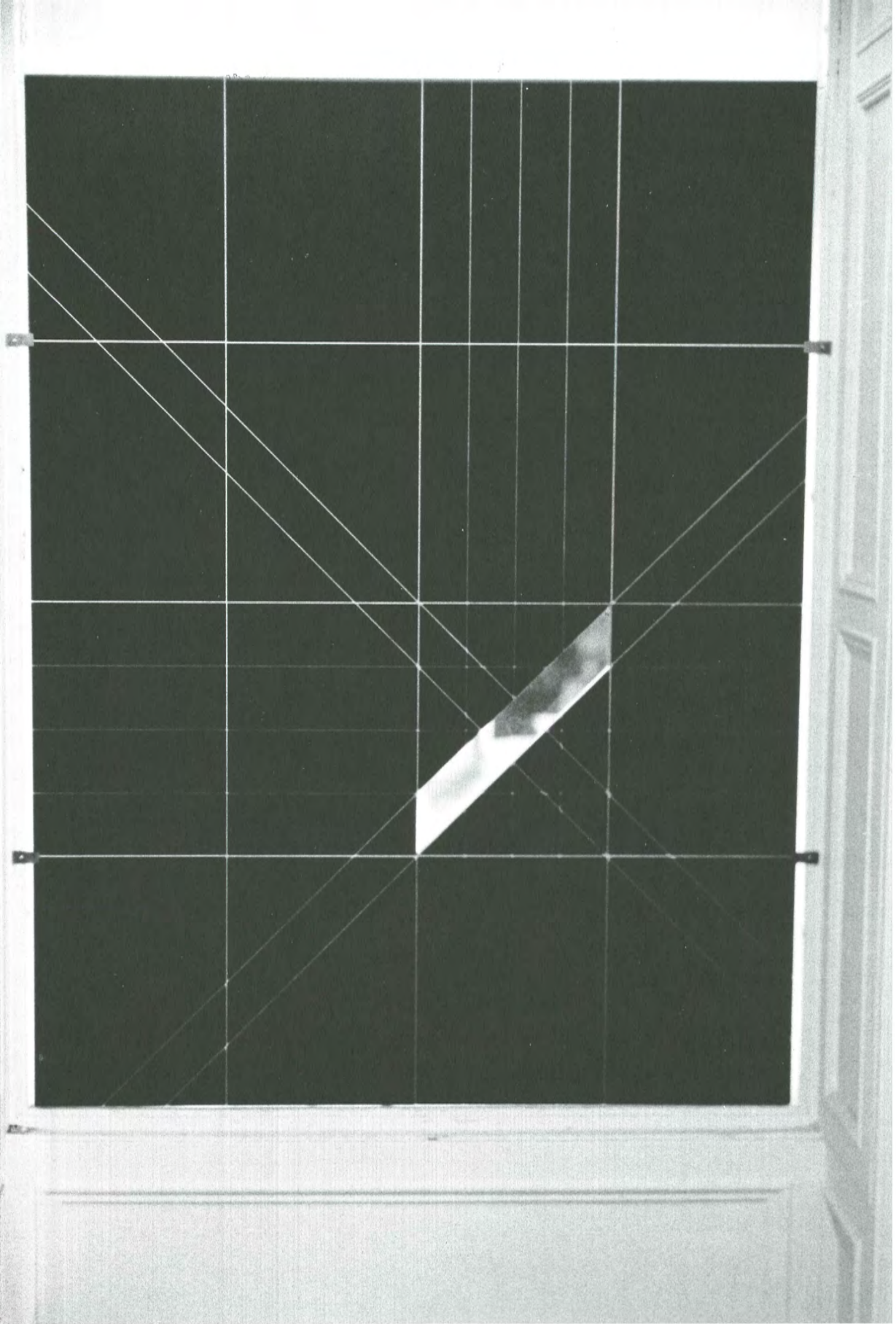


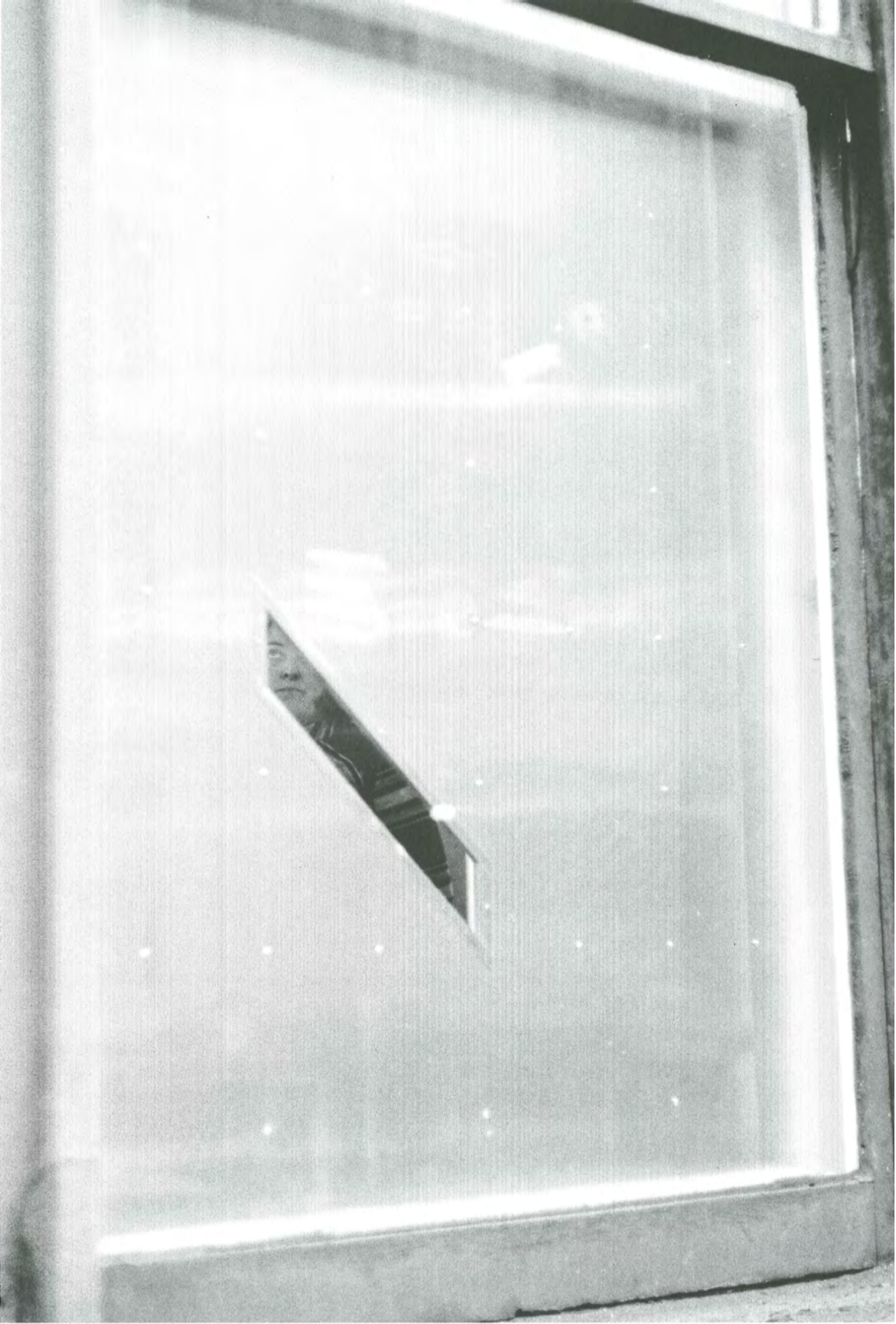












Michael Snow: Sculpture
Poindexter Gallery, New York
January 27–February 16, 1968

- pages 302–306 **Scope** 1967
Stainless steel, mirrors
2 elements: 175.3 x 396.2 x 91.4 cm
 137.2 x 71.1 x 27.9 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
- 305–311 **Blind** 1967
Painted aluminum and steel
243.8 x 243.8 x 243.8 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
- 310–314 **First to Last** 1967
Painted wood, aluminum, glass
208.5 x 208.5 x 15.2 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario
- 315–316 **Sight** 1967
Aluminum, engraved plastic
142.2 x 106.7 cm
Vancouver Art Gallery

like *In Place*, allowed the viewer to see whatever passed by the other end; and if nothing was captured there, as if in a closed-circuit dialogue with oneself, one's own face was dimly reflected back by the stainless steel sheet attached to the wall in front of the other aperture. (Snow originally questioned what should be located there: the room, a painting, a photograph, or itself. One photograph shows the scope, tautologically, being reflected back into itself.) Thus engaged and blinkered, we put ourselves on view for others. So Snow thought in a series of sketches (and in an actual other performance) where he staged the apparatus in front of an audience and added "periscope play," making of the mechanisms *Scope* sets up, as in *In Place*, a play between public and private.²⁶

First to Last combines features of *In Place* and *Scope*. As a free-standing wall, this sculpture obstructs sight as much as it obscures it. For while our view through *First to Last* makes it a periscopic device as well, looking is now frustrated in various ways and perversely directed elsewhere by means not so obvious as *Scope* where we recognize from the shape of the device where our gaze is to be thrown. The periscopes in *First to Last's* viewing slots direct the eye not *through* the piece but, unexpectedly, in other directions, to the floor or ceiling — or sky, as in its original outdoor installation. Like *Scope*, *First to Last* is a scopic apparatus but it is constructed so that its internal functions dictate the external. (The aluminum inner walls that narrowly face each other in *First to Last* act as mirrors, emphasizing its tautological or self-reflexive character.) "This sculpture is so internal that it feeds on what is external. It composes by the very limitations it imposes."²⁷ In so directing the totality of

vision, the limitations it imposes exhaust vision. (Notes reveal that Snow considered calling this piece by the titles "Sum" or "Total.")

This trajectory from *In Place* to *Scope* to *First to Last* complicates the process of perception: from pieces that seem merely to be interested in framing and in the dynamics of activity and stasis set up thereby (*In Place* and as redirected to a lesser extent, *Scope*), to devices that bring us into view (*Scope*), to self-sustaining or tautological "machines" (*First to Last*) that ask us to examine their operations. Admittedly, all these sculptures share these characteristics to a degree. While all are framing devices of Duchampian derivation, they are also sculptural objects that take up space. They are optical machines that bring the body into consideration. Combining the two functions makes them interactive: they invite a participation both physical and visual.

This dual engagement is most active in *Blind*, a work that draws us in both physically and optically. *Blind* is made of a series of steel mesh screens of different gauge of opening and orientation. One can pass back and forth between the channels of the screen experiencing the sculpture spatially while also putting oneself on display for another: as that body recedes back from plane to plane, we use this figure to judge depth (the reverse of the painting *Test Focus Field Figure*). But the parallel screens accomplish this function on their own. They draw us optically back and forth through this space by means of the interaction of the meshes which establish different focal planes, thus making *Blind* function as a continuous zoom (causing the planes of the screens to foreshorten in space); as a large focusing device our eye adjusts, lock-

ing in place a particular focal plane; or even as the iris of a camera as the interplay of the meshes narrows or opens the different apertures.

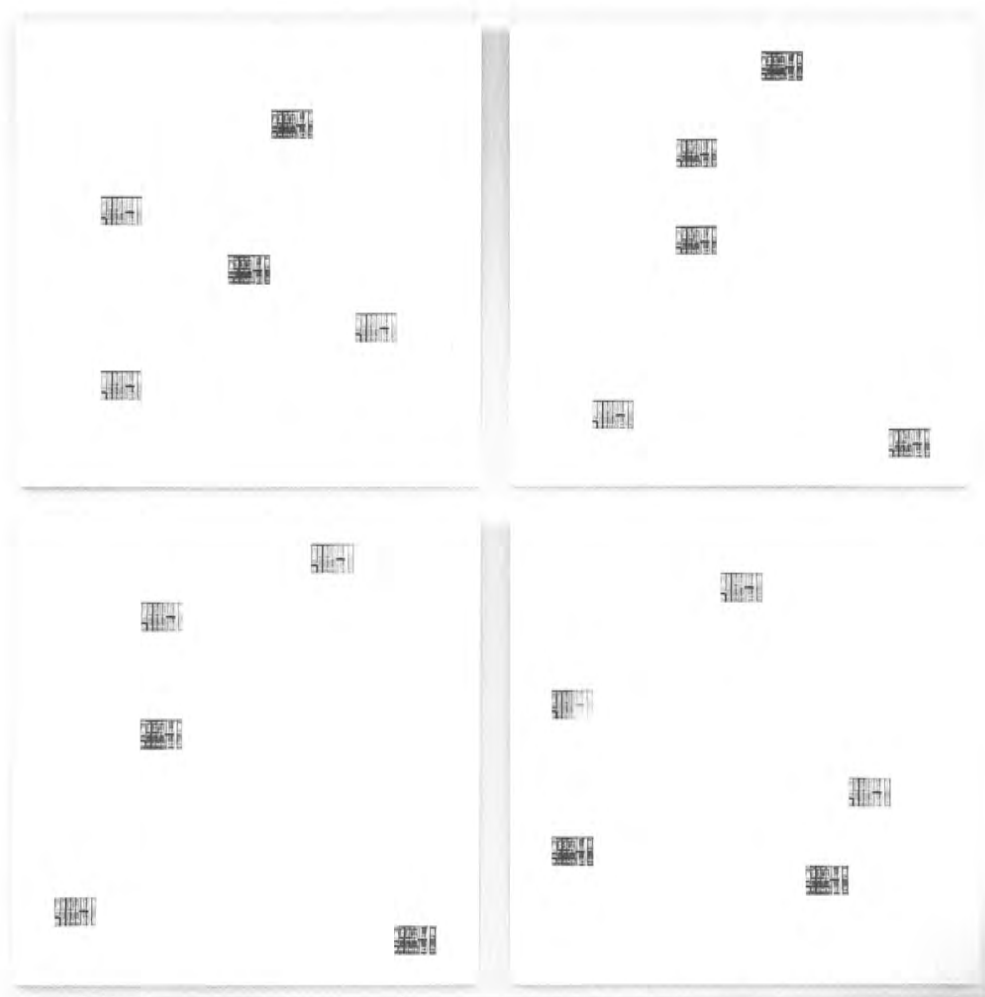
Snow considered calling *Blind* by the title “Snow Storm” recalling for us the formal role his name — and biography — often had in the choice of subjects. But here the title would have added the realistic reference of a blizzard for the density and optical sparkle of its perceptual effects caused by the meshes’ interplay. The final title still retains an autobiographical relevance, in that his father went blind, a factor that attuned Snow to the mechanisms, obscurities and anomalies of sight.²⁸ (The optical effects are similar to a complementary photographic work he did title *Snow Storm, February 7, 1967*, which substitutes the density of falling snow photographed through a barred window of his Chambers Street studio for the visual overlap of levels of mesh.)

The back and forth, “to-and-fro” characteristic we observe in *Blind* — uniting the body walking back and forth to the optical shifts from front to back — is a factor operating in all the pieces. In *In Place*, it is what passes by as seen through its slot, but also in what the aperture brings from outside into the gallery as an image. In *Scope* it is the dialogue that takes place from the two ends of the piece as well as the mirroring shuttle back and forth between the viewer and his or her own reflection. This visual displacement of the viewer’s image — as a doubling or ghost of the self proper to the photographic image — is in contradistinction to the physical displacement sculpture invokes in asking us to see it from all sides, or, in this case, from both ends. The aperture both frames *and* captures: as we are captured so is an image, analogous to

the photographic print. The physical constraint of the sculpture is a means to make us focus on sight; in doing so our sight is channelled, displaced from our place to another, and, in reply, an image is transposed from its site to ours. Movement of the viewer and transposition of the image are analogous here in their potential and actual displacements.

“See it my way,” by which I title this section is drawn from a reference in Snow’s notes and suggests the modernist artist’s function of changing vision or directing it to new sources. Such is the Cagean strategy of breaking down traditional hierarchies by opening our view to the things around us, those chance, everyday events in real space and time brought into focus by the apertures of Snow’s apparati. We could just as well read the phrase as a threat: “see it my way — *or else*.” To the physical and perceptual we must also add a psychological dimension of constraint. Snow’s notes are filled with sketches and plans for sculptural machines for viewing, but the self-reflexivity implied in limiting vision to observable conditions is not always of an epistemological order here. These sighting devices constrain vision through the common model of the perspectival cone, as if those lines of sight were literalized and beyond which, thus blinkered, we could not stray. The scopic field for Snow is possessive (as well as sexual: compare the sight-lines incorporated into the painting *Seen*, 1965; although clothed in this example, the naked female body in the male gaze is a model of vision), so he not only constrains our bodies with these machinic sculptures, but he also possesses our sight (a “temporary possession,” however) by directing it.

In constraining body and diverting sight, these sculptures partake of the per-



Snow Storm, February 7, 1967 1967
Black and white photographs, enamelled masonite
121.9 x 121.9 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

verse obdurateness that is a not so subtle undercurrent of Minimal art. We recognize the performative aspect Minimalist sculpture shared with dance. But there is something that goes beyond its possession of space and confrontation with the viewer, which Michael Fried criticized and from which one can trace the origins of Performance and Body art, such as that by Vito Acconci and Dennis Oppenheim. (Robert Morris is an emblematic figure here, passing between performance and sculpture in the early sixties.²⁹ As with the framing device, Duchamp can be seen as the inspiration for all these physical and optical constraints brought to bear in Minimalism and its derivations in various ways and through diverse media exemplified by artists such as Jasper Johns, Robert Morris, and Bruce Nauman. This is the “optical” Duchamp of *To be looked at from the Other Side of the Glass with One Eye*,

Close to, for Almost an Hour, 1918, but also the “performative” Duchamp of the suggestion “Establish a society in which the individual has to pay for the air he breathes [air meters; imprisonment and rarefied air, in case of non-payment simple asphyxiation if necessary [cut off the air].”) While Minimal art seemingly is an art without content, the space of confrontation between work and spectator, in which the spectator is forced to participate, psychologizes the space in such a manner it becomes a social situation. It is in this charged space that all the unresolved social turmoil of the mid-sixties race riots, civil rights agitation and Vietnam war unconsciously surfaces.³⁰ This is not an arbitrary suggestion: Snow toyed with titling the Poindexter exhibition “Public Private Paranoid Visual Art” and, however ironically, thought of calling the Isaacs exhibition “Protective Measures.”

III. Shaping Time, Shaping Space: Wavelength

“Quite obviously there’s Snow sculpture before *Wavelength* and Snow sculpture after *Wavelength*.” So wrote Gene Youngblood in 1970 and such is the conjecture of this exhibition.³¹ Yet, the material of this conjecture, called sculpture here, pursues its medium in as pure a way as possible for Snow, as does film. Both utilize the body and eye, and what is specific to each may be general to the other.³² Snow was enough of a modernist that he sought to keep media independent. He attempted to discover latencies within media obscured by what was shared across them. What gets “mixed” are not media but levels of presen-

tation and representation. (The complex dialectic between presence and absence of the photograph makes it an apt model for investigation, which is why it is so dominant in Snow’s work in film, sculpture and, obviously, photoworks themselves.) So the statement or premise should read instead, there’s Snow work before *Wavelength* and Snow work after *Wavelength*. In that it concludes one body of work and introduces another, we ask of *Wavelength* the summation it implies for the rest of his work.

Wavelength has been one of the most influential and written about of experimental films. Since in so many of those

commentaries, Snow's statement for the Experimental Film Festival of Knokke-le-Zoute in Belgium, in which he won first prize in 1967–68, is also quoted, it makes sense to repeat it in full here:

"*Wavelength* was shot in one week in Dec. '66 preceded by a year of notes, thots, mutterings. It was edited and first print seen in May '67. I wanted to make a summation of my nervous system, religious inklings, and aesthetic ideas. I was thinking of, planning for a time monument in which the beauty and sadness of equivalence would be celebrated, thinking of trying to make a definitive statement of pure Film space and time, a balancing of 'illusion' and 'fact', all about seeing. The space starts at the camera's (spectator's) eye, is in the air, then is on the screen, then is within the screen (the mind).

"The film is a continuous zoom which takes 45 minutes to go from its widest field to its smallest and final field. It was shot with a fixed camera from one end of an 80 foot loft, shooting the other end, a row of windows and the street. This, the setting, and the action which takes place there are cosmically equivalent. The room (and the zoom) are interrupted by 4 human events including a death. The sound on these occasions is sync sound, music and speech, occurring simultaneously with an electronic sound, a sine wave, which goes from its lowest (50 cycles per second) to its highest (12000 c.p.s.) in 40 minutes. It is a total glissando while the film is a crescendo and a dispersed spectrum which attempts to utilize the gifts of both prophecy and memory which only film and music have to offer."³³

Most commentators selectively unpack this statement according to theoretical need or argument, or they catalogue the discrepancies between statement and fact, few

considering the consequences, however, of each aspect of Snow's summation — especially the "religious." *Wavelength*, however, is his second filmic summation. Michael Snow's first film (discounting his seven minute animation *A to Z* of 1956), *New York Eye and Ear Control* of 1964, assembled its diverse materials towards a definitive statement. Subtitled "A Walking Woman Work," *New York Eye and Ear Control* attempted for film the encyclopedic summation pursued according to medium in the rest of the painting and sculpture of that same series.³⁴ Snow said, "This film contains illusions of distances, durations, degrees, divisions of antipathies, polarities, likenesses, compliments, desires. Acceleration of absence to presence. Scales of 'Art' — 'Life', setting-subject, mind-body, country-city pivot. Simultaneous silence and sound, one and all. Arc of excitement, night to daylight. Side, side then back then front. 'Imagined' and 'Real'. Gradual, racial, philosophical kiss."³⁵ While these dualities — black-white, figure-ground, motion-stasis, sound-silence, city-country, men-women, etcetera, that range in nature and theme as classes and events from abstract, formal, and metaphorical to social — structure the film, the figure of the Walking Woman herself, as in the static painting and sculpture, is a device to judge phenomena as presented and represented in film space and time. A static image of an active gesture, the Walking Woman here is the passive element that makes the field active or that makes us active in the field, i.e., viewing the material of this film experience.³⁶ The Walking Woman, however, is not the main actor; that role is reserved for what is most active and determining in this black-and-white film: light, or, rather, light-duration. While the Walking Woman

form is used analytically to contrast foreground-background, positive-negative figure-ground relationships, among others, and is the anchor of different types of camera shots, Snow would instead abstract the conditions of his next film (*Wavelength*) from the long static shots of its planar outline in differing lighting and exposure conditions (such as the long shot on the lower Manhattan rooftop where the sunrise changes the exposure of the image from under-to-overexposed). These “elements” of light and duration would find their consummate shape in *Wavelength*.³⁷

(Abstracted from the polarities listed above, the nascent forms light-duration assumed at this stage relate *New York Eye and Ear Control* to Warhol’s earliest films of 1963–64: the lightstruck ends, the long takes emphasizing the literal duration of camera time, in particular.³⁸ According to P. Adams Sitney, Warhol’s contribution to structural film that shortly followed his first films was his “temporal gift . . . duration.” He suggested “Warhol must have inspired, by opening up and leaving unclaimed so much ontological territory, a cinema actively engaged in generating metaphors for the viewing, or rather the perceiving, experience.” Sitney thought that *New York Eye and Ear Control* was “architecturally naïve. . . . However, Snow’s primary weakness here becomes the central strength of his later work: the vision of a simple situation permeated by rich philosophical implication, which *duration* elaborates.”³⁹)

Film answered a desire for Snow that his paintings could be seen in time: that the lateral or spatial seriality found in paintings such as *Olympia*, 1963, *Encyclopedia*, 1964–65, or *Mixed Feelings*, 1965, for example, be controlled in time;

that the theme and variation motif common to jazz find its equivalency and be played temporally, rather than the spatiality of one thing after another that was the ideal of Minimalist sculpture.⁴⁰ Insofar as *Wavelength* fulfilled this desire for serial variation in duration, it could be argued to be still a *Walking Woman* work. (Her image, pinned to the end wall of the loft, is in range of the target of the zoom.)

In the twenty-seven years since its first screening, *Wavelength* has accumulated many different readings and interpretations following upon the theoretical debates of avant-garde film. My concern here initially is not to enter these debates — since I claim no expertise or theoretical position — but to recall the first interpretations that set the parameters for future reconsiderations or reconfirmations. These figure around *Wavelength*’s celebrated zoom and the film’s purported narrative structure.

Wavelength came at the confluence of two streams, one from the world of American experimental or underground film and the other from the New York artworld, which Snow bridged, and they found their most powerful exponent united in one individual — Annette Michelson. Michelson, however, was not the first to champion the film or Michael Snow. The film’s epoch-making character was heralded by P. Adams Sitney as exemplary of a new film form, “structural film.” Writing of Michael Snow (taken to be “the dean of structural film-makers”) and George Landow, Hollis Frampton, Paul Sharits, Tony Conrad, Ernie Gehr, and Joyce Wieland, Sitney claimed “Theirs is a cinema of structure in which the shape of the whole film is predetermined and simplified, and it is that shape which is the primal impression of the film.”⁴¹ Whether or

not this founding claim is accurate — and it was Snow's film *Wavelength* that led Sitney to these formulations — is not the issue here, rather, Sitney saw structural film as fulfilling "the great unacknowledged aspiration of the American avant-garde film" which he took to be "the cinematic reproduction of the human mind."⁴² Elsewhere Sitney claimed "*Wavelength*... comes to constitute a mode of philosophical thought," thus bridging film to contemporary artists' conceit that art was a philosophical activity.⁴³

"There is a metaphor recurrent in contemporary discourse on the nature of consciousness: that of cinema." So writes Annette Michelson, concurring with Sitney, in the opening line to her 1971 article on Snow; and she continues: "And there are cinematic works which present themselves as analogues of consciousness in its constitutive and reflexive modes, as though inquiry into the nature and processes of experience has found in this century's art form, a striking, a uniquely direct presentational mode. The illusionism of the new, temporal art reflects and occasions reflection upon, the conditions of knowledge; it facilitates a critical focus upon the immediacy of experience in the flow of time.... Epistemological inquiry and cinematic experience converge, as it were, in reciprocal mimesis."⁴⁴

In our anti-foundational, and consequently anti-epistemological times, such a statement on the epistemological claims of art at least has to be situated in its own time.⁴⁵ These claims orient Michelson to a limited — though powerful — description of the events of *Wavelength*, and while their phenomenological basis is of its moment, the consequences of her description and interpretation probably continue today.⁴⁶

Michelson isolates one characteristic of the zoom and the superimpositions that occur therein to establish her argument: "The camera, in the movement of its zoom, installs within the viewer a threshold of tension, of expectation.... Now the effect of these perceptions is to present the movement forward as a flow which bears in its wake, contains, discrete events: their discreteness articulates an allusion to the separate frames out of which persistence of vision organizes cinematic illusion. Above all, however, they create, through the slow focussing in time, through relentless directionality, that regard for the future which forms an horizon of expectation. We are proceeding from uncertainty to certainty, as our camera narrows its field, arousing and then resolving our tension of puzzlement as to its ultimate destination, describing, in the splendid purity of its one, slow movement, the notion of the 'horizon' characteristic of every subjective process and fundamental as a trait of intentionality. That steady movement forward, with its superimposition, its events passing into the field from behind the camera and back again beyond it, figures the view that 'to every perception there always belongs a horizon of the past, as a potentiality of recollections that can be reawakened; and to every recollection there belongs as an horizon, the continuous intervening intentionality of possible recollections (to be actualized on my initiative, actively), up to the actual Now of perception.'" The consequence: "And as the camera continues to move steadily forward, building a tension that grows in direct ratio to the reduction of the field, we recognize, with some surprise, those horizons as defining the contours of narrative, of that narrative form animated by distended temporality, turning

upon cognition, towards revelation."⁴⁷

Narrative form, then, is what Snow restores to film. Against its destruction and concomitant perpetuation of a disjunctive, fractured space represented by Stan Brakhage's films, "Snow has re-defined filmic space as that of action. . . . The film is the projection of a grand reduction; its 'plot' is the tracing of spatio-temporal *données*, its 'action' the movement of the camera as the movement of consciousness. . . . *Wavelength*, then in a very special sense was an 'eye-opener', as distinguished from both the hypnagogic vision of Brakhage and the stare of Warhol. Snow, in re-introducing expectation as the core of film form, redefines space as . . . essentially 'a temporal notion'."⁴⁸

Michelson's argument hinges on expectation and while one cannot doubt the overwhelming determination of the zoom on our fascination, the superimpositions themselves perhaps play roles other than that of exemplifying phenomenological horizons. Actually, they are infrequent and appear only late in the film. There is one very brief flash superimposition of an earlier point of the loft space as if a reminder of that passage but it is so quick we cannot establish where it was in the passage and it occurs well past the death; the telephone call is the occasion for *immediate* flashbacks, not later recalls; and close to the end there is a projection forward so that a gap opens up between the two images of the wave photograph. Michelson's endeavor to define a new category of temporal arts by overemphasizing an epistemological and phenomenological reading of the work collapses the space of viewing and the time of the filmic experience to that of the movements of consciousness. A too reciprocal mimesis takes place here, dis-

counting the objectivity of our position *outside* the film observing the "pure" orders Snow constructed and analysed in *Wavelength*.⁴⁹ Adducing this experience as narrative oriented future discussion of the film to the normalizing role of dominant cinema, condemning *Wavelength* to a role of critique or simply condemning it — for its self-same narrative devices.⁵⁰

The human events that could be construed as elements of a narrative series do not naturally link together and each cannot, as is generally thought, be taken to be a realistic standard from which deviations are made or traditional narrative undermined. Although the immediate entry of figures into the space gives an impression of realism ("The room is shot as realism."), already there are fluctuations in the image, a flash frame, and colouration of the image caused by filters or gels, which Snow labels "intimations of other ways of seeing the thing, until the first real break is when the image is totally negative."⁵¹ One could say, rather, that the figures moving the heavy bookshelf into the loft simply establish the depth of the space, which appears more foreshortened than its actual eighty foot length, and through which the zoom will have to travel for forty-five minutes. (We do not yet know that the hierarchy of action is to be displaced, with the zoom assuming a more significant role than the human actors and that the actors will be no more important an event than the light fluctuations.)

The second human appearance and episode similarly is an initial means to deconstruct elements that make film, in particular, image-sound relationships, as initiated and analysed in *New York Eye and Ear Control*. So far the film has been in *sinc* sound. Now with the shutting of the

window (unnaturally closing out the street sound as happens so often in commercial film in passages outside to inside, or room to room and thus setting up one consideration of an “inside”/“outside” as well as sound/silence construction) music from the radio is ascendant. When one of the women walks back through the space, her footsteps are not heard. Yet when the radio is turned off, sync sound returns and we hear the footsteps of the second woman who makes the same exit behind the camera. (Street sound returns even though the window is not re-opened.) The use of this particular song playing on the radio, the Beatles’ “Strawberry Fields Forever,” moreover, allows the first colour fluctuations caused by filters to be seen as referential, the rose-like tones exemplifying what is sung in the lyrics pointing to its own “unreality.”

“Off-stage” sound is used to announce the third human event: the entry of the man who collapses and dies in front of the camera. This “typical” scene of dramatic construction — a death — is already denaturalized by the fact that even before we see him enter the frame the time of his movement passes (through different stocks of film and takes) from day to a twilight effect of grainy filmstock to night. Here, once again, the human intervention seems to be a prop the zoom relentlessly rolls over.⁵² And now the colour and light fluctuations assume another referential role as reflection of inner states.

The zoom now having passed over the body, the fourth event occurs, which is linked through dialogue to the body in the space. A woman enters presumably from the same location but the sync sound of her walking corresponds now only to the visible depth of field as if what we have passed

through by means of the zoom — and in which the body “exists” — is no longer in our presence. The telephone call that makes reference back to the body is followed closely on the woman’s exit by flashbacks, literally, a series of flashes in black and white as if ghostly traces of the *immediate* past action. (During this scene, strong shadows of the figure are thrown against the wall, paralleling the separation between the two Walking Woman cut-outs above her, anticipating her own ghostly apparitions, and the out-of-sync images of the waves soon to appear.)

Each of these incidents is subject to immediate question as to their constructed reality or to what Michael Snow calls levels of belief. In the reality of film, they are not of a different order than the abstract or light events that interrupt; they are not the realistic counterpart to the materialist demonstration of medium to follow that then puts that *construction* of reality in doubt.⁵³ It was in doubt from the start since the only construction of reality here is the film. Similarly, Michelson’s concentration on expectation limits the film to one order of reality, that of intentional consciousness, without allowing other orders and levels of events — the “dispersed spectrum” of the film — to be considered. (It is as if the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, a philosophical source for Snow, was not considered in favour of the phenomenology of Husserl as a resource for reading this film.) With the proviso that Snow calls *Wavelength* “metaphysics” and *New York Eye and Ear Control* “philosophy,”⁵⁴ the former is like the latter in that different orders and classes of events construct it:

“Now: one of the subjects of or one of the things *Wavelength* attempts to be is a

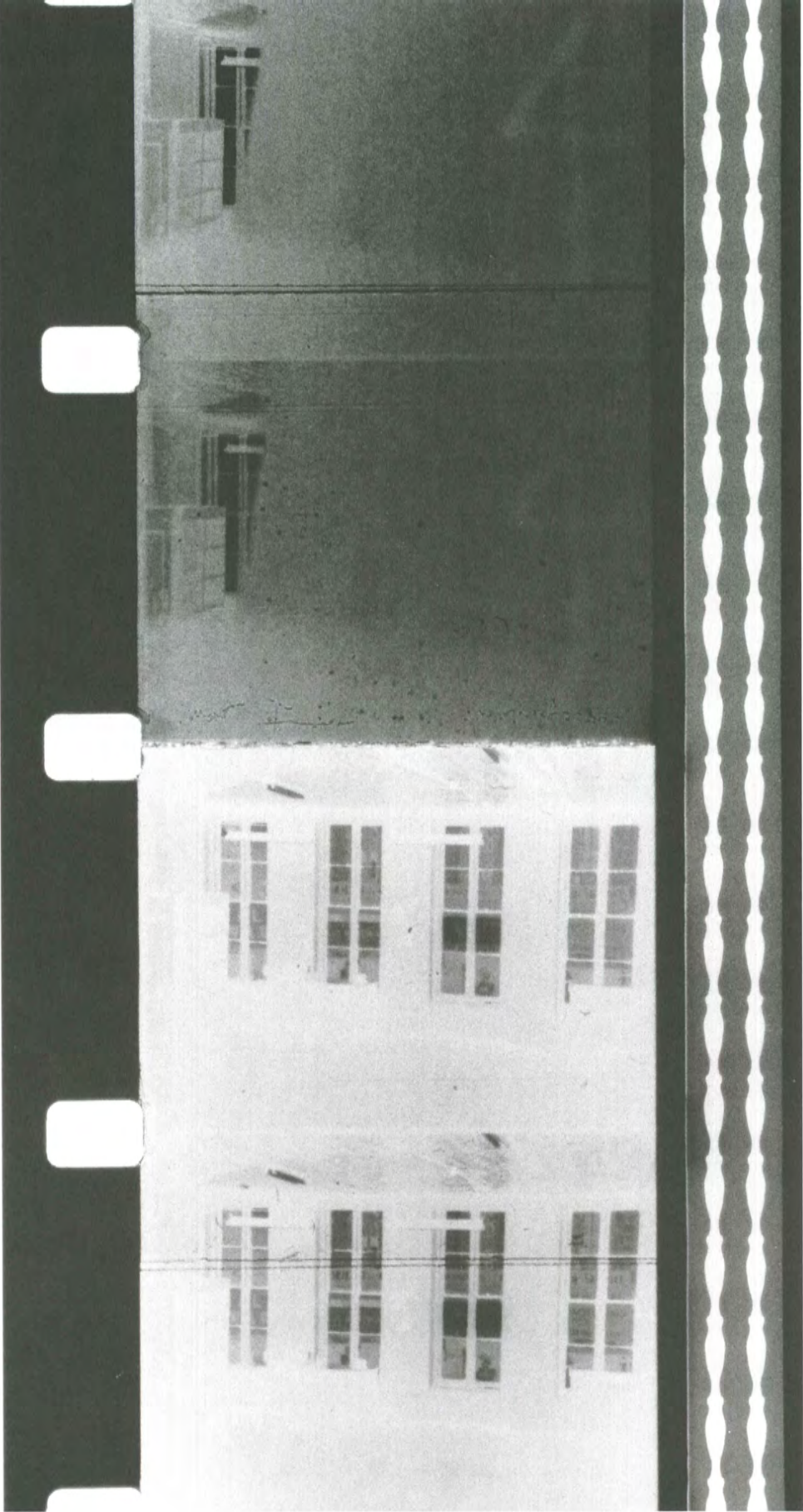
'balancing' of different orders, classes of events and protagonists. The image of the yellow chair has as much 'value' in its own world as the girl closing the window. The film events are not hierarchical but are chosen from a scale of mobility that runs from pure light events, the various perceptions of the room, to the images of the moving human beings. The inert: the bookcase that gets carried in, the corpse, as seen, dying being a passage from activity to object. Inertia. It is precise that 'events *take place*.' The various kinds of events imply or demonstrate links which are, more or less, 'stories.' We tend to make a strong human event link between the death and the phone call. It is the beginning of what we conventionally call a 'story.' Before the man dies or after he dies the 'story' changes levels and one 'reads' relationships. His entry (He is not seen. Behind you?) is announced/preceded by breaking glass, etc. sounds as well as image-colour fluctuations. The sound is 'representational,' 'realistic' as he is seen, walks in, dies. This is against the 'abstract' sine-wave glissando. When he dies the 'realistic' sound stops and is now seen. The colour-image waves which on other occasions are sensed as light events tied to what-is-happening-to-the-room (!) belief are now sensed as ripples of life-heart struggles or the reverberations of hitting the floor. It is a very involved subject to try to write about. The 'story' is on different levels of belief and identification."⁵⁵

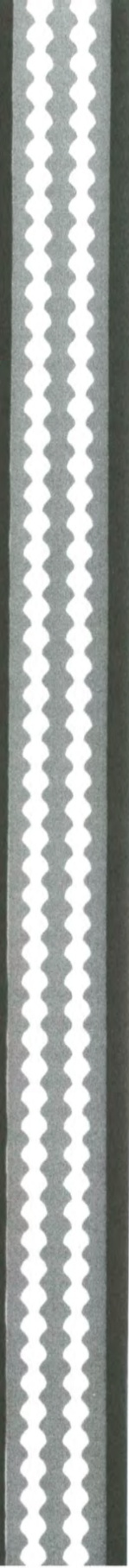
That one thing after another happens does not necessarily comprise a narrative: Snow's desire for serial variation does not restore narrative and its forms of cinematic identification. The anti-narrative spatiality of Judd's "one thing after another" is made temporal in *Wavelength*.⁵⁶ The zoom is the

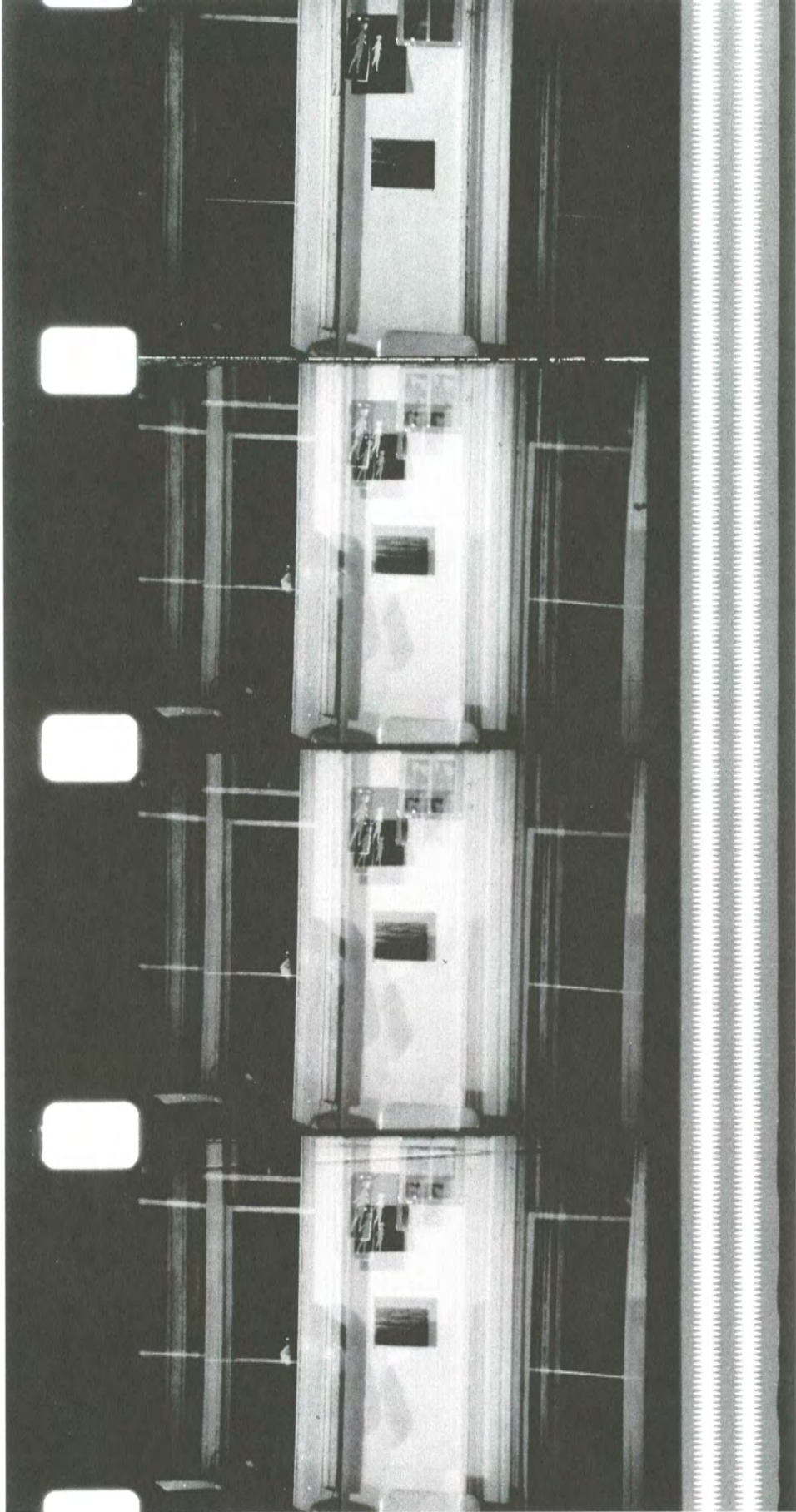
temporal vehicle or medium in which events can happen, just as the space is its analogue for human actions. Michelson, in claiming "Snow has re-defined filmic space as that of action" and that the film is a "grand reduction" itself reduces the film to an aim — to get to the end of the space of the loft where tension and expectation, "the core of film form," are resolved in the conclusion of the still image of the sea. (The implications of that climax, however, are left unresolved or even unnoted, as Sitney points out in his criticism of Michelson's view.⁵⁷ Moreover, once the film is seen and our expectations are satisfied the film no longer would have any future aesthetic effect for us if we already knew the outcome of the zoom.) "It is precise that 'events take place,'" and yet these events which take place during forty-five minutes of time are precisely what is lost in Michelson's scenario, perhaps because they are, only — light.

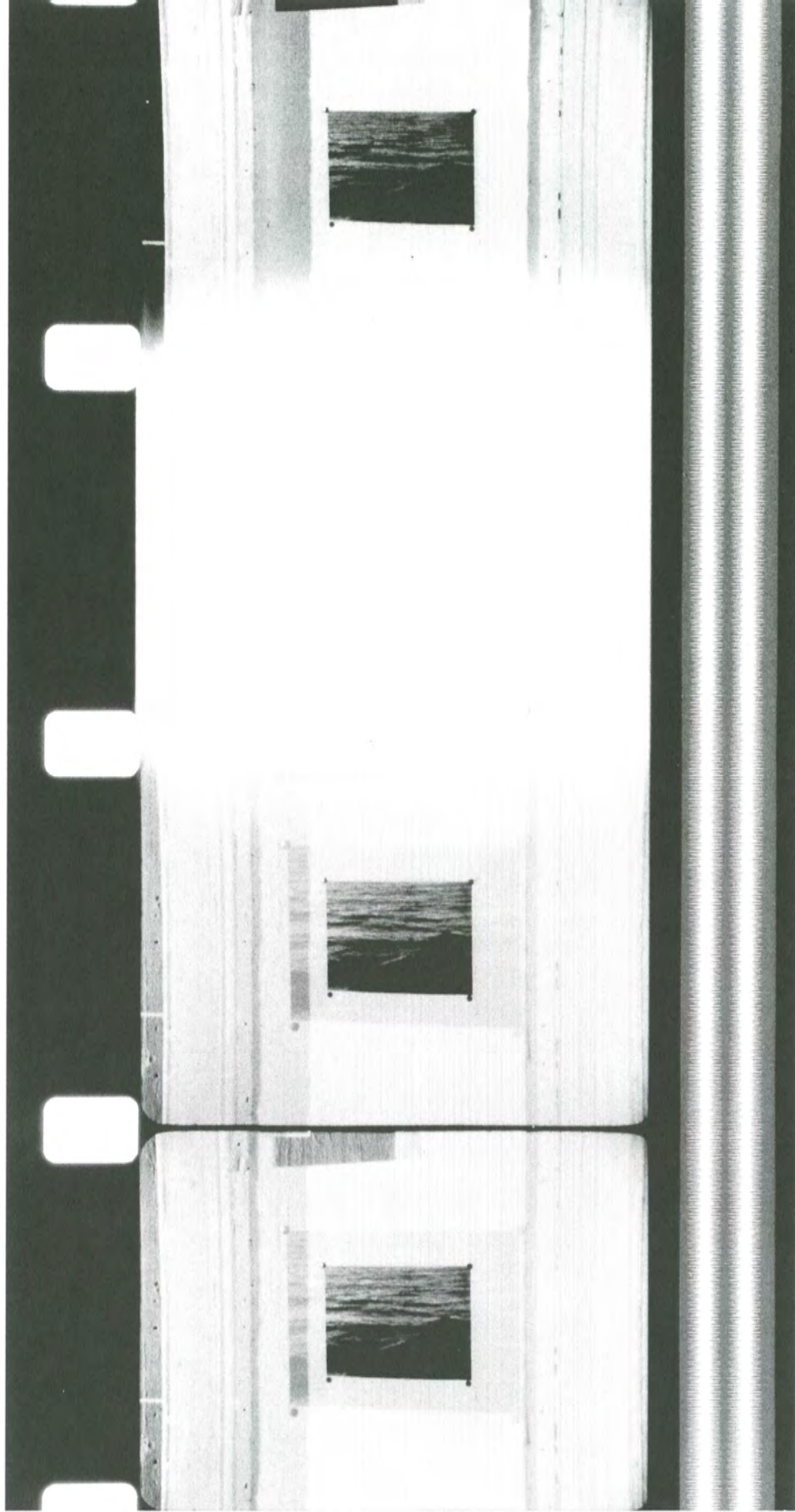
What creates equivalences in this film ("beauty and sadness of equivalence"; setting and action "cosmically equivalent"; "balancing of 'illusion' and 'fact'") is what makes film — light. The medium of light makes the presentational medium of film and therein all things are equal. In that all "things" are light here, the film *Wavelength* concerns itself with the *representation* of light in time. Notes reveal that *Wavelength* started as a much different film, although the room and the zoom were constant throughout.⁵⁸ In all cases, room and zoom were vehicles for the events that take place. As with his sculptures, Snow "set up a system or container which could both shape the fortuitous and give it place."⁵⁹ *Wavelength*, as I have suggested, is the last Walking Woman work in that it fulfilled Snow's desire to make a work on/of

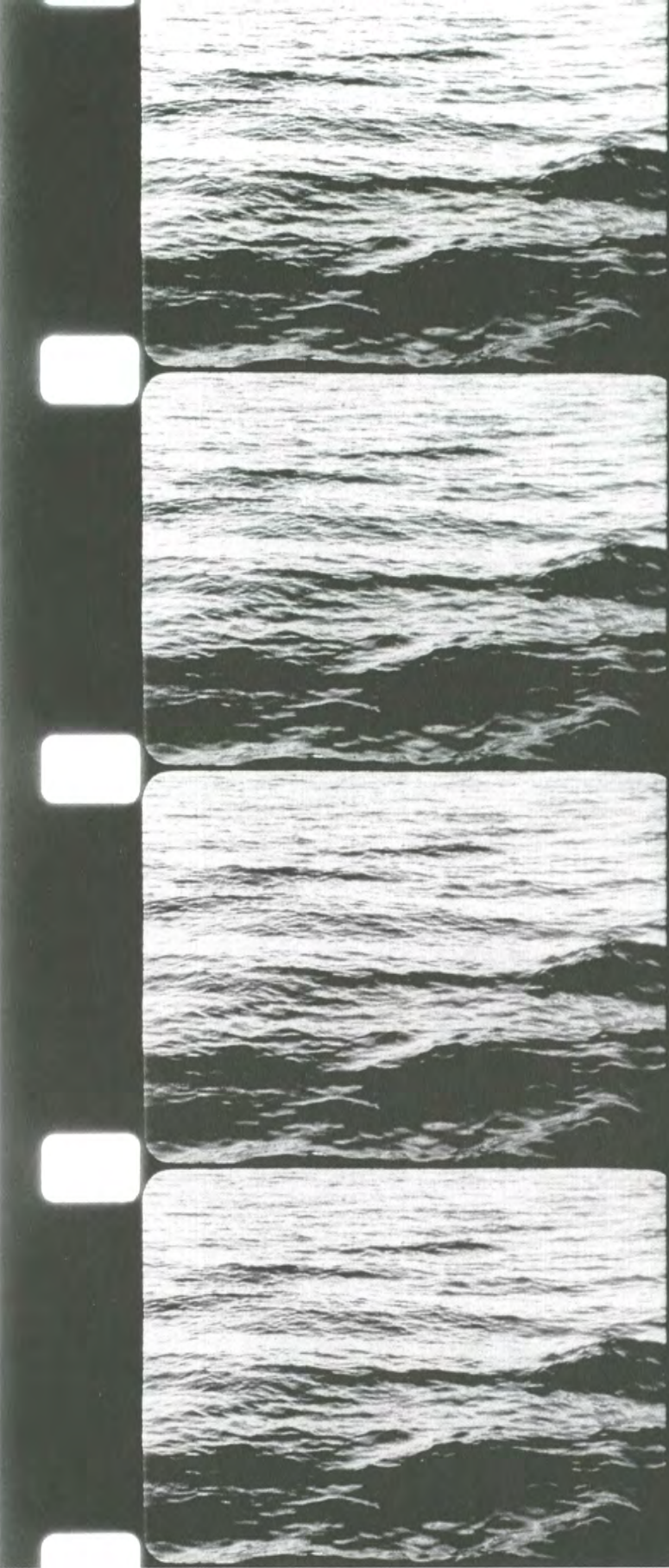












variation. "Don't paint use light to make variations," Snow wrote in his notes; but clearly the historical issues of painting were still in his mind. In attempting "to make a definitive statement of Pure space and time, a balancing of 'illusion' and 'fact,'" Snow had the model of painting and Cézanne in particular before him. So he told Jonas Mekas and P. Adams Sitney in both his *Film Culture* interview and letter.⁶⁰ But he also deleted this ambition from a draft for his Knokke-le-Zoute statement: "In painting since Cézanne 'space' has been a subject of art and has to do with a balance of 'illusion' and 'fact'. I wanted to do this for film with light not paint."⁶¹ Light, then, for Snow becomes the medium for what is pure in "pure Film space and time."

Space in film is formed by coloured light thrown onto a ground that is the screen (itself a framed rectangle). Thus, light functions much as the "abstracted" brushstrokes of a Cézanne painting, hovering between material and representation, fusing an illusionistic space by recognizable visual clues common to any photographic medium. While what makes the image still is only light, what is real as light is emphasized by what is pertinent to film — flash frames, filters, visible splices — but above all by time, the duration brought about by projection. What film adds uniquely to the spatial representation it shares with both photography (a dimensional space constructed by the lens) and painting is duration.

The loft space delineated by the zoom of *Wavelength* was chosen to exemplify, mirror or map out the space of film and seeing: Snow said the film was planned to be "all about seeing." We have to follow that space as it diminishes, not only to experience variation, but to discover what Snow thinks are the pure orders of filmic

presence and representation, illusion and fact. (Painting allows us to enter its picture plane at any place and proceed in any direction outside any hierarchy of relationship. Film's ordering of space is otherwise directed by temporal succession and *Wavelength* in particular by the diminishment caused by the zoom.) Snow described this space for us: "The space starts at the camera's (spectator's) eye, is in the air, then is on the screen, then is within the screen (the mind)."

The representational space of the film seems perspectival, but is actually, nearly, conical, mirroring the throw of the projector's beam. The zoom does not move through the space along perspectival lines of sight but advances maintaining a planar construction of viewing: "It's all planes, not perspectival space," said Snow.⁶² The jerkiness of movement, rather than smooth transition, emphasizes this construction, all the more abstract since the zoom cannot be duplicated naturally by the eye. The light variations, especially those caused by filters or gels, actually reinforce this planar construction. (Delimiting the other end of the loft, the windows close off the space of the zoom but still envelop the street in the optics of the lens, and they are the most immediate means by which colour difference is seen. As clear frames light projects through, analogous to the projector itself, colour thereby achieves all its vibrancy and transparency through the windows otherwise muted and transformed by the colours in the space itself. The window panes thus act as a complex mediator between inside and outside, moreover, functioning like a projector in one direction or operating akin to the zoom lens in foreshortening the façades of the buildings opposite in another). All these planar reinforcements

are “projections” of the actual “unseen” individual frames of the filmstrip themselves as they compose the seeming diminishment of space when run together (the illusion of movement of the zoom) — the nature of the filmic enterprise Snow described as the “frame by frame truth and the running together illusion.”⁶³ The balancing of illusion and fact is this accomplishment, in that film is both representational and durational.

Moving through the space of Michelson’s “grand reduction” or Sitney’s “story of the diminishing area of pure potentiality,” we arrive at the full frame still photograph of the waves.⁶⁴ We have to arrive there, not because it is the climax and passage to a transcendental realm, but because it returns us to the very materials and terms of illusion and fact Snow started with. The film had to end on a still on that flat plane of the screen replicating the material of a beginning, with the *difference*, however, that temporality makes: the single frame still image/s projected in time.⁶⁵ At the end, a still image, which we know to be a spatial illusion (the photograph in our reality is “opaque” not “transparent”), is rendered on and reduced to the flat two-dimensional plane of light. It is maintained there even after the sound track ends, only to be dissolved through turning the image out of focus, finally transpiring as white light on a flat screen. *Wavelength* concludes on this “frame by frame truth” the image reveals to us at the end of our passage through film time.

The “metaphysical” moment of penetration for Sitney (“The metaphysical culmination of *Wavelength* had been the moment of breaking through the photographic surface.”⁶⁶) or material exhaustion of space for Michelson (material in the

sense that an optical apparatus exhausts the “space” of the film) is marked rather by the revelation of the original terms of film in the moment that the two cones coincide on, or are reduced to, the plane of the screen — the material conical throw of the projector and the illusionistic space of the loft that mirrors it — collapsed into the full frame still image. This is the logical conclusion of the shape of the film as the consequence of the zoom. But the film does not end here. We do not pass through the image, after all the zoom stops there, but we enter into another durational space or state that the image brings about, which Snow reveals is just as endemic to film space and time.

Of course, in that there are different levels of order in this film, being a summation of Snow’s “nervous system, religious inklings and aesthetic ideas,” the end of the film and the image of the waves can be made a metaphor and Snow talked many times of the waves being an image of continuity: “The photograph of the waves is an implication of a kind of total continuity for everything and not just that simple incident.”⁶⁷ P. Adams Sitney, I think, was the closest of the first commentators in taking *Wavelength* at Michael Snow’s word as elaborated in his Knokke statement and *Film Culture* interview and letter, especially in considering the transcendental implications of Snow’s summation. He agreed with Snow that “metaphysics (for Snow, the religious and apperceptive dimension and the locus of paradoxes) . . . is the specific domain of *Wavelength*.” He criticized “Michelson’s brilliant analysis of the film [because] it does not account for its transcendental aura, which emerges,” he believes, “from the tension between the intentionality of the movement forward

and the superhuman, invisible fixity of the tripod from which it pivots," and from that between the glissando and natural sound which are climaxed "in the final eerie plunge from the flat wall into the illusionary depth of the motionless seascape."⁶⁸

Snow's "religious inklings," perhaps are no more than a general sense of continuity allied to a notion of fate for which film is suited and around which *Wavelength* is purely constructed.⁶⁹ Referring to *Wavelength*, Snow has written: "From the beginning the end is a factor. In the context of the film the end is not 'arbitrary'; it is fated. And past the end it should have ripples. The wave photograph; waves are the visible registrar of invisible forces. Because it is (at first) seen as flat (on the wall) it makes a total spatial ending for the film at the same time as an image it implies continuity."⁷⁰

This statement in itself points to the levels of comprehension each moment of the film must balance: perhaps here is the paradoxical locus Sitney calls "metaphysical." But in the reality that the film maintains, here and now in its viewing situation, as in all his films Snow constructs image-spectator relations which are also "attempts to suggest the mind to a certain state or certain states of consciousness. They are drug relatives in that respect." The transcendence Snow speaks of for *Wavelength* is specific to those elements that compose the film: light and time. "*Wavelength* ... is more transcended by light-time," Snow claimed.⁷¹

Another reading of the film, then, would attempt to link what is rendered in its common elements of light and time, concentrating in different ways on the new rhythms of time, light and sound as they shape our viewing. In other words, the "shape" of *Wavelength* is more than its

exhaustion of space. (Shape would be measured along the rhythm of light and sound breaks.) Not only would expectations change (now measured along the rhythm of non-human events) but also the way the film has been structured in descriptions around the human events. If we then divorce our viewing of the film altogether from the human actions as a four-part structuring of the film corresponding to those actions (as the film is usually analysed in commentaries and which cannot account, like Michelson, for the conclusion, which is beyond the human), we can begin to reconstruct *Wavelength* around other types of events. A four-part division of the film can still be maintained with the human actions figuring now only as particular moments within overall duration. (A more detailed breakdown aligned to classes of variations would follow the changes in rolls and stocks of film and processing.)

The first section of the film sets out general relations and expectations, but not a duality between realism and materialism. The alternation between actors and empty space by no means prejudices us in favour of the human activity we expect to follow (or not). The empty space maintains its own presence through the durations when nothing (human) happens. Already that space has been interrupted by flash frames and fluctuations. After the radio sequence a whole repertoire of effects is established by means of superimposed filters or plastic gels, generally yellow during this sequence (the colouration during the film progresses from warm to cool, in wavelength from light to water), flashes, rapid alternations between filters and back to the space, some emphasizing, at one moment, the interior and, at another, the world outside the

studio. (These alternations introduce us to one of the themes of an inside/outside dichotomy and reveal the effects to which the windows are put as they emphasize the inside of the room or the street outside with its façades and passing trucks, at one moment transparent, at another as opaque and reflective as the walls — or screen.)

The passage to the second part of the film, “the first real break,” illustrating that there was an equivalency between the seemingly different “realistic” and “abstract” events depicted, is made through a transition to a negative image. The transition is not made easily, however. There seems to be a struggle through hesitating flashes of white light to attain this state, as if a passage was being made through light from one *threshold* to another (thresholds that will be enacted in different ways between the parts of the film).⁷² Once again the “same” repertoire of effects is catalogued through colour filters, only now in negative with similar alternations between inside and outside. The negative image offers a new reality, however abstracted, and sculptural form to the space. (Even the bookcase, its compartments mimicking the panes of the windows, finally is clearly visible.) A drone, Snow’s sine-wave glissando, commences with the negative image, replacing that of the “realistic” street sound, and continues to the end of the film as the zoom’s abstract complement.

The third section begins after the negative sequence has ended in a few frames of white light, caused by clear leader, returning the loft to a positive image, now tinted green and in which varying transformations continue to take place. The room changes, bathed in a glowing aqueous white light in which the yellow chair

beside the desk and underneath the photographs takes on added prominence. This sequence passes from day to night intervened by the break-in and death. Intervened only — the zoom, continuing to pass over the body, brings the yellow chair all the more to attention. The sequence ends, fading to black (in opposition to the transitions in white earlier) only when the frame begins to encroach on the image of the chair, which suggests from the moment the chair came to prominence that all objects, including the human body were subsumed to the same class of event: that of the inert object. (The death is not the climax to be resolved in a denouement that concludes a classic four-part dramatic construction.)

If the third part of the film is dominated by the objectivity of the chair, the fourth part, in contrast to the third (as part two contrasted to the positive image of part one), is devoted to representations of the photographic image, although this is not immediately apparent as the end of the wall seems to float before us through a white haze. But as the wave photograph commands the centre of the wall (as it has done since the beginning of the film), so photography sets in place the various operations of human action depicted. Another day to night passage occurs here, now artificially introduced by pure black frames. The phone call is the occasion for various “out-of-sync” images to supervene, such as those between figure and shadow or the ghost image of the flashbacks and the past reality of their subject, both of which mirror the slippages the wave photograph more obviously will introduce. (The telephone call is, as well, a representation, a verbal flashback, of a past action.) The very images of the Walking Woman above the wave photograph are accurate templates for

us to judge any slippage of the image. At the point when the wave photograph begins to dominate the ground by its centrality, still framed by a wide border of white wall and window moulding around it, it announces its end in an anticipatory dialogue with itself (casting its "shadow" before it). A larger ghostly image of the photograph appears while the image of the present location of the zoom remains constant and clear. The zoom motion then tracks that of the larger ghost image, maintaining the scale of the earlier image, until it marries its own image in depth. Here an inversion occurs whereby the large image surfaces through in all its black and white reality. Now the wave image dominates the screen and quickly fills it.

The zoom ends here, edging slightly into the photograph, but the film does not conclude. Reaching the photograph does not end the film but subject the image and audience to different dimensions of temporal experience of (by means of) the photograph. After having reached a peak, the glissando slides up and down, then, after the image of the waves has been held on the screen for a long time, ends, while the image is held silently for an equal time before being tuned out of focus.

Beyond the activities of its human actors, image, light, sound, and time resolve here as the pure motivations of the cinematic apparatus to which the zoom and glissando have led us: "It is a total glissando while the film is a crescendo and a dispersed spectrum which attempts to utilize the gifts of both prophecy and memory which only film and music have to offer."

The temporal dimension of prophecy and memory are brought forth by the zoom and glissando apart from any human

motivation in the film. The contradictory appeal to "the immediacy of experience in the flow of time" as an intentionality of consciousness mirrored by the viewer as an analogy to the actions of the film is belied by the construction of the film. (Yet abstraction and motivation are related: "Within that I played/improvised with plastics and filters while shooting, feeling it out but bearing in mind certain prior considerations: their relation to the human events [announcing/echoing etc.], when they should perhaps be most pure..."⁷³) The temporal structure of announcements and echoes means that the film is never fully present as much as the intensity of the effects of its inter-frame rhythms, the relentless drive of the zoom, and the shrillness of the glissando subject the viewer. But this viewer, as well, is subjected to new conditions brought about by a move towards temporal structure. As such the identifications sustained by both mythopoeic film and Abstract Expressionism in corresponding passages to structural film and an allied Minimalism no longer hold and enter a contradictory moment for the subject/viewer. This would account for first interpretations and subsequent revisions of *Wavelength* as well as for the discomfort, perhaps, that the dialectic of presence and absence enacted through a dualism of human and inhuman brought about by representations made by a machine — the camera apparatus — produced for the viewing subject. These representations within a temporal structure of announcements and echoes would make *Wavelength*, then, surprisingly, allegorical. Announcements and echoes would not adhere to the intentional structure of consciousness where a "reciprocal mimesis" would make the film symbolical in

structure but to an allegorical mode which “always corresponds to the unveiling of an authentically temporal destiny.”

The nature of *Wavelength's* construction, of frame following frame, the relationship between one slightly differentiated sign and another in a film that attempts to end after its passage in the recognized but differential conditions of its origins “necessarily contains a constitutive temporal element; it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the *repetition* (in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term) of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority. . . .

Allegory appears as a successive mode capable of engendering duration as the illusion of a continuity that it knows to

be illusory.” “Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognized as a non-self.”⁷⁴

The engendering of a new mode necessarily enfolds a past aesthetic and so we expect to find the symbolical and allegorical mixed in the intentions and interpretations of this film. The allegorical mode only, however, can envelop in its constructions the levels that must be balanced in this film, some contradictorily, and the summations that must be resolved as much as they express on the part of the artist conflicting nostalgia and desires.

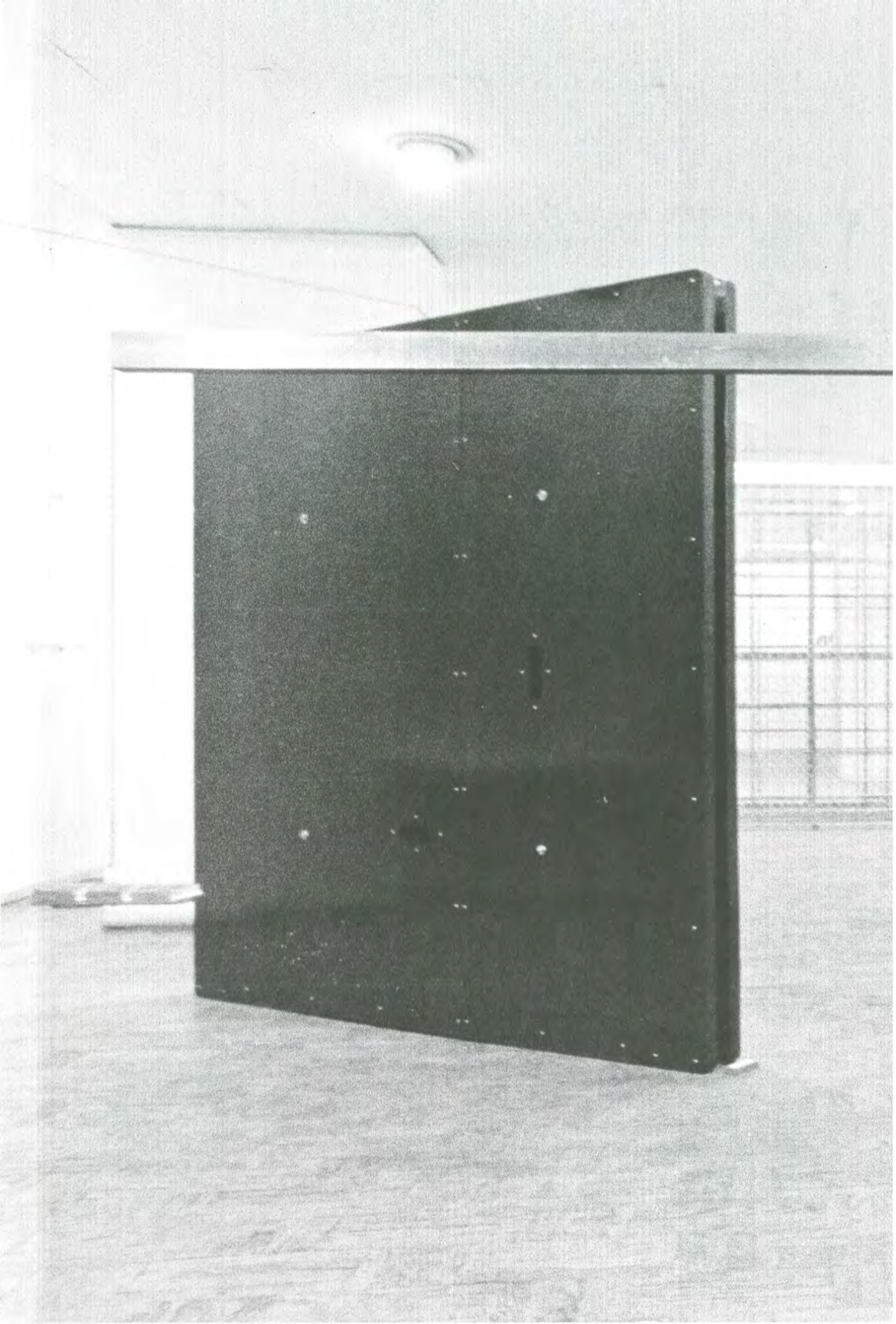
IV. Autonomic Art

Michael Snow: Sculpture, The Isaacs Gallery, Toronto
January 15–February 3, 1969

Snow's exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery in Toronto reprised that of the Poindexter Gallery a year earlier, including its four works *Blind*, *Scope*, *First to Last* and *In Place*, now titled *Site*. The presentation in Toronto added *Atlantic*, made in 1966–67 before any of these works (significantly, through the period Snow was thinking about and making *Wavelength*) and subsequent works that continued Snow's theme of framing (*Portrait*, 1967, *View*, 1968) and those that broached new conceptual territory (*Aluminum and Lead*, 1968), as well as more ephemeral

works that took the space of installation as their compositional device, such as *Long Distance (for Wendy)* and *Piano*, both 1969. Photography on its own was yet absent, except by implication or influence and as part of the sculpture *Atlantic*.

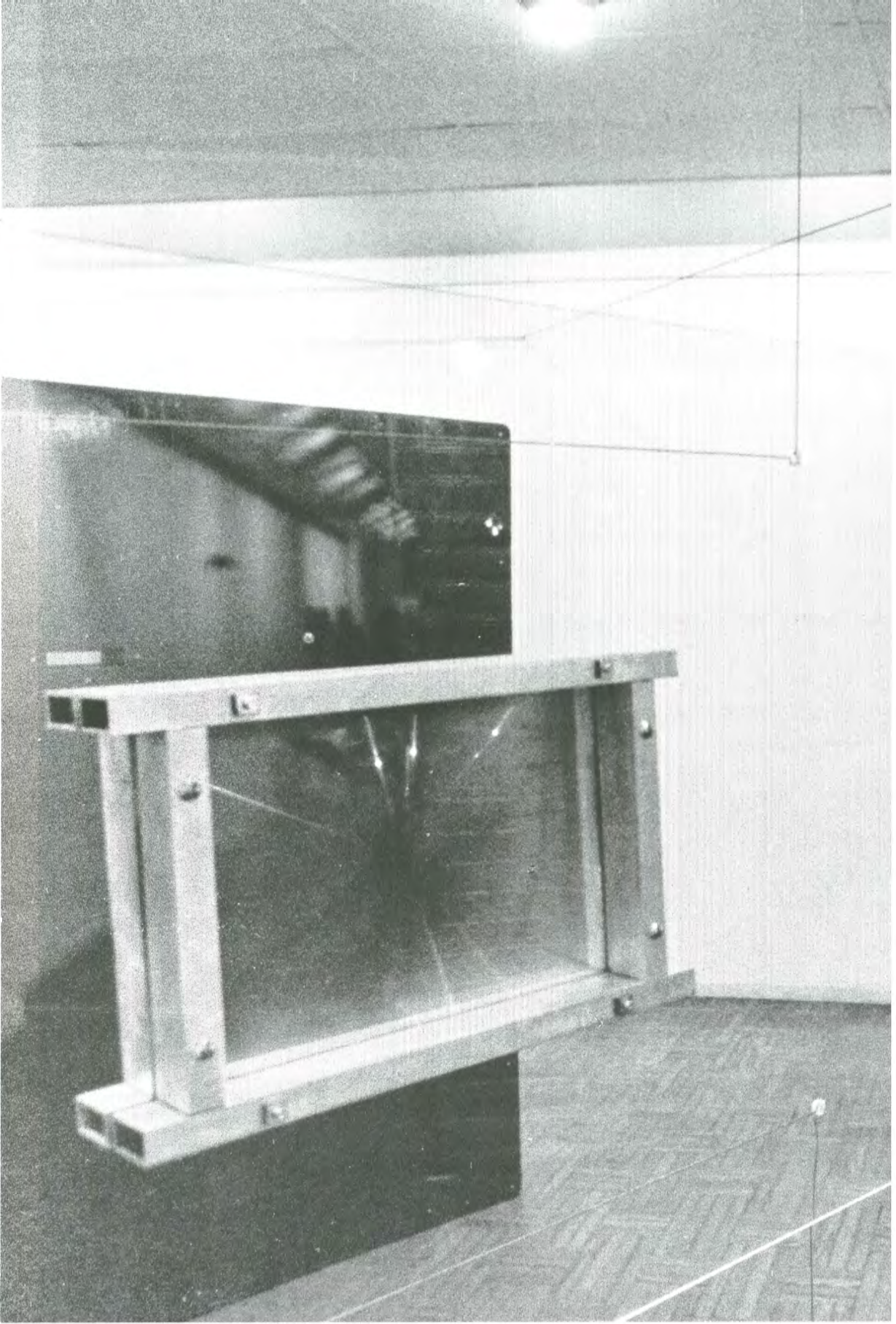
Though comprising many of the same works, the exhibition in Toronto had a different reception, function and meaning for Canadian art than it would or did in New York. In New York, the work would be seen as the continuing articulation of a Minimalist aesthetic shared by many



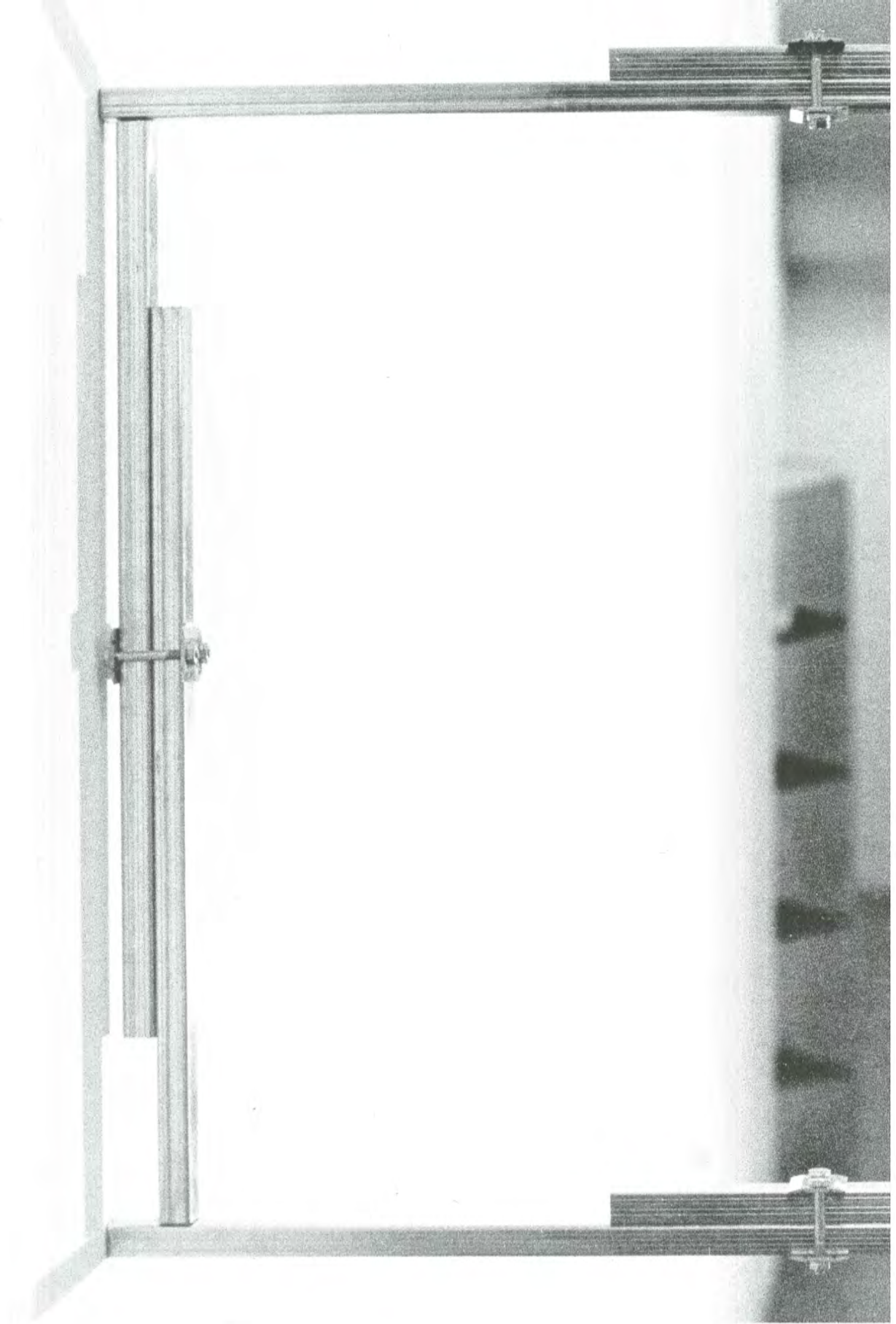




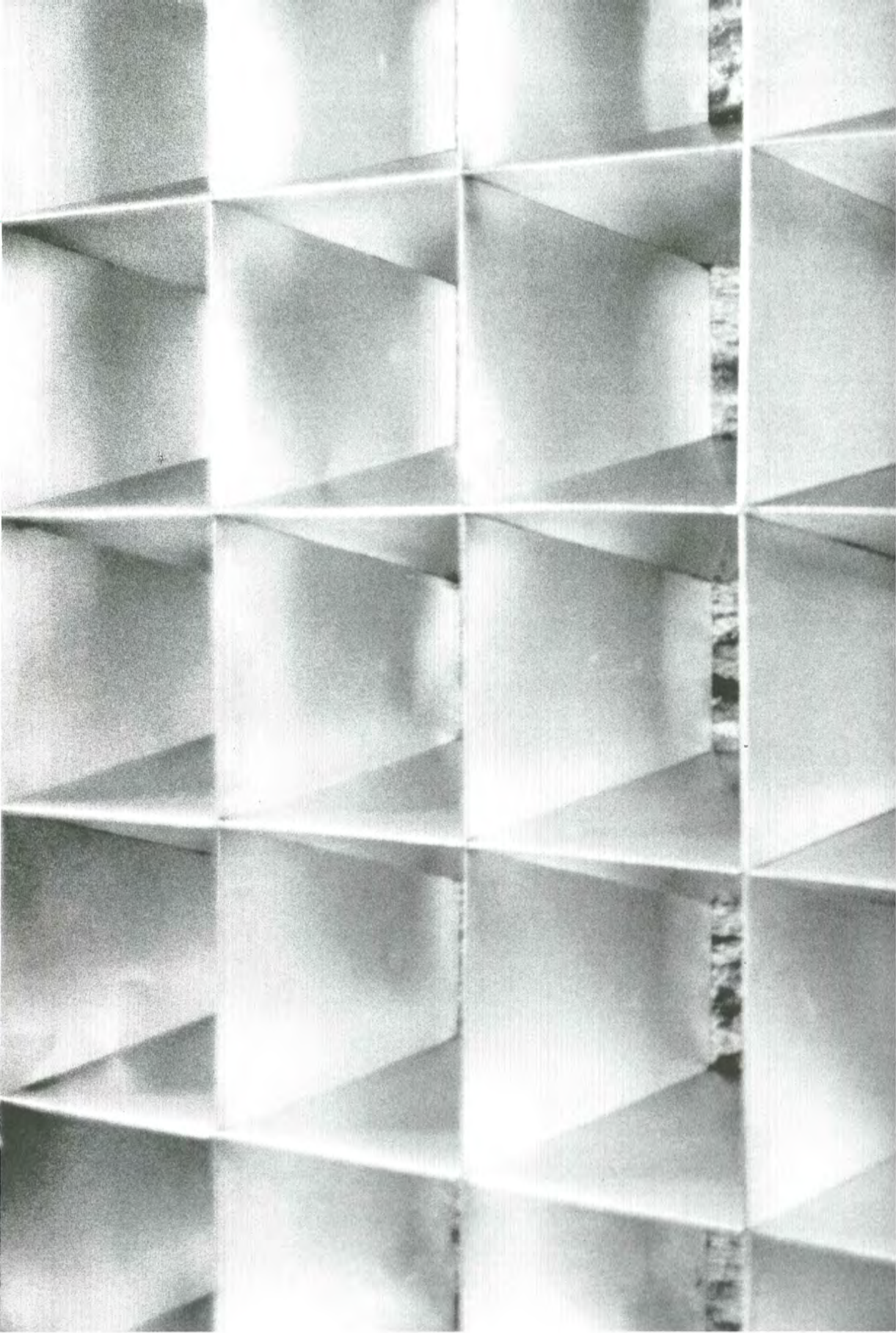


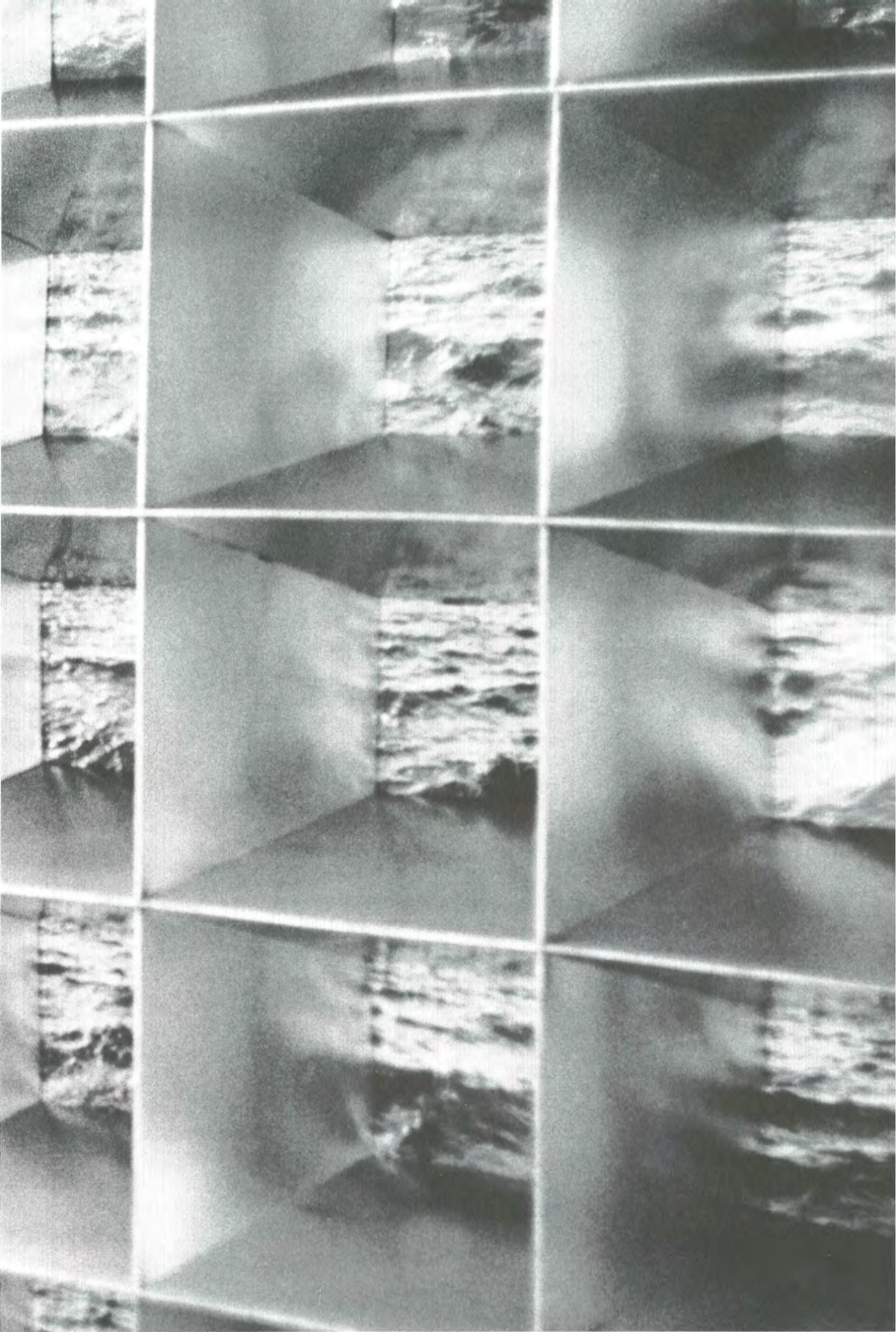


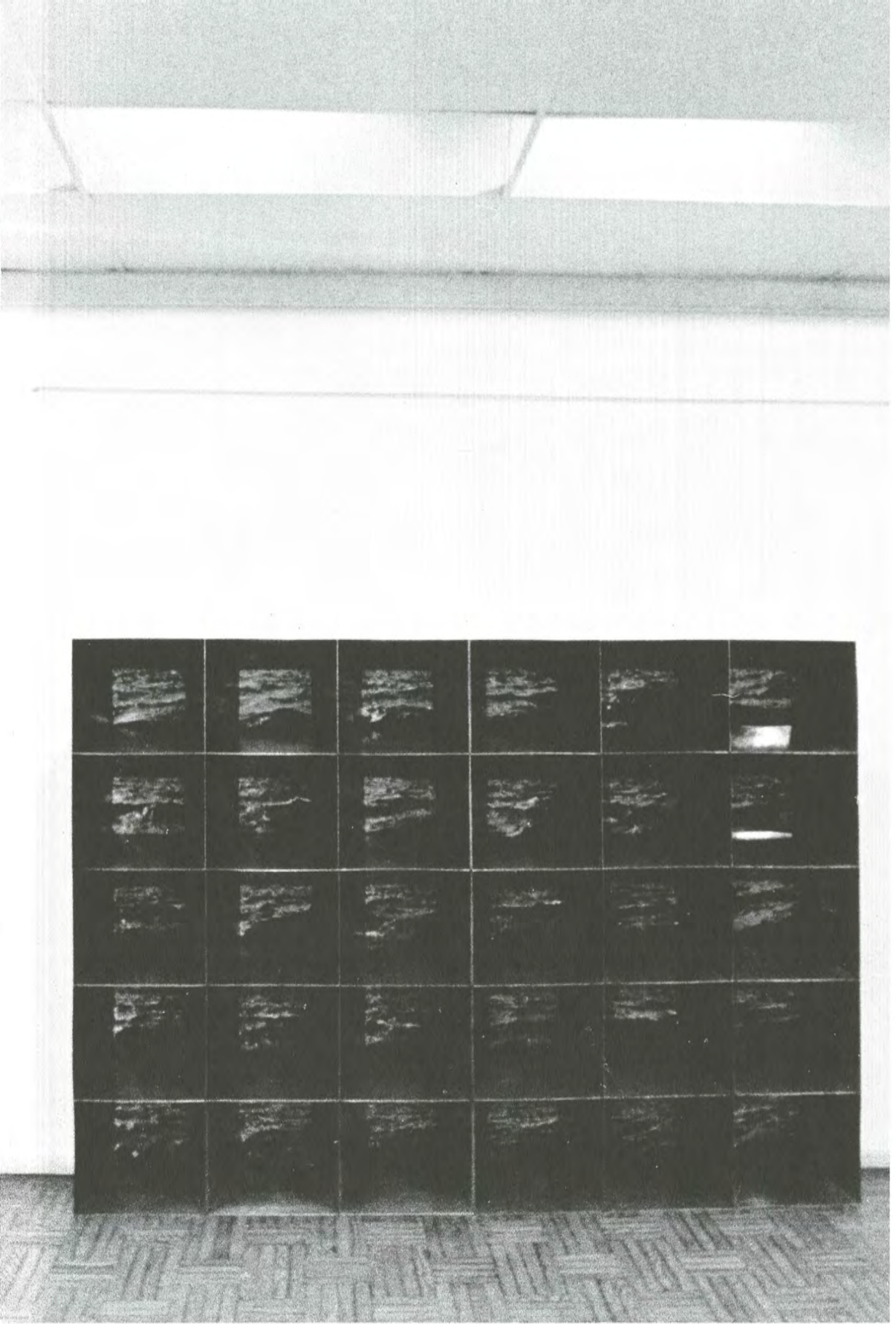












Michael Snow: Sculpture
The Isaacs Gallery, Toronto
January 15–February 3, 1969

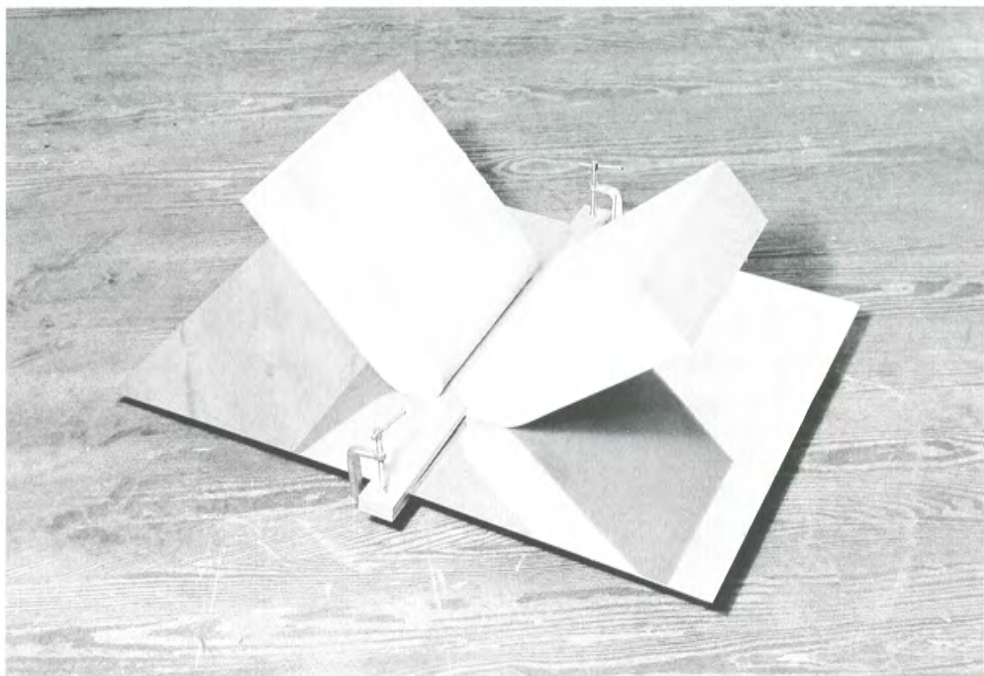
- pages 340–342 **Aluminum and Lead** 1968
Aluminum, lead
Height adjustable, cross bar 304.8 cm,
lead ingots 53.3 and 33.0 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario
- 340, 343, 344 **First to Last** 1967
Painted wood, aluminum, glass
208.5 x 208.5 x 15.2 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario
- 344–345 **View** 1968
Plastic, steel cable
55.9 x 76.2 x 7.6 cm
Mrs. Peter MacLachlan, Toronto
- 346–347 **Portrait** 1967
Aluminum
Variable dimensions: approx. 60.9 x 91.4 cm
Private Collection
- 348–350 **Atlantic** 1967
Metal, wood, photographs, arborite
171.1 x 245.1 x 39.9 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario

artists, but it would not necessarily have stood out on its own, or it may be seen more in relation to *Wavelength*. In Toronto, where Snow was known primarily for the Walking Woman, and not, for instance, for his film *Wavelength*, his sculpture was seen as a departure from his own work and that of his past association with the Isaacs' group of painters. But this work was also very much a confirmation of the direction a generation of younger sculptors were taking — Karl Beveridge, Royden Rabinowitch, and David Rabinowitch especially — in their Toronto exhibitions of 1968 and 1969 and can be taken as a marker of a new orientation in Canadian art. Reviewing the Poindexter exhibition for a Toronto newspaper, Harry Malcolmson recalled *First to Last's* exhibition in *Sculpture '67*: “*First, Last* was so contrary to the flow of the sculpture at the City Hall exhibition as not to be comprehensible.” By the next year, this would no longer be the case.⁷⁵

The Isaacs exhibition included works made over what was more than a two year period and thus in the context of those sculptures from the Poindexter exhibition introduced a seemingly new direction to past concerns. While works such as *Portrait* and *View* seem to further economize the theme of framing and hardly seem sculptural at all, they are closely related conceptually and structurally to a new direction of Snow's sculpture exemplified in *Aluminum and Lead* and, indeed, to his future photographic works. Snow's sculpture trailed off after this exhibition and, aside from continuing major work in film, his visual art of the seventies was devoted to photography. The last sculptures, actually two complementary works, *Membrane* and 432101234, both from 1969, were first

shown in his 1970 retrospective, and this particular practice would not reassert itself until his 1982 sculpture exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery, although many of those works had their origins in notes of this earlier period. During the period covered by the 1969 Isaacs exhibition, Snow worked on the films *Wavelength*, *Standard Time*, 1967, and \longleftrightarrow , 1968–69. In fact, after this exhibition, by his own testimony, Snow distanced himself from being an artist in favour of being seen as a filmmaker as he was then recognized, culminating with *La Région Centrale* in 1971, as the major influence in experimental film. The film \longleftrightarrow , or *Back and Forth* as it is also known, was Snow's main filmic effort after *Wavelength* (*Standard Time* being really a study of various camera movements and image-sound relations preparing for it). The clarity of structure and different concern for materiality Snow pursued in \longleftrightarrow was brought to bear in the new sculptures as well.

Aluminum and Lead greeted visitors as they entered the Isaacs Gallery, as if, in its difference from Snow's past sculpture, setting the parameters for re-viewing the earlier works made for the Poindexter exhibition (or, like *Portrait*, made at the same time) along Snow's new lines of interest. The title, *Aluminum and Lead*, itself describes both basic elements of the sculpture, with its grammatical conjunction mimicking by its position in the title the function of balance in the piece. *Aluminum and Lead* is simply that: a balanced construction of unadorned and untransformed materials, lead ingots and aluminum extrusion, the weight of the lead played against the structural strength of the aluminum. Reduced here to the basic elements of simple utilitarian materials and architectonic



Membrane 1969 (top)
Chromed steel, wood, rubber
9.5 x 48.9 x 67.3 cm
S.L. Simpson Gallery, Toronto

432101234 1969 (bottom)
Chromed steel, aluminum, sponge rubber
33.0 x 48.9 x 67.3 cm
Peggy Gale, Toronto



←→ 1968-69
50 min., colour
Art Gallery of Ontario

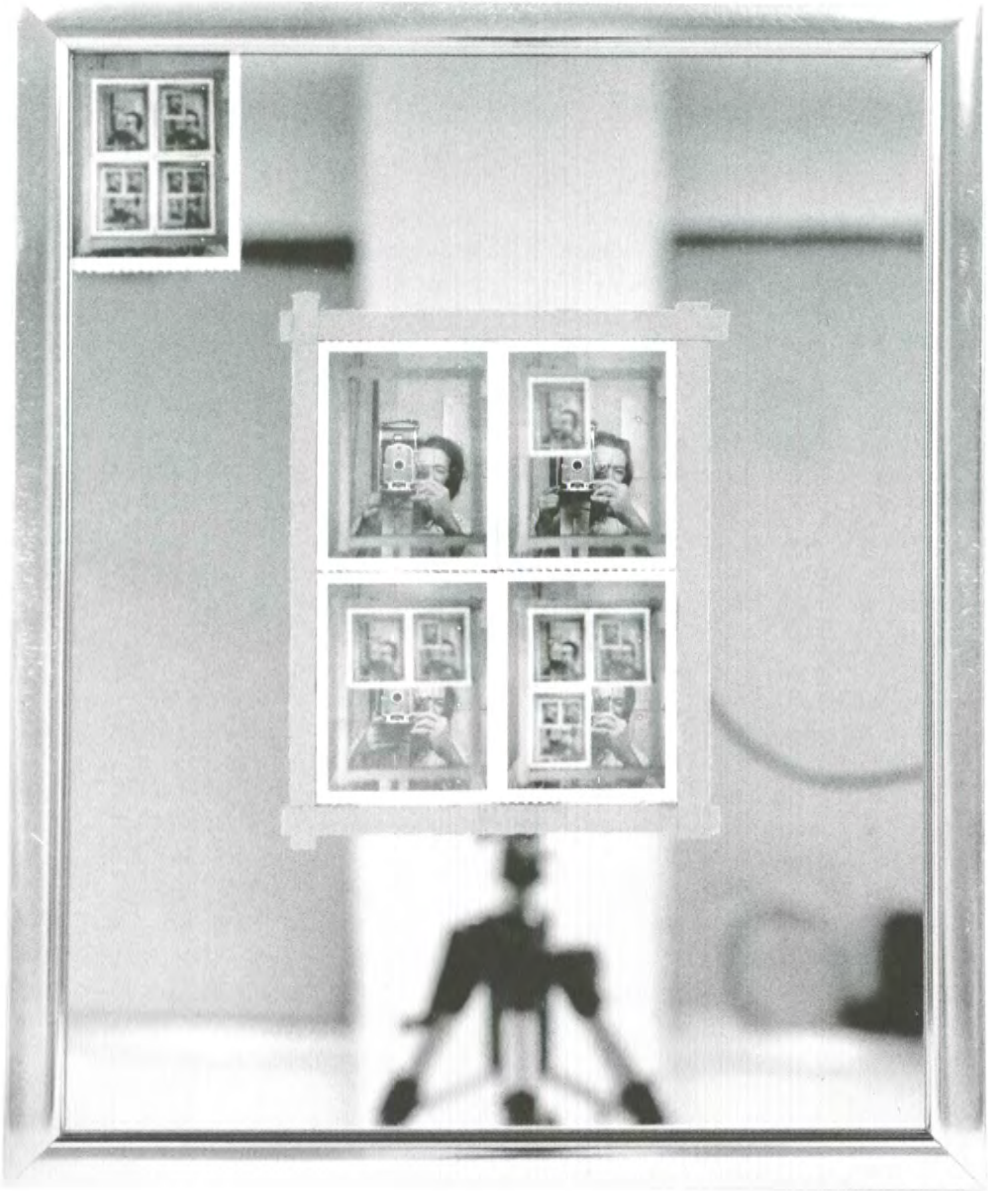
form held in tension and compressed between floor and ceiling, the sculpture partakes of “the human intervention of architecture” thus relating itself to the rectangle and framing device of the earlier sculpture. But it is more than this as well. As in *First to Last*, the work “composes by the very limitations it imposes.” *Aluminum and Lead* is a closed system that draws its construction from the potentialities of its materials and situation, and that shows itself by its clarity of making — it is all there for the seeing. This procedure is the principle for *Membrane* and *432101234* as well, where the constraint that in the past was applied to seeing now is given over to materials, the operation and procedural effects of which are offered to observation.

In retrospect additionally this can be seen to be a principle of the framing pieces such as *Portrait*. Interviewed for the Isaacs exhibition, Snow replied: “*First, Last* and especially *Portrait* also *Aluminum and Lead* are held together by equalizing tensions. In *Portrait* each set of two bars is forced against both the opposite walls or door-jamb and against one another and in addition are held there by being clamped together. This makes a kind of compressed point of stasis or rest. All the forces involved have an equal part in maintaining the form which you are seeing. I think this is very clear, very simple, very sculptural, very necessary and very important. The forms are made from forces but they are fixed.”⁷⁶

The articulation of a clear conceptual structure that displayed the conditions of the work’s making as effects to be realized in the viewing of the work was applied, moreover, as a working procedure for future photography, a procedure displayed as its indexical signs of making in *Authorization*, 1969. The photographic

works included in the present exhibition, while grouped as a medium here, have different affiliations. None were shown actually in the Poindexter or Isaacs exhibitions. *Snow Storm, February 7, 1967* was first shown in a Canadian group show in Europe at the time of the Poindexter exhibition and closely relates to the works in that exhibition, especially *Blind. Authorization, Press, 8 x 10, Tap*, all from 1969, were first shown in *Michael Snow/A Survey*, and *Untitled Slidlength, 1969–71*, found its context at the Bykert Gallery in New York in 1971, in a group of other photographic works outside the purview of this exhibition. The fact that most of these photoworks date from 1969 suggests the beginning of Snow’s more dominant orientation to photography during the seventies, but they are all more closely aligned to the concerns of the sculpture here than to the photographic practice to develop. The one earlier photographic piece, *Snow Storm* from 1967, is as sculptural as the other contemporary work that incorporates photography, *Atlantic*, both relating to the earlier concerns of the Poindexter sculpture.

“I am working to use photography in a very enclosed way so that there is nothing outside the work itself that is used in the photograph... as in certain kinds of painting which have an autonomy of their own.”⁷⁷ So said Snow in reference to such self-referential work as *Authorization*. *Authorization* is the record of its own making, as if in dialogue with itself through the process of its self-fabrication. The step-by-step process is clearly demonstrated: the artist shoots a polaroid of a framed rectangle taped to a mirror; that slightly out of focus print (since the focal point is the reflection of the artist) is placed within that frame and a new shot

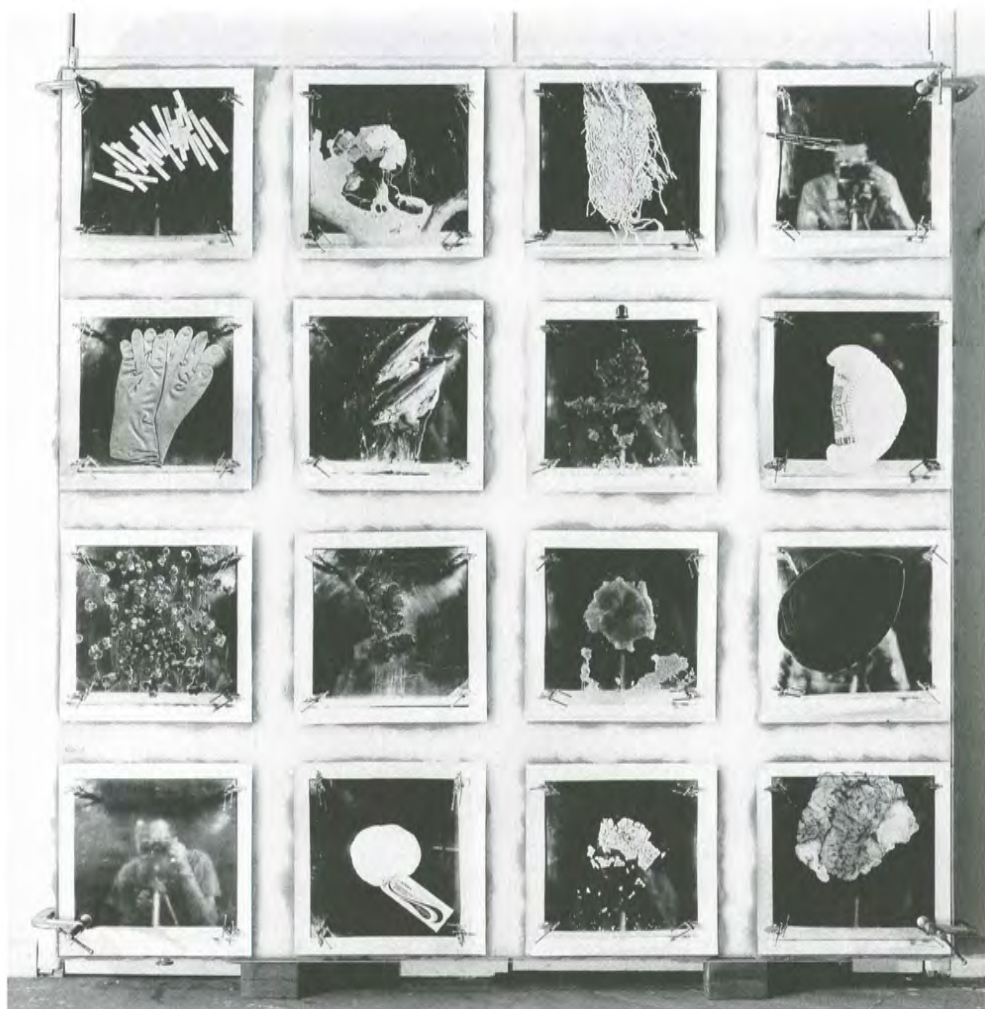


Authorization 1969

Black and white polaroid photographs,
tape, mirror, metal

54.5 x 44.5 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa



Press 1969

Black and white photographs, plastic, metal

182.9 x 182.9 x 25.4 cm

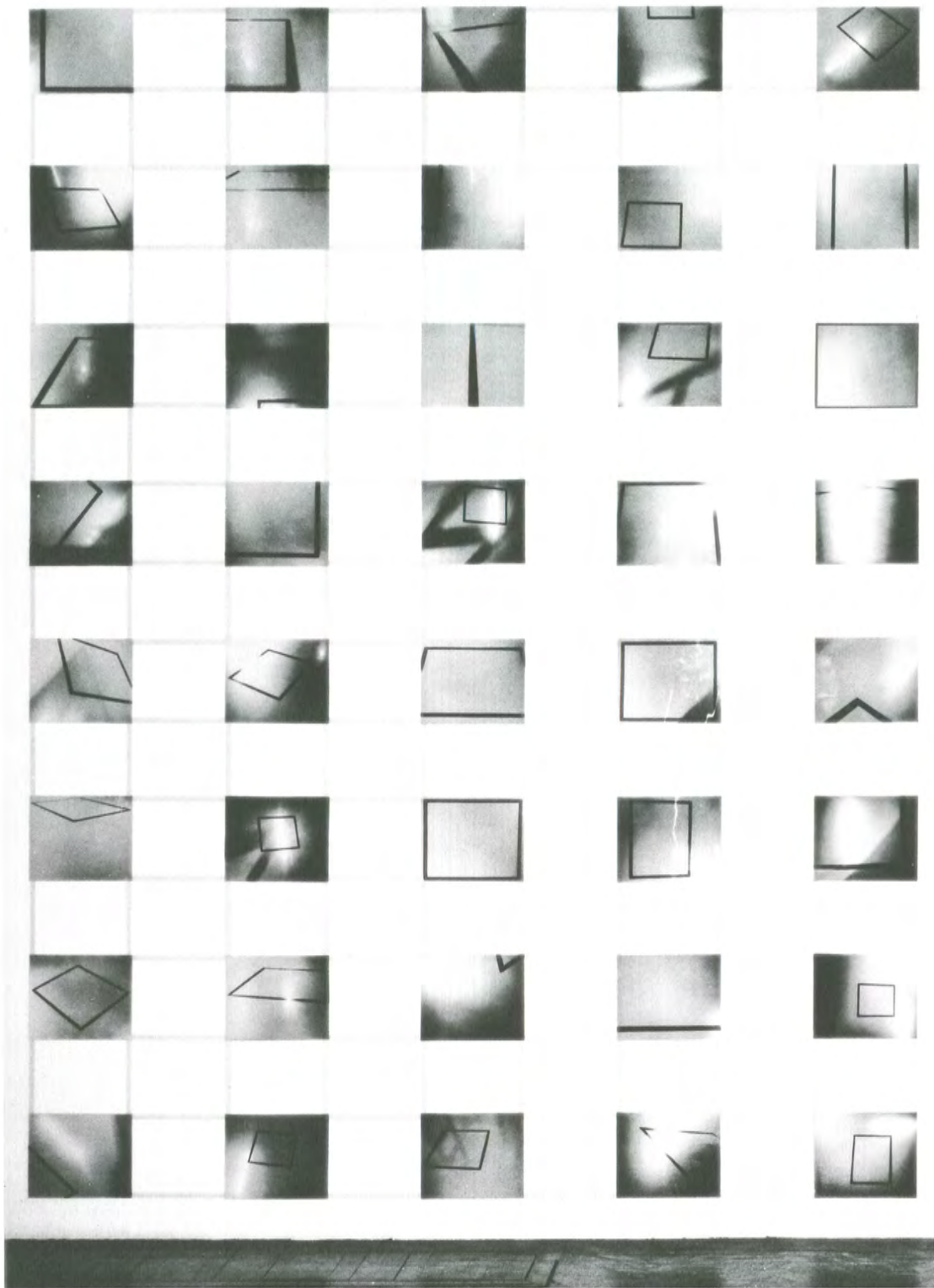
Dr. & Mrs. Sydney L. Wax, Toronto

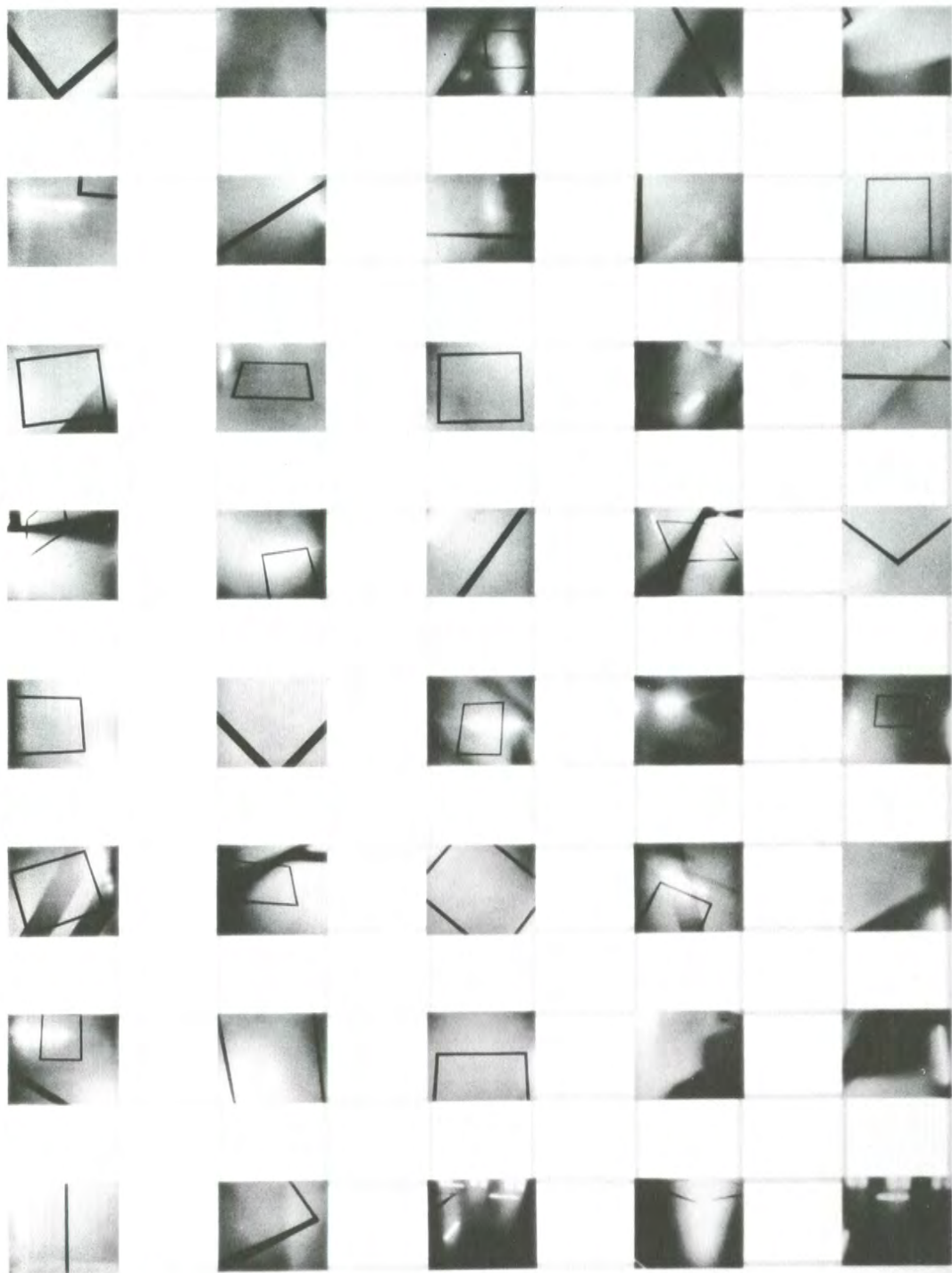
8 x 10 1969 (over)

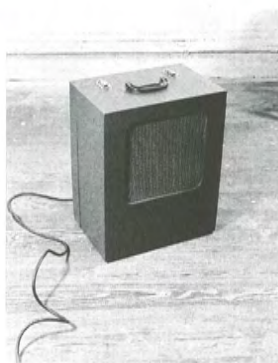
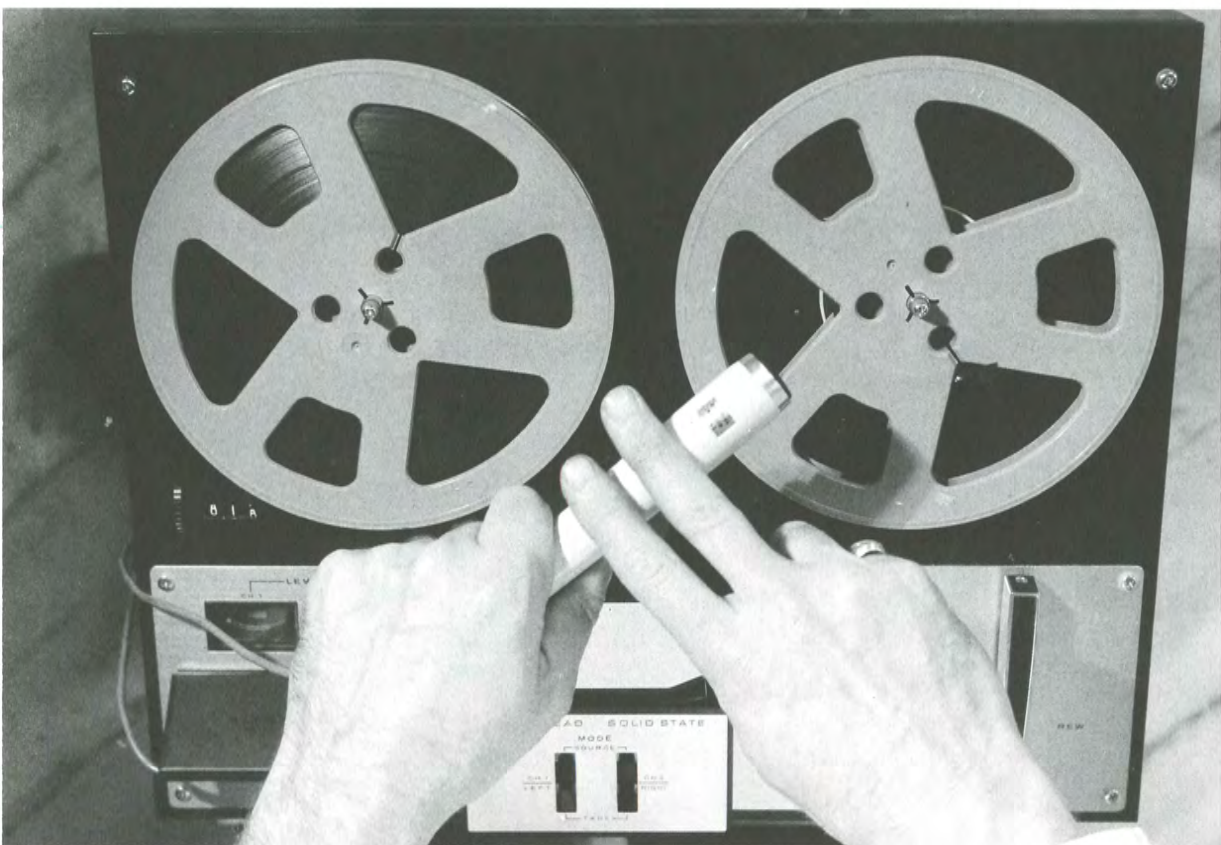
80 black and white photographs

Each: 20.3 x 25.4 cm

S.L. Simpson Gallery, Toronto







Tap 1969

Framed black and white photograph,
framed typewritten text on paper, tape player,
speaker, wire and sound tape

106.8 x 156.3 cm; 65.1 x 40.0 cm;

48.3 x 38.1 x 25.4 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

TAP (PART THREE)

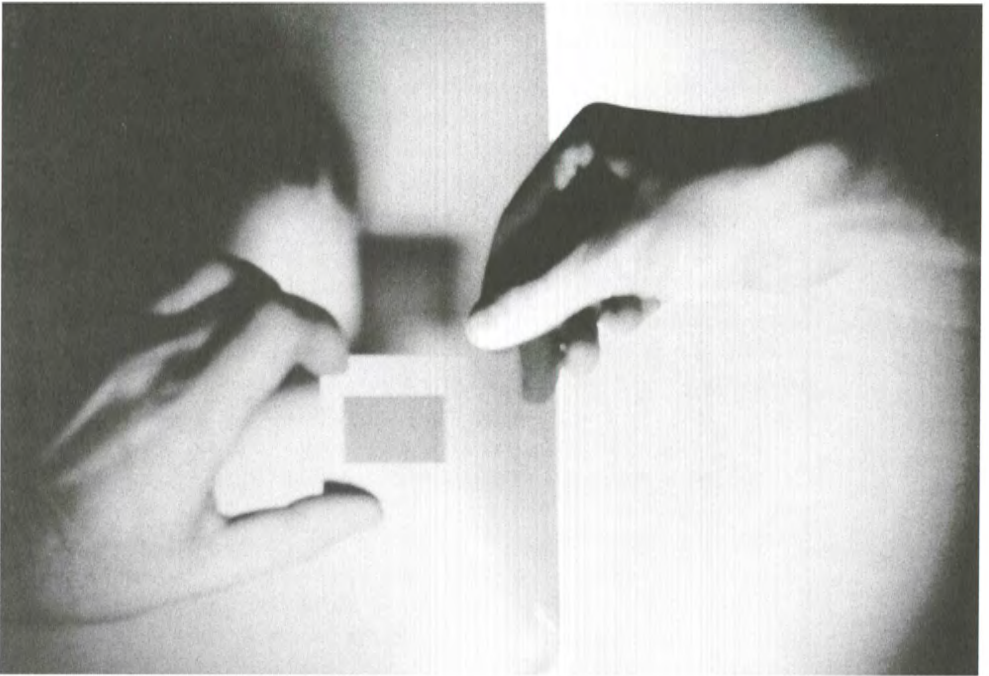
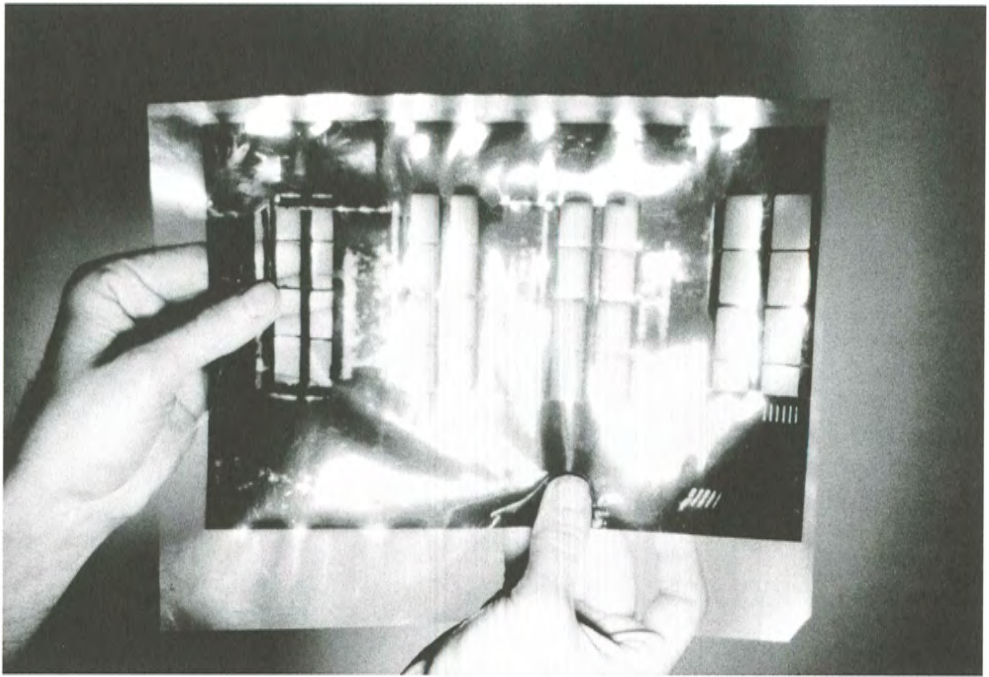
THE "DRUMMING" SOUND WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD, ARE HEARING, WILL HEAR OR PERHAPS WON'T EVER HEAR I MADE BY TAPPING MY FINGERS AGAINST A MICROPHONE WHILE MOVING IT OVER THE TAP RECORDER TO MAKE A BIT OF FEEDBACK. I THEN MADE A LOOP OF A SELECTION FROM THE RESULTING TAPE, THERE IS A LARGE BLOWUP OF A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ABOVE PROCEDURE WHICH YOU MAY HAVE SEEN OR WILL SEE ETC. ITS SUPPOSED TO BE HANGING SOMEWHERE IN THIS BUILDING. THE TAPE AND THE PHOTO WERE MADE IN FEBRUARY 1969 AND THIS IS BEING TYPED ON MARCH 14 1969. VOICE WILKLAND SNOW AND I TOOK THE PHOTOS WITH A MIRANDA 35MM. CAMERA, AN 8"x10" PRINT FROM THE SELECTED NEGATIVE WAS MADE BY "MODERNA" ON 48TH STREET AND THE ~~THE~~ 6' X4.0" BLOWUP WAS MADE BY "INDEPENDANT" ON 42ND STREET. IT COST 336.00.

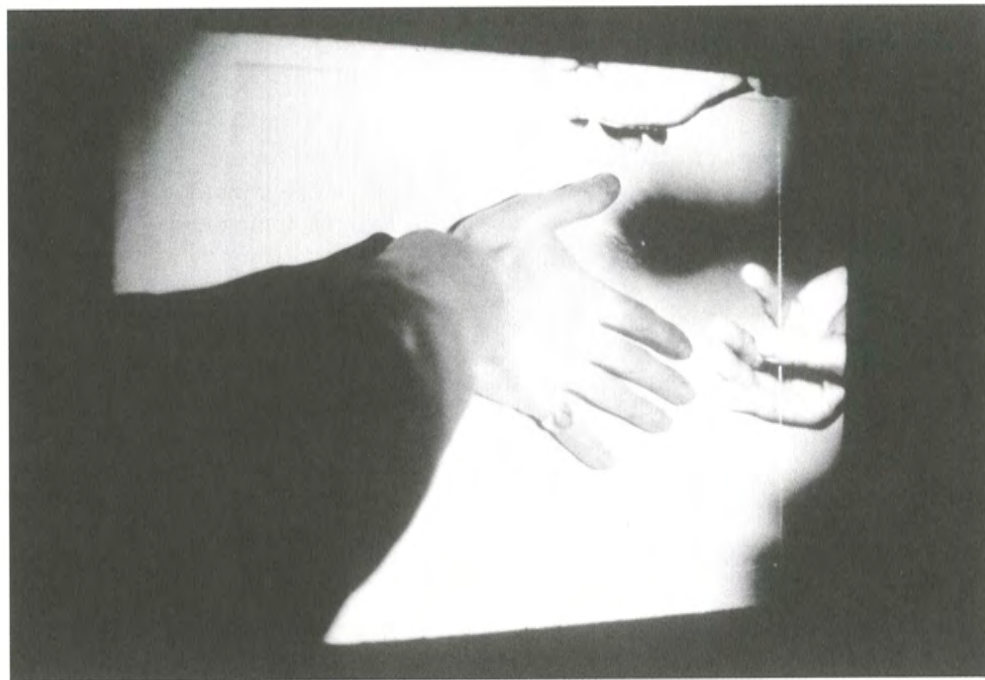
I WANTED TO MAKE A COMPOSITION WHICH WAS DISPERSED, IN WHICH THE ELEMENTS WOULD BE BECOME UPON IN DIFFERENT WAYS AND WHICH WOULD CONSIST OF 1. A SOUND, 2. AN IMAGE, 3. A TEXT, 4. AN OBJECT, 5. A LINE, WHICH WOULD BE UNIFIED BUT THE PARTS OF WHICH WOULD BE OF INTEREST IN THEMSELVES IF THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THEM WERE NOT SEEN (BUT BETTER IF SEEN). ONE OF MANY ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS WAS THAT IT BE PARTLY TACTILE, BODY MADE THO USING MACHINES. TYPEWRITING IS A VERY SIMILAR FINGER TAPPING TO THE WAY THE TAPE WAS MADE AND I THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS I SHOULD MAKE A COMPLEMENTARY OBJECT BY FINGER TAPPING BUT FINALLY DECIDED TO SHOW THE LOUSPEAKER AS THE OBJECT, AS A "FOUND" ELEMENT WHICH SPREADS THE "CREATED" ELEMENT. THE SPEAKER IS JUST A CHEAP PORTABLE SPEAKER I GOT ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO AND I CONSIDERED "INCLUDING" IT MORE BY PAINTING IT, PERHAPS I WILL, AT THIS WRITING IT IS DARK BROWN, ITS ORIGINAL COLOR. RATHER THAN CHANGE THE "GIVEN" COLOR OF THE SPEAKER OR ITS SHAPE I DECIDED TO CONTINUE THE COLOR. THIS AND THE PHOTO ARE BLACK AND WHITE AND THE WIRE IS BLACK. SINCE THE BROWN SPEAKER "FRAMES" THE SOUND I USED THE SAME BROWN IN FRAMING BOTH THIS AND THE PHOTO. THE FRAMES ARE ALSO RECTANGULAR "LOOPS". THE LINE, WHICH OF COURSE, PROPERLY SPEAKING IS ALSO AN OBJECT I DECIDED TO COMPOSE THROUGH WHATEVER BUILDING THE PICE IS IN. IT PARTLY "COMPOSES" ITSELF ACCORDING TO ITS OWN NATURE BUT IT EVENTUALLY "DISAPPEARS" TO THE TAP RECORDER WHICH IS NOW(?) PLAYING THE TAPES SO THAT IT (THE WIRE) HAS "SPREAD" WHICH IN ITS OWN TERMS HAS SOME SIMILARITY TO THE ACOUSTICAL SPACIAL SPREAD OF THE SOUND, EVENTUALLY DISAPPEARING. I DECIDED AGAINST SHOWING THE PLAYBACK TAP RECORDER BECAUSE THE SOURCE OF THE SOUND AT THIS TIME AND HISTORICALLY IS HERE DESCRIBED AND IN THE PHOTO, PICTURED. IN A SENSE THE BLACK LINE (CARRIER OF THE SOUND) DISAPPEARS TO HERE (TEXT) TO THE PHOTOGRAPH (IMAGE) BOTH OF WHICH ARE "TRACES" OF IT AND TO THE ACTUAL (HIDDEN) TAP RECORDER.

THIS PICE IS AN ATTEMPT TO, AMONG OTHER THINGS, DO SOMETHING MANIPULATIVE WITH MEMORY DEVICES: TAPE RECORDER, CAMERA, TYPEWRITER. IT IS NOT A "MIXED MEDIA" OR COLLAGE ASSEMBLAGE PICE, NOR IS IT THEATRE. AS IS PROPER TO THE USE OF THE ABOVE DEVICES IVE ATTEMPTED TO USE MEMORY AS AN ASPECT OF THE WORK. I HAVE MADE SEPARATED OR "DISPERSED" COMPOSITIONS SINCE 1961, SOME OF THEM HAVING PARTS ON DIFFERENT CONTINENTS BUT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CERTAIN PERFORMANCE PLACES (E.G. "RIGHT READER" 1966) AND FILMS (SIMULTANEOUS IN ELEMENTS AND SITE) THE PARTS ~~WERE ALWAYS~~ ALWAYS IN THE SAME MEDIUM, INVOLVED, IMAGES ONLY (IF THAT'S POSSIBLE) OR WORKED IN AN IMAGE TO OBJECT SCALE.

"TAP" IS A KIND OF STILL SOUND MOVIE ~~MOVIE~~. THE WAYS IN WHICH THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OCCUPY SPACE ARE INTERESTING: THE SOUND FILLING IT, HAVING A SOURCE BUT NO DEFINITE "EDGES", THE LINE, READING BACKWARDS, READING AND CARRYING THE SOUND AND HAVING A UNSEEN END, THE IMAGE FLAT, TWO DIMENSIONAL, THIS FLAT, BLACK, LINEAR, SMALL, IN YOUR EYES AND IN YOUR MIND.

Michael Snow





Untitled Slidlength 1969–71
80 35mm colour slides
S. L. Simpson Gallery, Toronto

taken; the process repeats until the frame is full and this final record is tucked into the upper corner of the mirror frame.

While the artist initiates — or authorizes — the process, the work has a life of its own, tautological, as the mirror and the camera mimic each other. (The work is authorized almost as a readymade, in that the conditions are chosen to make themselves: a “solo for polaroid and mirror,” Snow referred to it in his notes) But an image is transferred, much as in *Scope*, and the author of the image, as the taker of the photograph, cannot be separated from the work. This self-referentiality is not solipsistic, however: the conditions of making have to reveal something of its material properties, here, the camera apparatus and the indexical nature of the photograph.

Conditions of presentation match conditions of production so that now in *Press*, which similarly reflects the artist taking the photographs (but in a way that does not show a step-by-step temporal progression), the manner of shooting the image becomes the means of its presentation. In *Press*, various things — eggs, fish, spaghetti, etcetera — have been squeezed (pressed) between a sheet of plexiglass and stainless steel sheet, photographed upright, and the ensuing photographs then have been assembled, pressed themselves under a plexiglass sheet secured by the same type of clamp. In squeezing things into a flat plane, the work literalizes the transformation of three-dimensional objects into the two-dimensional plane of the photograph (as if photography exerts a pressure on those things photographed, the film technique of a dolly or tracking shot Snow would literalize in his films *Breakfast (Table Top Dolly)*, 1976, and *Presents*, 1980–81). The record of this compression is equiva-

lent to the material tension of a sculpture such as 432101234.

Untitled (Slidlength), 1969–71, belongs to a different category of photographic works that utilize slides. While these works are on the perimeter of my concerns, having been produced mainly in 1970, they do investigate image, light and sound relationships as if traces of *Wavelength*. In that they use the resources of different media and mechanisms of recording and projection, however, they further pursue interests beyond that of *Wavelength*. Moreover, they combine media, as in *Sink* and *A Casing Shelved*, both 1970, or one medium is transformed within another, as in *Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film*. *Untitled Slidlength*, with its pure light events and photographic references to *Wavelength*'s loft absent of any of its human actors, could be thought to be a purified coda for that film. It takes the mechanism of the carousel slide projector and the material of the 35mm slide to its purified essence: “It’s really a pure slide piece, a coloured light, colour-field and time composition.”⁷⁸ As a meditation through another medium on the facts and illusions of *Wavelength*, *Untitled Slidlength* shares with these other manipulations of the slide medium the temporal control of light and image, the legacy of *Wavelength*.

Authorization and *Press* both incorporate the body or rather image of the body of the artist, and the viewer at least can find his or her reflection in *Authorization* as the immediate presence of viewing after the fact of making (and as the chance element of a structured event). But the two-dimensional nature of the photograph maintains its traditional static relation to the spectator. Film, photography, and sculpture each situates the body in various ways. In film all movement is within the

film frame as a result of the camera activity, whether the zoom of *Wavelength* or the panning of \longleftrightarrow , while the viewer is stationary. In sculpture, it is the reverse with the spectator moving around a static object. Even though the spectator can move back and forth in front of it, no aspect of a photograph changes. Any implied movement of the body or embodied eye, and any temporality, has to be introduced to the image by evidence of *process*. Such is the case in *Authorization* and *Press*, and in *8 x 10* as well, a work about framing that does not let us look through it but makes its framing infinitely flexible as an *object* of photography itself and thus forces us to change our relations to it moment by moment, image by image, and by making us move across its wide wall expanse as well. This is also the case for *Tap* as it is the one photographic work that literally

makes us walk to experience its three parts, composed of a photograph, a text and a recording.

The percussive tapping we hear on the recording of *Tap* returns us to \longleftrightarrow , a film about which Snow has said " \longleftrightarrow is percussion and *Wavelength* is song."⁷⁹ If *Wavelength* can be seen to envelop the Poindexter and related sculpture within its concerns, \longleftrightarrow provides the framework for those new works of the Isaacs exhibition. In fact, Snow took \longleftrightarrow to be sculptural in its particular shaping of space and fusing of image, flattening the space through a blur of light caused by speeding up the motion of the pan, the basic camera device of the film. (This camera operation makes the pivot of the metronomic pan function much like the constructive elements of the sculptures *Aluminum and Lead* and *432101234*.)

V. Time, Light, Sound

"For me, film is a coming together of things previously separated in my work. Sculpture and film both represent my coming to terms with formerly scattered elements. One is thoroughly static and solid, something you can hammer together, and the other is light, sound and time, a fusion of pretty fugitive things. The structuring of time and the duration of things interests me as well as the realization of total time-shapes that have a beginning and end."

"While still an Artist (capital A) the effect the film [*Wavelength*] had on other people has been helping me realize myself as perhaps essentially time-light-sound poet."

— Michael Snow⁸⁰

In making *Wavelength* a "time monument," Snow shaped our sense of temporality through the relentless progression of the zoom over a forty-five minute period. If he hyperbolized the zoom, he hypostatized the conclusion by holding the still image of the waves on the screen, retaining it long

enough that it sustains both the glissando and an equal period of silence. In maintaining this image, not only did he return the film to its originating constituents, but he contrasted seemingly different states of time, or rather he opened to view a new sense of time and interrogation of the photographic

Atlantic 1967 (detail)

Metal, wood, photographs, arborite

171.1 x 245.1 x 39.9 cm

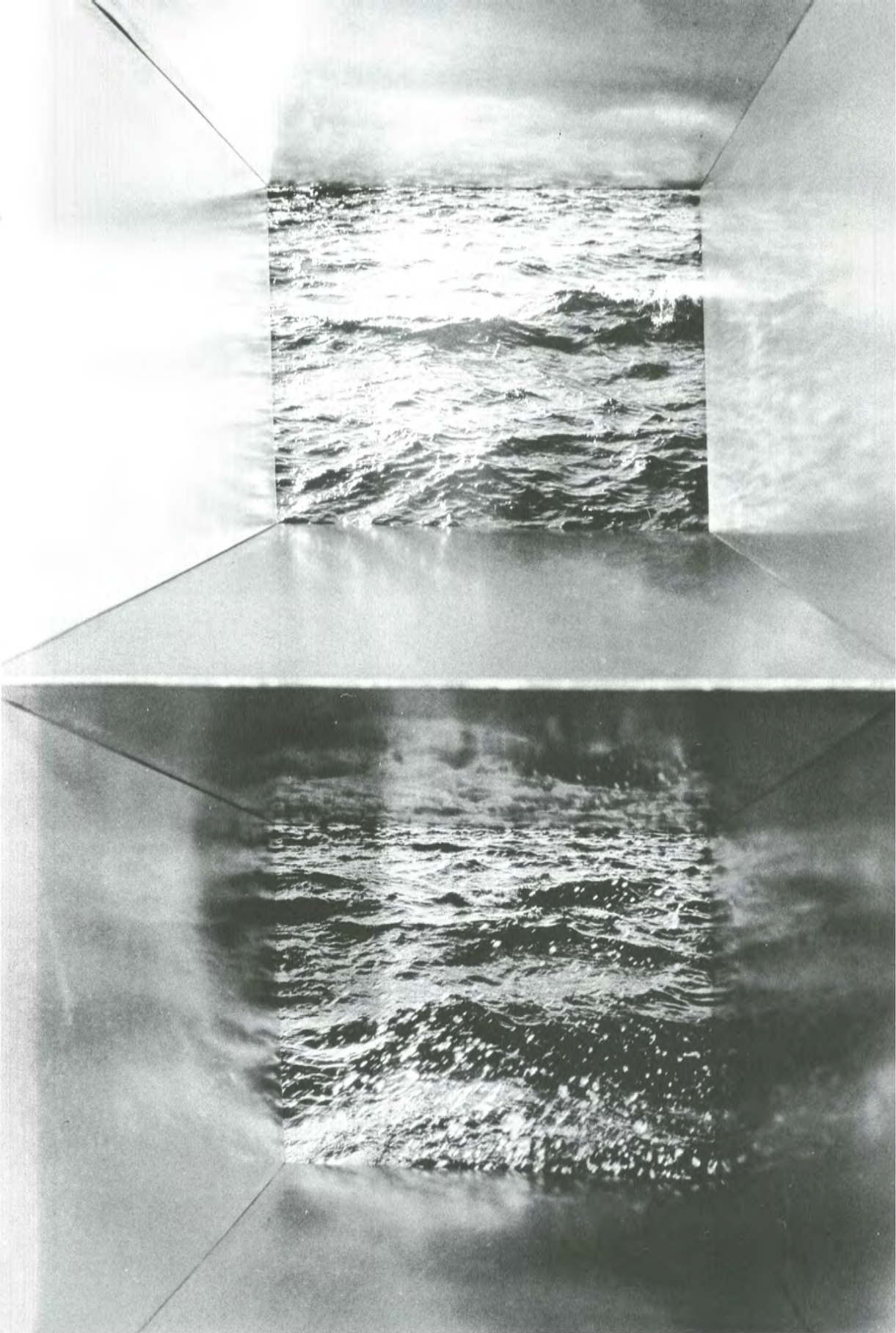
Art Gallery of Ontario

image. Earlier, the long take of the Walking Woman on the rooftop in *New York Eye and Ear Control* lent itself to this new ontological relation Sitney defined for Warhol's early films, and in Snow's film the changing exposure of the image drew us to observe variable photographic-perceptual effects. In *Wavelength*, the photographic image was slowly brought forward by the zoom until it merged with the screen, but it already existed in the space of the loft tacked to the end wall as a constant reminder, perhaps, of film's photographic character.

The dichotomy between the still and moving image is played out fully in Snow's 1969 film *One Second in Montreal* which extrapolates from *Wavelength's* conclusion. Here a succession of still images alone composes this silent film. *One Second in Montreal* is made of thirty-one shots of varying length, thirty-one off-set photolithographs of Montreal parks under snow sent to the artist in 1965 as part of a sculpture competition. These nondescript urban scenes, even less visually compelling due to the poor quality of their original printing, do not really maintain a hold on our attention as the individual shots are held for longer and longer periods. About mid-way through this film, projected, as with Warhol's early films, at sixteen frames per second (rather than the customary twenty-four), the shots begin to shorten to a different rhythm and we find with the change of tempo a change in our expectation as we begin to scan the images with a new sense of urgency. We have fallen, almost unaware, beyond boredom and the discomforts of the body, under the fascination of time. "You have to be able to live with what's happening for a certain length of time in order to begin to understand it. It is literally made with lengths of time."⁸¹

As a concluding work to this exhibition, *One Second in Montreal* brings us full circle to one of the earliest, equally hybrid works, *Atlantic*, itself a sculpture incorporating thirty still images of the waves that appeared in *Wavelength*. These multiple images of the sea — each slightly different from the others, but not immediately so, their distinctness eroded by the stainless steel funnels that separate them, yet through reflection unite them in continuity as well — give the work a cinematic effect. Stilled images, their crashing waves resonate a ghostly silence. Silent stills, representations, their very presence seems to call for what would give them life, their opposite — the *illusion* of movement and sound.

Atlantic, exactly, is not a film but a static object. We move around it, side to side and back and forth, following and discovering another movement, that of the camera, one inhuman presence having recorded another: the sea. The camera has changed its angle in recording, and as those images are stacked one above the other we read this optical shift in the "space" of the photographic representation. More than an allusion to the persistence of vision that composes film, these splayed out multiple images, the same yet different, enfold together, in the play between presence and absence (the nature of a photograph), the real time of our presence and of the past of recording. Not in an instant, however; the work is static while our experience is insistently durational. Of course, what stands between past and present is this work, an object *and* a representation, just as the camera intervened for the artist, blinding him in the moment of the closing of the aperture, the pure presence of that instant mediated by a tool and repeated, mechanically, over time.





One Second in Montreal 1969
20 min., black and white
Art Gallery of Ontario

This work of art is the complex site of enquiry of an apparatus, more than a century and a half old, the camera and its photographic image (whether static or durational as in film) that has distilled the issues of representation as the paradoxical play of presence and absence. Michael Snow's career has proven to be a long meditation on the camera and the photograph. Nowhere was it initiated so clearly as in the camera-related works — sculptures, films, photoworks — included in this exhibition. Snow does not aim simply for an image, nor is the camera a simple apparatus, a tool for observation that would make his concerns merely epistemological. He wants to make sight visible through his sculptures, yes; but as sight is embodied, the whole human drama of existence enters (of memory and presentiment, of time and fate) somehow condensed in the fragile image, process and paradoxical product of the photograph. Whatever sense of temporality accompanies the image, whether that image is still or in motion, somehow seems to define something about the human being. All the more paradoxical, insofar as the play between presence and absence that defines our temporal sense is derived from a machine — the camera — and its representation is an optical-chemical product — the photograph. What defines the human is given over to the inhuman, moreover, as the end that Snow traditionally names this sense of temporality: "fate."

In its combination of sculpture and photography and in its allusion to cinema, *Atlantic* can stand as an emblem for the works of this period. Produced in 1966–67, it shares its origins with the planning and making of *Wavelength*, the film being a summation of his "nervous system, reli-

gious inklings, and aesthetic ideas," whose last frames end on a similar image of waves, that image of continuity which passes through Snow's work and is of autobiographical note.

"*Wavelength*, some four years old, is now a celebrated film, a turning point for many in the history of the medium as in the maker's own development. . . . The film is a masterwork, a claim hardly to be seriously contested at this point in film history." So wrote Annette Michelson in 1971, and she repeated a similar claim in 1978: "The film . . . broke upon the world with the force, the power of conviction which defines a new level of enterprise, a threshold in the evolution of the medium."⁸² It is hard for us coming from the other direction in time to recover the force of the film's assault on the mythopoetic context of avant-garde film of its moment, except through such testimonials. Repeated screenings show the film to sustain an aesthetic force; the more repeated, the rhythms of this "time monument" begin to assert themselves. For us, *Wavelength* must take its context in the development of Michael Snow's other work in film, sculpture and photography. Obviously, *Wavelength* played a role of summation according to Snow, but in not ending a career, it shared influences, of the camera apparatus, for instance, across Snow's other media. Amongst the repertoire of effects the film established, however, its most lasting influence was its powerful assertion of temporality in the investigation of conditions of the photographic image.



Manual 1970
 58.8 x 57.8 cm
 Offset lithograph
 Art Gallery of Ontario,
 gift of the artist, 1970

Notes

1. Side Seat: A Retrospective Look

1. From the manuscript "About Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film" dated 1978 in the Michael Snow Fonds in the E. P. Taylor Research Library of Art Gallery of Ontario. All references to Snow's notes and sketches in the text pertain to this archive. The catalogue referred to is *Michael Snow/A Survey* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario and The Isaacs Gallery, 1970). The exhibition took place Feb. 14–March 15, 1970. Also see the print *Manual*, 1970, which uses the 1970 catalogue as a physical object to transform photographically into another work.

2. *A Casing Shelved*, an autobiographical "talking picture," also from 1970, has a retrospective structure.

3. Snow, "About Side Seat..."

4. On the notion of a retrospective look for curatorial practice, see Philip Monk, "In Retrospect: Presenting Events," *Parachute* 46 (March–May 1987): 11–13, and the Preface to Philip Monk, *Ian Carr-Harris: 1971–1977* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1988), 6–7. *Around Wavelength* continues the curatorial conjecture set out in that earlier exhibition.

5. While the present exhibitions survey the same period, needless to say, they are separate and operate under different curatorial criteria. Together, though, *Exploring Plane and Contour*, *Around Wavelength* and The Power Plant's *Embodied Vision* provide a "retrospective" survey of Snow's work, without following the retrospective format.

2. "See it my Way"

6. Donald Judd, "Local History," *Complete Writings 1959–1975* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and New York: New York University Press, 1975), 149, 151.

7. Annette Michelson points out the (positive) differences to American Pop art: "Conceived and executed largely during the years of Pop, these works neither offer the polish nor the sensuousness of the work of the major American Pop artists. The irony and sensuousness of media images and plastic materials to be found in Lichtenstein and Warhol are absent from these works. Lushness of surface, intensity of color are also lacking, as are the kinds of irony available in the use of consecrated images — familiar labels, packages and such. The series does, on the other hand, explore in a fashion that parallels the Americans, the possibilities of a single basic figure, of its serial organization or variational play effected by change of context. They explore much more radically and extensively, however, the contrast between pictorial and sculptural space, modes and degree of representation and variety of materials." Annette Michelson, "Toward Snow," *Artforum*, 9: 10 (June 1971): 35.

8. Michael Snow, "A Lot of Near Mrs.," in Louise Dompiere, *Walking Woman Works: Michael Snow 1961–67* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1983), 18.

9. "I like work of Johns, Oldenburg, Dine, partly because apparently they came to similar conclusions arising out of the accomplishments of the great senior New York painters." Snow, "A Lot of Near Mrs.," 19. Duchamp, mentioned in these notes as well, should be reserved as an influence on both Johns and Oldenburg and particularly on Snow. He is mentioned as well as Johns and Oldenburg in a list of other influences which include Duke Ellington, Mondrian, Matisse, John Cage,

Jan Vermeer, Bach, Jimmy Yancy, Joyce Wieland and Paul Valéry. Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture* 46 (Autumn 1967; published October 1968): 5.

10. Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Complete Writings*, 181–89.

11. Judd, *Complete Writings*, 120; originally published in the March 1964 issue of *Arts Magazine*.

12. Judd, "Specific Objects," 183.

13. In an interview for the 1969 Isaacs Gallery exhibition, Michael Snow established precedents in his earlier abstract painting and sculpture for his later post-Walking Woman sculpture:

"Did work that had to do with framing (masking), with seeing through, with window relationships, also balances between activity-stasis like the painting *Lac Clair* and sculptures that partly derived their form from room relationships like *Shunt* (wall to floor and vice versa). *Window*, a construction which was in the so-called Dada show at Isaacs, has probably the clearest connection as far as 'in terms of visual perception.'" "7 questions + 1 on Michael Snow at The Isaacs Gallery," *artscanada* 26: 2 (April 1969): 30.

14. Donald Judd: Greene Gallery, December 17, 1963–January 11, 1964; Snow: Poindexter Gallery, January 28–February 9, 1964; Robert Morris: Greene Gallery, December 1964–January 9, 1965. Mention should also be made of Frank Stella's exhibitions at Castelli in 1960, 1962, and 1964.

15. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in Gregory Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1968), 116–47. Originally published in the June 1967 issue of *Artforum*.

16. P. Adams Sitney, "Michael Snow's Cinema," in *Michael Snow/A Survey*, 79. On the relationship between dance and Minimalist art practices, see Yvonne Rainer, "A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A," in Battcock, *Minimal Art*, 262–73.

As part of the Whitney Museum's "Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials" exhibition, "Four Evenings of Extended Time Pieces" took place between May 21–27, 1969, with compositions and extended time pieces by the composers Philip Glass and Steve Reich and artists Bruce Nauman and Richard Serra; Snow's \longleftrightarrow and *One Second in Montreal* were premiered there May 21. Sitney wrote the article "The Avant-Garde Film: Michael Snow" after these performances claiming: "In fact, the influence of recent avant-garde dance (Yvonne Rainer, Deborah Hay, Meredith Monk) in both theory and practice on the events in \longleftrightarrow cannot be ignored. Each activity is a rhythmic unit, self enclosed, and joined to the subsequent activity only by the fact that they take place in the same place." *Changes*, 3 (June 1969): 15, 28. Richard Foreman wrote on Snow's films in relation to Philip Glass's compositions in "Critique: Glass and Snow," *Arts Magazine* 44: 4 (Feb. 1970): 20–22. Steve Reich also wrote an unpublished commentary on *Wavelength* which is in the Michael Snow Fonds. On the dynamic interrelationships of the arts in the early 1960s, see Barbara Haskell, *Blam: The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance 1958–1964* (New York: Whitney Museum of America Art, 1984). For a more specific study of one artist, however, whose connections to dance and performance illustrate this period, see Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989).

Annette Michelson was the major theorist of the new "temporal arts." For her summation of this period in the context of Snow's work, see "About Snow," *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 111–25.

17. Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 5. Snow lent his studio to "free jazz" musicians such as Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler, Archie Shepp. Snow brought together Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, John Tchicai, Roswell Rudd, Gary Peacock, and Sonny Murray as an ensemble to

provide the soundtrack for *New York Eye and Ear Control* which was also released as a record.

18. Jonas Mekas and P. Adams Sitney, "Conversation with Michael Snow," *Film Culture* 46: 3. "The most developed of the 'dispersed' compositions was the 11 part steel composition I did mostly in '66 for Expo '67 in Montreal. The 11 variations were scattered over large area, couldn't all be seen at once. One came upon them. This was the last walking woman work." Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Ibid.*: 5.

19. Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," in Battcock, *Minimal Art*, 232, 234. Originally published in *Artforum* as "Notes on Sculpture, Part II," October 1966.

20. Morris, 234.

21. Snow in Dorothy Cameron, *Sculpture '67* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968), 12. "First, Last comes from the window pieces that I did beginning three years ago. This business of framing derives from a series running from the first 'Walking Woman' paintings (where the figure was framed, cut-off) to the last highly polished 'Walking Woman' sculptures at Expo (which framed within themselves the reflected outside action). But both here and in the window pieces I am interested merely in *framing* itself. This piece is a kind of absolute that frames things that are fortuitous... Any chance thing can suddenly appear in it: whatever is going on on either side or in the sky... This sculpture is so internal that it feeds on what is external. It composes by the very limitations it imposes."

Fifteen years later in written interview response, Snow elaborated on his fascination with the camera apparatus:

"My attention was directed to the camera as a director of attention from considerations of Art itself being (in another situation) a director of attention. Similarly cameras both intensify and diminish aspects of normal vision and they 'set apart' those aspects for possible examination. By the object-memory which they produce (photos, films, tape), they give a locus for and evidence of selection, of choice. The rectangular camera frame/mask, of course, continues the human intervention of architecture and sets up the possibility of a perhaps edifying dialogue between the rectangle and all its specifically human content with the nature (that might be) pictured through the camera or in the rectangular result. That the photographer/viewer is hidden in this architectural paradigm also becomes interesting... The result of framing in photography is always a fragment, making the camera potentially analytical, an epistemological tool. That's to say (to repeat?) that out of the universal field, knowledge isolates, selects and points out unities or differences which were not previously evident. Identification, definition is a matter of limits, of recognition of limitations, bounds, boundaries. There are ways of indicating the depth of implication of this human viewer instrument between us and the rest of the universe. Lenses extend, expand or contract vision (abstract it) in both the optical and chimerical senses. I'm interested in the way that the products of cameras are ghosts of their subjects. Less than desiccated, wonderful as the relic is, it has (almost) only two dimensions. Still photographs are suffused with nostalgia seconds after their taking/making. Cinema ghosts are more active, Flying Dutchmen.

"I don't know why I became interested in these things. It gradually became evident to me that more was to be done in this area, that I was especially interested in time, that I might learn something about it, myself and what-it-all-means..." "Michael Snow and Bruce Elder in Conversation," *Cine-Tracts* 17 (1982) reprinted as "A Conversation," *Afterimage* 11 (Winter 1982-83): 34-35. Of interest is the notion of ghosts which has relevance to my discussion of *Scope* below.

For an interview on the camera related work, see Pierre Th  berge "Conversation with Michael Snow," *Michael Snow* (Lucerne: Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1979), especially p. 17.

22. "Opposites. Film I'm working on seems to concern itself with the poetry of juxtaposition of the static and dynamic, absence, presence, development of events-for-capture = art series of photographs taken in Toronto April '62." Snow, "A Lot of Near Mrs.," 19.

23. See note 13.

24. Michelson, "Toward Snow," *Artforum*: 33.

25. "I'd thought fleetingly of calling it *Protective Measures*, which is more or less relevant too, but is also only an aspect." "7 questions + 1 . . .," *artscanada*: 30.

The reference to Kramer's "the atmosphere of a chic concentration camp" is taken from "Farewell to a Lady," *Time* (Canadian Edition), Jan. 24, 1969: 17. See also the title to a review of the Isaacs exhibition by Gail Dexter, "Sculpture makes gallery something like a prison." *Toronto Daily Star*, Jan. 16, 1969: 40.

On the Poindexter exhibition: "Seen from the street the piece [*In Place*] looks like a section of a Brinks armored car with a peculiarly shaped gun slot." John Perrault, "The Act of Seeing," *Village Voice*, Feb. 8, 1968: 19.

On one sheet of notes, Snow tried out titles such as: "storm cage, blizzard cage, concentration storm," and on another: "blizzard concentration, blizzard cage/jail/prison, storm camp, surveillance."

26. In 1965, as an "advertisement" for an upcoming *Walking Woman* exhibition at the Poindexter, Snow performed *Right Reader* at the Filmmakers Cinematheque. See *Michael Snow/A Survey*, 62, for photographs and a text on the performance by Richard Foreman, and Dompierre, *Walking Woman Works*, 12, 14, for Snow's comments. The year Snow constructed *Scope* he also staged a performance with himself and Joyce Wieland involving communication through mirrors of actions repeated by the participants but partly hidden from the audience.

In a different context in the interview "A Conversation," *Afterimage*: 49, Snow unites the names Heraclitus and Sartre after his discussion of *Sight*, the two names being an intriguing philosophical conjunction operative in the work: what is seen — the Heraclitian flux; what is being seen in the look of the other — our viewing. See Sartre's situation of being at a keyhole, in "The Look," *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 259 ff.

27. Snow in *Sculpture '67*, 12.

28. Titles in Snow's notes that unite perceptual effects to his name or its associations include: "inside winter, storm cage, blizzard cage, concentration storm, snow storm, blizzard concentration, blizzard prison, storm camp."

"My father, who was a surveyor then civil engineer during most of his life had only one eye, then lost the sight of his other eye during my teens, which made us both very interested in vision." "A Conversation," *Afterimage*: 36.

On the self-referentiality of Snow's work, see Philip Monk, "Colony, Commodity and Copyright," *Vanguard* 12: 5-6 (June 1983), reprinted in Philip Monk, *Struggles with the Image* (Toronto: YYY Books, 1988), 95-99.

Hollis Frampton made a film, titled *Snowblind*, using the optical effects of *Blind*.

29. "Literalist sensibility is theatrical because, to begin with, it is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters literalist work. . . . The theatricality of Morris's notion of the 'nonpersonal or public mode' seems obvious: the largeness of the piece, in conjunction with its

nonrelational, unitary character, *distances* the beholder — not just physically but psychically. It is, one might say, precisely this distancing that *makes* the beholder a subject and the piece in question... an object... But the things that are literalist works of art must somehow *confront* the beholder — they must, one might almost say, be placed not just in his space but in his way." Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 125, 26, 27. On Morris, see, Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s*.

30. The political climate in which a film such as *Wavelength* could be seen and criticized in the period is revealed in the leaflet distributed at the Knokke-le-Zoute festival at which Snow won the \$4000 first prize:

"FIGHT AGAINST THE OPEN AND THE UNDERGROUND AMERICAN IMPERIALIST AND CINE-IMPERIALIST AGGRESSION ALL OVER THE WORLD.

"The international capital recruits its boys: Gaevent-Agfa lends them a roll of filmmaterial and pays the one who is most obedient with 4000 US dollars: every meter film showing a naked ass out of the metropolises keeps silence about a burned body in Vietnam making more profit than 4000 US dollars." etc. The statement is reproduced in P. Adams Sitney, "Report on the Fourth International Experimental Film Exposition at Knokke-le-Zoute," *Film Culture* 46: 6.

On the other hand, consider a later evaluation of the political function of film — albeit a particular notion of politics: "Despite the lack of any evident political signified (as though such an 'evidence' could furnish criteria), Snow's films are politically insistent in their question of the cinematic institution of the subject in film, their question of another subjectivity — material, heterogeneous, in process —, of a film that *makes a body*." Stephen Heath, "Film Performance," *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 129.

3. Shaping Time, Shaping Space: Wavelength

31. He continues: "And since he's been concerned almost exclusively with process and perception, one can say that the film work has qualitatively improved the sculptures." Gene Youngblood, "Icon and Idea in the World of Michael Snow," *artscanada*, 27: 1 (Feb. 1970): 10.

32. Of Snow's many comments on this subject, a contemporary one suffices: "I tend to make sculpture that is sculpture, and films that are films, and I don't want to see them both together. I think each should have power enough within its own medium to be of interest. The term 'mixed media' is often used to describe a kind of impressionism and I'm more interested in the specific than the general." Snow in *Sculpture '67*, 12. Also see note 34.

33. Michael Snow, "A Statement on *Wavelength* for the Experimental Film Festival of Knokke-le-Zoute," *Film Culture* 46: 1.

34. "...since I started to get a clear idea of what seemed of interest in film — since '63, I guess it was, or when I made *New York Eye and Ear Control* in '64 — it seemed to me that some elements of the medium have possibilities of content of their own that have only been used for some other purposes, in a way..." George Csaba Koller, "Interview with Michael Snow," *Cinema Canada*, 4 (Oct.-Nov. 1972): 51.

35. Michael Snow, in *New York Filmmakers Cooperative Catalogue*.

36. Within the active-passive opposition, the camera-eye substituting for the viewer and filmmaker is active while the *Walking Woman* is passive, subject to different optical and perceptual

conditions, including hanging, burning, being run over. This structure repeats itself in the treatment of the "actors," the women passively compared to the "ideal" cutout of the Walking Woman, while the men — those who make up the jazz ensemble — are individuated in portraits.

37. "[Most other films] don't use the material. They use the mechanism, but they don't use *duration* and they don't use *light* for the qualities and contents that are possible from using those things as the actual material of the medium. The material of the medium isn't, you know, showing somebody killing somebody, or whatever the usual subjects are; the material is shaping light and shaping time, and that's what you do when you make a film." Snow, interviewed in Koller, *Cinema Canada*: 51.

38. "*Eye and Ear Control* was finished summer '64 and sometime late fall saw first Warhols: *Henry Geldzahler* and others at the *New Yorker* which I very much admired. I was amazed at the coincidences, I mean shocked, to my thinking in *Eye and Ear*. I not only used lightstruck ends, there are a set of 'portraits' and the time sense is similar. To continue the amazement I later read about *Empire*. In *Eye and Ear* there is a dawn sequence which is much shorter than I'd intended but it is essentially the same thought. . . . The differences are of course vast as well. When I started thinking, jotting notes for *Wavelength* it occurred to me that it might be a little like *Empire*. It didn't come from there tho. The similarities are partly the background of our thinking which came from the issues of the painting world: Oldenburg, Jasper Johns, Duchamp." Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 5.

39. P. Adams Sitney, "Michael Snow's Cinema," 82; *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 412. These polarities are what makes the film "philosophical" in its analytical character: "For him *New York Eye and Ear Control* analyses modes of action, philosophy being a curriculum extending from ethics to logic, but excluding metaphysics." Sitney, 420.

See Youngblood on the film's relation to Warhol: "*Wavelength* is post-minimal because, thanks to cinema, it can deal empirically with illusion, that is, a wider range of vision than usually is engaged in the plastic arts. It is post-Warhol because it confronts the illusory nature of cinematic reality; it presents not only 'pure' time and space, but also *filmic* time (fragmented) and space (two-dimensional, nonperspectival). It is more metaphysical than Minimal. *Wavelength* is a romantic movie." Gene Youngblood, "Michael Snow: *Wavelength*," *Expanded Cinema* (New York: Dutton, 1970), 126–27. Youngblood's description of *Wavelength* is very inaccurate. Descriptions of *Wavelength* vary in accuracy. The fullest representations are those by Regina Cornwell, *Snow Seen: The Films and Photographs of Michael Snow* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1980), 60–79, superseded by Bruce Elder, *Image and Identity: Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989), 188–213. In citing only Michelson's and Sitney's descriptions below, I am concentrating on the first interpretations that set the context for and reception of *Wavelength*.

40. "The walking woman thing was a whole sort of variation which is related to jazz. The theme and variation thing. And while I was doing them I was thinking that maybe a lot of the paintings I did should be seen in time — that there should be a serial display of the variations. That was one of the things that preceded *Wavelength*. This idea of having the variations follow each other in time is like jazz, or any music. *The Goldberg Variations* especially." Snow interviewed in Joe Medjuck, "The Life & Times of Michael Snow," *Take One*, 3:3 (Jan.–Feb. 1971): 8.

41. Sitney, *Visionary Film*, 407. "A structural film creates its primal impression with its overall shape. *Wavelength* hyperbolizes this form: not only is its shape its primary impression, but that shape appears before the viewer from the very first minute of the film. In other 'structural films' the shape becomes evident at the end of the first viewing. In fact, the lucid shaping of *Wavelength* first led me to consider

the existence of a new formal category; the article referred to ['Structural Film'] emerged out of that consideration." Sitney, "Michael Snow's Cinema," 80.

For reconsiderations of structural film and Sitney's role, see Paul Arthur, "Structural Film: Revisions, New Versions, and the Artifact," *Millennium Film Journal* 1:2 (Spring–Summer 1978): 5–13; and "Structural Film: Revisions, New Versions and the Artifact. Part Two," *Millennium Film Journal* 4:5 (Summer–Fall 1979): 122–34; David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

42. Sitney, *Visionary Film*, 408. For a critique of this view of Sitney's and Michelson's, see Constance Penley, "The Avant-Garde: Histories and Theories," *Screen* 19: 3 (Autumn 1978), reprinted in Penley, *Future of an Illusion: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 31–37.

43. Sitney, "Michael Snow's Cinema," 79. Also see the statements by Jonas Mekas: "Philosophical cinema? Can there be such a thing?... A philosophical cinema, a treatise on the essence of reality, that's what Snow's films are to me." "A Note on Michael Snow, written in a Minnesota Snowstorm," *Take One*, 3:3 (Jan.–Feb. 1971): 12, reproduced in Pierre Théberge, *About Thirty Works by Michael Snow* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1972), 7–8. This view was common among the Minimalist and Conceptual artists: for example, Michelson writes typically of Robert Morris: "An enterprise of this kind is critical in each sense we commonly attach to the word, and in one other; its fullest comprehension commands recognition of the singular resolution with which a sculptor has assumed the philosophical task which, in a culture not committed on the whole to speculative thought, devolves with a particular stringency on its artists." "Robert Morris — An Aesthetics of Transgression," *Robert Morris* (Washington: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), 7.

44. Michelson, "Toward Snow," *Artforum*: 30.

45. Among others, refer to this critique in Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). (We will have to ask ourselves in relation to this film what today constitutes "conditions of knowledge" which is more an issue of representation and power now than one of epistemology.)

46. For instance, Bruce Elder repeats this claim from the opening lines of "Michael Snow's *Wavelength*," in *Image and Identity*, 188–213.

47. Michelson, "Toward Snow," *Artforum*: 31. The quotation in Michelson's text is from Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*.

48. Michelson, "Toward Snow," *Artforum*: 32. In 1979, as the promised part 2 of her 1971 "Toward Snow" article, Michelson revised her views on *Wavelength* in light of the "apparatus" debates that took place in French film theory by reconsidering Snow's restoration of narrative space as confirmation of the transcendental subject. "He had, in fact, by restoring and remapping the space of perspective construction, reestablished its center, that place which is the space of the transcendental subject. *Wavelength*, then, appeared as a celebration of the 'apparatus' and a confirmation of the status of the subject, and it is in those terms that we may begin to comprehend the profound effect it had upon the broadest spectrum of viewers — especially upon those for whom previous assaults on the spatiotemporality of dominant cinema had obscured the subject's role and place. The spectator for whom that place was obscured — and threatened — by the spatial disorientations of, say *Dog Star Man*, (a space purely optical and a temporality of the perpetual present) could respond, as if in gratitude, to Snow's apparently gratifying confirmation of a threatened sovereignty." "About Snow," *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 118.

Whether or not this refers to her own spectatorship, its sleight-of-hand revisionism obscures the role Michelson played in her original phenomenological reading of *Wavelength*. Nevertheless, Baudry's discussion of the ideological basis of cinema in the replication of Renaissance perspectival construction through the optics of the lens is pertinent to both the zoom and the space of *Wavelength* (as are his comments and therefore implicit critique of Michelson on "the constituting transcendental function to which narrative continuity points"). Michelson, at least, maintains that Snow subjected these norms "to constant analytic transformation. . . . The depth and integrity of the perspective construction is at every point subjected to the questioning and qualification imposed by the deployment of anomalies as differences within the spatiotemporal continuum." "About Snow": 118. For further discussion of this space, see note 62.

For Baudry see, Jean-Louis Baudry, "Effets idéologique de l'appareil cinématographique de base," *Cinéthique* 7-8 (1970): 1-8. Translated as "Ideological effects of the basic cinematographic apparatus," *Film Quarterly* xxviii: 2 (Winter 1974-75). Also "Le dispositif," *Communications* 23 (1975): 56-72; translation "The Apparatus," *Camera Obscura* 1 (Fall 1976): 104-26. Both articles are reprinted in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, ed., *Apparatus* (New York: Tanam Press, 1981), 41-83, from which the Baudry reference above comes: 32.

Bruce Elder has taken Baudry's critique of the phenomenological subject film confirms, ironically, for positive application to Snow's films: see his "Snow's Transcendental Self," and "The Transcendental Self, *La région centrale*, and Idealist Thought," *Image and Identity*.

49. By changing to a panning motion of the camera from side to side in \longleftrightarrow rather than a zoom in depth as in *Wavelength*, Snow rid the later film of any mistaken identification and absorption of the spectator in the "depth" of the space of the image. Discussing the space of \longleftrightarrow , Snow wrote: "You aren't within it, it isn't within you, you're beside it. \longleftrightarrow is sculptural, because the depicted light is to be outside, around the solid (wall) which becomes transcended/spiritualized by motion-time whereas in *Wavelength* it is more transcended by light-time." Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 4.

In a recent interview on *Wavelength* Snow warned the interviewer of a too mimetic attraction and participation, which the interviewer called "existential": "I'm not so much interested in depicting — although my work is representational — as in making a kind of phenomenon that's as much itself as you are. And it doesn't necessarily have to take you into it — it's just that it has its own strength and you're here and it's there. With regard to my films, for instance, you don't really disappear into them in the same way you might with a fiction film because there's an objective level that remains, I think, in watching them." "Michael Snow in Conversation with John Massey," *C Magazine* 38 (Summer 1993): 19.

50. Such has been the ambiguous role Snow and *Wavelength* have played for the British Structural/Materialist filmmakers/theorists such as Malcolm Legrice and Peter Gidal. For a review of these interpretations see Michael O'Pray, "Framing Snow," *Afterimage* 11 (Winter 1982-83): 51-65. For an exchange between Gidal and Michelson on her Snow article, see "Foreword in Three Letters," *Artforum* 10:1 (Sept. 1971): 8-9. Michelson's reference to Manny Farber's review of *Wavelength*, "Film," *Artforum* 7:5 (Jan. 1969): 70-72, reprinted in *Negative Space: Manny Farber at the Movies* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 250-55, and the narrative space of action is central to their exchange.

For a discussion of the the diegetic rather than narrative production of *Wavelength*, see Noël Burch, trans. and ed. Ben Brewster, *Life to those Shadows*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 255-59.

51. "Conversation with Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 3.

52. Snow's comments on murder in note 7 seem to pertain to this incident and may be the reason for the choice of this particular type of event for the film for the structural expectations it sets up in commercial film that are not met here. In fact, as the zoom relentlessly passes over the body, we even forget that it is there as it passes out of the frame, until it is recalled to us by the telephone call. In the reality of the film, the glissando carried more of the traditional role of building climax as it accompanies the zoom both reinforcing the relentless plotting of a fated sense of time. "It's the movement of time, which is inexorable. It is fated. And fate is really a proper subject for films. Since their end is already in their beginning, to work with fate is very apropos." "Michael Snow in Conversation with John Massey," *C Magazine*: 21. "... the medium of cinema, it seems to me, is quite properly concerned with fate. I mean, what is a more appropriate content for a medium that is a temporal structure that's determined?... The whole element of fate that's in Agamemnon too, it's in all these things; it's in cinema. I hope it's in all my films. The mystery of going and not knowing where you're going, but the way is predetermined." Snow interviewed in Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Snowbound: A Dialogue with a Dialogue," *Afterimage* 11: 68.

53. Elder, for instance, makes too much of this opposition in *Wavelength*, "Michael Snow's *Wavelength*," 189–90. Speaking of his 1980–81 film *Presents*, Snow said: "Then, within each of the 2 major sections, there are fluctuations of emphasis from the 'concrete/materialist' to the 'naturalistic/realist'. In my own monologues about my work, I call these changes in 'type of belief'." Snow and Elder, "A Conversation," *Afterimage*: 43. Also see Snow's comments to Rosenbaum on the equalization proper to film and in his *Presents*. "Snowbound": 68.

54. "If *Wavelength* is metaphysical, *Eye and Ear Control* is philosophical and \longleftrightarrow will be physics." Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 4.

55. Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 4.

56. See Regina Cornwell's description of *Wavelength's* zoom in its relation to the structural principles of Minimalism, *Snow Seen*, 73–4.

57. See Sitney's comments on Michelson quoted below.

58. For instance Duke Ellington and then a nude woman in a room were considered subjects. Asked by Sitney, "Which part of the concept of *Wavelength* came first?," Snow replied: "The zoom. I was searching for the place for a long time and I didn't know where it started or where it went. It was just the idea of a long zoom." "Conversation with Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 3.

59. Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 5.

60. "It is attempting to balance out in a way all the so-called realities there involved in the issue of making a film. I thought that maybe the issues hadn't really been stated clearly about film in the same sort of way — now this is presumptuous, but to say — in the way Cézanne, say, made a balance between the colored goo that he used, which is what you see if you look at it in that way, and the forms that you see in their illusory space. That whole issue in film has been touched on by lots of people, that it's light, and it's on a flat surface, and it's also images. A kind of space that seems natural to it is maybe conical, but flattened. I can't explain how that seems proper. But it's something to do with that and that (Snow indicates first the flat of a screen with his palm and then the conical projection beam with both hands): the beam and the flat surface." "Conversation with Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 3. "I mentioned Cézanne in a comment about the illusion/reality balancing act in painting. Tho many others painters have worked out their own beautiful solutions to this 'problem', I think his

was the greatest and is relevant because his work was representational. The complicated involvement of his perception of exterior reality, his creation of a work which both represents and is something, thus his balancing of mind and matter, his respect for a lot of levels are exemplary to me. My work is representational. It is not very Cézannesque tho. *Wavelength* and \longleftrightarrow are much more Vermeer (I hope)." Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 5.

61. A second version has: "An ambition: to make a definitive statement of pure film space. Huge generalizations in painting since Cézanne's masterpiece 'space' has been a 'subject' of painting, having to do with a balancing of 'illusion' and 'fact'. I wanted to do this for film with light not paint as 'representational' not as 'abstract' art."

62. Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 5. For an unique, corrective analysis of the role of the zoom, see William C. Wees, "Prophecy, Memory and the Zoom: Michael Snow's *Wavelength* Re-viewed," *Cine-Tracts* 4: 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1981): 78-83.

That *Wavelength's* deep space does not follow perspectival construction but is composed of many orders perhaps gives it a special place in the apparatus debates referred to in note 48. Jean-Louis Comolli discusses the role of deep focus in the construction of verisimilitude in early film through the constitutive codes of perspective and its historical effacement: "It is by the transformation of the conditions of this credibility, by the displacement of the codes of cinematic verisimilitude from the plane of the impression of reality alone to the more complex planes of fictional logic (narrative codes), of psychological verisimilitude, of the impression of homogeneity and continuity (the coherent space-time of classical drama) that one can account for the effacement of depth." All these codes seem in question in *Wavelength* partly through the theatricalization of the zoom of the camera placed high on its tripod, which both strengthens the belief in the image at the same time that it dramatizes the space: "This is why cinematic deep focus does not slip into the 'naturalness' of linear perspective, but inevitably stresses that perspective, accentuates it, indicates its curvature, denounces the visual field it produces as a construction, a composition in which there is not simply 'more real' but in which this more visible is spatially organised in the frame, dramatised. Deep focus does not wipe out perspective, does not pass it off as the 'normality' of vision, but makes it readable as coding (exteriorisation of the interiorised code); it de-naturalises dramatises it." Jean-Louis Comolli, "Machines of the Visible," in Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds. *The Cinematic Apparatus* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 130, 137. Also see, Comolli, "Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field," originally published in 1971 in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, reprinted in *Film Reader* 2 (January 1977): 128-40.

63. Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 5. "*Wavelength* was trying to be aware of the fact that films are made up of single frames." "Michael Snow and John Massey in Conversation," *C Magazine*: 24.

64. Sitney, *Visionary Film*, 413.

65. One of the characteristics of the zoom Wees concentrates on in *Wavelength* is constancy of the photograph in the centre of the frame due to the optical mechanics of the zoom. "Presumably this is why Snow says that from the beginning of the film, the end is 'fated.' The end is visibly present in the beginning: a grey spot precisely in the centre of the projected image. There is no 'choice' but for the end to increasingly manifest itself through the photograph's increasing size.... Thus it is that *Wavelength's* zoom permits us to perceive, cinematically, that interpenetration of beginning and end... It is also in this way that the interpenetration of space and time is made visible. As the zoom is the 'cause,' so is the photograph the 'effect.' It is the visible evidence of a telescoping of centre and periph-

eries, time and space, beginning and end. Hence the particular significance in the fact that the film is centered on the photograph throughout. The photograph is literally the center of the film's projected image from beginning to end, and at every moment it embodies, in Snow's phrase, 'prophecy and memory'..." On the concluding image, where the zoom stops because the photograph cannot be penetrated by the optics of the zoom as the room has, Wees offers a different opinion from mine: "Although there is nothing more that the zoom lens can show us, the film does not end on a dead center of exhausted perception. The spatial flattening produced by the zoom does not, finally, affirm the flatness of the photograph/screen, but, instead, releases a qualitatively different sense of depth than that we had experienced as long as the wall provided a 'ground' for the photograph and prevented our experiencing the photograph's 'infinity.' By the same token, the film does not simply reduce itself to the materiality of the screen and the flat image projected on it. It ends by suggesting that its materiality is not 'the end' at all. At least, that is what I take to be the implications of the 'flattening' effect leading to, and being superceded by, the perception of 'infinite' depth, and the increasingly blown-up image of the photograph being erased by a final vision of pure, unobstructed light. Where the film ends, the imagination is encouraged to carry on, free of material constraints." Wees, "Prophecy, Memory and the Zoom," *Cine-Tracts*: 81, 82.

66. Sitney, *Visionary Film*, 423.

67. "Conversation with Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 3. "Wavelength starts wide and goes to one thing which has wide implications. As far as the space in the image is concerned, that's what it does...."

Q: By wide, do you mean spatially?

S: Yeah, and in terms of references." Snow interview with Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Film Comment* (May-June 1981): 36-37.

68. Sitney, *Visionary Film*, 420-21., "Discovered the high angle to have lyric God-like above-it-all quality." Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 5.

69. "My own fairly obsessive attempts at resolving existential problems have always started from an attempt at realising a specific concrete/materialist base. Successive seeming clarifications in my philosophy as in many others always head to Mystery. I'm not a 'literary' philosopher but, if we are here to name everything, it all has to build to a Transcendental Signifier. Out of facetious humility, I'm 'religious'." "A Conversation," *Afterimage*: 41. "I think if you don't recognize that certain kinds of examinations of reality bring you to a stage that asks for metaphysics, you're being stupid."

Rosenbaum, "Snowbound," *Afterimage*: 75

70. Simon Hartog, "Ten Questions to Michael Snow," *Cinim* 3 (Spring 1969): 3-4, reprinted in Peter Gidal, ed. *Structural Film Anthology* (London: British Film Institute, 1976), 37.

71. Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 4.

72. "...I've been trying to give some attention to how 'one thing leads to another' or more accurately: 'the ways in which one action leads to another.'" Snow, "Passage," *Artforum* 10:1 (Sept. 1971): 63.

73. "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 5.

74. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Blindness and Insight* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 206-07, 226. "The dialectical relationship between subject and object is no longer the central statement of romantic thought, but this dialectic is now located entirely in the temporal relationships that exist within a system of allegorical signs. It becomes a conflict between a con-

ception of the self seen in its authentically temporal predicament and a defensive strategy that tries to hide from this negative self-knowledge." Ibid., 208. An allegorical interpretation of *Wavelength* would account, for instance, for Michelson's own troubling revision from her 1971 to her 1979 article (see note 48). De Man's article, first published during this period in 1969, expresses the conflicts within the film that Michelson could not recognize: see her "Art and the Structuralist Perspective," a 1969 lecture published in *On the Future of Art* (New York: Viking, 1970), 37–59. De Man's essay was a resource for Sitney. "The structural film — and *Wavelength* may be the supreme achievement of the form — has the same relationship to the earlier forms of the avant-garde film that Symbolism had to its source, Romanticism. The rhetoric of inspiration has changed to the landscape of aesthetics; Promethean heroism collapses into a consciousness of the self in which its very representation becomes problematic; the quest for a redeemed innocence becomes a search for the purity of images and the trappings of time. All this is as true of structural cinema, as it is of Symbolism." *Visionary Film*, 417.

4. Autonomic Art

75. Snow's prior exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery in 1966 was still *Walking Woman Works* and he had a retrospective of the series at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1967. At Expo '67, his *Walking Woman* was well represented by its function as a public sculpture at the Ontario pavilion.

For a review of the situation of sculpture in Canada, see Philip Monk, *Robin Collyer* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1993), 16–17, 89 n. 2. That year, 1967, also saw the publication of Canada's first major art history, J. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada*, its title indicating clearly the obstacles sculpture would have to overcome to bring Canadian art into line with the defining work done elsewhere.

Harry Malcolmson, "Michael Snow — after *Walking Woman*," *Toronto Daily Star*, Feb. 10, 1968: 34–76. "7 questions + 1..." *artscanada*: 30–31.

77. Robert Fulford, "Aprópos Michael Snow," *Michael Snow/A Survey*, 11–12.

78. Théberge, *About 30 Works by Michael Snow*, 37.

79. Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow to Peter Gidal on the film *Back and Forth*," Gidal, *Structural Film Anthology*, 51.

5. Time, Light, Sound

80. Snow quoted in Jud Yalkut, "Wavelength," *Film Quarterly* 21:4 (Summer 1968): 51. Snow, "Letter from Michael Snow," *Film Culture*: 4.

81. Snow quoted in "Michael Snow: A Filmography," *Afterimage* 11 (Winter 1982–83): 10.

82. Michelson, "Toward Snow," *Artforum*: 30, 32; "About Snow," *October*: 113.

Exhibition List

Sculpture

1. *Atlantic* 1967
Metal, wood, photographs, arborite
171.1 x 245.1 x 39.9 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Purchase, 1986
2. *First to Last* 1967
Painted wood, aluminum, glass
208.5 x 208.5 x 15.2 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Purchase, 1985
3. *Sight* 1967
Aluminum, engraved plastic
142.2 x 106.7 cm
Vancouver Art Gallery, purchased with funds from the Vancouver Foundation Endowment and the Canada Council
4. *Scope* 1967
Stainless steel, mirrors
2 elements: 175.3 x 396.2 x 91.4 cm
137.2 x 71.1 x 27.9 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
5. *Blind* 1967
Painted aluminum and steel
243.8 x 243.8 x 243.8 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
6. *Portrait* 1967
Aluminum
Variable dimensions:
approximately 60.9 x 91.4 cm
Private collection
7. *Aluminum and Lead* 1968
Aluminum, lead
Height adjustable, cross bar 304.8 cm,
lead ingots 53.3 and 33.0 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Purchase, 1969
8. *View* 1968
Plastic, steel cable
55.88 x 76.2 x 7.62 cm
Mrs. Peter MacLachlan, Toronto
9. *Membrane* 1969
Chromed steel, wood, rubber
9.5 x 48.9 x 67.3 cm
S.L. Simpson Gallery, Toronto
10. *432101234* 1969
Chromed steel, aluminum, sponge rubber
33.0 x 48.9 x 67.3 cm
Peggy Gale, Toronto

Photography

11. *Snow Storm, February 7, 1967* 1967
Black and white photographs,
enamelled masonite
121.9 x 121.9 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
12. *Authorization* 1969
Black and white polaroid photographs,
tape, mirror, metal
54.5 x 44.5 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
13. *Press* 1969
Black and white photographs, plastic, metal
182.9 x 182.9 x 25.4 cm
Dr. & Mrs. Sydney L. Wax, Toronto
14. *8 x 10* 1969
80 black and white photographs
Each: 20.32 x 25.4 cm
S.L. Simpson Gallery, Toronto
15. *Tap* 1969
Framed black and white photograph,
framed typewritten text on paper,
tape player, speaker, wire and sound tape
106.8 x 156.3 cm; 65.1 x 40.0 cm;
48.3 x 38.1 x 25.4 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
16. *Untitled Slidlength* 1969–71
80 35mm colour slides
S.L. Simpson Gallery, Toronto

Films

17. *Wavelength* 1966-67
45 min., colour
Art Gallery of Ontario
18. *Standard Time* 1967
8 min., colour
Art Gallery of Ontario

19. ←→ 1968-69
50 min., colour
Art Gallery of Ontario
20. *One Second in Montreal* 1969
20 min., black and white
Art Gallery of Ontario

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- O'Pray, Michael. "Framing Snow." 51-65;
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