

Transparency, Reflection, Light, Space: A Response

Transparency A Repose Reflection Space Light

Leah Mackin

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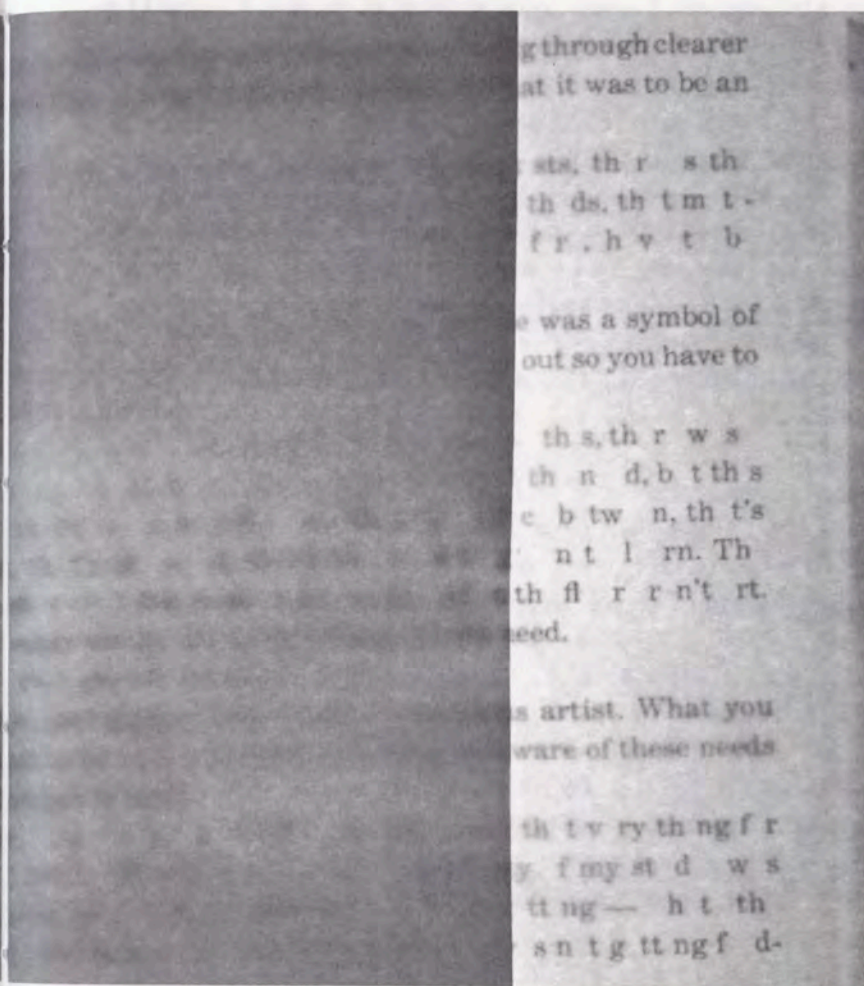
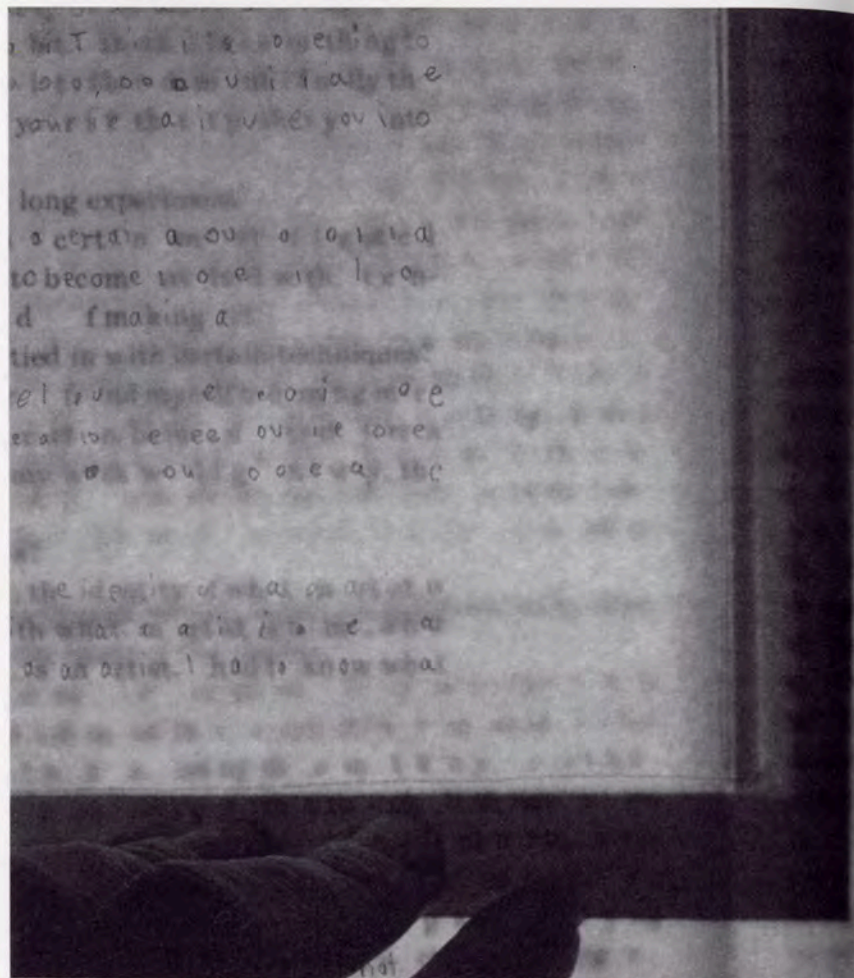
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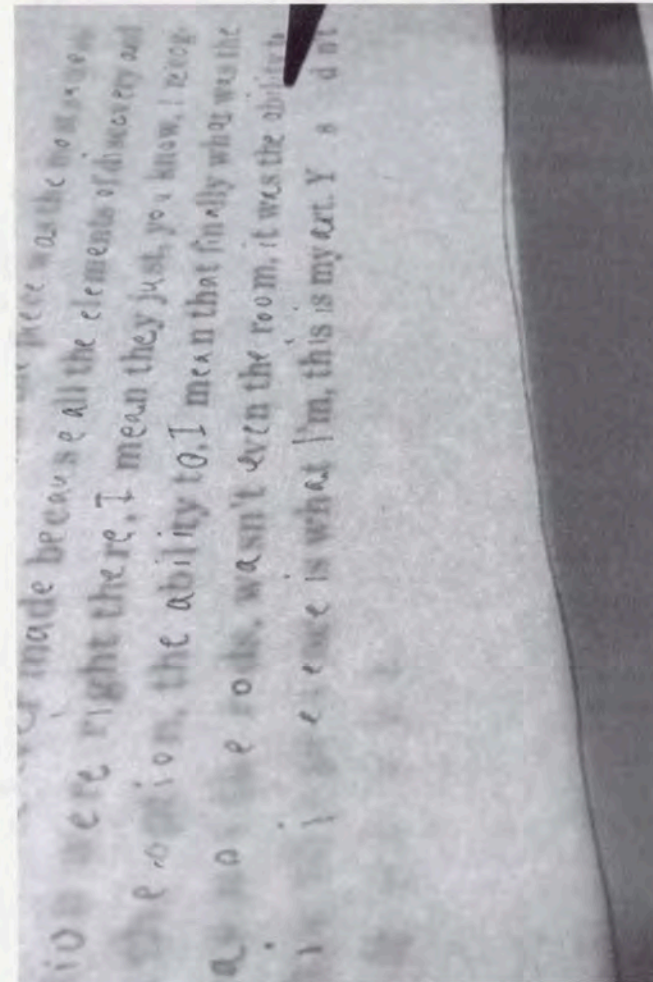
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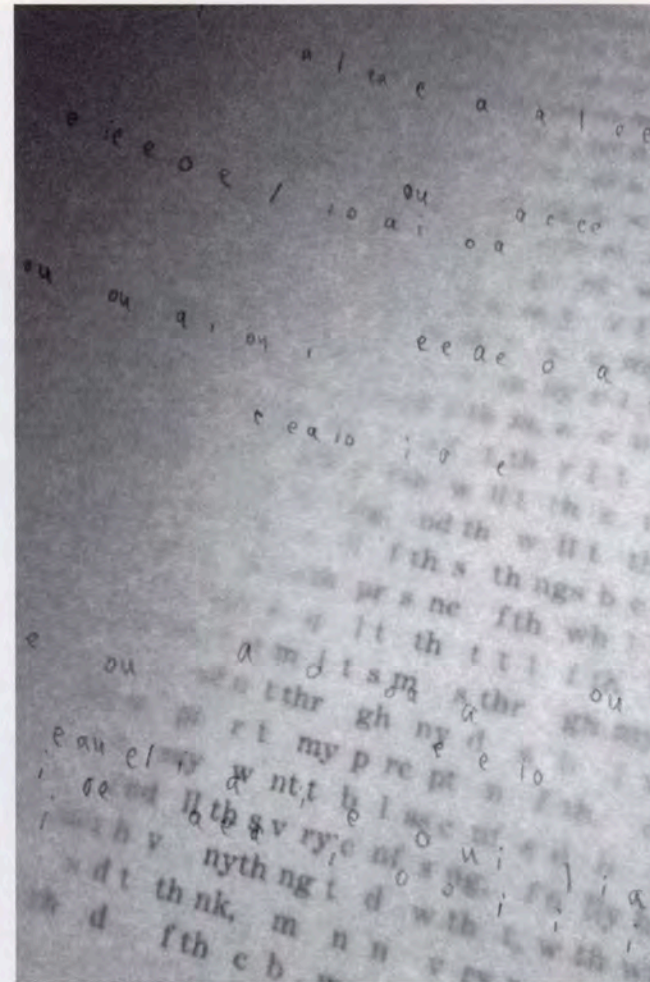
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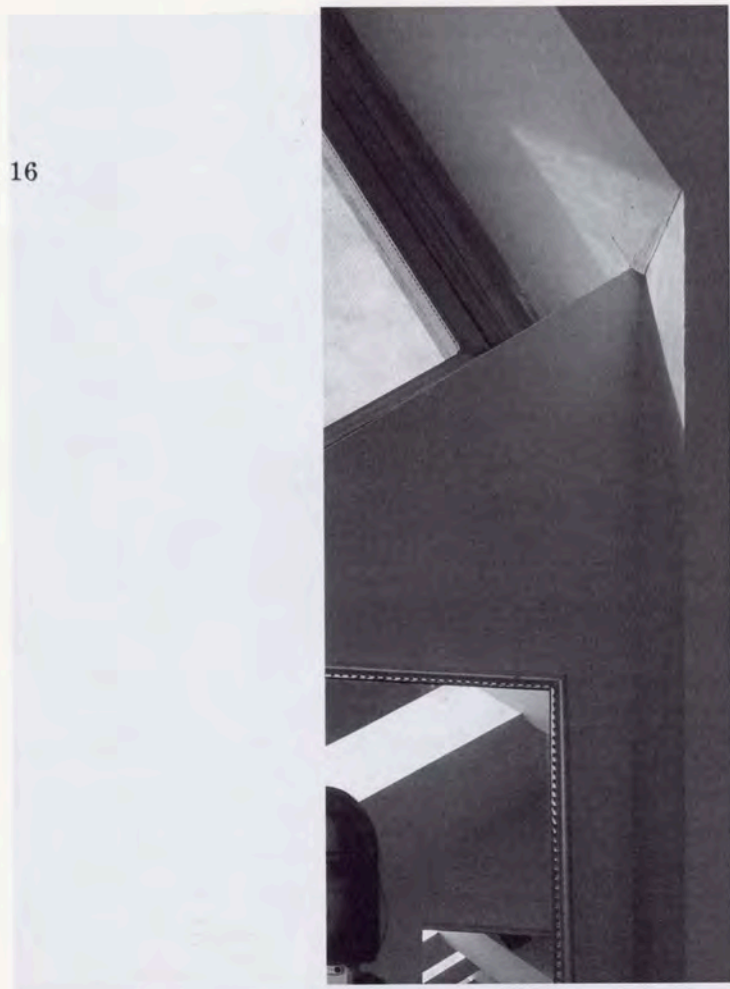
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Transparency, Reflection, Light, Space: A Response was published by the Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale, NY. WSW is funded in part by the New York State Council on the Arts, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts. This project was also funded by Windgate Charitable Foundation. This book was laser printed, photocopied and letterpress printed on Neenah Classic Crest paper and UV Ultra II.

Thank you to everyone at Women's Studio Workshop, especially to Chris Petrone for guidance and to Megan Borseth and Adreena Cook for production assistance. The artist would also like to express appreciation and gratitude for encouragement from Jessica Simmons and Brooke Kanther; for support from Carol Mackin; and a special thank you to Alex Lukas, always.

This is book no. 25 of 63 copies.

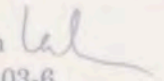
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An Interview with Larry Bell

It is my opinion the vowels were deleted intentionally. FREDERICK WIGHT

W You have told me that you got out of painting to get into something that suited you better.

B Th r 's lw ysthsm ttr ftryngt s st n ntr st n n
ctv ty. lw ysw s lttl conf s d st wh tth d f n
rtstws s pps dt th r lty f n rtst. t's nly b n
r cntlyth tth rh scl rd bt. thnk thss m thngt
d j stwthth cc mlt n f lt fbr dm ntlfn llyth
br dmflss ch bgsp c ny rlf th ttp sh sy nt
n th r r m.

W In other words, it's been one long experiment.

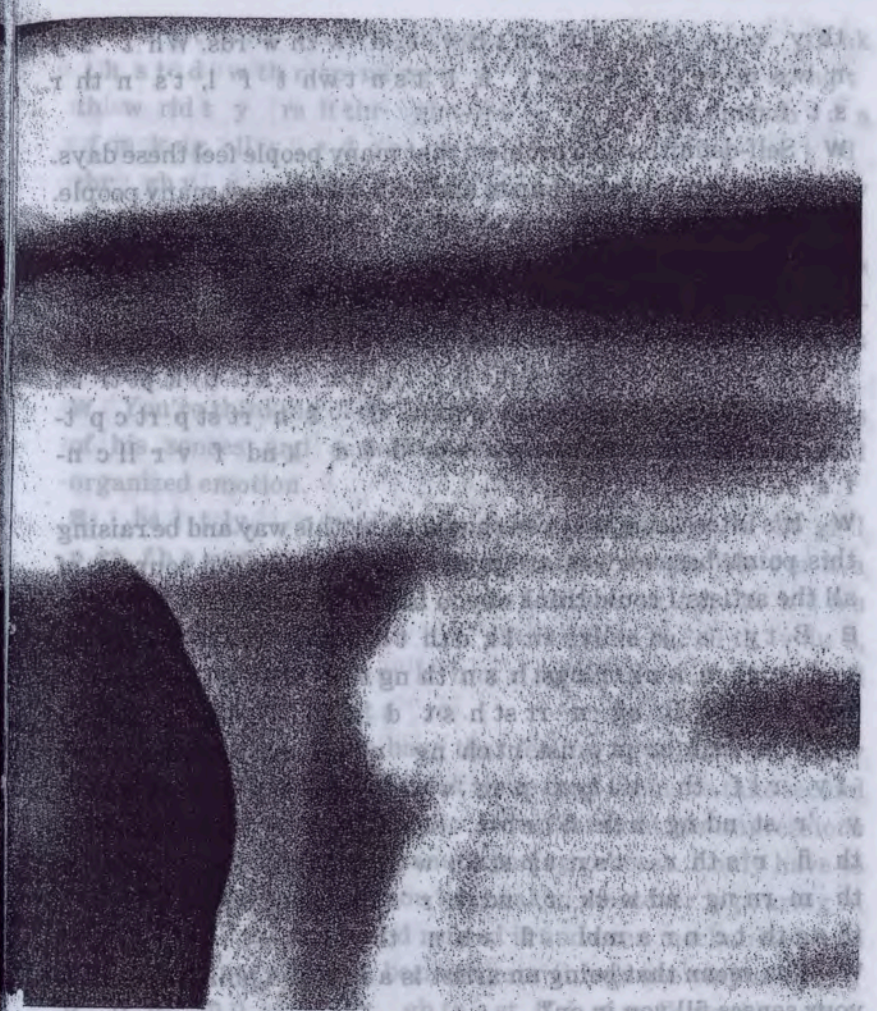
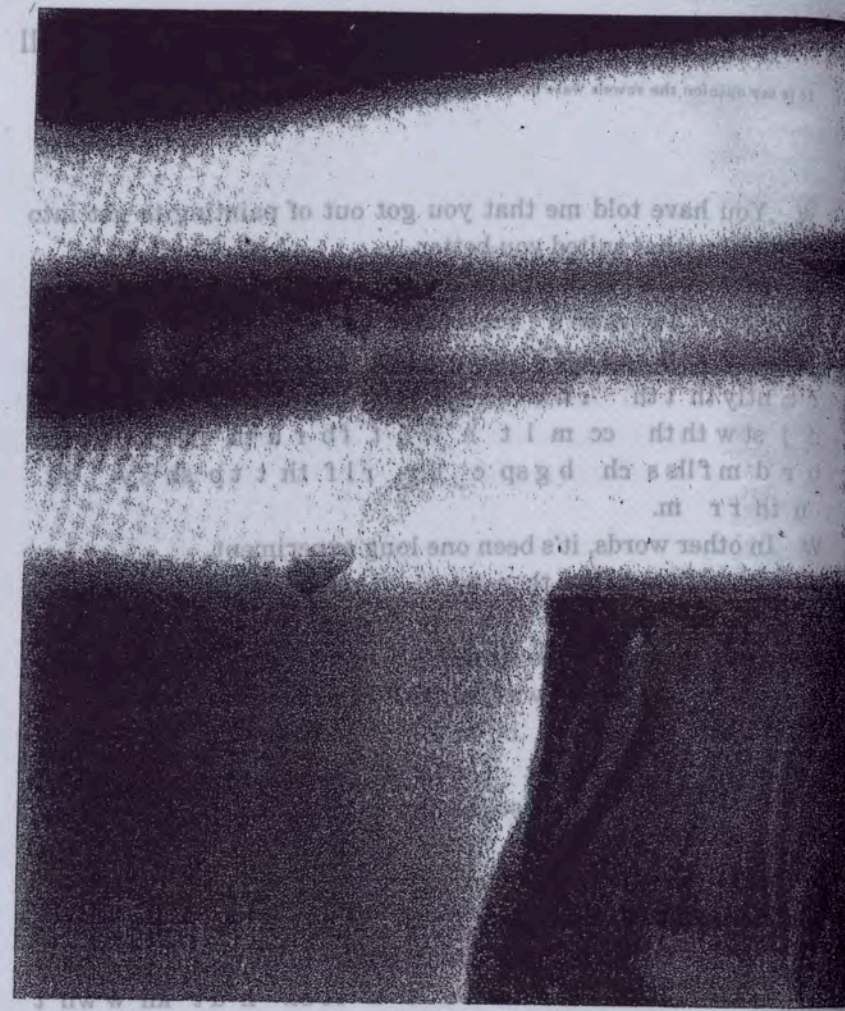
B Y s. f nd th tth r ws crt n m nt flgstcl
m n v rngth t lw ldh v t b c m nv lv d wth. t c n
f s d m gr td l b tth d fm kng rt.

W You mean that art was just tied in with certain techniques?

B W ll, n tw s lttl btm r. f ndmys lfb c mngm r
nd m r nv lv d wth n ntr ct n b tw n tsd frc s
nd my w rk, y nd rst nd, my w rk w ldg n w y, th
frc sw r g ng n th r.

W What were the outside forces?

B Th y h dt d wth d nt ty, th d nt ty fwh t n rtst s
td y. h dt c m t grps wth wh t n rtst st m, wh t
rtst m n rd rt f nct n s n rtst. h dt kn w wh t



thy r, y s . t d sn'th v t d wth w rds. Wh t s y
n w c m s s c n d t wh t f l, t's n t wh t f l, t's n th r
s t f symb ls.

W Self-definition is a problem that many people feel these days.
The question, what am I up to and why, hits a great many people.

B W ll, thnk th t m n h s d n h m s l f tr m n d s dis-
s r v c b y c n f n d n g n d l m t n g h s b l t y t p r c v b y th
m n t f h r d w r e th t h f n d s t n e s s r y t f c t r th
g d s f th d y. J s t m k n g c f f , j s t s h r p n n g p n c l,
j s t k p n g t r c k f th t m b c s t m h s t b k p t t r c k
f. m n l l f th s th n g s n d th d f n r t s p r t c p t-
n g n s y s t m f th n k n g h s p r d c d k n d f v r l l c n-
f s n.

W It's interesting that you should think this way and be raising
this point, because you are pretty deep in technical sources, of
all the artists I could think of you have a—

B B t y s , f n l l y r l z d th t b n g n r t s th s n th n g
t d w th m k n g th n g s, h s n th n g t d w th th th n g s y
l v b h n d. B n g n r t s th s t d w th th b l t y t m k
d c s n s n d c c p t c n s t n t c h n g n th f r m t n d s t r c t r
f y r l f, th b l t y t p r c v th r g h l l y r s n s s th t
y 'r s t n d n g n th f l r b c s y r f t r t l l n g y th t
th f l r s th r. t's n t j s t k n w n g th t w h n y g t p n
th m r n g n d w l k r n d th r's l w y s g n g t b s m-
th n g th t c n r s m b l f l r b n th y .

W You mean that being an artist is a sort of a philosophy that
your senses fill you in on?

B d n't thnk th s nyth n g t d w th ph l s phy. thnk
th s t d w th r s p n d n g t y r p r c p t n s, r s p n d n g t
th w r l d t y r s l f th r g h (h b y, 'm g t t n g t d) th d a
f m k n g l l y r d c s n s b t w h t y 'r g n g t d
th r g h y r s th t c, n t th r g h nyth n g l s. D y f l l w
th t? n th r w r d s, f s th s n d t m n s s m th n g t m
th t n f r m t n m m d t l y g s t m y s th t c w h c h c t s
n t t v l y n d g v s n f r m t n b c k t m y h d n d d p n d-
n g n th c n d t n f m y h d t th t m w l l r s p n d c r t n
w y.

W You're thinking of an artist as someone who reacts in terms
of his senses and sensibilities rather than to filtered and
organized emotion.

B b s l t l y. c n s d r n r t s t's s th t c s n n t g r l
p r t f h s s y s t m j s t l k h s h r t r h s k d n y s. W h t m k s
h m d f f r n t f r m th w h l r s t f m n s th t h m k s h s
d c s n s th r g h h s s th t c. l l th d c s n s, l l th v l u s,
l l th b s c th n g s th t m k h m r s p n d t th w r l d r n d
h m c m n l y f r m th t s r e.

W A good many people have that feeling and use it to justify
living by impulse. But the artist these days seems to take second
thoughts about what he is up to. He screens out his impressions
and puts them through a manufacturing process. I only have to
look over here to see that you have taken whatever is pouring in
on you and simplified it and refined it and even mechanized it to
an extraordinary degree, because your things are very simple.

B W ll, 'm p s s n g th r g h th s s t f f, j s t w l k n g th r g h t,

jstlk y wlkthr gh nydffrntt lsd rngth tm
 thty spndd nger t nthngs. Ths llf nct ns n crt n
 wybc s thr r crt nthngsth th dt b dn ndth
 nly wyth y c ldb dn sths wy. n nt r stng thng,
 gttngb ckt th nt r ct nb tw nmys lf nd th rrcum-
 stncs, wsth ttd ths trq rdd ng llknds f thr
 thngst st pth pssblt sth tw ldl t th pp n. nd
 ths thngsh v nthngt d wth rtb tth y h v n nt r st-
 ng t p n n th r knd flvl. bg nt r lz th tth
 chngsth ttk plc nmy wrk—wh t's h pp n ng— r
 th s rc fts strngth. B tth strng sth ngth t 'v b n
 nylv d wth fr th l st tw y rsh s b n sttng pths
 st d , sttng pths fclty t wrk. h v c m t th c n-
 cl s nth tth st d sm ch str ngr th nth wrkth tth
 st d c ldpr d c. Th st d s v r t l d, fy c n nd r-
 st nd th t.

W You sound as though for you being clear-headed about what
 an artist is was the heart of the matter.

B t's b c m n ss lk ccpt nc fr sp ns blty fr n's
 ct ns. Th t m s d m nd th t v ryb dy b r sp ns bl frhs
 ct ns, fr wh th d s, nd by th s m t k n y c n't h d
 y rh d nth s nd nd fgr th tth gh llthngs r nd
 y chng y wllr m n ny rc rs. Th c nt n nts, v ry-
 thng s shft ng, v rythng m v s, s y r m v ng t-
 m t c lly. Wh n n rt st p tsh ms lf n p st n f s yng
 th s fn lly r s lv s v rythng, wh th s ct lly syng s

q t, d n't w ntt r s lv nythng nym r j stw ntt st
 hr, s ?

W But you were saying that things were coming through clearer
 to you and that you had a clearer picture of what it was to be an
 artist.

B Y s, b tth fclty fr chng lw ys xsts, th r s th
 r c gnt n f bs l sc nc, th t d s, th t m th ds, th t m t-
 v tng fr s c n b c m bs l t nd, th r fr, h v t b
 d sc rd d—

W Can we say a certain box at a certain time was a symbol of
 something for you that could conceivably wear out so you have to
 find another symbol?

B L t's l k t t l t t l b t d ffr nt. f m k ths, th r w s
 n d f r t t b m d s th s w sth r s l t f th n d, b t th s
 s n t rt, th n d w sth rt. Th r's sp c b tw n, th t's
 th rt, th t's th n d, th t's th n d t g n t l rn. Th
 thngsth t r l f t b h nd nth w lls nd nth fl r r n't rt.

W In other words, it's in the change in the need.

B Th t's r ght, th t's wh r t s.

W This presupposes that you're a conscious artist. What you
 do seems to be very conscious, you must be aware of these needs
 and changes in need.

B ct lly 'v b n l t t l nc nsc s f th t v ry th ng fr
 qut wh l. M stly b c s th c m p l x t y f m y st d w s
 n t g v ng m r f l c t n f r m, w s n t g t t ng— h t th
 w r d f d b c k b c s t's s st p d, b t w s n t g t t ng f d-



b ck fr m my w rk, w s nly g tt ng f db ck fr m th c m-
pl xty f m nt nng n rt st d . Th t d n d th v ry
pr ms fb ng n rt st. My d fwh t st d w sb c m
th m tv t ng frc b t ll tm tv t dw sth cntn t n f
s m th ng th tw sn'tw rk ng.

W If you find that or this environment getting in your way, what
does it do to you when you find your boxes very successfully get-
ting all over creation?

B W ll, 'llt lly td sn'tm nt m cht m . tr ss
c rt n pr bl m. t m ns c rt n m ss g s c m ng n fr m
s rc sth t r s irr l v nt nd n mp rt ntt wh t 'm nt ,
th y j st ddt th ttle n f s n. Lk nvr, 'mnt n b s-
n ssy s , d n'tgv sht b tth tst ff. D ngth s nths
w yr gurd c rt nknd ffn nc lfclty th tcm t f
r sp ns t my rl r wrk. m n t j st h pp nd. h d
s m fncy d l r sw h kn wh wt m v th s thngs. S ll
dd w st k th s fclty th t th s thngs g v m nd p t t
b ck nt th sh p. tw s n rb tr rym v . ddn't h v ny
pl ns, th ghts m h w n xp ns n fth d w s g ng t
ch ng t b tw h n st r t d m k ng th btp c s fsc lpt r I
r lz dth yw r n d ffr nt fr mth c b s, th nly d ffr nc
w sth t th c rn r sw r nd ffr nt pl c s.

W You come back to seeing things more clearly. That must show
up in what you're doing.

B W ll, y s, b t c n'tt lly wh t th t s. c n'tt lly why
s cl rly r v n wh t s , b c s ll kn w sth r sp ns .
Th nly w y c n m v st m v nt tv ly nd c n'tm v

nt tvly fth r'sn thngt rnngm n. S wht l h v t d
s l'k r nd nds y kywh ttrnsm n sw h r t s.

W Well, what is turning you on over and above what was turning you on when you were making those boxes, space I would suppose, the manipulation of space in some way.

B W ll, y s, m n p l t n f s p c d f n t l y. 'v b n w r k n g
n t h t f r b . t y r n d . h l f n d s t l l h v n t g t t c m-
p l t l y d n b t t's p r t t y c l s t b n g d n . B t s m h w y
k n w t's l k n x r c s . Y s t h t's t h s, t h t's t h t, b t h
s p c t h t 'm t h n k n g f s t h s p c b t w n t h s n d t h t.
'm n t s p k n g f t h t s p c .

W You mean space as a dimension of change?

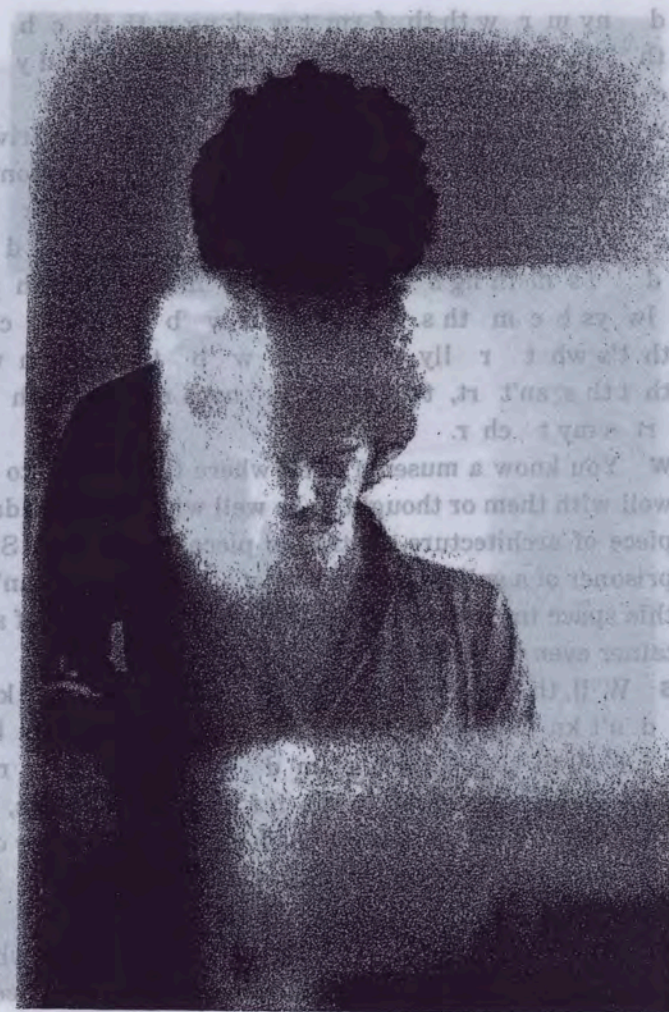
B R g h t.

W Well, I have the impression that you are in a dimension of change, I've seen that the box thing seems to have been a sort of trajectory which —

B L t m n s w r t h r w r c r t n v s l t h n g s t h t w s
n t r s t d n . s t r t d r s l v n g m s t f t h q s t n s, t h p r b-
l m w s t h t g t b r d n d t l l b c m r d n d n t . F n l l y n
p l s h n g t t h b x s r s l v d t h m s l v s . r l z d t h r w s
n t h n g l s c l d d , m n t h r w s n m r , c l d n't t k
t h t n y f r t h r, y k n w m n, t h y r s l v d t h m s l v s j s t
b y b n g r s l v d . J s t b y f n l l y n s w r n g l l t h v s l q s-
t n s.

W They were geometry, and geometry comes up with its own answer doesn't it?

B d n't k n w n y t h n g b t t h t b t k n w t h t c l d n't



d nym r wth th frm t w rk ng w th c b nd fn lly
th l st ns b c m n t t , n t r lly v ry g dy kn w be-
c s th dr v , th nt t v dr v w s g n .

W Well, would you say that what you seem to be driving at now
is a container regardless of whether something is contained?

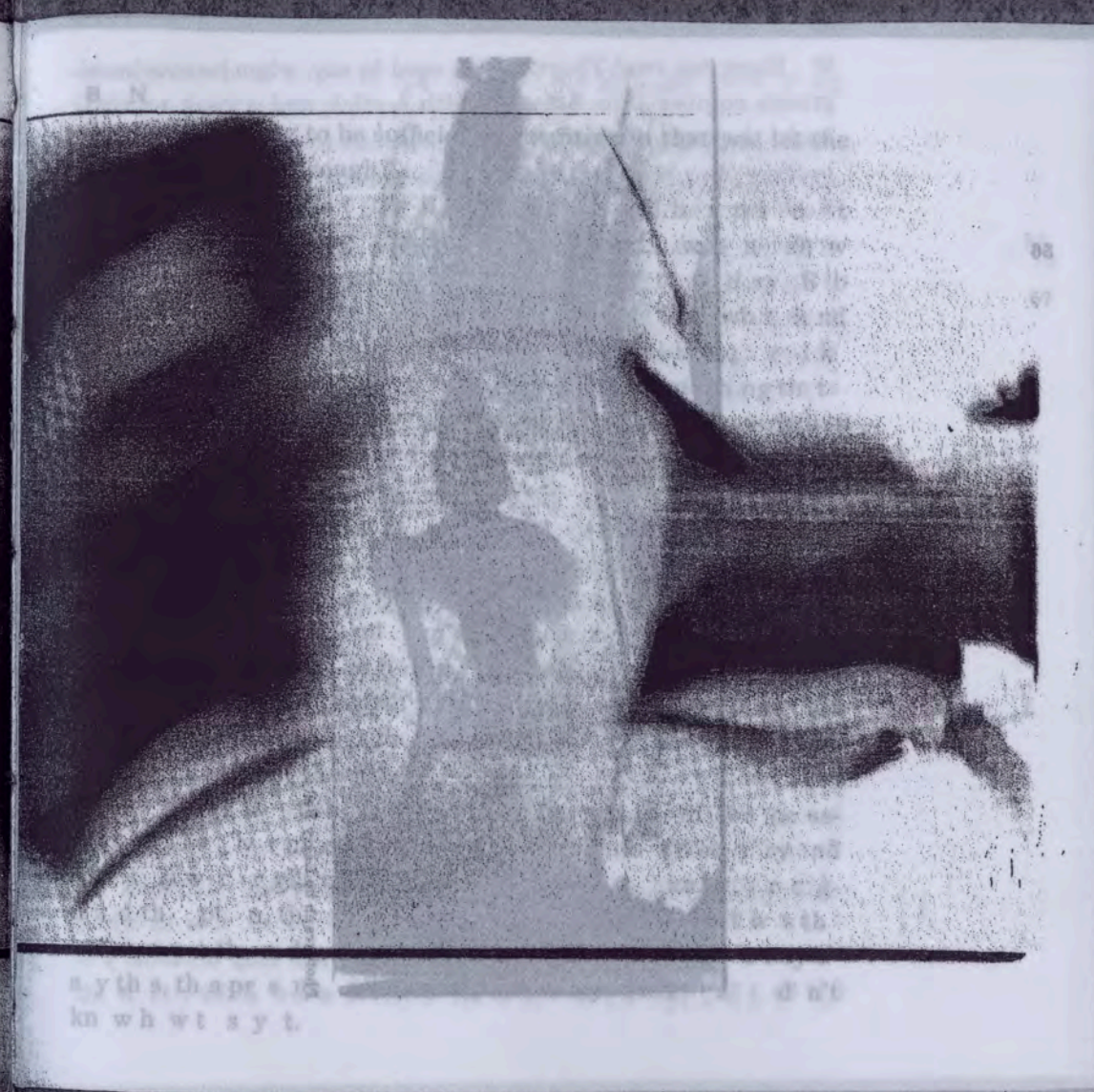
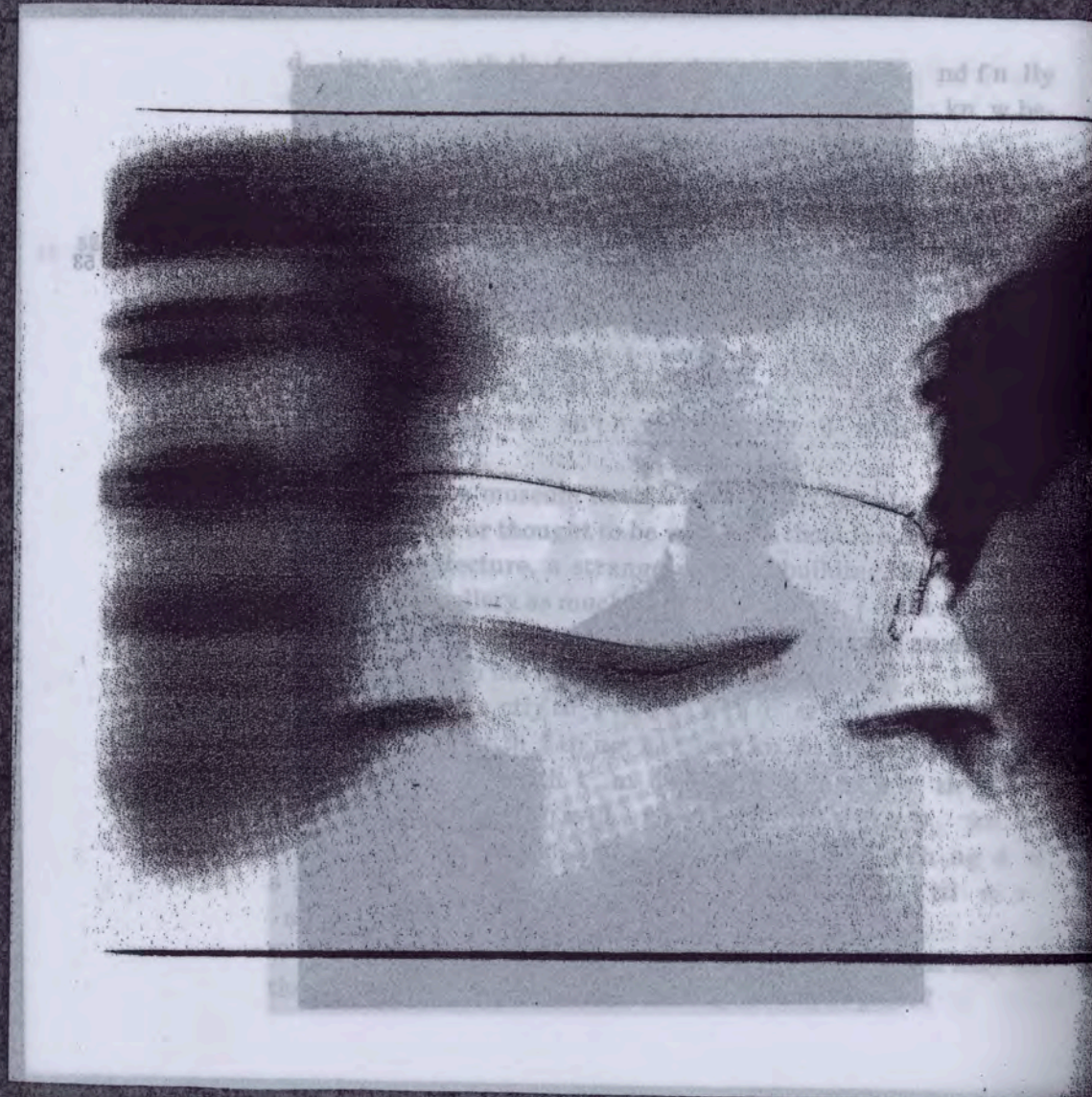
B thnk th d m ns ns f my blt st m k thngs r
r lly l m t d . m n , n th p st th y f lly x st d w th n th
d fs m th ng b ng f c t r d . N m t t r w h t sh p t w s t
l w y s b c m th s . w n t t kn w b t th t s p c b t w n ,
th t's w h t r lly w n t t kn w b t b c s n w r l z
th t th s . sn't r t , t d sn't h v nyth ng t d w th r t , m n
r t s m y t ch r .

W You know a museum itself where things tend to go if all is
well with them or thought to be well with them is a damn funny
piece of architecture, a strange piece of building. Since I'm a
prisoner of a gallery as much as of other things, I can't step into
this space in here without thinking of it as a sort of an art con-
tainer even if you haven't put anything in it yet.

B W ll, th t's x ctly th l m t t n th t w s s p k ng f , s .
d n't kn w w h t th t th ng s , nly kn w t's f n lly th s b -
c s ll th d c s n st h t m d n th f c t r ng w r th s m
k n d f d c s n st h t m d n f c t r ng th c b s , y kn w ,
y l k t th s n d th st b b g g r r s m ll r r ch ng d n
s m w y s w ch ng t l t t l b t r w ch ng t l t t l m r
n d d th s n d th t .

W Do you have any thought at this juncture as to what may be
the thing you will do with a piece of space in our place?







Photograph by Larry Bell

W Have you read Thoreau? He used to say, when he saw immi- grants coming into America with a stick and a pack

B N Or is it going to be sufficiently intuitive so that you let the answer come on through?

B I d n't kn w wh t t w ll b . th nk t w ll b d f n t Yd t th gh. h d str ng xpr nc n ngl nd, w s n sh w w th D g Wh l r nd B b rwn t th T t G ll ry. B b sh w dh str nsp r nt d scs nd Wh l r m d v b g wh t k nd f nvr nm nt nd sh w d c pl f th s l k sq r l k p c sth th m ks, nd w sg ngt d th s m thngth t d d t th M d rn wh ch w sth s d rkr m nd gl ss r ds b t wh n w g t th r m l l d n t d d n't w rk, th p c d d n't w rk t ll n th r m.

W How did you adapt it?

B t w sq t smpl, d e d d th t ft r b ng n th r m, s m st t ng n th r m w t ng f r th s gl ss r ds t w rk b t th y d d n't w rk nd kn w m m d t ly why th y d d n't w rk, wh y n th nge l d b d n b t th gl ss r ds. r l z d th t th r m w s d ng wh t th r ds d d w th t th r ds, nd th fl r w s d ng wh t th r ds d d —

W So you left out the rods?

B S j st l ft t th r ds nd th p c w sth m st s cc ss fl p c 'v v r m d b c s ll th l m nts f d s c v ry nd nt t n w r r ght th r, m n th y j st, y kn w, r c g n z d th pt n, th b l ty t, m n th t f n lly wh t w sth r t w s n t th r ds, w s n't v n th r m, t w s th b l ty t s y th s, th spr s nc s wh t 'm, th s s my rt. Y s d n't kn wh w t s y t.

W Have you read Thoreau? He used to say, when he saw immigrants coming into America with a stick and a pack on their backs that was all their worldly goods, he felt sorry for them not because they had so little but because they had so much.

B Y s'r ght. Wh t l r n d w s, h d d p n d d n t h c n-
tr v n c f t h r d s t b t h r t t h p c w l d h v f l d.
d d n't c h n g, t h n l y t h n g t h t w s c h n g d, w s t h t t h
r d s w r r m v d, b t y c o l d n't h v s n t h m n y w y n d
t h p c w r k d. t' s l k s y n g k y, y g n t w h t w s
s y n g a b t t h p r e p t o n f t h f l r f r m y r f t—y
w o l k n t s p c, y w l k n t r m, t h r s c m p l x t y f
w h t y r n t r n g n t. T h r r s m n y r l t n s h p s
r n d y t h t f y w s h d t c n s d r t h m, w c n s t r t b y
s n g t h r l t n s h p f t h f l r t y r f t, t h r l t n s h p f
t h f l r t t h w l l, t h r l t n s h p f t h w l l t t h c l n g, t h
r l t n s h p f t h f l r t t h c l n g, n d t h w l l t t h w l l,
t h c o r n r t t h c o r n r, m n o l l f t h s t h n g s b e m s
m a c h f n a l m n t f t h r m s t h p r s n c f t h w h l r m,
m a n t h s t r n g t h f p r t s s q l t t h t t l f t h w h l
t h n g. r c g n z w h y w h t s t m l t s m s t h r g h m y p r-
c e p t n s f w h t v r t s, n d n t t h r g h n y d s b t t t h t
h v p a s s d t h r g h m p r r t m y p r e p t n f t h c t l
t h n g. T h t' s t h r o s n s a y w n t t b l s s e n f s d b t l l
f t h s s t f f, b c s f n d l l t h s v r y c n f s n g, f n l l y h v
r a l z d t h t t d s n't h v n y t h n g t d w t h t, w t h w h t
'm n t r s t d n. s d t t h n k, m n n v r y n v w y
f l t t h t t h c b s, t h d f t h c b, w s r d c d t l w s t

c m m n d n m n t r t h t w s f n c t n l t h r g h w d r n g
f c t v t s f r m t p r t e p t n.

W Is the thing that you're doing now whether it's a couple of panes of glass or whether it's a space, like here, still simpler than these cubes?

B W l l, d n't t h n k t' s r l l y n y d f f r n t. T h t h n g t h t
f n d m s t n t r g n g s t h s p c n b t w n t h s t h n g s, b c s
t h t s d f f r n t, t h t' s n t d f f r n t. T h t r m s n d f f r n t
f r m t h c b s r t h s s t r p s r t h s t n k r n y t h n g. B t t h
d f f r n c, w h t' s r l l y d f f r n t s w h t l t s t h t x s t.

W Do you think there is really a profound change that can be broken through to?

B d n't k n w. n l y k n w w h t t t k s t k p m n t r s t d,
w h t h v t d t p r p t t m y x s t n c, t k p t h n g s
g n g. M y b f n l l y k p n g y r s l f m u s e d s m s t m p r t n t.

W It's a very wide-open situation that you are describing.

B W l l, t h p n t s, t h n l y l m t t n, n y l m t t n t h t s
p r s n t d s n r b t r y l m t t n. n y t h n g c n x s t, t h
d f t b n g n t r p r t d s f l s s r m r m p r t n c s n l y
w h' s d n g t h n t r p r t n g. r l l y b l v t h t l t f t h t
k n d f n t r p r t t n t h t w r c n f r n t d w t h t d y n t r m s
f t h r t w r l d, r t s c h l s, m s m s n d s n s r l l y l l
c n m c.

W Have you had your go around with (the) Irvine (campus) yet?

B Y s.

W How did that work?

B R l l y w l l, w s r l l y s r p r s d, w s s r p r s d b c s

t frst, th ght t w s f l r nd th n g t ll th s n t
l t t r s f r m t h s s t d n t s t h t s d, G d, w h t h p p n d d r n g
t h t t m w s r l l y m p r t n t t m n d w s v r w h l m d,
c l d n' t b l v t.

W That's fine.

B Y s, t w s g r t n v r g t l t t r f r m n y b d y s y n g
t h t b f r

W Do you think there is really a profound change that can be
broken through? I think so. I think it's a very wide-open
question that you are describing.

W It's a very wide-open question that you are describing.
I think it's a very wide-open question that you are describing.

W Have you had your go around with (the) living (campus) yet?
I think so. I think it's a very wide-open question that you are describing.

W How did that work? I think it's a very wide-open question that you are describing.

B R lly w d l p w s r l l y s r p s d, w s s r p s d o c s

