

Endless Installation: A Ghost Story For Adults

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

The Box man

The Father

The Manager

Roland Barthes

Aby Warburg

Meir Agassi

Walter Benjamin

Frederick Kiesler

Doctor

Juhani Pallasmaa

THE ENTRANCE

The Box man. This is a tale, of course. This story is in act of taking place. Since you hear it you have the obligation of being one of the cast of characters.

The Manager. Very well, -- but where does all this take us?

The Father. Nowhere! It is merely to show you that one is born to life in many forms, in many shapes. So one may also be born a character in a play.

(break)

The Father. He who has had the luck to be born a character can laugh even at death. He cannot die.

(break)

The Father. He who has had the luck to be born a character can laugh even at death. He cannot die.

(break)

The Manager. And where is the "book"?

The Father. It is in us! The drama is in us, and we are the drama. We are impatient to play it. Our inner passion drives us on to this.

(break)

The Box man. This is the record of a box man. I am beginning this account in a box. A cardboard box that reaches just to my hips when I put it on over my head. That is to say, at this juncture the box man is me.

Instead of leaving the box, I shall enclose the world within it. The space that was supposed to be a room had changed into an alleyway... If I tried taking another step further, what would happen? I was curious.

Of course, only one of the three of us really exists. The one who is continuing to write these notes. Everything that has happened is merely the monologue of that someone...

(break)

The Box man. Since you have come to this room you seem motionless. Just as I look for signs of you on the other side of the door, so you too look for signs of me.

The streets of this city have no names. The spaces that compose it in detail are unnamed. Domiciliation is sustained by an abstraction. You must orient yourself in it by walking, by sight, by habit.

Barthes. You must orient yourself in it by walking, by sight, by habit.

Warburg. The images and words ought to be a help to those who come after us.

Barthes. Here every discovery is intense and fragile; it can be repeated or recovered only by memory of the trace it left in you. To visit a place for the first time is thereby to begin to write it.

The Box man. If this was the starting point, would we be successful commencing all over again from the beginning?

Of course, it should be possible to start over again any number of times.

Of course, it should be possible to start over again any number of times.

JUNCTURE 1

TRACK 1 - what is an artist?

The Box man. A went stealthily out into the streets with the box over his head. And didn't come back.

Once a day I would put on the box and go out into the town. Wandering about the streets like a transparent person, I would go around collecting.

Agassi. As you can see, I am interested in the quality of accumulation, of representing a group of things... Storing, categorizing, ... arranging and re-arranging...

The Box man. Once a day I would put on the box and go out into the town. Wandering about the streets like a transparent person, I would go around collecting.

I would go around collecting.

The Box man. If you pay no attention to a box man, he is just like wind or dust.

.....

Warburg. Beneath the dark flutter of the griffon's wings we dream – between gripping and being gripped – the concept of consciousness.

Agassi. I like the idea that I can amuse or disappoint myself without being distracted by the desire, or the need to create this eternal monster...'a masterpiece'... or to obey the autocratic need for 'a statement'.

The Box man. In processing the box the most important thing in all events is to ensure leaving plenty of blank space for scribbling.

Warburg. I had developed a downright disgust with aestheticizing art history.

The Box man. He spends the greater part of the day just reading and listening to news... he is unable to separate himself from the radio or television.

Benjamin. Here we have a man whose job it is to gather the day's refuse in the capital. Everything that the big city has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, and everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects.

Kiesler. We must not forget that the artist-creator can never be extraterritorial. His territory will always remain his life experience. All art is, of course, only an abstraction of what exists.

.....

Kiesler. Artists are born unequal. I am little, five feet one inch and many of you out there are six-foot one and no technique can stretch me to six foot. A rock cannot become a mountain, and a frog cannot blow himself up and become a swan.

Are we not educating people to false ambitions in life and art?

And planting in them the seeds of unbearable frustration?

Warburg. I let the signs that I receive come out of me, because in this epoch of chaotic decline even the weakest has the duty to strengthen the will to cosmic order.

The Box man. If a ghost is something that is not visible, a box man is just the opposite.

The Box man. The reason the world ignores the box man is because nobody understand who's inside the box.

Kiesler. Nature is so rich, so compact and so condensed that each innermost particle would open an endless world to us if we had strong enough lenses in our eyes and enough cells in our frontal lobes to see and grasp it. We don't - but artists present us that world outright.

Doctor. He practices a cult with the moths and butterflies that fly into his room at night. He speaks to them for hours. He calls them his little soul animals and tells them about his suffering. He recounts the outbreak of his illness to a moth.

The Box man. A box man lived a harmless existence.

Warburg. The most beautiful butterfly I have ever pinned down suddenly bursts through the glass and dances mockingly upwards into the blue air... Now I should catch it again, but I am not equipped for this kind of locomotion. Or to be exact, I should like but my intellectual training does not permit me to do so...

The Box man. A box man lived a harmless existence.

.....

Agassi. And the thinking relates to this persisting crisis about my identity as an artist as a whole, my joyful but painful diversity as an artist.

I keep telling myself that it is all a process of learning. Isn't it?

How to make from all the components, fragments, patches, One Thing...

Maybe instead of seeing myself 'officially' as one artist, I should declare myself as many artists, with many names. Why not?

Kiesler. My making several units of paintings, galaxies, separated from one another at different intervals, is an attempt to make painting not an illusion of reality, but real. It is anti-art and pro-life.

Agassi. Those ideas of 'dealing with group of images', or 'sequence with a rhythm' appeals to me very much.

Warburg. I do not want my presentation of images to be taken as results of a supposedly superior knowledge or science. Rather, they are the desperate confessions of someone seeking redemption.

The Box man. So many times I have thought how I would like to strip off my own skin including the box the way one peels off the skin of a fig.

Agassi. You ask me what I meant by saying that "I am disturbed and on the brink of mental disaster"? Maybe one of the problems is that I just know too much about art... For as far back as I can remember I kept doubting myself.

This is in no way to suggest that my failure to get from the fringe to the centre is anyone's fault but my own. The truth is, I never really felt confident about showing my work.

The Box man. There is no need to claim that you are the author of these notes. Because there's absolutely no problem even if the author is someone other than yourself.

Agassi. Maybe, instead of seeing myself 'officially' as one artist, I should declare myself as Many Artists, with many names, I could invent artists, give them names, biographies, myths, signatures, etc. Why not?

Warburg. In my healthy time I never would have dared to say something scholarly about it.

The Box man. A box man has experience that only a box man can talk about, adventures that apply to him alone, that a fake box man can never tell.

Agassi. But this still does not release me from the deep burden of failure. It does not help to know that we share the same experience.

.....

The Box man. When and how did I get to this point?

Packing oneself up as a baggage and walking about is an insult to the world and goes beyond just strange behaviour.

You should be able to ignore me too if you want to.

How in heaven's name had Box man met his end?

Benjamin. I know of no other city except Moscow where the state would pay for a writer's room – after all, the hotels are run by the Soviet.

Kiesler. He so-called artist must learn only one thing in order to be creative: not to resist himself, but to resist, without exception every factor that prevents him from being himself.

Warburg. Sometimes it looks to me as if, in my role as psycho-historian, I tried to diagnose the schizophrenia of western civilization from its images in an autobiographical reflex...

The Box man. If you pay no attention to a box man, he is just like wind or dust.

Kiesler. The artist is never of his time. He is always against his time. If he would be only of his time, he is already dead.

We run out of time, and time runs out on us.

May everybody to his dying days learn how to enjoy art, but for heaven's sake lets stop manufacturing artists.

TRACK 2

Agassi. This work takes the form of a box ... as an archive.

The Box man. Actually a box, in appearance, is purely and simply a right-angled parallelepiped, but when you look at it from within it's a labyrinth of hundred interconnecting puzzle rings.

Agassi. Hanover Merzbau – Cathedral of Erotic Misery – contains all these contradicting elements, which always fascinated me in art: collection of ready-mades, collecting the everyday as well as the bizarre, fantastic-fetishist objects. It was, as a whole, like a big, exposed set-piece of its creator's mind.

Warburg. The universe perceived in the form of a house...

Pallasmaa. We can dream and sense our being outdoors, but we need the architectural geometry of a room to think clearly. The geometry of thought echoes the geometry of the room.

Agassi. This could imply that however diverse and different the work is, it can have the unity of the umbrella of the museum's mental space. As in Kurt Schwitters' *Merz – Hanover Merzbau* - work could be titled under the caption "Work from the *Meir Agassi Museum*" or any other permutation. From now on everything would happen inside the boundaries of this museum and everything would be a piece, a product of it.

Pallasmaa. The window has lost its significance as a mediator between two worlds, between enclosed and open, interiority and exteriority, private and public, shadow and light. The window has turned into a mere absence of the wall.

Kiesler. It would be better, more honest, if we closed the museums and eventually gave all the art back to where it came from.

We could disperse the works to community buildings and homes – large paintings to large homes, smaller paintings to smaller houses. And they should also be brought to the homes of the poor.

We outsiders could then go and visit the paintings and sculptures of the memorable past and of our time in private homes, gardens, courtyards, rooftops and basements.

We shall have tea with those who cherish them, talk about them, enjoy them, linger in the past, speak about the future and perhaps enjoy the present.

The Box man. When one cannot avoid being seen it is common sense to demand compensation. Anybody would rather look than be looked at.

Warburg. The more we see, the more we must be able to add by thinking. The more we add there to thinking, so much the more we can believe ourselves to see.

Pallasmaa. Architecture is the art of reconciliation between ourselves and the world, and this mediation take place through the senses.

Kiesler. How things hold together is quite miraculous. It's too strange for us humans to understand the way molecules click, cells divide without losing hold of each other.

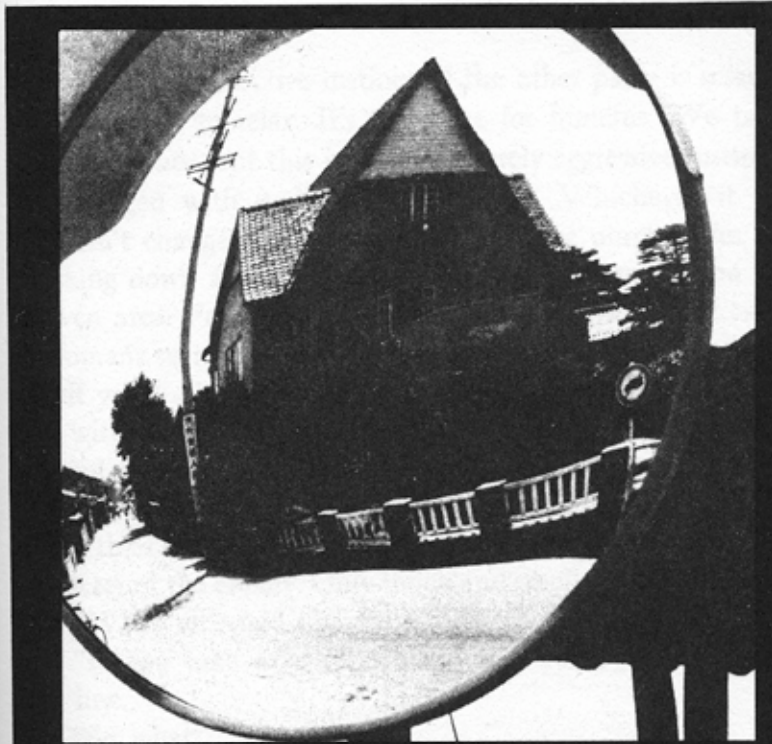
We build by making joints after joints. Nails for wood. Bolts for iron. Welding for steel. Friendship has invisible ties as strong as iron. They shake hands with each other without touching.

Paalasmaa. We are rooted in the continuity of time; in the man-made world it is the task of architecture to facilitate this experience.

Kiesler. The binding force between art and life is the cohesive strength of the personality. This force is inexplicable. It must be lived to be understood.

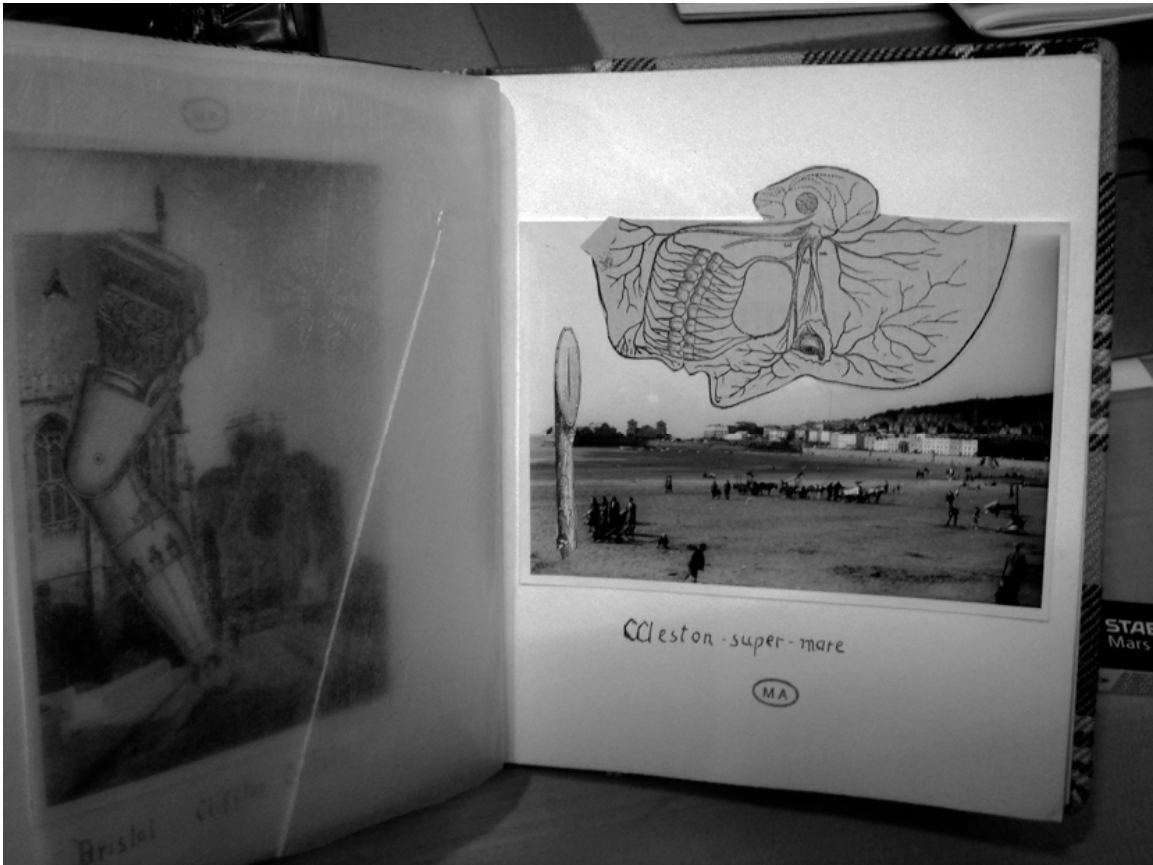
Pallasmaa. Architecture is understood and appreciated through its echo as much as through its visual shape.

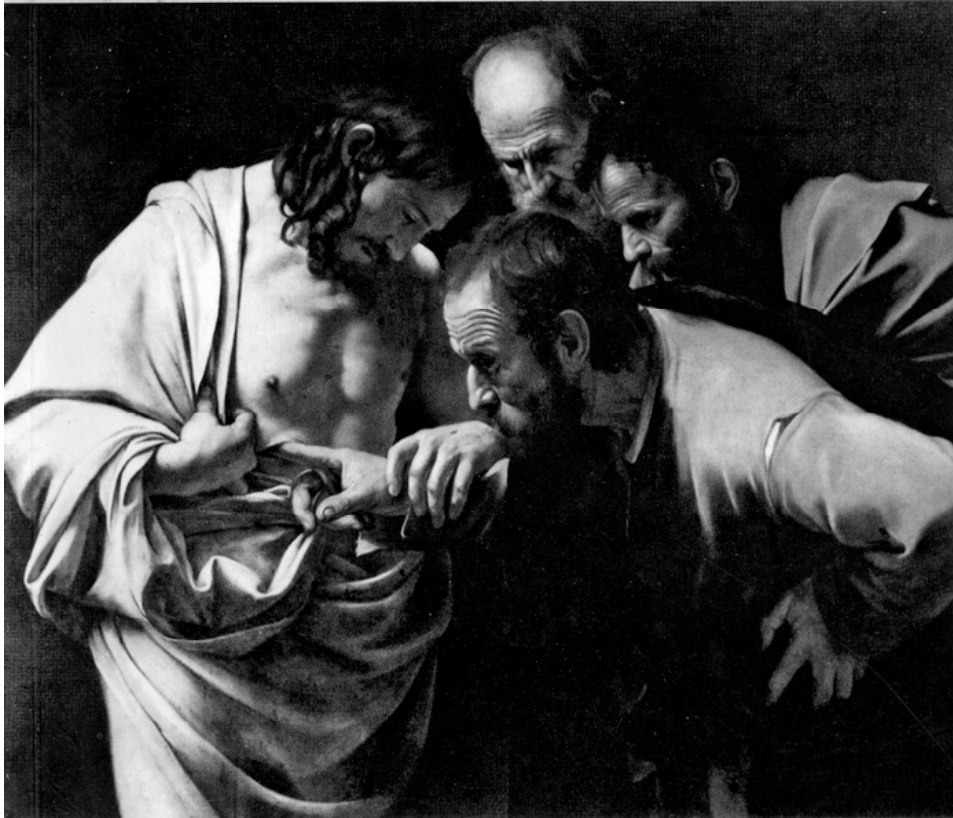
The Box man. I hear that the box is indeed a dangerous source of blue.

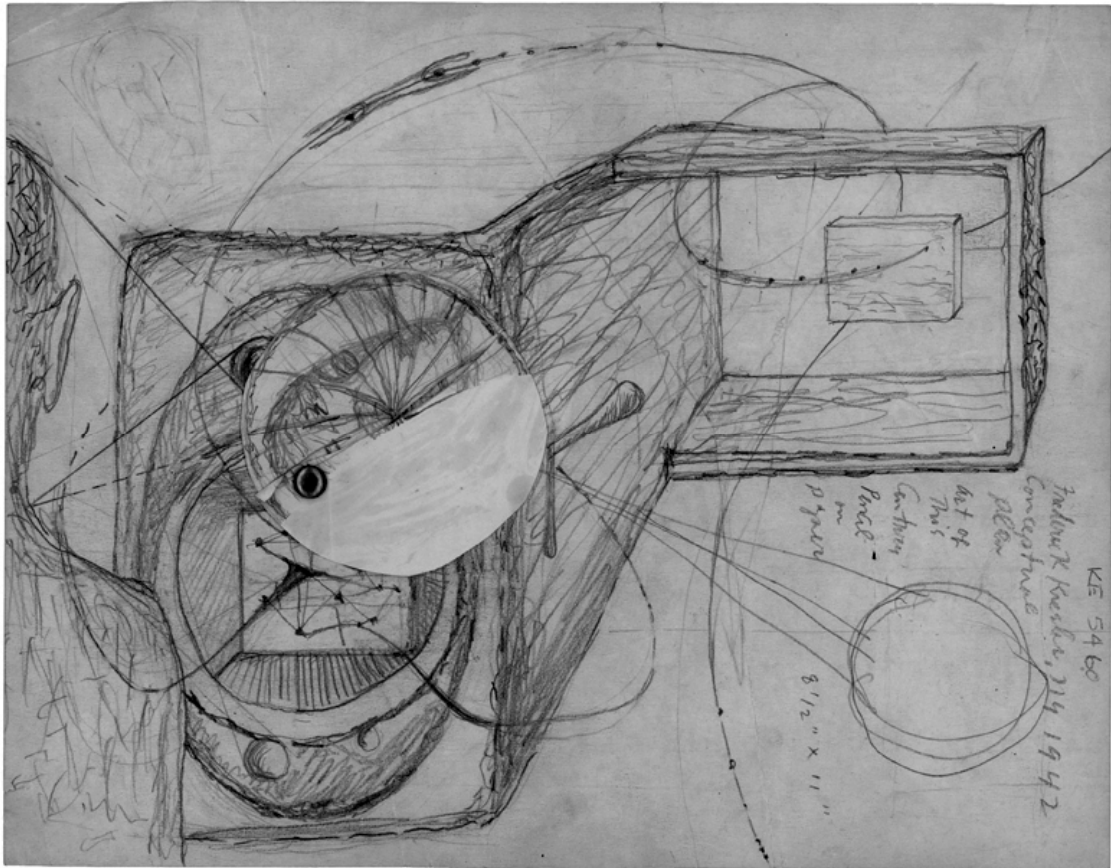


*When I look at small things, I think I shall go on
living: drops of rain . . . leather gloves shrunk
by being wet . . . When I look at something
too big, I want to die: the Diet Building . . .
or a map of the world . . . or . . .*

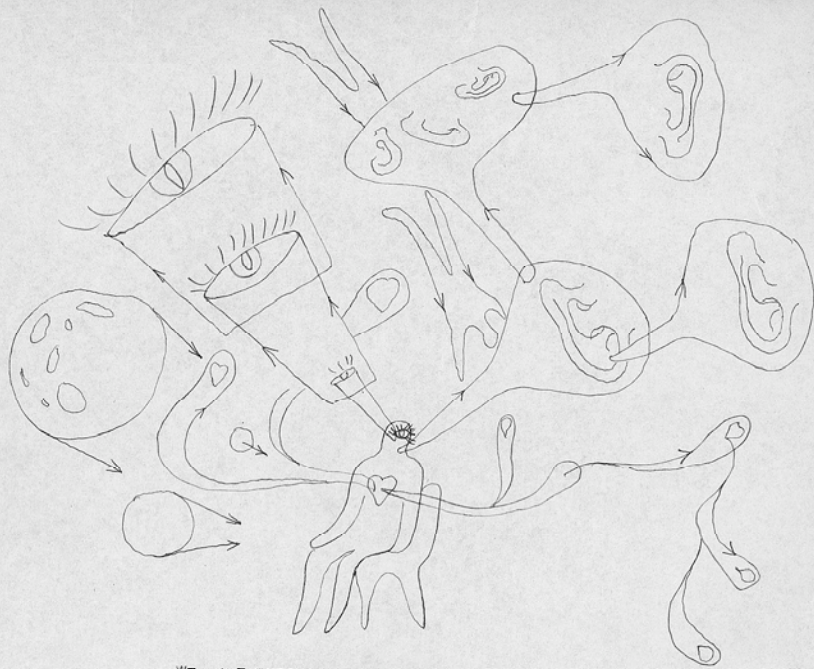








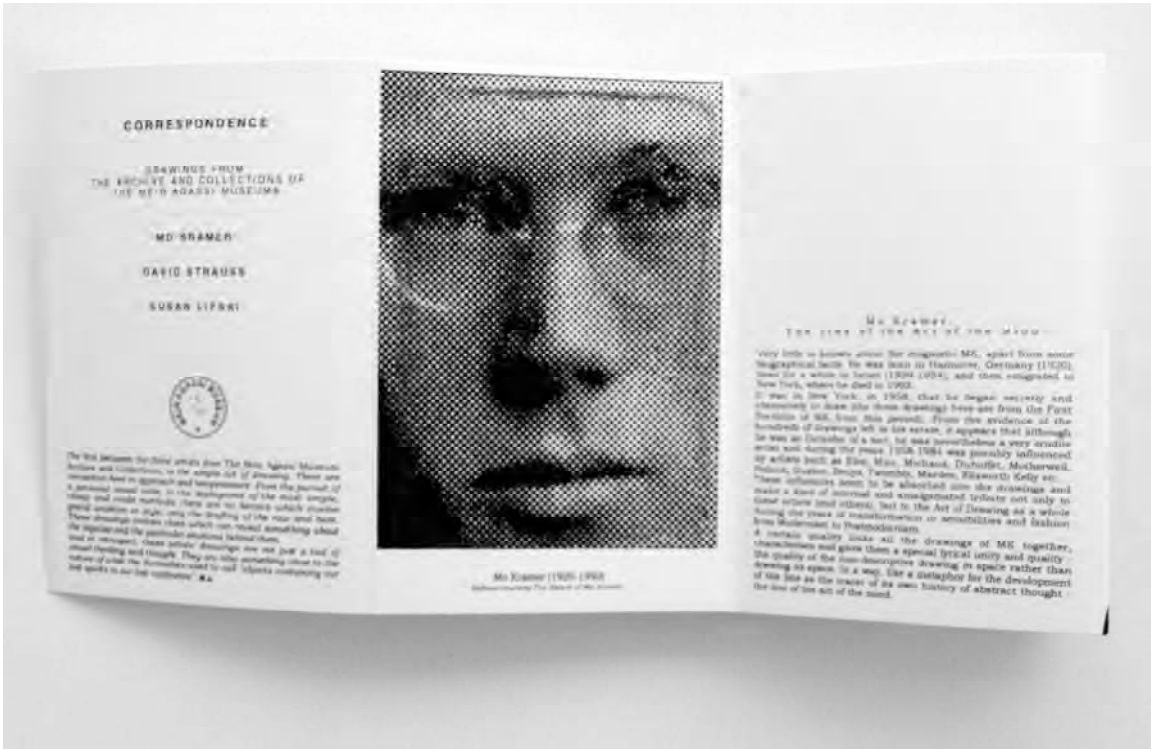
I OBJECT : triangle
II concept : triangle
III essence : triangle
IV word : triangle
V name : triangle
VI sign Δ

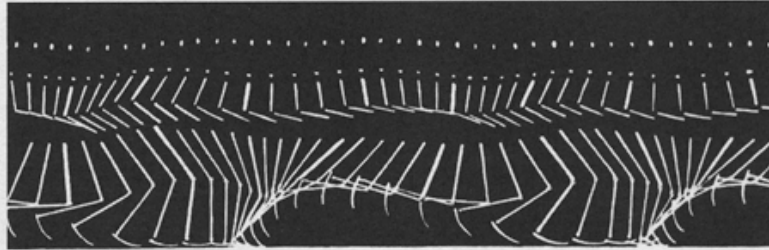


WE LIVE THROUGH CORREALISM.

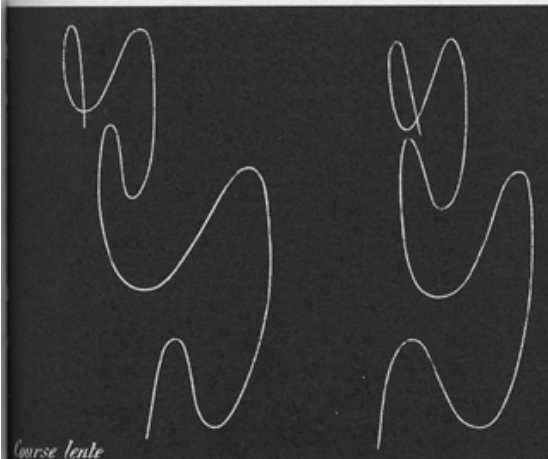
SCIENCE, ART AND PHILOSOPHY TRY TO MAKE US UNDERSTAND
THIS FACT, MORE AND MORE, DEEPER AND DEEPER, RICHER
AND RICHER.

ALL OUR BEING IS CONDITIONED BY A CONSCIOUSNESS OF
CORREALISM.





Figures 26a and b. The man with the galloon, at rest and moving. From Etienne-Jules Marey, *Le Mouvement* (1894).

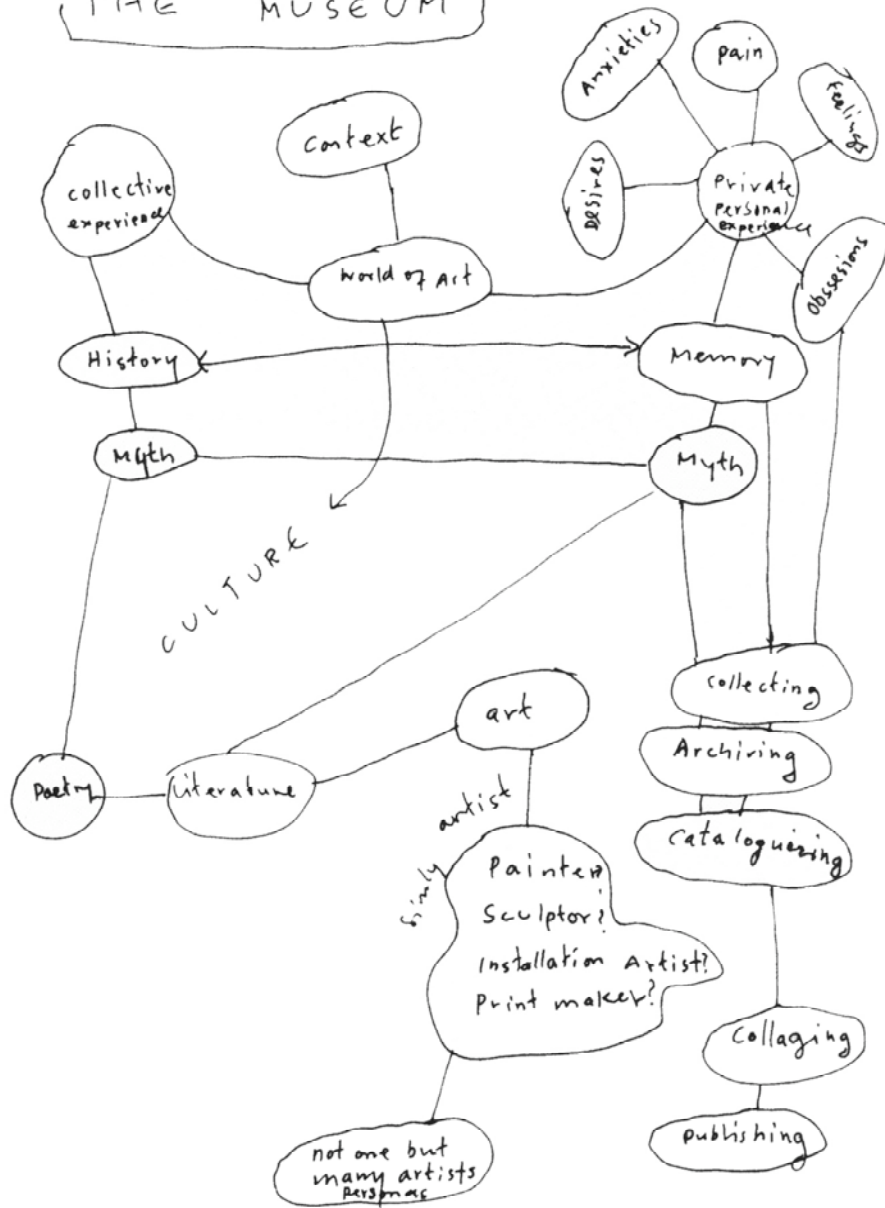


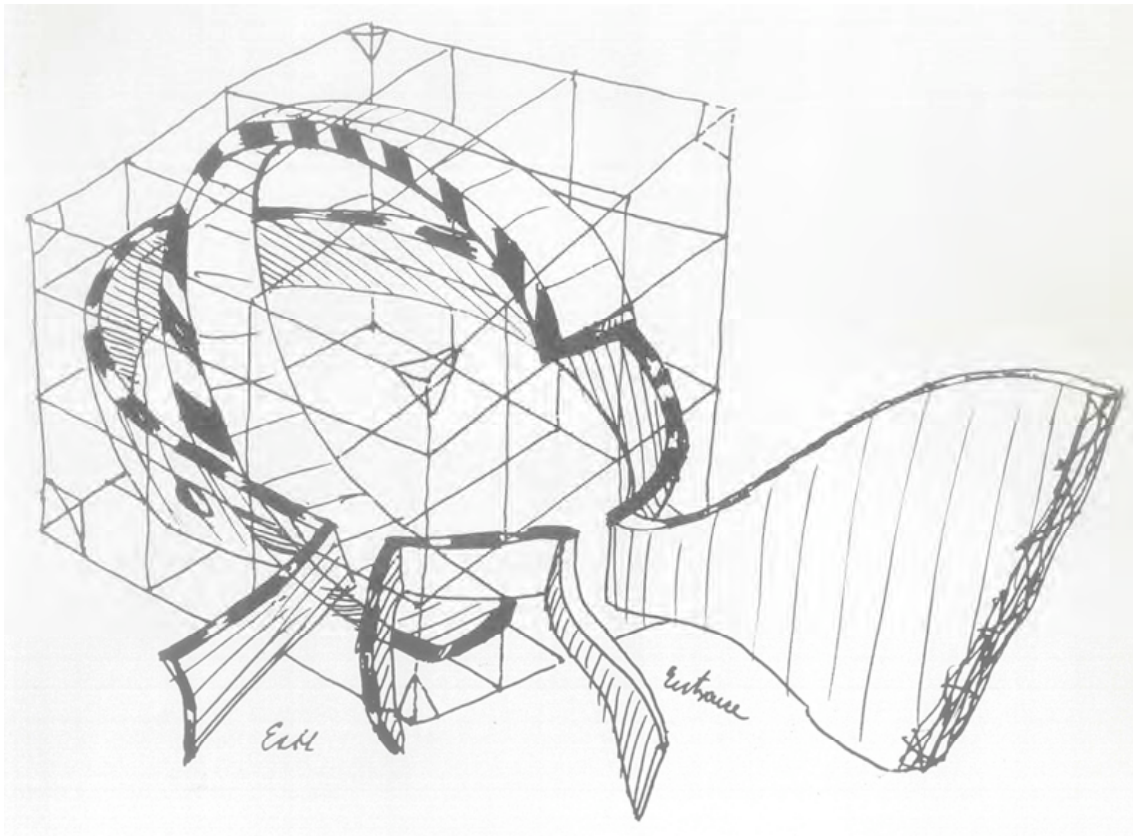
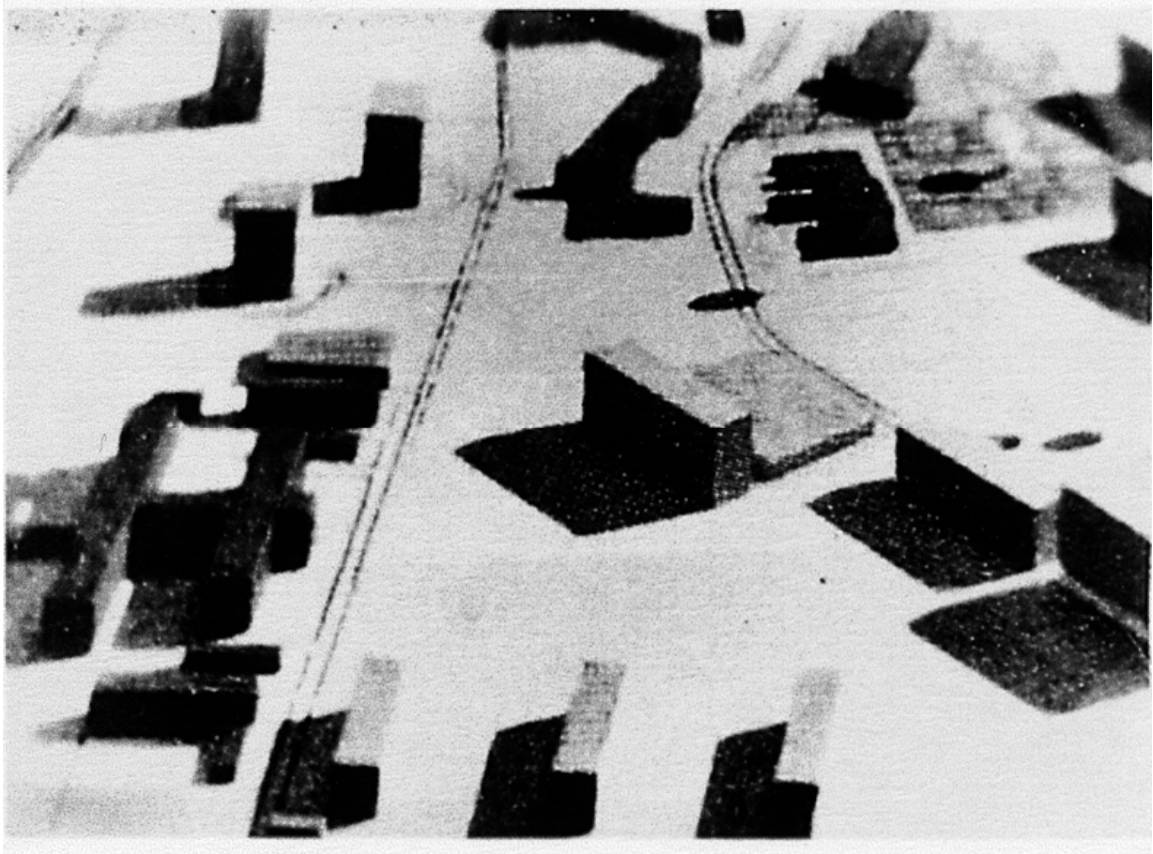
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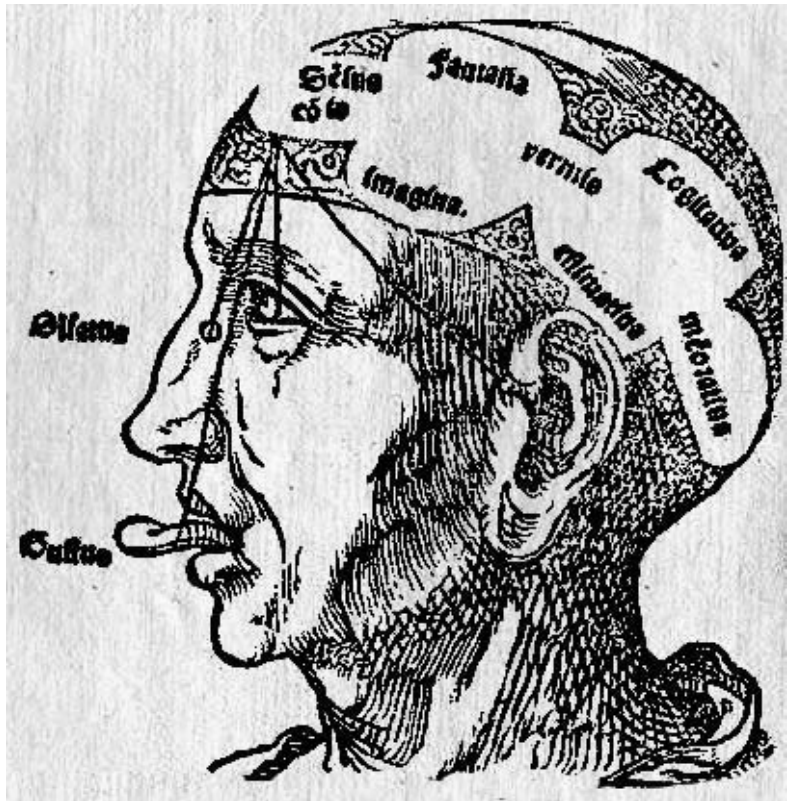
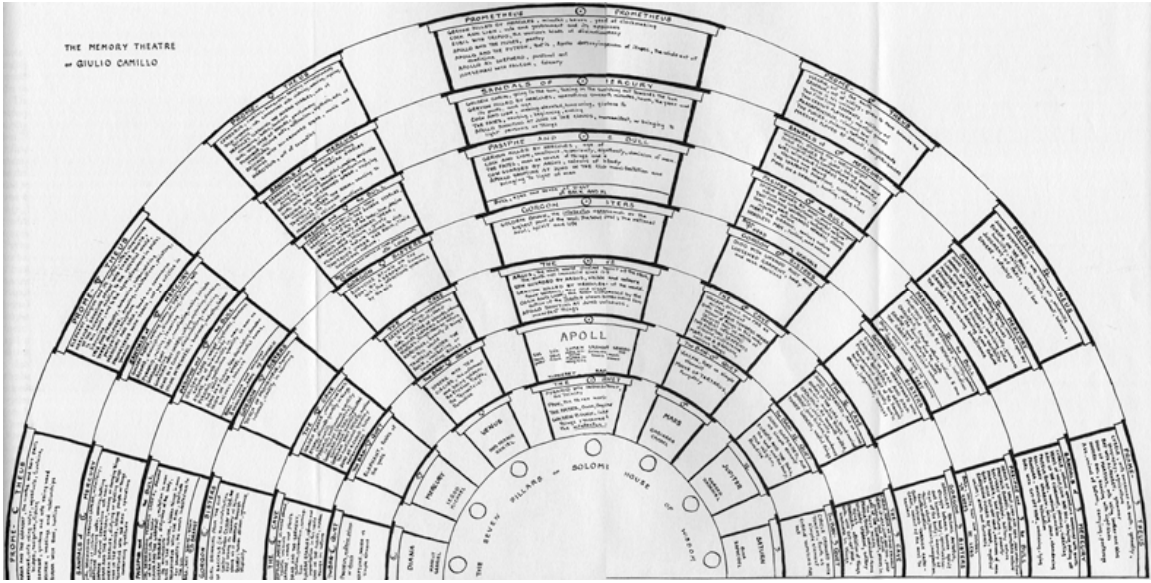
Figure 27. Stereoscopic trajectory of a bright point placed on the lumbar vertebrae of a man walking away from the camera. From Etienne-Jules Marey, *Le Mouvement* (1894).

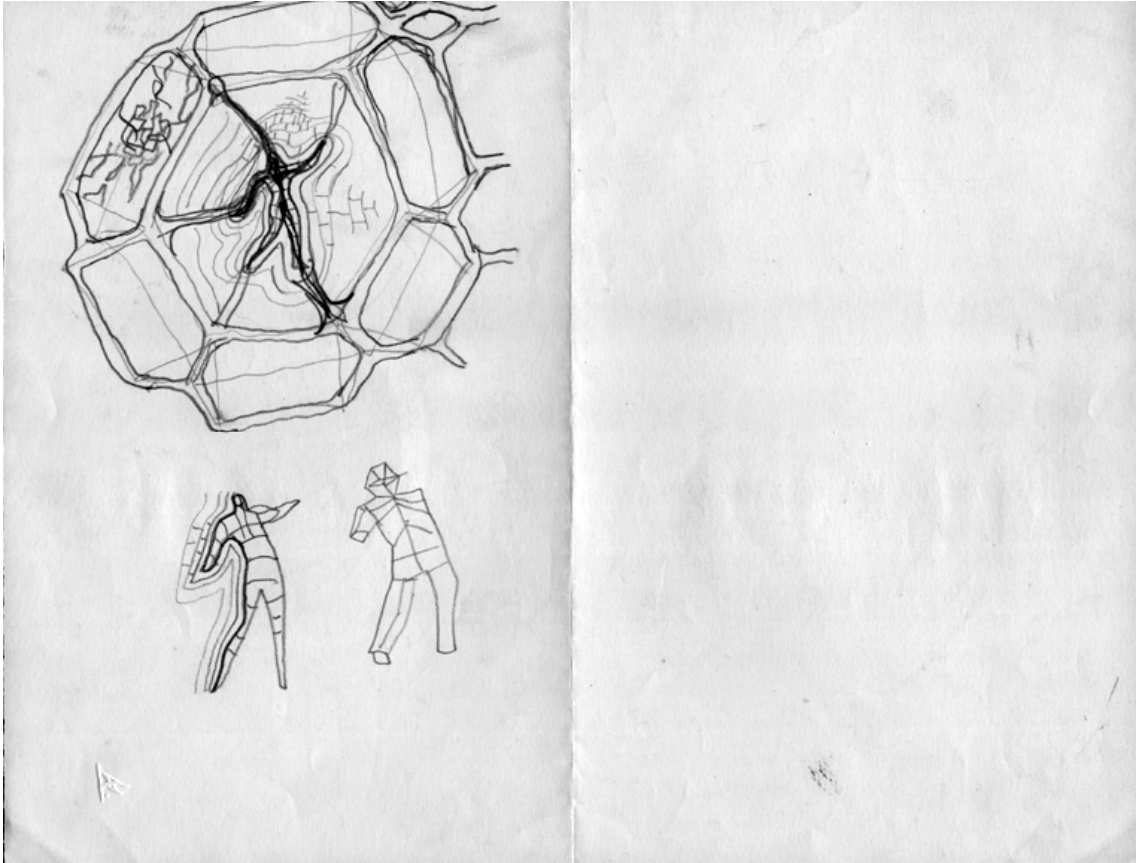


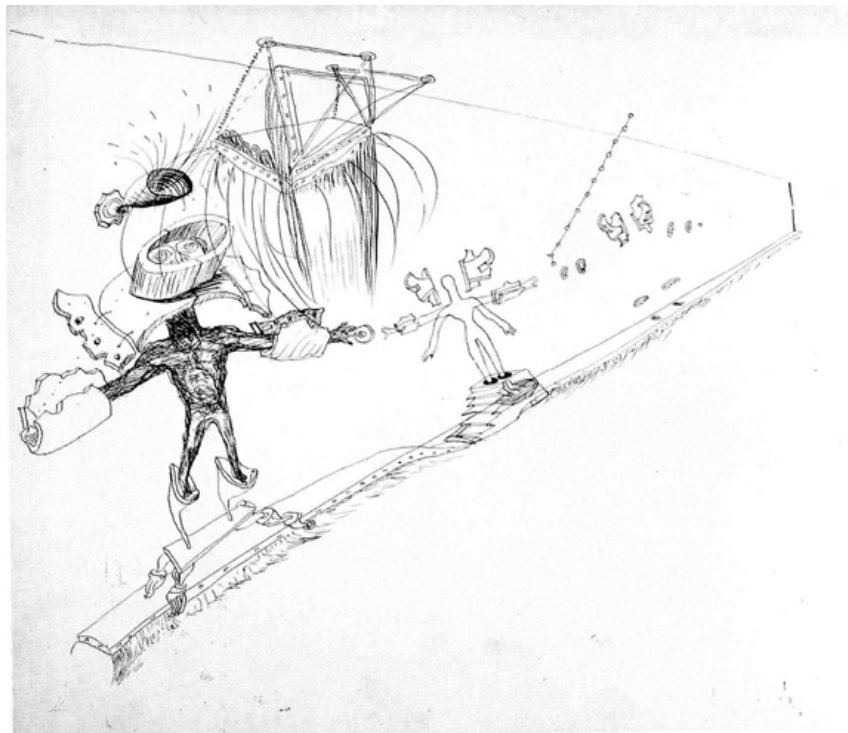
THE MUSEUM











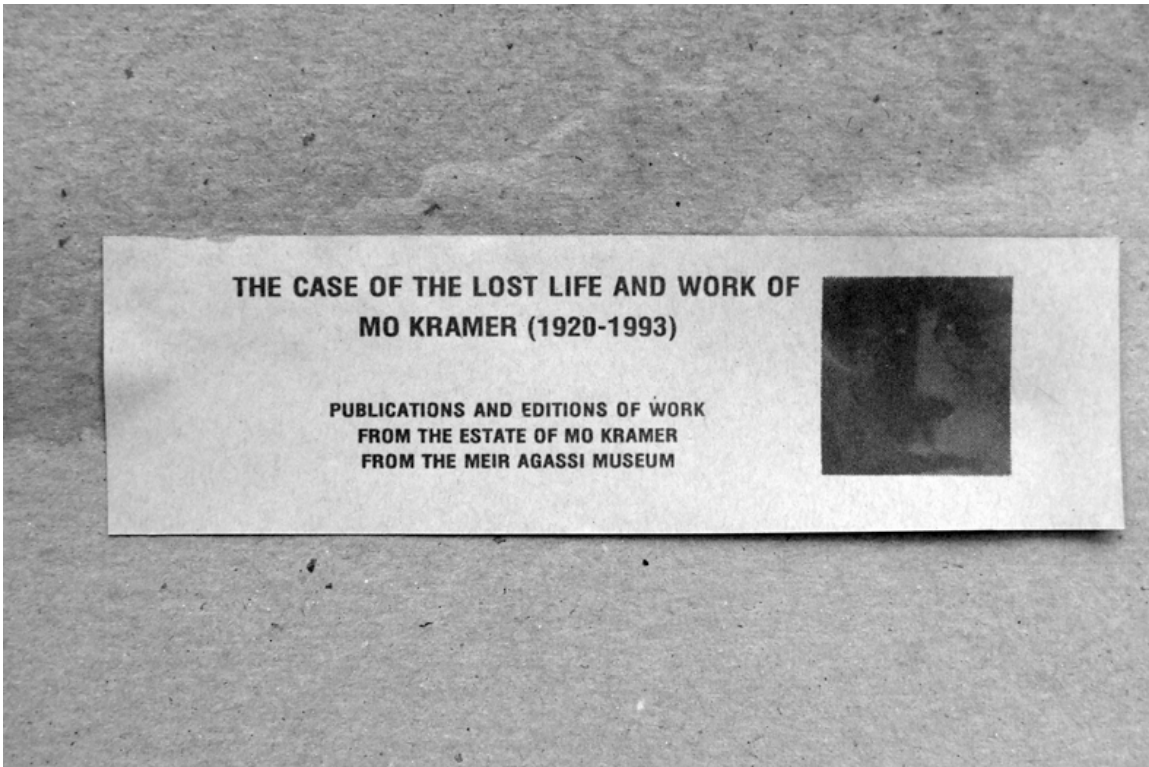




NOTES

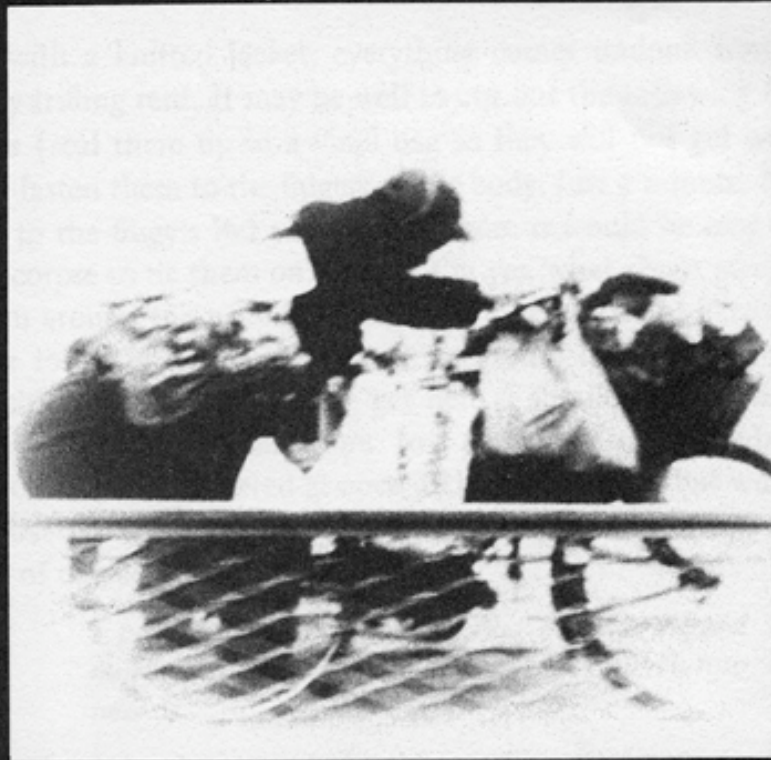
I am trying to release a locked image. I am Tired. I have no story to tell, nor do I have a clear image to show you. Only a sense of Lyla through the blinking eyes of a sleepwalker child.

Lyla in Hebrew means Night. It means as well dark and danger.

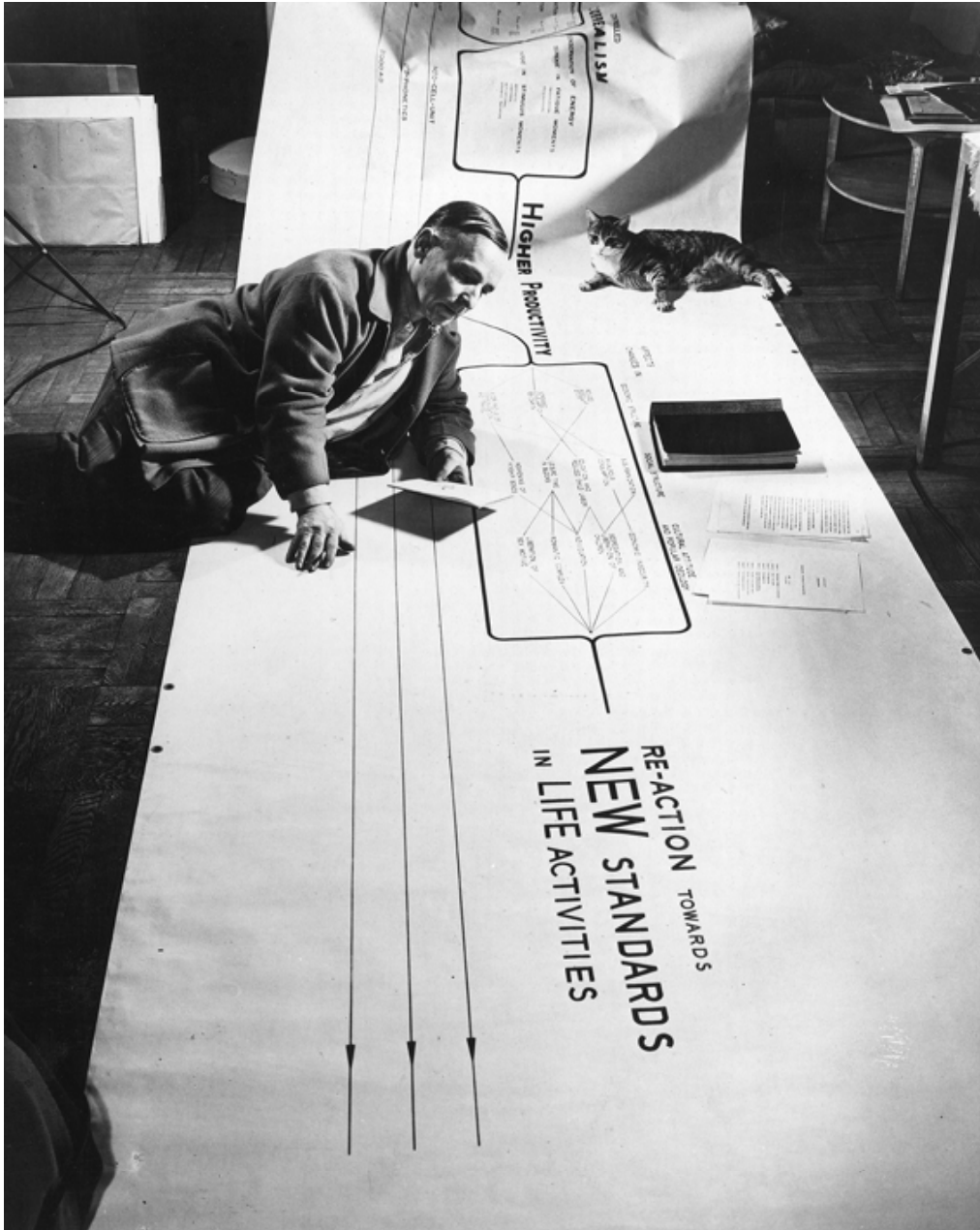


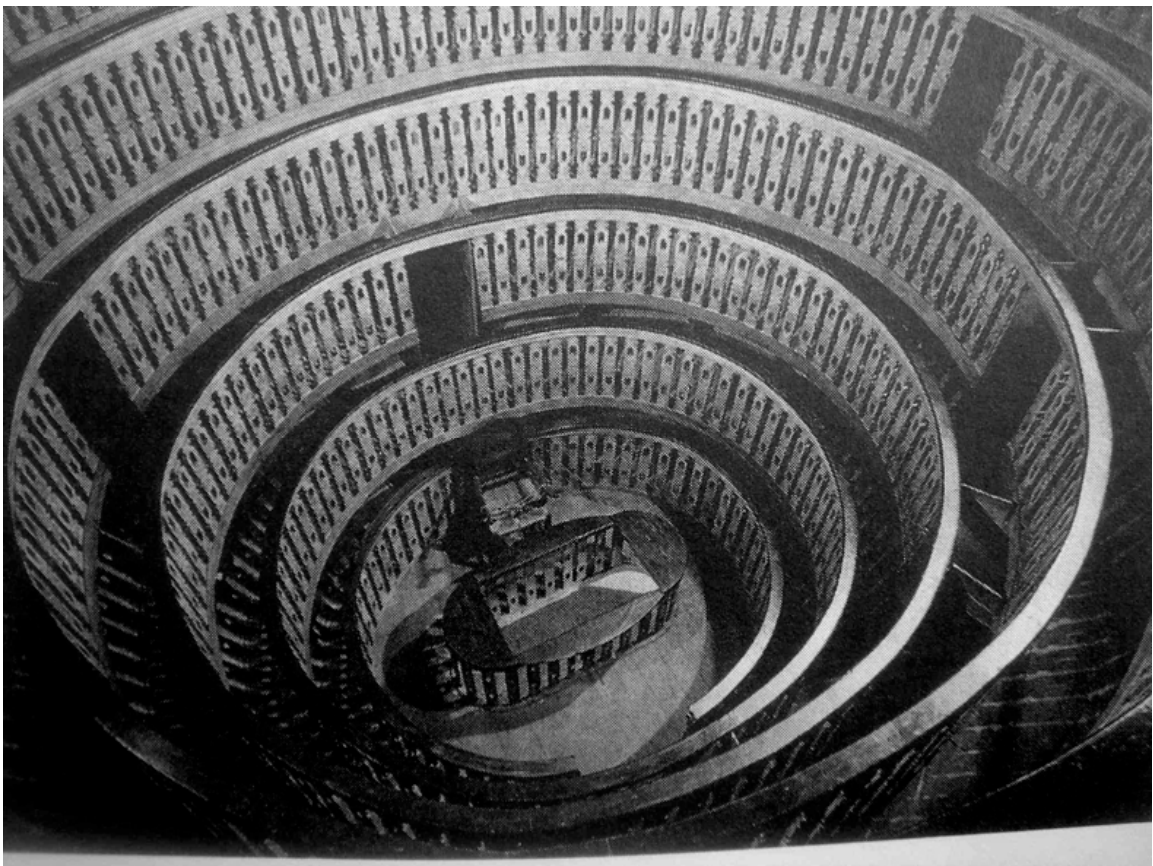
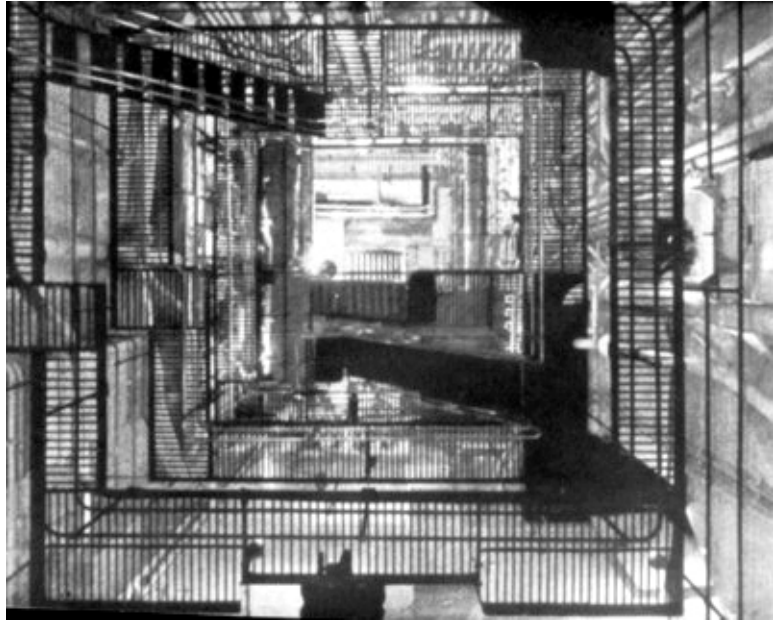
ENTRY June 11





Here is a town for box men. Anonymity is the obligation of the inhabitants, and the right to live there is accorded only to persons who are no one. All those who are registered are sentenced by the very fact of being registered.









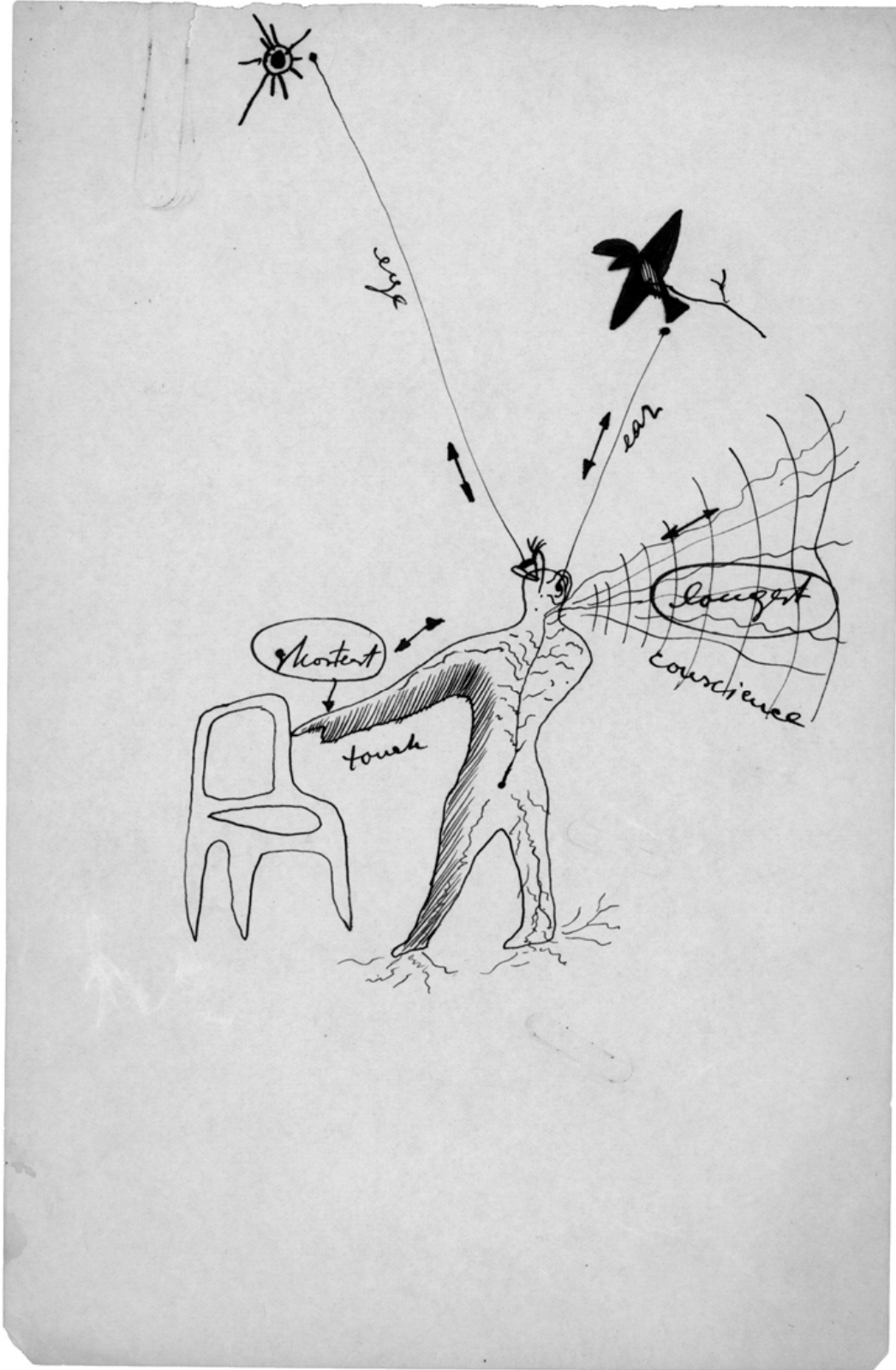
The City is an ideogram:
the Text continues



Hercules q̄ stans genu flexu. Habe aut in capite stellā unā. In utroq; humero
stellā unā. In cubito sinistro. unā. In dextro fenore. duas. In genu dextro. 1.
In ca. de cubito unā. In dextera manu. 1. In ropoto que tenet in eade
mano unā.









Endless Installation: A Ghost Story For Adults
Public Space With A Roof
March 21 – April 26 2009, SMART Project Space, Amsterdam

The Script

Composed by Maja Novak with the quotes from
Abe, Kobo: The Box Man; Agassi, Meir: The Meir Agassi Museum; Barthes, Roland: Image
Music Text; Barthes, Roland: Empire of the Signs; Benjamin, Walter: Letters from the Walter
Benjamin's Archive; Gombrich, Ernst: Intellectual Biography; Kiesler, Frederick: Selected
Writings; Kiesler, Frederick: Inside the Endless House; Kiesler, Frederick: Endless Space;
Michaud, Philippe-Alain: Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion; Pallasmaa, Juhani: The Eyes of
the Skin; Pirandello, Luigi: Six Characters in Search of an Author

The Cast

The Box man: Sander Blom; The Father: Vesna Madzосki; The Manager: Adi Hollander; Roland
Barthes: Henry Vega; Aby Warburg: Zhana Ivanova; Meir Agassi: Samuel Vriezen; Walter
Benjamin: Henry Vega; Frederick Kiesler: Ayalet Harpaz
Doctor: Henry Vega; Juhani Pallasmaa: Henry Vega
Recorded at: STEIM, Amsterdam

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Bernhard Cultuurfonds; VSBfonds.

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van Eyck Academie; STEIM; Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation; The
Museum of Art Ein Harod; Issta Direct; Argos, Brussels.

Photo credits:

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The Box Man, Kobo Abe

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Artist's book, Meir Agassi

From the collection of the Warburg Institute, London

p.13

Artist's book, Meir Agassi

Sketch for the Art of the Century, Frederick Kiesler

p.14

The Incredulity of Saint Thomas, Caravaggio, 1602

p.15

Sketch for the Art of the Century, Frederick Kiesler

The Triangle, Walter Benjamin

p.16

Correalism, Frederick Kiesler

p. 17

Correspondence: Mo Kremer, David Strauss, Susan Lipski, Meir Agassi Museum

Correspondence: Mo Kremer, David Strauss, Susan Lipski, Meir Agassi Museum

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Aby Warburg and Image in Motion, Phillippe-Alain Michaud

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Mnemosyne Atlas, Panel C, Aby Warburg

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The Museum Map, Meir Agassi

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Cities, Atlas, Gerhard Richter

Sketch for Calle de superstition, Frederick Kiesler

p.22

The Memory Theatre by Gulio Camillo, The Art of Memory, F. A.Yates

From the collection of the Warburg Institute, London

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Correalism, Frederick Kiesler

Bunraku puppet doll and how three puppeteers attend a single doll, The Society for International Cultural Relations, Tokyo, 1935

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Passage, Saburo Murakami, Moving Image, Phillippe-Alain Michaud

Vision, F.Kiesler

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Studies from a miniature multiples, Souvenirs from Meir Agassi Museum

Correspondence: Mo Kremer, David Strauss, Susan Lipski, Meir Agassi Museum

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Homeless in the city, Japan

Quote, Lyla, M.Agassi

The case of the Lost Life and Work of Mo Kremer (1920 – 1993), Meir Agassi Museum

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Self-portrait, Meir Agassi

Aby Warburg and a Hopi Indian, Warburg Institute, London

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The Box Man, Kobo Abe

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Frederick Kiesler, Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation

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Vertigo (1958), Alfred Hitchcock

Anatomical Theatre, Warburg Institute, London

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13. Forests, Magic Architecture, Frederick Kiesler

The Trial (1962), Orson Welles

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Empire of Signs, Roland Barthes

Home Theatre backstage, The Netherlands Theatre Institute

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Gestures, Image constellation, Warburg Institute, London

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Merzbau: The Cathedral of Erotic Misery, Kurt Schwitters

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Perception, Frederick Kiesler

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Herbert Bayer, The Lonely Metropolitan