

TIM NOBLE & SUE WEBSTER

TURNING THE SEVENTH CORNER



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TURNING THE SEVENTH CORNER, FOREWORD

DAVID ADJAYE

My first project with Tim Noble and Sue Webster was The Dirty House – a home/studio that we created in 2002 within a former factory in London’s East End. At the time, the artists’ reputation was firmly established, and working on a number of exhibitions simultaneously, they were driven by a determination to craft an extraordinary space for living and working – a place to combine their creative professional spirit with their home life. They were attracted by my interest in materiality and my ability to play with contrasting heights. Rather than demolish the building, which was literally crumbling, we decided to keep it. We froze the past and created a symbiotic connection to the future – a kind of 21st century concept of restoration. This opportunity came at a pivotal moment in my early career. The aesthetic confidence that I subsequently gained meant that it has become a conceptual cornerstone for later work.

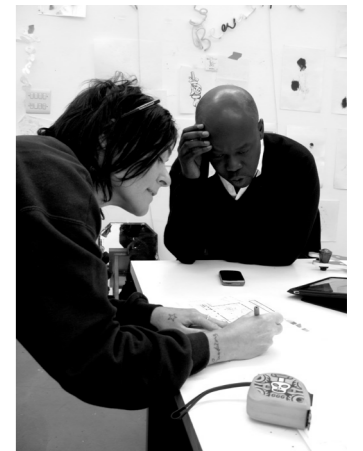
The Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver was my first public commission in the US and presented me with a second opportunity to work with the artists. When the museum decided to commission a permanent, site-specific installation outside the building, I immediately thought of them. Their interest in electricity, in neon and flashing lights and the transformation of the everyday seemed entirely appropriate for the urban landscape of America, and in particular, Denver. The museum was thrilled by my suggestion, so there was a strong synergy between architect, museum and artist. This three-way relationship was not only very rewarding for me personally, but I believe also enriched the work itself.



The Dirty House, East London.

Turning the Seventh Corner is therefore our third collaboration. It materialised after Tim and Sue learned that I had an office in Berlin, which is a city they were interested in for its centrality to the European art world and its complex recent history. They wanted to create a work that would be truly public. We met in the drawing room of The Dirty House and discussed ideas for the Berlin piece. In particular, we wanted to explore the incredible split identity of the city and the duality of its history. Our site was inside the former printing factory of Der Tagesspiegel newspaper.

We conceived of the work as a journey into an urban narrative that leads to the discovery of a surprising moment. The installation draws you inside a tunnel-like space, with individually positioned lamps propelling you around seven rotations. The sense of disorientation draws you inside instantly, and you are immersed, immediately becoming part of the narrative. Rather than being theatrical, the encounter is experiential. The installation’s use of a single material and its honest construction achieves this genuine immersion of the visitor into the space. Once inside, moving through the tunnel with its shadows and its seemingly random lighting that pulls you forward, you come upon a startling event. The gold Medusa with its wild shadows is like a portrait of yourself, a reflection of the artist in entropy and a moment of insight into the starkly split identity of the city of Berlin.



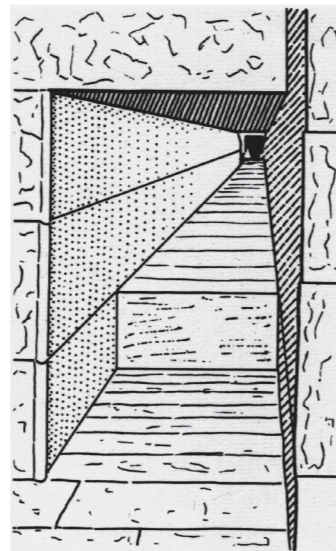
Sue Webster and David Adjaye, the studio at The Dirty House.

AN EGYPTOLOGIST REFLECTS ON THE SEVEN CORNERS

JAMES PUTNAM

Turning the Seventh Corner is a unique collaborative artwork that effectively blurs the boundaries between installation, sculpture and architecture. Integral to the work is the viewer's own intense gaze along with the experience of actually being enclosed within the space itself, which is winding and seemingly endless. The austere design of David Adjaye's maze-like corridors leads to Tim Noble and Sue Webster's finely-detailed gold sculpture, and together these draw an interesting parallel with the architectural forms, burial chambers and treasures of Egypt's pyramids. Although nowadays many of Egypt's vast temples are open to the sky, in ancient times they were covered, dimly lit and consisted of a series of unsettling and gradually narrowing passageways. These terminated in the 'Holy of Holies' where the sacred gold deity statues were found. Noble and Webster's project has a number of specific references to ancient Egypt, namely the Great Pyramid of Giza, the Valley of the Kings, the contents of King Tutankhamun's tomb, as well as the process of mummification itself. Here, the intricate facts and fictions that relate to these Egyptian architectural and cultural practices will be explained to delineate seven elements that influenced the creation of Noble and Webster's sevenw-cornered installation.

The Great Pyramid — The gradual climb up the Great Pyramid's cramped, 37 metre long passage creates a sense of disorientation as well as expectation for the awesome moment of reaching the King's Chamber. Greatly inspired by this experience on their recent trip to Egypt, Noble and Webster created their installation of dark labyrinthine passages to similarly prepare the visitor for an experience of their gleaming gold sculpture. Like anyone who first sees the Great Pyramid, the artists were taken aback

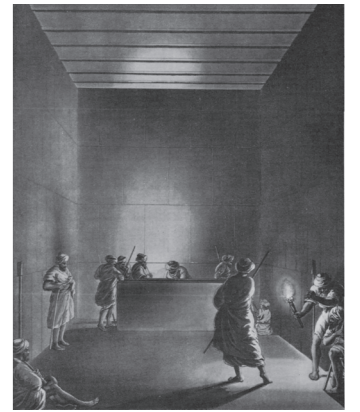


The first-level passage,
The Great Pyramid.

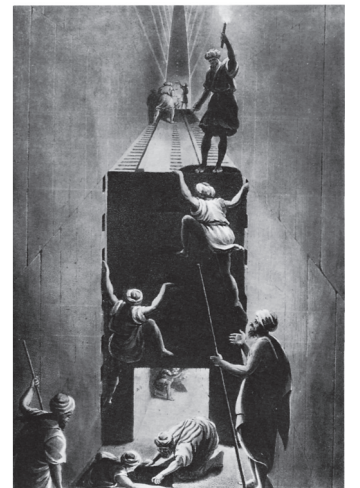
by its sheer scale at 147 metres high, and were immediately intrigued by its fascinating network of internal passages, shafts, secret galleries and hidden chambers. Of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, it is the only one still in existence; originally constructed around 2859 BC, it is astonishingly composed of some 2.3 million blocks of stone, weighing an average of 2.5 tonnes per block. Its four sides are each over 230 metres long and are aligned almost exactly with the compass points of north, south, east and west – this orientation is so accurate that compass errors can be checked against it.

Throughout history, the Great Pyramid's huge stone mass has inspired the belief that many secrets lie hidden within it. An examination of a cross-section diagram of the pyramid (see p.14) reveals that the entrance connects into a descending corridor which runs underground towards an unfinished subterranean chamber. A second corridor ascends through the Grand Gallery to the King's Chamber, the vital cell which contains the pharaoh's sarcophagus. At more than 43 metres above ground, its roof is lined with nine colossal slabs of granite weighing 50 tonnes each; these were originally quarried in Aswan and therefore needed to be transported over 500 miles to then be lifted to the chamber. Despite this labyrinthine maze of passages and various other stringent security measures, the burial treasure of the King's Chamber was accessed and looted by robbers, who supposedly raided the pyramid at some point before 2000 BC.

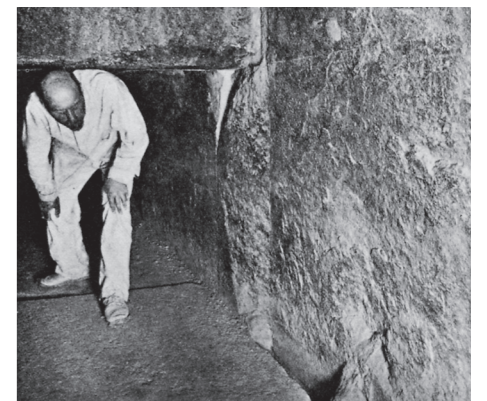
The Great Pyramid's Function: Fact and Fiction — While working at The British Museum as a curator of the Egyptian Antiquities Collection, I received a great number of letters and enquiries from the public about the function of the pyramids. Some of the most intriguing ones came from visitors with personal ideas about the Great Pyramid's internal construction and purpose. Many were far-fetched, including the belief that aliens had landed to build this mesmerizing structure. In a sense, the public psyche associates the pyramids with metaphysical existence and they are believed by some to hold the key to a lost occult science. Moreover, certain religious beliefs have been ascribed to the pyramids, and in 1864 the Scottish Astronomer Royal, Piazzi Smyth, claimed that the Great Pyramid itself was built to God's own precise measurements. Similarly, it has inspired complex numerological theories; in 1924 the writer Morton Edgar devised an elaborate system for calculating a chronological world history, based on the dimensions of the pyramid's internal passages.



The King's Chamber with
sarcophagus.



Climbing up the Grand Gallery.



The pyramidologist Morton Edgar,
entering the King's Chamber.

Although there continue to be many imaginative theories relating to the Great Pyramid's true function, it has been proven that it was ultimately intended as the tomb of King Khufu, also known by his Greek name, Cheops. His sarcophagus, minus its mummified body, is located within the King's Chamber and it was this that Noble and Webster became particularly fascinated by.

The Specifics of the Great Pyramid's Shape — Many scientists and academics have come up with plausible ideas about the shape and structure of the Great Pyramid based on physics and engineering principles. Although we broadly understand how it might have been built, using either long straight ramps or external spiral ramps, intriguingly the pyramid still holds many secrets and mysteries yet to be solved.

The highly specific voluminous shape of the Great Pyramid is believed by some to have magical properties generating a higher power or energy. It has even been claimed that blunt razor blades have become miraculously sharpened when placed exactly at the centre of a pyramid form. The shape of the pyramid was adopted by the freemasons, and also appears on the American one-dollar bill; the all-seeing eye of providence looks out above the pyramid's summit, a representation of permanence and strength.

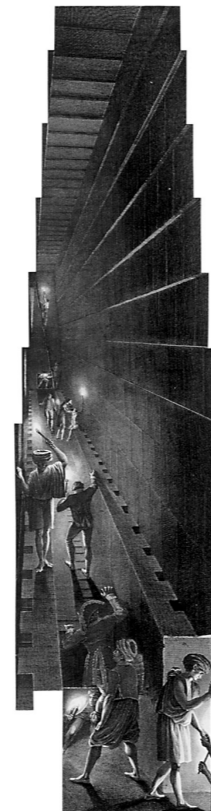
Certain theories about the pyramid's astronomical significance directly link to the internal layout of the structure. It has been suggested that airshafts running from the main chambers towards the surface may have been used to observe the sun and the stars. One of the shafts in the Queen's Chamber would have indeed pointed directly to the star Sirius at the time the pyramid was built. However it is more broadly accepted by Egyptologists that this airshaft would have been intended to symbolically facilitate the ascension of the king's spirit into the stars.

Another fascinating proposal claims that there is a correlation between the location of the three Giza pyramids and three central stars of the constellation Orion. The Ancient Egyptians associated Orion with their God of Resurrection, Osiris, and accordingly it has been suggested that the Giza pyramids were purposefully built to correlate directly with Orion, aiding resurrection and passage into the afterlife.

Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs — Imhotep was the world's first recognised architect. He designed Egypt's earliest pyramid



Entrance to the Great Pyramid.



Scaling the Grand Gallery, leading to the King's Chamber.

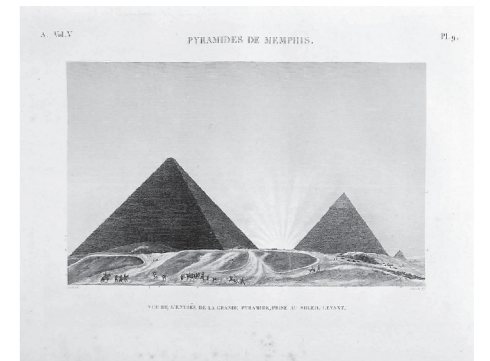
at Saqqara, and was later deified by the Ancient Egyptians as the God of Wisdom.

Beyond their fascination with the form, function and shape of the Great Pyramid of Giza, Noble and Webster crafted the title of *Turning the Seventh Corner* to allude directly to the concept of a journey towards wisdom. It references chapter 9:1 of the Book of Proverbs in the Hebrew Bible, which states: 'Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars'. This phrase is suggestive of the meditative journey that the visitor undertakes within the installation. Interestingly, many passages from the Book of Proverbs are actually paraphrased from the Teachings of Amenemope, which is an ancient Egyptian wisdom text depicted on papyrus in The British Museum, dating from approximately 1300–1075 BC.

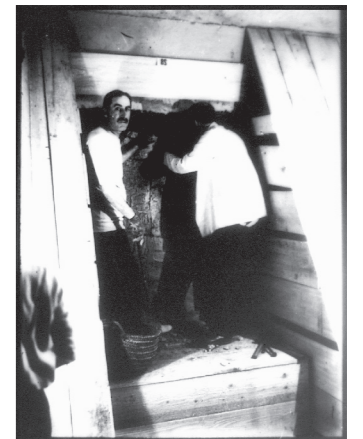
Tutankhamun's Treasure and the Valley of the Kings — During their time in Egypt, Noble and Webster also visited the Valley of the Kings in Luxor, where the tombs of the pharaohs are cut deep into the barren rock. *Turning the Seventh Corner* conjures the archaeologist Howard Carter's 1922 revelation of Tutankhamun's treasure, which he observed through a peep-hole in the tomb's sealed wall. Fittingly, the Egyptians referred to burial chambers as the 'House of Gold' or 'Room of Gold', regarding them as the sites where the deceased entered into eternal life. Carter's sight of the young pharaoh's burial chamber revealed a mummy encased within a nest of three gold caskets, adorned with a superbly crafted mask of solid gold: 'As my eyes grew accustomed to the light... I was struck dumb with amazement.'

Tutankhamun's death mask is a stunning example of the art of ancient goldsmiths; cast in solid gold, it is inlaid with semi-precious stones including lapis lazuli, cornelian, quartz, obsidian and turquoise, as well as coloured glass. Carter's five years of methodical exploration had resulted in arguably the most exciting archaeological discovery ever made; dating from 1352 BC, this was the only untouched pharaoh's tomb to have been found.

The Ancient Egyptians were one of the earliest civilisations to utilise the art of casting using the lost-wax method, and in choosing to adopt this technique, Noble and Webster formed synergies between their own contemporary practice and those of ancient times. Composed of more than twenty separate sections that were cast and then welded together, their own sculpture



The Great Pyramid of Giza.



Archaeologist Howard Carter at the entrance to Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922.



Inlaid solid gold mask of King Tutankhamun.

was created in sterling silver and then dipped in pure gold, conjuring evocative notions of the treasures of Tutankhamun.

The Egyptian Process of Mummification — Noble and Webster were also influenced by the mummification process, which was central to Ancient Egyptian culture. This practice related to a belief that bodily preservation was essential to the afterlife; the Ancient Egyptians believed that when a person died, their escaping soul would need to be able to recognise an unchanged body, so that it might live for eternity.

An embalming method was therefore developed using natron—a naturally occurring salt which absorbs water, dissolves body fats and also acts as a mild antiseptic, killing destructive bacteria. Embalming traditionally took 70 days, of which 40 were dedicated to drying the body and removing the vital organs – with the exception of the heart. The body was then washed with palm wine and spices, covered in natron and wrapped in layers of linen bandages. The heads of human mummies were collected in the 19th century and sometimes disrespectfully displayed as curiosities in glass domes, like taxidermied animals.

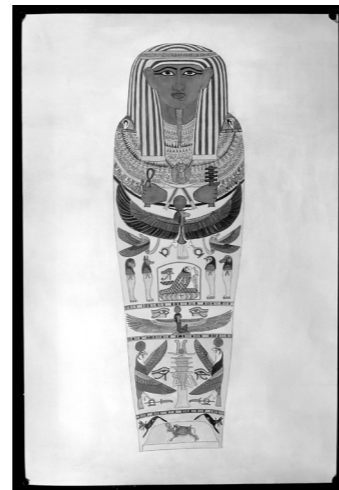
The body can also be preserved through natural climatic conditions that cause dehydration and arrest any process of decay. Evidence from the earliest desert burials, which occurred over 5000 years ago, underlines that the Egyptians understood how decay was halted by the hot sand's drying action. The deceased would be placed in a simple grave – little more than a shallow oval pit – in a crouched foetal position, the face turned west towards the setting sun. The cavity would then be filled in with sand which mummified the body naturally. The fact that these corpses were buried along with their personal possessions and food provisions suggests that the Egyptians already believed in life after death.

A striking example of this form of predynastic burial is the mummy named 'Ginger' at The British Museum, who has wonderfully preserved red hair. Egyptologists concur that these early natural processes of mummification would have most probably inspired the Ancient Egyptians to develop their ritualistic embalming technique. Some remarkable mummies have also been discovered in Northern Europe, preserved by their immersion in marshy bogs.

Ultimately, natural mummification only takes place in extreme climates where it is either very dry or freezing cold. It can also



Ancient Egyptian mummy cases.



Mummy case showing decoration of magic symbols, watercolour by James Putnam.

be caused by the combination of cold temperatures and very dry winds, enabling a freeze-drying effect.

Noble and Webster's Composite Creatures — The Egyptians believed that gods could take the form of animals. Accordingly, they mummified all manner of creatures including cats, jackals and ibises as votive offerings to particular deities. Thousands of these have been discovered in special sanctuaries beneath temples. It is understood that animals were specially bred to be mummified and were then sold to pilgrims who offered them back to the gods.

The mummification of animals has been an ongoing fascination for Noble and Webster, becoming interwoven with their artistic practice. *The Gamekeeper's Gibbet*, positioned in the central tomb of the installation *Turning the Seventh Corner*, is an exquisitely detailed gold sculpture derived from naturally mummified frogs, squirrels, a mouse, a rat, and bird parts including a chicken's foot, a pair of crow's feet and a pair of Egyptian vulture's feet. This extraordinary amalgam of creatures is ominously bound together with a coiled rope that wraps around the mummies' body parts.

The artists first became aware of this phenomenon of natural mummification when they discovered a dried frog under an armchair; this inspired them to start collecting dead animals which they then dried and mummified themselves. Over a period of three years they collected hundreds of dead creatures, many of which were then used as the basis for *The Gamekeeper's Gibbet*.

When standing in front of the work, it seems that some inexplicable alchemical process has transformed the amorphous mass of writhing creatures into two golden sculptures, which then project two perfect shadow silhouettes of the artists. The final encounter with Noble and Webster's 'burial chamber' evokes Howard Carter's reaction to the sight of Tutankhamun's tomb; the viewer experiences absolute wonder and amazement after stumbling across this beautifully strange and curious treasure.

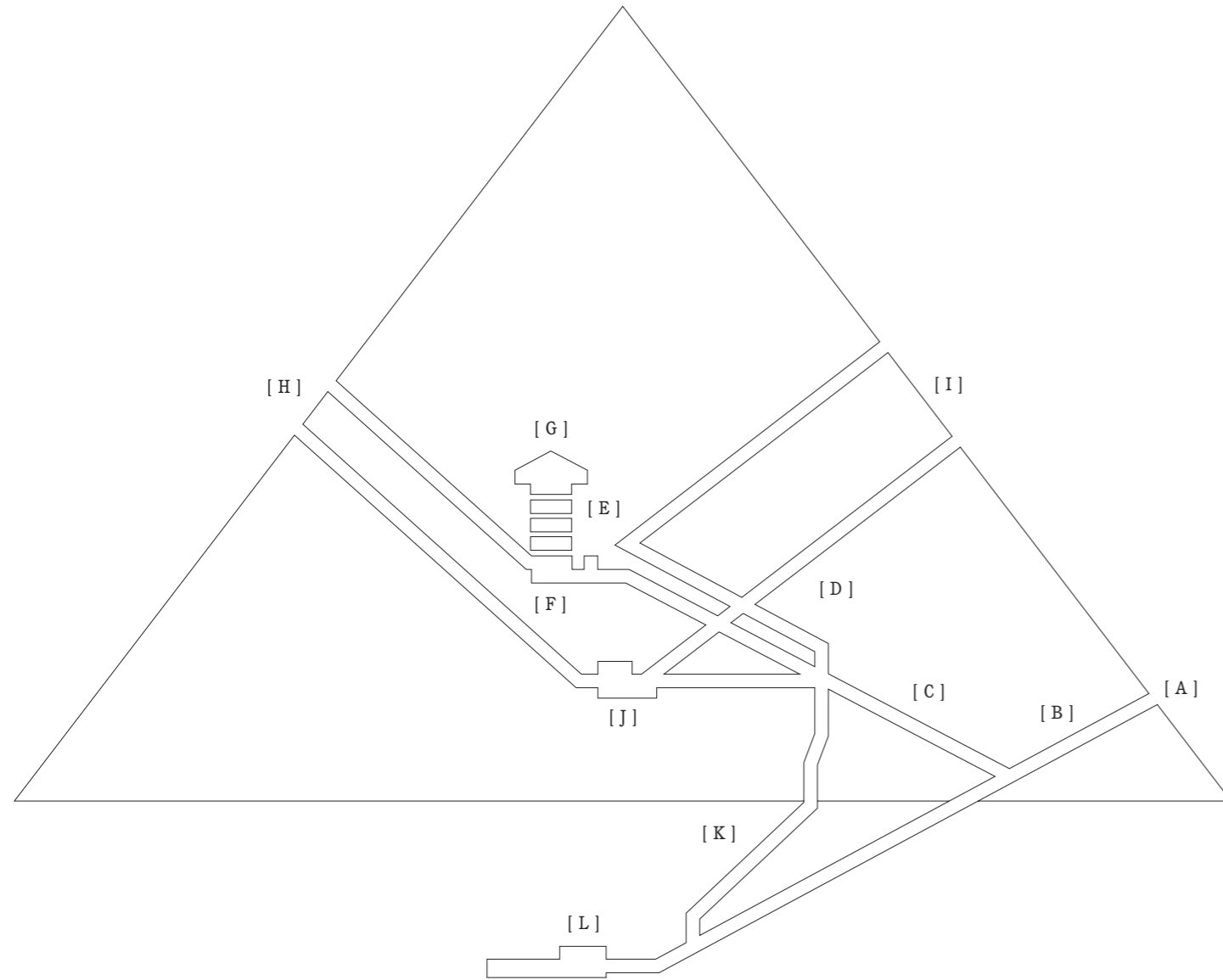
James Putnam is an independent curator and writer. He was formerly a curator of the British Museum's Egyptian Antiquities Collection.



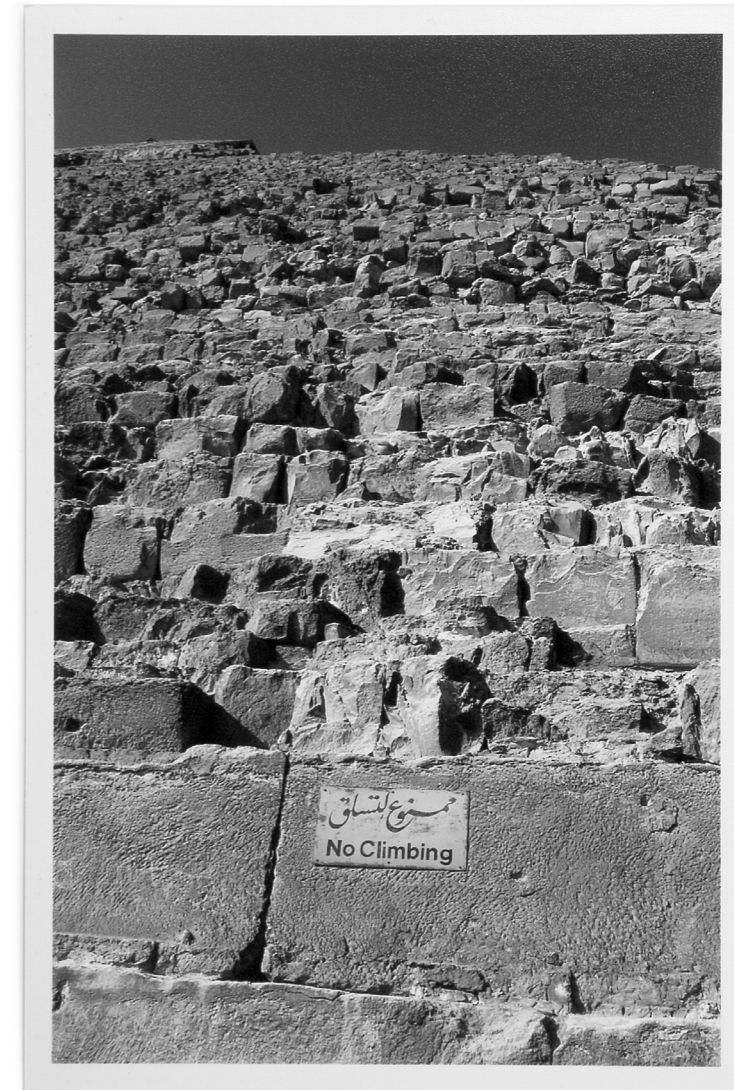
Mummified head displayed in 19th century glass dome.

A Cross Section of The Great Pyramid of Giza, Egypt.

- [A] Entrance
- [B] Descending Passage
- [C] Ascending Passage
- [D] Grand Gallery
- [E] Antechamber
- [F] King's Burial Chamber
- [G] Relieving Chambers
- [H] Diagonal shafts orientated towards the stars of Orion
- [I] Diagonal shafts orientated towards the North Pole star
- [J] Queen's Burial Chamber
- [K] Well Shaft
- [L] Subterranean Chamber



[1] Looking up at the Great Pyramid, Giza.



[1]

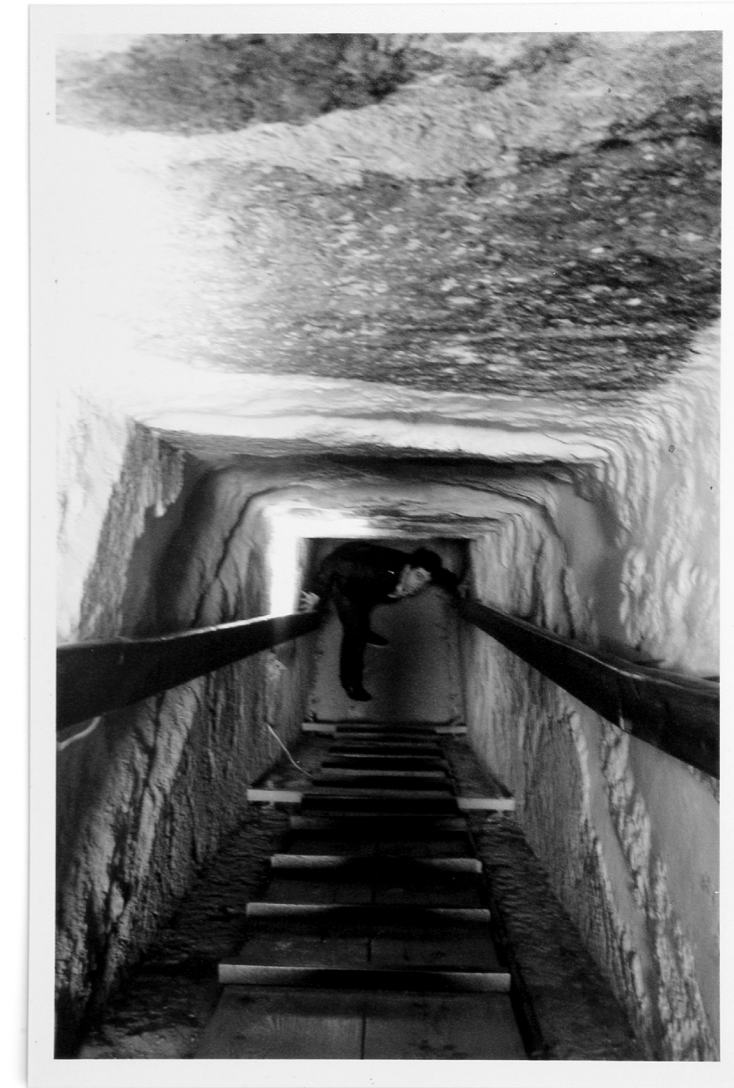
[4] Tim exploring the entrance to an underground tomb, Giza.



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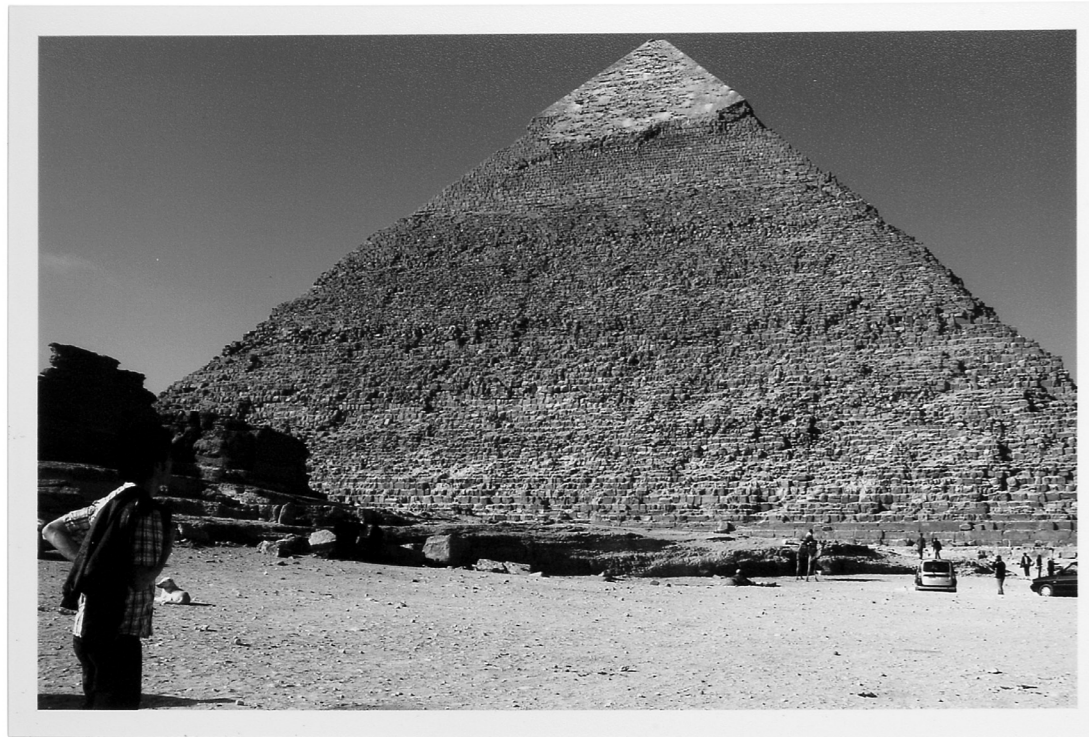


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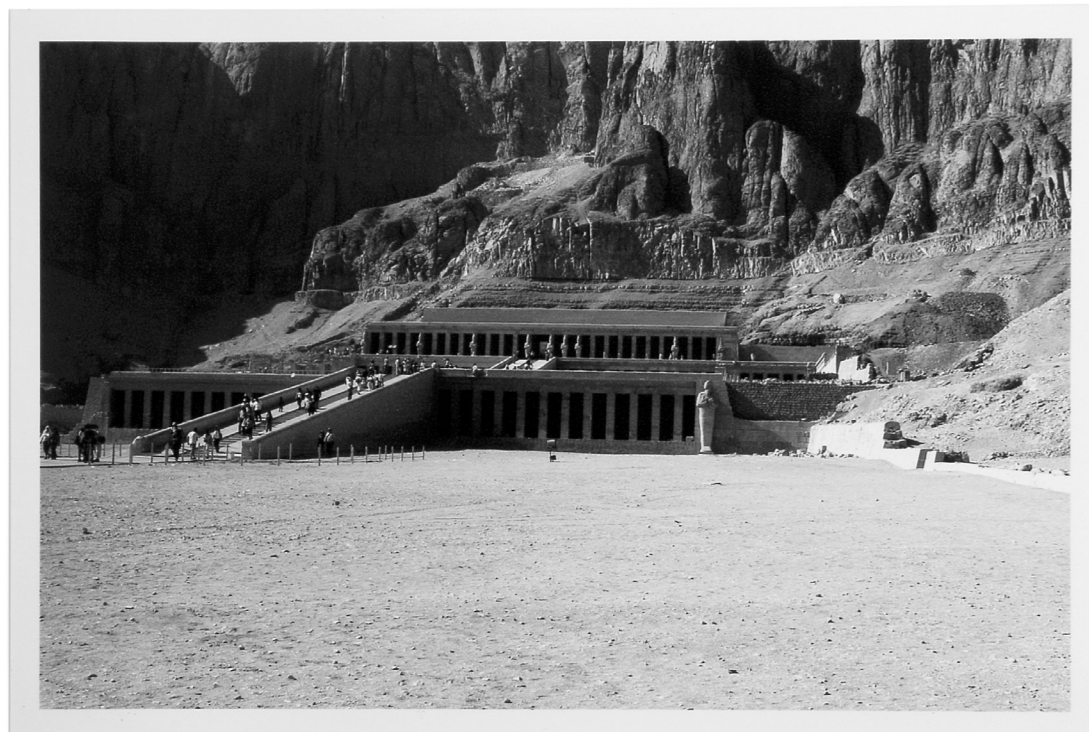


[4]

[6] The Temple of Hatshepsut, Luxor.



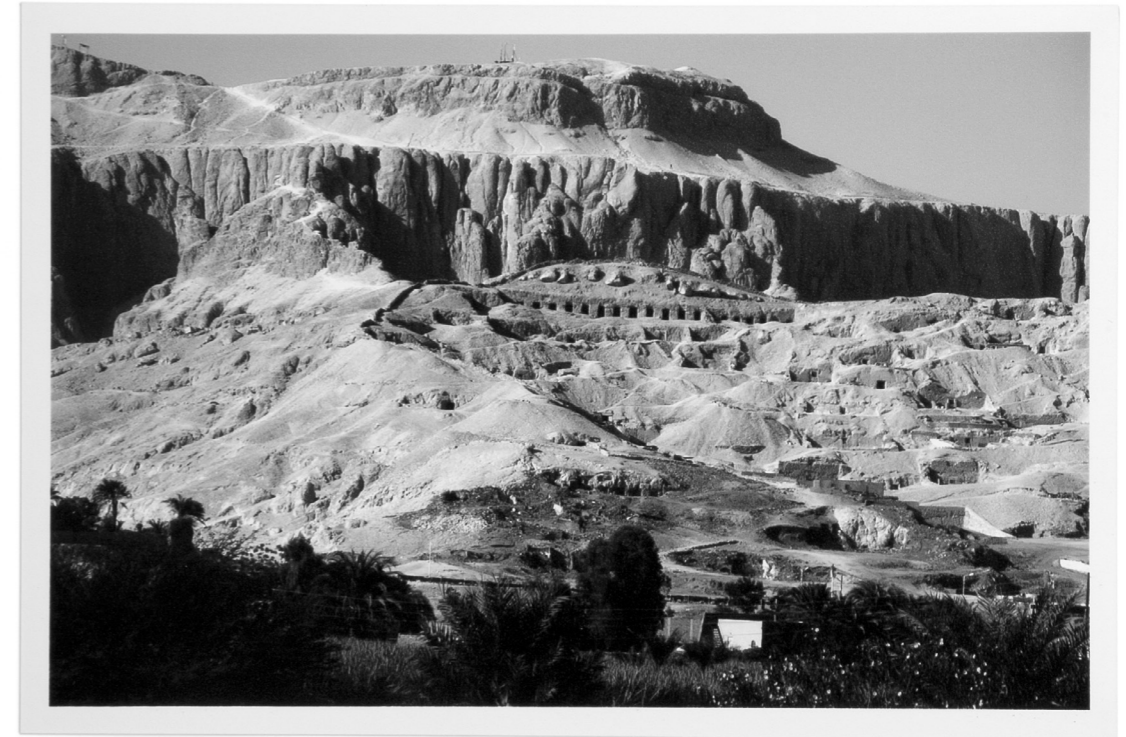
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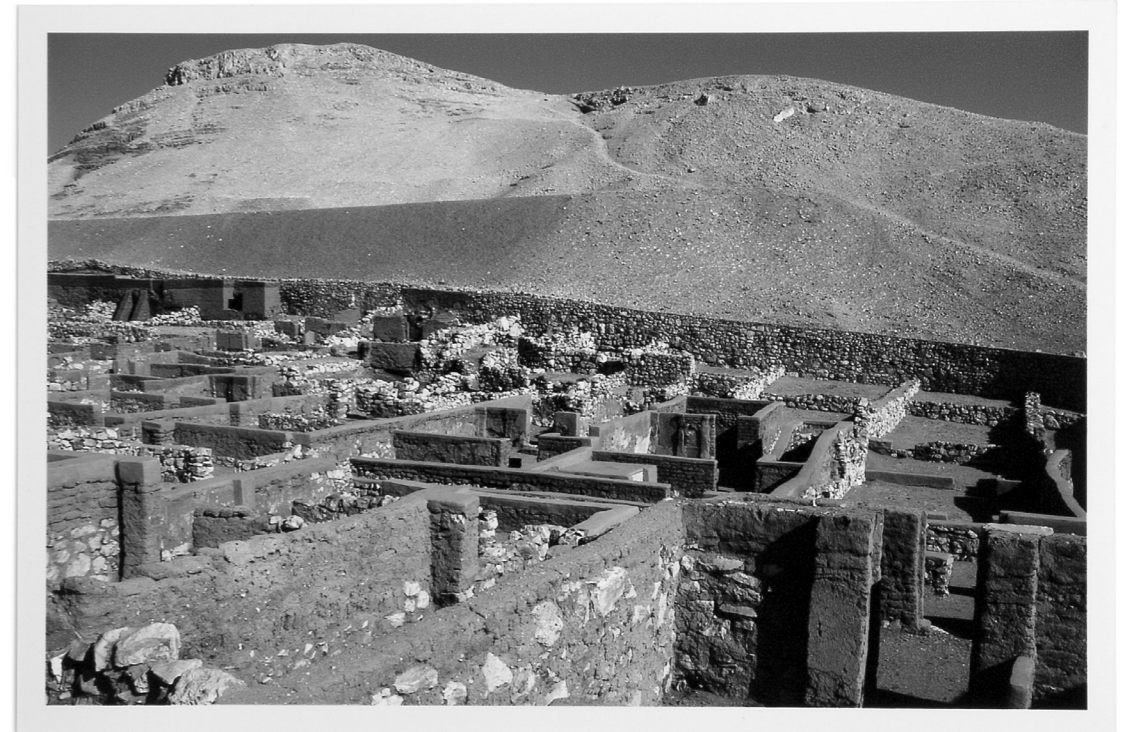
[6]

[7] Deir el-Medina, Luxor.

[8] Valley of the Artisans (Deir el-Medina), Luxor.



[7]



[8]

[9] The Karnak Temple complex, Luxor.



[9]

[10] Temple of Hatshepsut, Luxor.
[11] On the banks of the Nile, Luxor.



[10]



[11]



[12]

**An interview conducted by Louisa Elderton with
Tim Noble, Sue Webster and David Adjaye**

Louisa Elderton [LE] *Turning the Seventh Corner* is your third collaboration, the first being your studio and home The Dirty House, where we sit now, and the second being at The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Colorado. How did you all first meet and what has inspired such a long-standing artistic relationship?

David Adjaye [DA] I'd actually really like to know the story before we met, when you guys were searching for an architect – why did you come to me?

Sue Webster [sw] It's all a bit fuzzy. Wasn't it Picasso who was famous for reinventing his own history? The story that I believe to be true because I've said it so many times, was that you were at the Royal College of Art.

[DA] Yes, we met at the Royal College of Art, definitely, but it was the 'remeet' that I was more concerned about.

[sw] The 'remeet' was when you fitted out the gallery Modern Art.

[DA] Modern Art. That was it! It was Stuart Shave's space.

[sw] On Redchurch Street.

[DA] Exactly.

[sw] Stuart took on a space in Redchurch Street, which was our first gallery, and had the idea of you fitting it out, so that's how we met. I found this building [The Dirty House] because I used to live on Rivington Street and would walk past it on my way to visit the gallery.

Tim Noble [TN] We had this idea that The Dirty House had to be a square box.

[sw] Yeah, 'The Black Cube'.

[TN] Live upstairs and have the studio downstairs, that was very intrinsic to the whole thing. When we originally bought the building it was previously being used as a full-on carpentry workshop, a whole business that had been going for years.

[sw] When I researched the property, I discovered that the very corner of this building, sitting on Chance Street and Whitby Street, was originally a pub called The Blue Anchor, back in the 19th century. When David's builders were digging in that corner, they found hundreds of buried bottles. Not long after we moved in, someone who was tracing their family tree knocked on the door. Part of their family's story led them here and she asked if the building used to be a pub. I said,

“Yeah it did: The Blue Anchor.” And she said, “My great grandfather, Jem Kendrick, used to box in the Blue Anchor!” Apparently he actually became the English ten-stone champion back in 1885, here, on this very spot.

[DA] Oh my God!

[SW] And then it opened up another can of worms because apparently it was in this pub that they did bare-knuckle fighting, and it became the first place where they put gloves on. Later, I received a letter from Harold Alderman, a boxing historian, who was very excited to read that two artists had bought the building and that it still stood. He said that The Blue Anchor was the venue for all English Championships: ‘The most famous pugilistic Hostelry in the World.’ And it was also a brothel, where Prince Edward VII used to visit.

[DA] That was his hangout. It was a royal knocking shop! The Dirty House. The name was perfectly applied.



Newspaper clipping from The Mirror of Life, March 24th, 1897.

[SW] Dirty in more ways than one.

[TN] Filthy dirty.

[DA] That’s really nice: Edward’s knocking shop. I’m just completely tickled by that.

[SW] After the brothel, boxing club and pub, the building expanded into a boys’ club and then Probros, which was a father and son furniture business, and the son, Jeff Probyn, was an international rugby player.

[DA] Oh really?

[SW] My office space now is exactly the same size and sits in the same position as their office space then. Their’s was wood panelled. Do you remember? And it had Page Three pin-ups everywhere.

[DA] I remember: ding ding ding ding!

[SW] And on another wall were the back-page sports stories of Jeff Probyn’s rugby antics – I think he famously had a cauliflower ear.

[TN] Oh yeah, that was right. He was a big strapping guy with big tight shorts on ... China took all of the money away from the East End cabinet makers in London, and I think his business was barely being kept alive, so they were approached by somebody.

[SW] I remember seeing the building several times and it had a massive crack in the wall. It was next to a fish factory and I just thought, there’s absolutely no way in a million years I’m going to live next door to a fish factory. And here I am, ten years later.

[DA] Be careful what you say!

[LE] And at what point did you approach David, having found the building?

[SW] A few years before we found the building, when we hadn’t sold a single work of art and I was on the dole, I remember saying to David, “If we ever make any

March 24, 1897.

SATURDAY NIGHT BOXING. THE BURIAL OF BOXING AT THE BLUE ANCHOR.

FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL the Blue Anchor Saturday night boxing shows have been an institution of the country, and it is with regret that we have now to say finis to the closing of one of the oldest boxing rooms in London. One by one the vandal hand of improvement has swept away the sporting drums of London, and with them the Saturday night boxing; and now the Blue Anchor, Shoreditch, has gone by the board. Tales of the Blue Anchor would make very interesting reading, and were we to relate a tithe of the stories connected with the old house we could make a good two volume series. Sporting papers of the present day are so saturated in horse racing that even such an event as the closing of a time-honoured institution such as the Blue Anchor is passed without notice, while columns are filled with the passage at arms between Dicky Dunn and the Anti-Gambling League. Yet these same papers are the first to seize on boxing when they find the article a paying sporting commodity. On Saturday night the two Arthurs finished their Saturday night show at the

Newspaper clipping from The Mirror of Life, March 24th, 1897.

money, let’s do a project together.” Before we bought the building I asked David to take a look inside, as it was a big factory with columns everywhere holding up the first floor. You can see where we’ve taken out the floor in order to make a double-height space – there were originally two stories. There were columns everywhere, which made me really worried! I thought, I cannot work around these, as I really wanted to have an open studio space. I said, “David can we take the columns out?” You said yes, so then I bought it. The only thing holding me back was the columns.

[LE] So you thought of David immediately.

[SW] It seemed very natural.

[TN] Yeah.

[DA] I think that with architecture and art it’s actually all about relationships. It’s not really like you go to a shop and say, “Oh, I’ll have that.” You’ve got to

spend time with the person and sort of build up a pre-relationship, as I call it. So in a way we had built up the ground for trust and discussions. What was nice for me was that I could work with people of my peer group – with architecture it’s always some older person that’s commissioning you when you start, and you’ve always got this older person/younger person relationship.

[SW] Yeah, like a kind of patronising relationship, so we were really lucky in that sense – we grew together.

[DA] It was really fantastic. We could talk peer-to-peer.

[SW] Openly, and without fear.

[DA] Yes, without fear, without sounding funny or like people would judge you, it was like, we can talk about the issues.

[SW] I didn’t know much about architecture, but I knew about taste and aesthetics.

[TN] And once you install or engage that idea in your head, that you could possibly do this thing, there’s just no turning back, is there? I remember Jeffrey Deitch coming round here so that we could show him the space.

[SW] Before it was worked on.

[TN] And he was like, “Look you can just put a mezzanine here and paint it white, this could be a classic artist loft.” This kind of thing, and you go, “Hmmmmmmm...”

[DA] Hmmmmmmm...

[SW] I said, “We’ve got much bigger plans! We’re going to build a penthouse on the roof,” and I remember people going, “There’s absolutely no way you are going to be able to afford this, it’s going to ruin your life.”

[TN] It was a scary thing.

[LE] So what about the former Der Tagesspiegel building where *Turning the Seventh Corner* was installed?

I know that the space immediately resonated with you. What was it that appealed to you, and what about its intrinsic relationship to the history of Berlin?

[SW] It was almost like a déjà vu.

[DA] We just arranged to meet in Berlin to run around to see some things.

[TN] We spent the day.

[DA] We spent the day just driving around.

[SW] In the snow.

[DA] To these different buildings, which were all really interesting. But I think once we got to Der Tagesspiegel...

[SW] Harry [Blain] had several scouts out in Berlin to look at buildings, and he said, “Let’s go over for a day”, and David, you were due in town, so we met up to look at all of the buildings together. Then, we were just on the way to the airport and Harry said, “Oh, I’ve got this other place, it’s huge and it’s probably totally out of the question but let’s just take a look at it anyway.” So we stopped off and looked at the building, and then we got stuck in the lift.

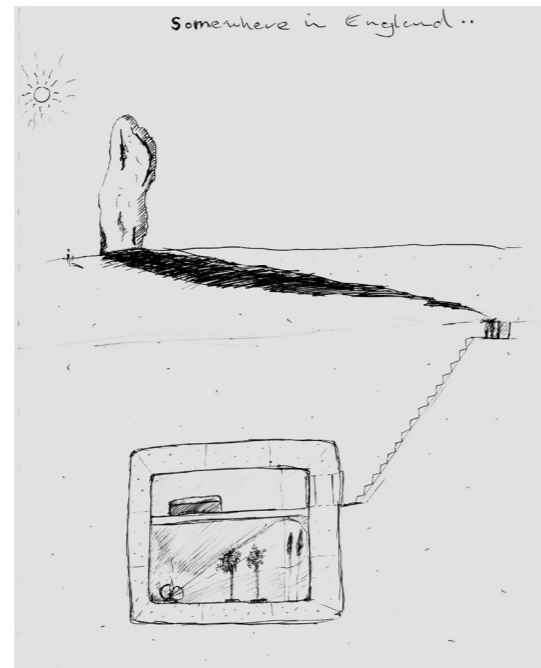
[DA] Yeah, we got stuck in the lift – this really weird lift that only has one door from the outside, it doesn’t have internal doors.

[SW] It was a goods lift.

[DA] Yeah, a goods lift that rises up the side of the building.

[SW] And Tim very excitedly ran and kicked the wall and of course that set off an alarm, which froze the lift and we were standing in it going, “The plane’s about to leave in twenty minutes!”

[TN] I’ve never seen so many very cool people just try to remain very calm.



The Devil's Toenail, Tim Noble & Sue Webster, 2010.

[LE] Eyes darting frantically... How did it start moving again?

[SW] Somebody saved us!

[DA] Somebody worked it out...

[SW] I think it was me who said, “What happens if you press that button,” and then the thing just jolted back to life. And then they wouldn’t let us on the airplane because we were late, and Harry sweet-talked us on! We were five minutes before take-off and we didn’t even have a boarding pass! I think from that experience I realised I just had to work with this guy.

[TN] When you walk into Der Tagesspiegel’s building you realise that it was specifically built so that these extraordinary machines could go up fifty feet.

[DA] More, sixty feet.

[TN] And there were offices right up there where the workers would walk out and get a print-off, but of course once the machinery had gone you are left with this extraordinary conceptual space.

[DA] A real negative.

[TN] It was just remarkable, wasn’t it? And it just had to be, didn’t it?

[SW] It had to be the most ridiculous space. And also, I think because the whole idea of the Berlin project was that... when we went to visit the Damien Hirst show [in Berlin] the previous year, it made us look to do the opposite.

[TN] We reacted to it.

[SW] We knew that we wanted to do this incredible project, although we didn’t know quite what it was at the time. But that’s how it came about. I thought of the concept after visiting Egypt. You know how things suddenly just happen? I thought, I know what I want to do but I need an architect because I can’t work out how to make the idea into a reality.

[LE] So, the starting point was Egypt then, in terms of conceptualising the work?

[TN] At one point, I think we wanted to realise the project in a bunker, because there were underground bunkers everywhere in Berlin – these secret spaces.

[DA] It just made sense as the thoughts were clarified.

[SW] I’m quite fascinated with travel, as most artists are, and often I don’t really know the reason why I want to visit a specific place. I feel like my brain is a creative sponge that soaks up everything and it never fails to surprise me when it decides to reveal itself back into my work.

[SW] Last summer, Tim and I were invited to visit Joshua Tree in California. Our friends had bought eighty acres in the desert and they wanted to buy a work of ours. So we proposed the idea of burying a work of art under the ground in the desert. We flew out there to visit their land, and that’s where we came up with the basis for this work, which was to position a giant rock so that when the sun hit the rock at a

certain hour it would cast a shadow, and the tip of the shadow pointed to a hole in the ground, which was the entrance to an underground tomb. Then you would descend down a passage in order to view the work of art – a pair of heads made from gold that cast a shadow.

[TN] And then we got really into the idea of making a piece of work that we could build in a solid concrete room underground, but no one would be able to see it in this lifetime; we could make it but no one would be able to experience it, like a delay system or something.

[LE] It’s interesting that you say that, because it seemed to me that the physical experience of the work was so much a part of it; you are pulled into this immersive tunnel and then you enter into a meditative journey. So the idea that the work might pre-exist or have a life beyond the viewer surprises me in a sense, as this felt so integral to the work that was eventually realised. How did this aspect of the work develop? David, you mention in your foreword that the viewer ventures into a narrative journey; how did the importance of this come about?

[TN] Originally, we thought it had to be sealed and that you shouldn’t be able to get to it. But when you think about it, the Egyptian tombs were buried but they all got discovered eventually.

[DA] They were allowed to be seen, ultimately.

[TN] So we wanted David to make something really special that happens on the way, stripping away all unnecessary information.

[LE] So there was always going to be a sense of it eventually being discovered, being physically experienced?

[DA] Absolutely.

[TN] It was about a bit of purity, so you have this experience before you get to the final thing, and maybe the final thing isn’t the final thing – it’s about lots of different things going on. I think that’s how it evolved, perhaps.



Dark Stuff, Tim Noble & Sue Webster, 2008.

[DA] I love very much this idea that it was this thing made for another time, or another story. It just so happens to be something that you allow people to see at this time. It's not going to be easy, you have to struggle a bit to get to it – travelling down this umbilical cord to the room is a real struggle. It was really fascinating to listen to people get hysterical at times, freaking out, grasping at the walls trying to work it out. We are so used to being given things all the time, there's something really nice about being denied something, so that you really want to see it. It was about how disorienting we could make it within the rules, you know, not making people throw up! It's not like a maze. It's definitely something that should allow you to rid yourself of the city and urban life and move your mind into imagining something that's not your everyday experience.

[LE] And that was where the influence of the Great Pyramid of Giza came in, as it has ascending and descending tunnels that disorient you and lead to the burial chamber?

[TN] Walking through that pyramid was so restricting, – you thought it was going to open up into a lovely empty pyramid inside, but in fact you just ventured further into the tunnel.

[SW] I was absolutely terrified when I went into the pyramid because I hadn't known anyone who had ever gone inside one; I hadn't watched any programmes or read any books. I thought it was just this giant pyramid, and it would be like: echo, echo, echo. So I got quite frightened about the idea of this huge empty space. When we went in I had no idea it would be a tunnel leading to a chamber that was suspended inside the centre of the pyramid, and that the rest of it was just solid stone.

[DA] And remember, the tunnels were not meant for going in, they were meant for going out; that was the escape route. It was designed as the last mechanism so that you were blocking the route, and then, [slaps hands] out. So it was a backwards journey, but we turned it into an inwards journey. It's another world. It's a reverse game. It's supposed to disorientate, as you're not supposed to ever find the chamber again.

[SW] So together that's what we successfully designed as the home for our sculpture.

[DA] A secure home not to be found again.

[SW] Hiding the buried treasure.

[TN] So we found this huge gallery, Der Tagesspiegel, and we said, "We don't actually want to do anything with this space!"

[DA] Watching Harry's face. He was like, "I'm renting this whole thing!"

[SW] Although we were given the whole space we decided instead to knock a hole in the wall and go through into the area next door – build the installation there.

[DA] And to his credit, Harry was bloodless.

[SW] He must be very good at poker.

[DA] He was just like, "OK, OK."

[SW] Whatever mad idea we kept coming up with.

[LE] And it did work so well because there was the chance to really get a sense of the cavity of Der Tagesspiegel's space, to think about how it might have originally been used, and you then stumble across this disorienting, surprising experience. So actually it was all part of it.

[TN] Yeah and even with the pyramids you have to clamber up a bit of rock to actually get to the tunnel.

[SW] Apparently the entrance hole is a smuggler's tunnel. It's bashed in and is not actually a proper entrance. It's known as 'The Robber's Tunnel'.

[LE] What about the development of the sculpture itself? It all started with *Dark Stuff* in 2008?

[SW] I guess this project touches on so many levels, we've talked about architecture, about Egypt, about Berlin and we haven't even discussed the work itself yet.

[TN] All of these mummified creatures and this precious metal; we were finding these beautiful...

[SW] ...being an artist you collect things and you don't know why; all you know is that one day they will come in useful for something. Tim's mum lives in the countryside and she had just bought two kittens. I remember going to visit her two or three years ago and while I was sitting watching the telly I moved the sofa back and I found a ball of fluff. I picked it up and blew at it only to reveal a dried frog. And I said, "What the hell is that doing here!" And she said, "It's the cats, they bring in gifts every day." And then I found something behind the television, and asked if this happens all the time and she said, "Yeah, it happens every day."

[TN] It's like this half-tortured thing and then it goes under the armchair to die.

[SW] So I gave her a box called 'Dead Things' to keep in her coal cellar, and I said, "Every time the cat brings something in would you mind picking it up

and putting it in this box?" And she did. So roughly every three months I'd go back to visit her and check on the box, and inside was a putrefied ball of death. The rotting meat attracts flies, which lay eggs that become maggots, and then the maggots just start crawling in, eating away at the flesh. So this thing is writhing.

[TN] But they only ate the internal organs, they go through the arsehole and the nostrils and eat the eye-balls and stuff, but they'll leave the skin and the bone.

[SW] I'd have to put on a breathing mask, because the stink was putrid, and rubber gloves in order to tear the animals apart because they'd melted into one ball, 'a menagerie of death'. I'd use tweezers to pull out the dried internal organs and a toothbrush to clean off the fur. Then I'd lay them out in boxes, and put them in her garage to dry – which she didn't know about. So I had a production line going over about three years and eventually accumulated more than 300 creatures, and I thought, "What fantastic material to make a sculpture out of", in the same way that we'd started out by collecting trash from the streets. I thought of this as country trash. We had this amazing collection of squirrels, rats, mice and shrews. Some of the shrews seemed to have had a heart attack before the cats had time to kill them as most of their faces were frozen with fear.

[TN] Petrified.

[SW] Around this time we were approached by Waldemar Januszczak to take part in an exhibition that he was curating at The British Museum called *Statuephilia*. The idea was to place contemporary art alongside ancient exhibits. His first thought was to show us the Mexican rooms, but I couldn't find any feelings within it. Once we entered the Egyptian galleries I immediately knew exactly what to do, that's when the idea struck me. By this time I'd accumulated quite a collection of creatures which had naturally mummified, and when we suggested the idea of creating a new work especially for the show, Waldemar was so knocked out. I think he wanted to invite us to his house to meet his family for dinner! I remember that as we were constructing *Dark Stuff* I held back on sacrificing

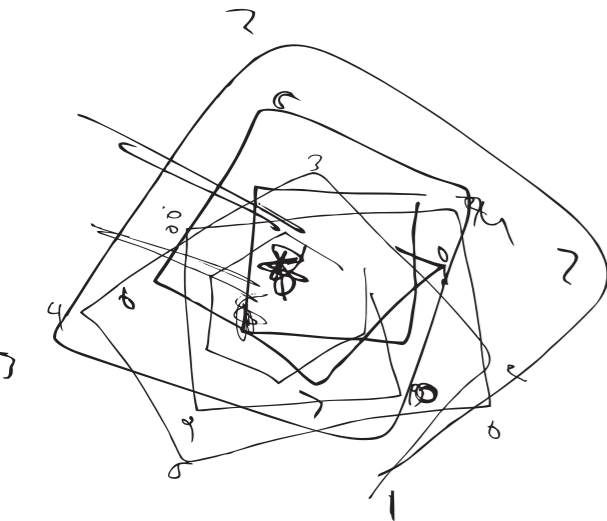
some of my favourite creatures, because at the back of my mind I could feel another idea unfolding.

[LE] The squirrels were particularly precious, weren't they?

[SW] Yeah, we inherited these specific squirrels from Tim's dad, which came from a gamekeeper's fence.

[TN] They were found on a walk in the woods as my dad discovered this gamekeeper's trophy fence; this particularly good one that was laden with things like squirrels, crows, magpies, jays and moles, and they were all just hooked on the back of the neck and had naturally mummified. Beautifully dried things, all slightly contorted, so they were almost dancing in a sense. So for *Turning the Seventh Corner* we had a male and a female squirrel and on each sculpture there was this ball of frogs, big rats, crows' claws, and they were spewing out of it as if they were pushing the actual squirrel out of each one.

[SW] As we were creating *Dark Stuff*, I remember the arduous task of trying to find a method of casting some of my favourite special creatures in order to create multiples, while maintaining the original creature for sentimental reasons. It literally took another three years to find a method to do so.



Preliminary sketch for *Turning the Seventh Corner*, David Adjaye, 2011.

[LE] Because they're unbelievably intricate.

[SW] Yeah, as a side project I was working on some jewellery ideas and while I was in the jewellery workshop I asked the silversmiths if it was possible to cast little creatures; they showed me a seahorse they'd done and I looked at the detail and thought, that's incredible! So I started taking them things to experiment with. I took them a little dried frog and said, "Can you cast that?" And then they came back and said, "Yes, look!" And then I gave them something bigger, a mouse, and that worked. The detail was amazing and the original was intact. So then I gave them the precious squirrels and they looked at them and said, "We'll try", and that's how we were able to cast these things in silver. The idea then developed about making a whole head from casts of mummified creatures in a precious metal. And therefore I didn't have to wait another three years in order to collect and naturally mummify three hundred more creatures.

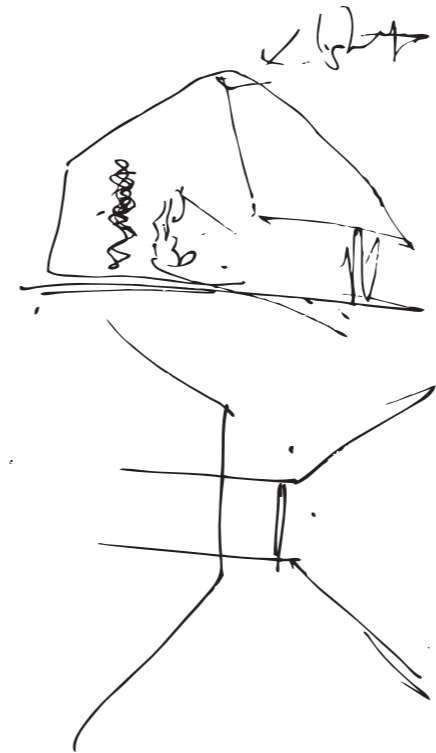
[LE] And it was so complex that you couldn't cast the whole sculpture in one go, could you? It had to be done in a series of sections.

[TN] We had to build the sculpture from wax casts first of all, which makes things fluid, so that you're actually making it and it's got all that sort of feeling flowing through it. Each tiny piece is blocking out light in order to make the shadow, but then the whole head had to be cut apart, cast and then reassembled. It wasn't as straightforward as we thought it was going to be – it was a nightmare. Constantly a case of building and rebuilding, but we had pure dogged determination wanting to see this thing happen.

[SW] We were lucky to have such a great team working with us; the mould makers and metal casters, the gold and silversmiths. Everyone worked around the clock, weekends and long hours. I think we only decided to start the project in January 2011.

[DA] It was really tight.

[SW] And Harry hadn't even signed the lease on the



Preliminary sketch for *Turning the Seventh Corner*, David Adjaye, 2011.

space yet! But somehow we managed to pull the whole thing around in two months or something.

[DA] It's actually quite extraordinary that we managed that.

[TN] Well, you responded really well.

[DA] I was really excited by it and what was nicest was that I had the Berlin studio. We had been working on small things and the team there are really hands-on and were able to get around and do this really quickly – without the team it would have never happened. We prefabricated the whole thing. It looks like something where you might think, it's just knocked together, but actually it's a kit that can be put up again, raised again – a very precise kit. It's beautiful working in Germany because you can specify exactly what you want. They want that information. It is lightweight and beautifully made.

[LE] And was it all one material?

[DA] Yes.

[LE] What type of material?

[DA] It's an ecological, eco-friendly ethanol-based MDF, which naturally blackens the material because of the additives. So it looks like a piece of slate or stone. Like volcanic stone.

[TN] And normally it would be covered with something?

[DA] Yeah, it would normally be painted or you would veneer it – it was definitely not designed to be seen. So maybe that's what threw a lot of people, to actually experience that material. Because it's not everyday matter, they just didn't know what it was. It was really bizarre. Sometimes that's really important; you could choose to use chipboard, or something, but everyone knows about it. We needed something where people wouldn't know what the hell it was.

[TN] Cos the walls could have been covered with mud or something. But you didn't need that, you just flipped it.

[LE] What about the significance of light within the construction, because obviously when it comes to your work [Noble and Webster] people often reference the opposition of light and dark, how those two elements repel each other. But actually in this work it was as if light and dark were really working together; darkness was as much a presence as the light.

[TN] Because in the darkness your imagination is just set on fire, and that was really what we were thinking about. People would have time to adjust and then you had to trust your senses. It was your senses that had to lead you through. It would override a normal situation and your curiosity would lead you.

[DA] I love working with Tim and Sue. I'm a huge fan of their work, or I wouldn't be here, and in a way I thought that there was a lesson in the DNA of their practice. They find things that you might find repulsive, put them together and transfigure it, but there is this amazing pureness about the way in which the light and

darkness reveal things. And in a way, even The Dirty House is a manifestation of them in that there is this dichotomy of lightness and darkness – the whole and the void. In a way it's like this journey is exactly the same as it reveals something else. For me it's really quite beautiful as I can use the principles that are inherent in the work to magnify another idea, and translate that into architecture.

[LE] What about alchemy? The idea that you are taking these base materials and then turning them into precious metal, gold. There's some sense of an elixir of life, your immortal souls being projected onto the wall.

[TN] There was a sense that it didn't have to be absolutely solid gold, so that it didn't become about monetary value, it was more about the traditional ways of making: lost-wax, casting and gilding.

[DA] Craft.

[TN] Definitely craft. You had to be able to interpret it in a way that you could visualise what it was that you were standing in front of. Finding these little accidental things and piecing them together, there was a kind of miracle sense in that.

[SW] They were dead things. When you looked at *Dark Stuff* they were put together in such a way that we brought them back to life. So with *Turning the Seventh Corner* it was about following the Egyptian belief that the preservation of the body was necessary so that the *Ka* [Egyptian concept of the vital essence of the soul] might meet it again in the afterlife. It is suggestive of the soul leaving the body.

[LE] David, you've also collaborated with Olafur Eliasson and Chris Ofili. In *The Upper Room* [with Chris Ofili] there was a very similar sense of tranquility and contemplation, which you also have in *Turning the Seventh Corner*. Tim and Sue, you once described how 'art is a religious experience ... you want to free your mind of all your thoughts.' I wanted to probe slightly deeper into your thoughts on the relationship

between art and religion and how close the experience of both might be within your installation?

[TN] Well, David, you've thought a lot about cathedrals and churches and light haven't you?

[DA] Yes. I think that you have to analyse the notion of immersing yourself within a sense of belief and where that takes you. That moment, which religion constructs really beautifully, is the kind of moment that one is really wanting; when rational thinking systems are down and you can wholly absorb yourself in something where you get a pure experience, where your belief and physicality fuse. You are made to feel something. Architecture, in a way, has always been obsessed with that as a kind of base idea.

[TN] These are powerful spaces that we are tapping into, a kind of fate tapping into this higher self, this other thing.

[LE] I wanted also to talk more generally about the relationship between art and architecture, because the cross fertilisation between these two elements has been in existence for centuries: from the frescos of Renaissance churches to Dan Flavin's conception of the unification of sculpture and architecture within a single installation. Why do you think that this dialogue between art and architecture, between artist and architect, can be so powerful? Why do you think this relationship has been so long-lasting? You are a link in a chain that is centuries long.

[TN] It's like meditation in a way. Looking at an object is a very strange thing to do. It seems even stranger in this day and age when we are so tied up with technology and things, so tied up with business and monetary systems. It does something neurologically, something very simplistic to the mind. It's reassuring as it's a thing that's never going to die, I think. If you combine that with space... well if you think about life, you are created in a womb, that is a space, and then you have your bedroom, and then school and everything is informed by some kind of space. It's a marriage.

[DA] They are eternal twins: you can't separate art and architecture. To see something, you need to construct a thing around it. Art and architecture have really evolved. Now I don't think it's about one thing interpreting the other, it's a very interesting binary situation in that we see art and architecture in this kind of fusion.

[LE] There's a symbiotic relationship...

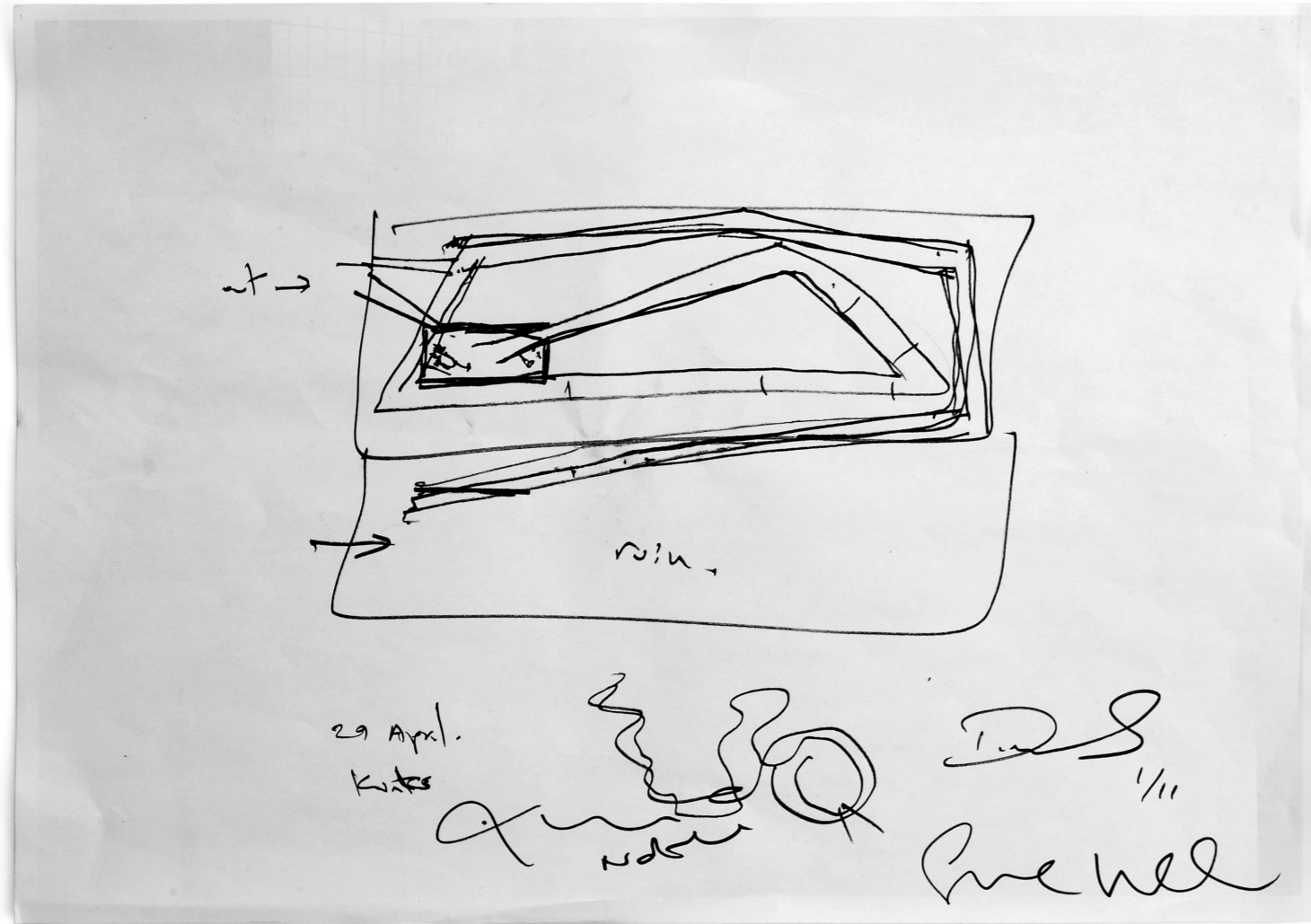
[DA] There's a much more symbiotic relationship, rather than a parasitical relationship. I mean it has parasitical qualities but it's definitely one reinforcing the other, the other reinforcing one. It's not to make one more clear, it's to make both clear. And that is something that I have really enjoyed very much. Working as a young architect in the 21st century enables one to work with artists and redefine that relationship. It's just about experiencing pure art and pure architecture together. And that's what this collaboration is. I mean it's just so compelling. It's liberating for me, as an architect.

[SW] At the time, when we were faced with a gallery situation in which to do an exhibition, we felt completely impotent – just floored by the idea of walking into *another* gallery experience. This feeling inspired us to want to shift outside of what is considered to be the four walls of a white cube, and show our work in a different way in order to make an innovative art experience; we've come beyond that, and it's our duty as artists to try and expand the boundaries. As an artist it's important to keep making things, but sometimes you have ideas that are bigger than your own capabilities and you need to collaborate with experts in their field to help you realise the dream. And that's what we did.

[DA] Nice ending.

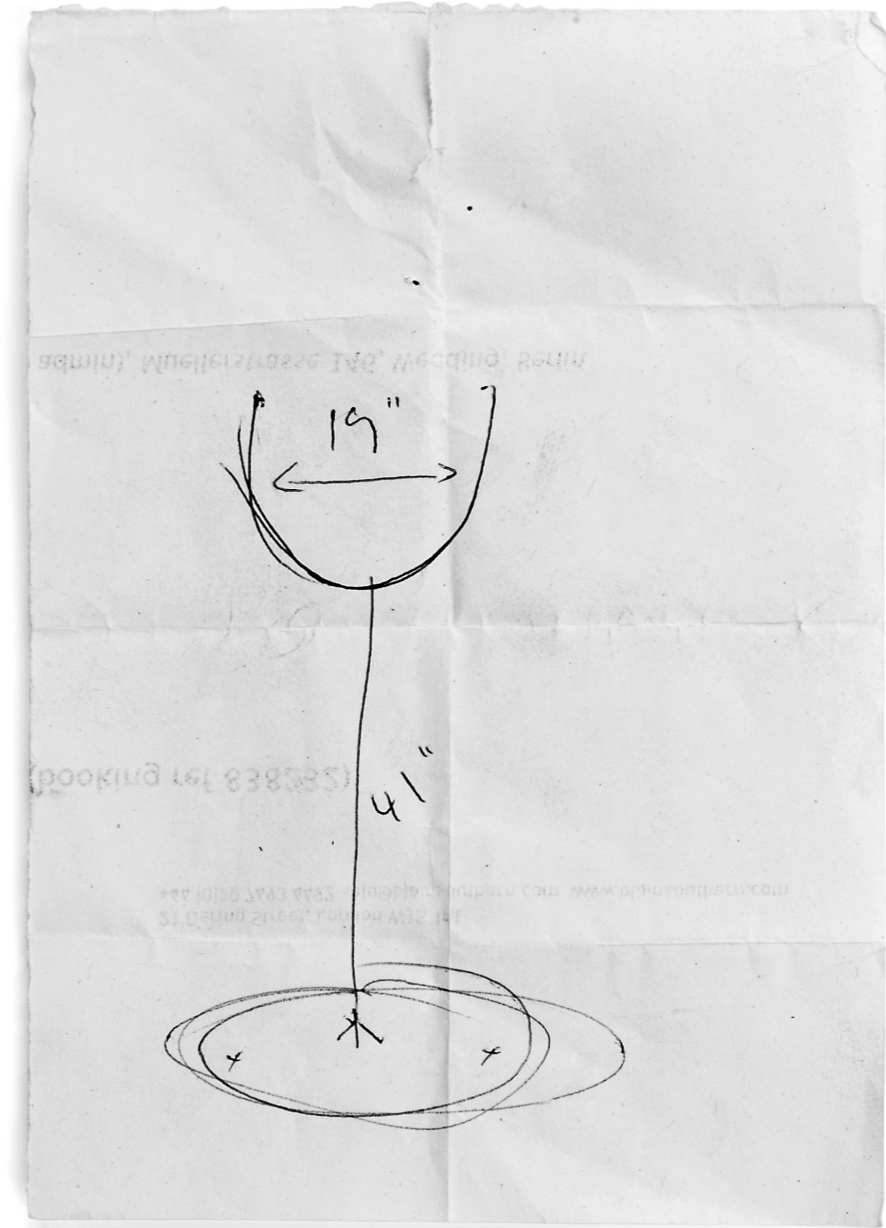
Louisa Elderton is the Associate Curator at Blain|Southern.

[13] Initial sketch of the seven corners, signed by Tim Noble, Sue Webster & David Adjaye, January 2011.

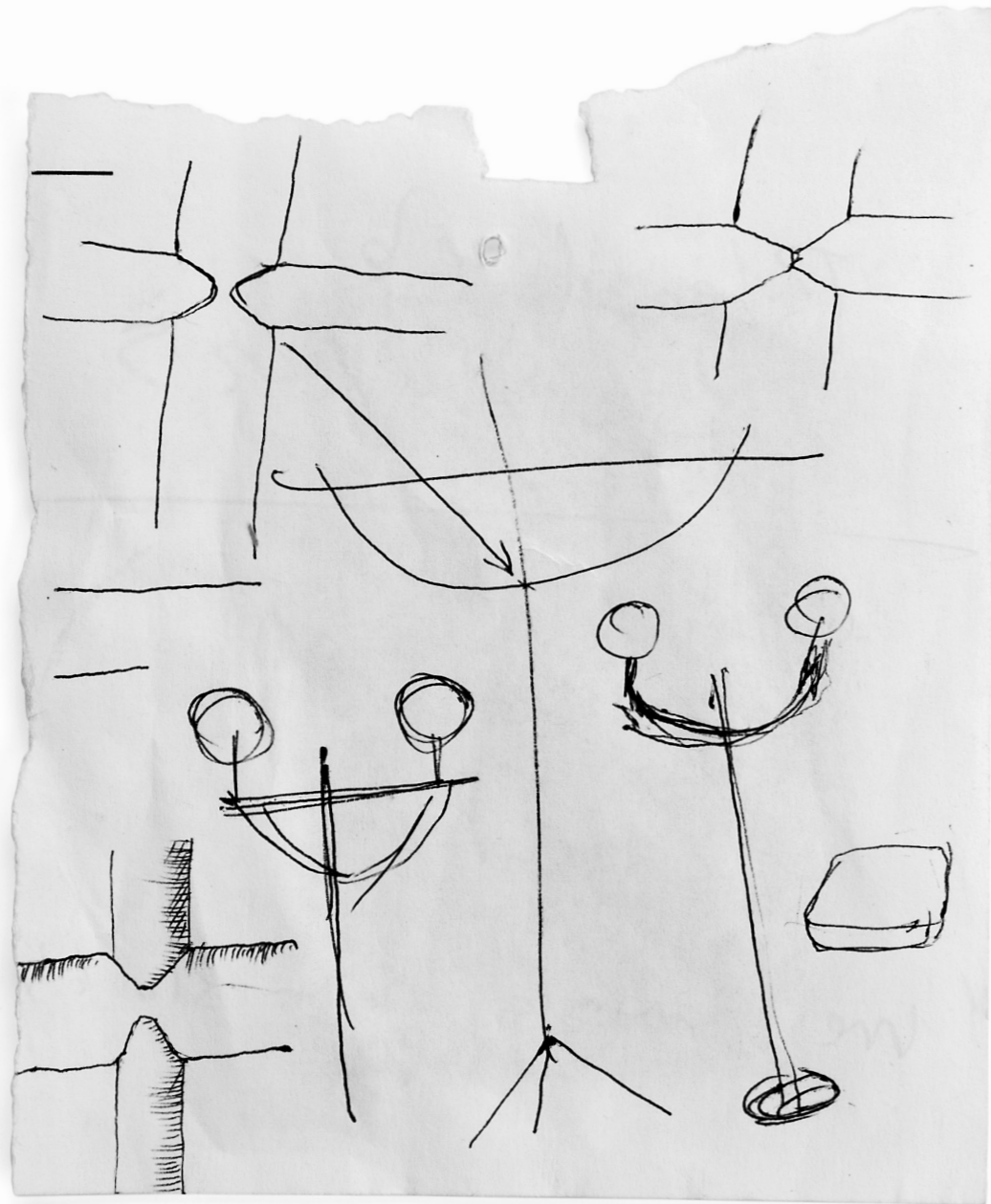


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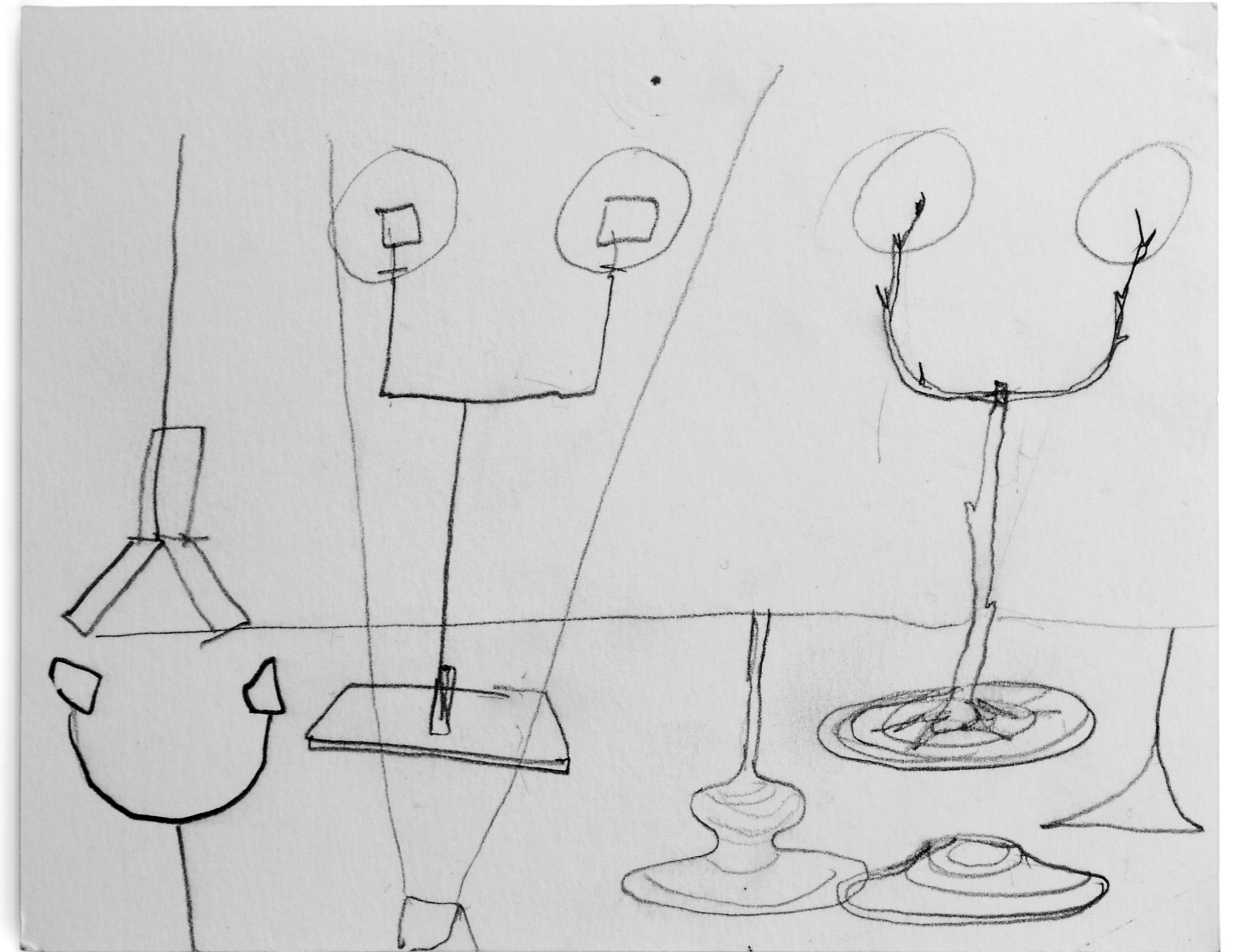
SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS WORKING DRAWINGS



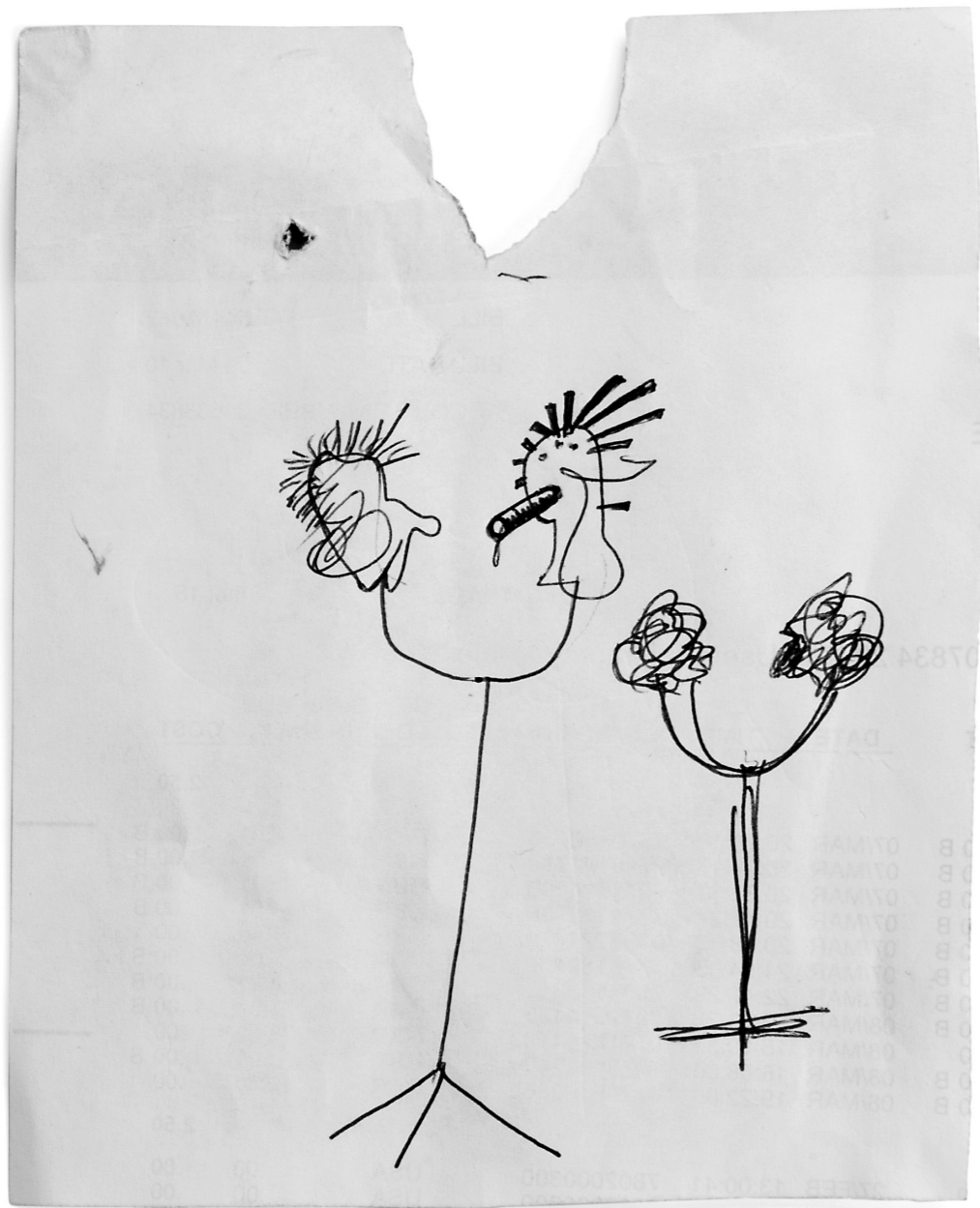
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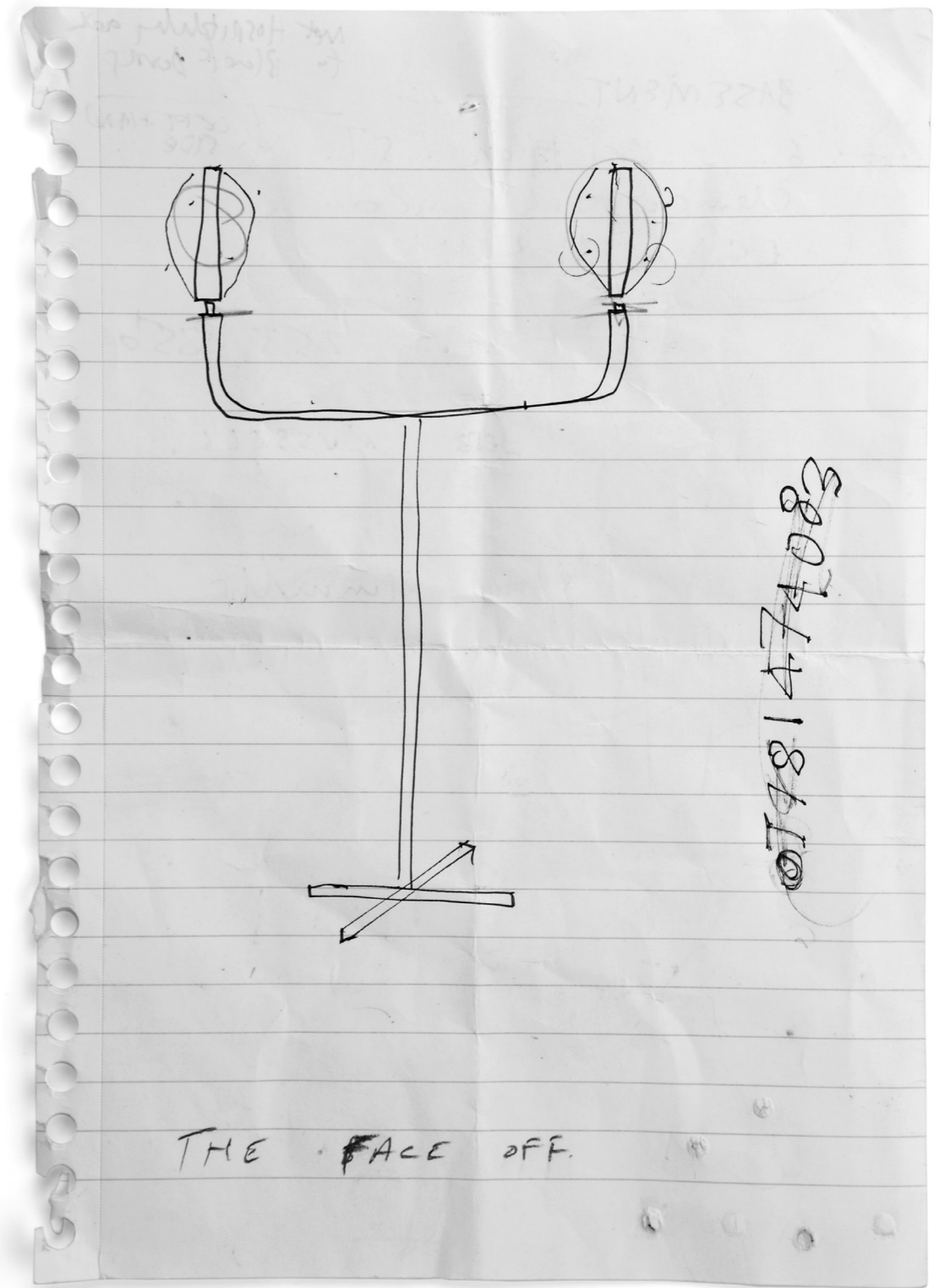
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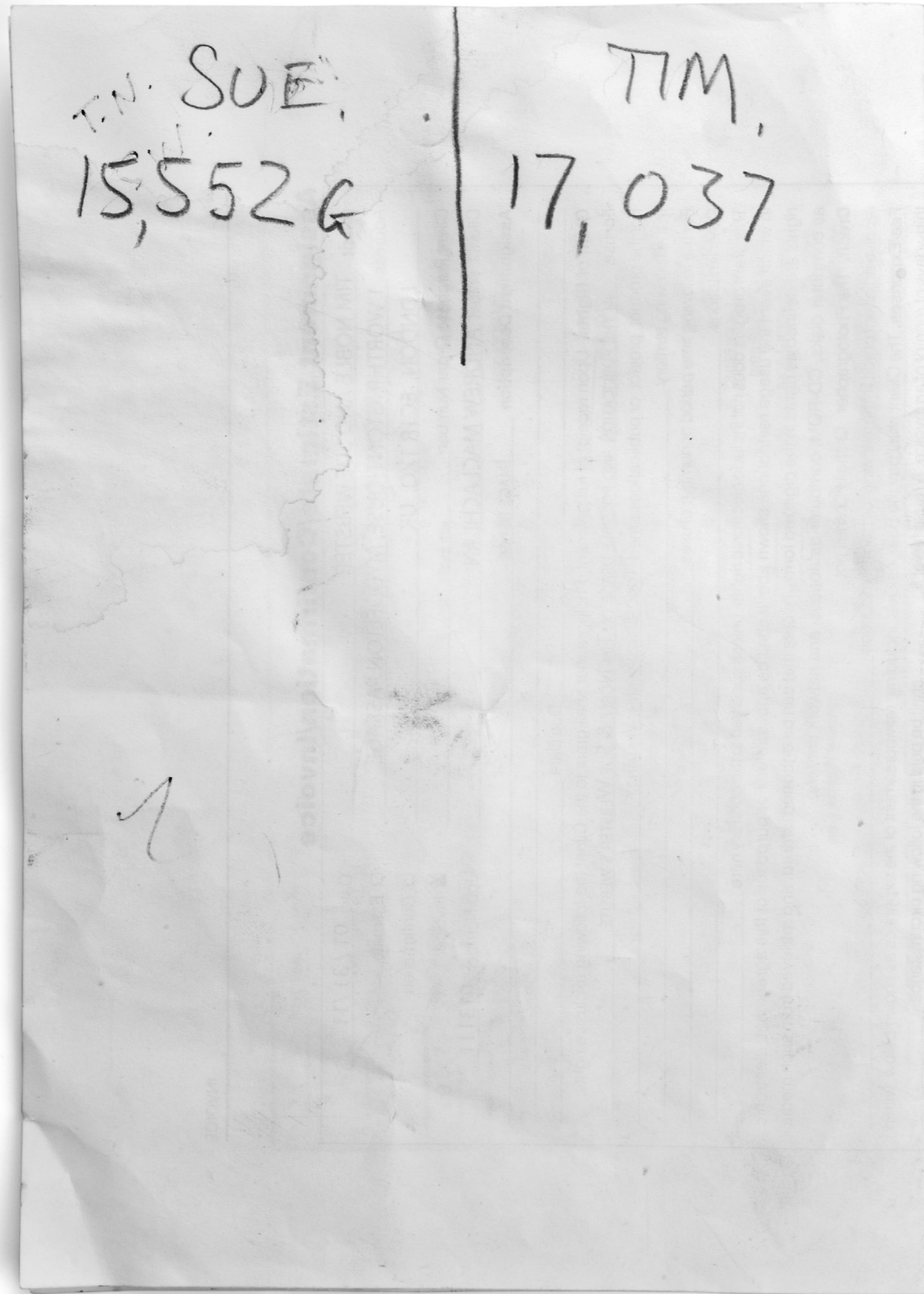


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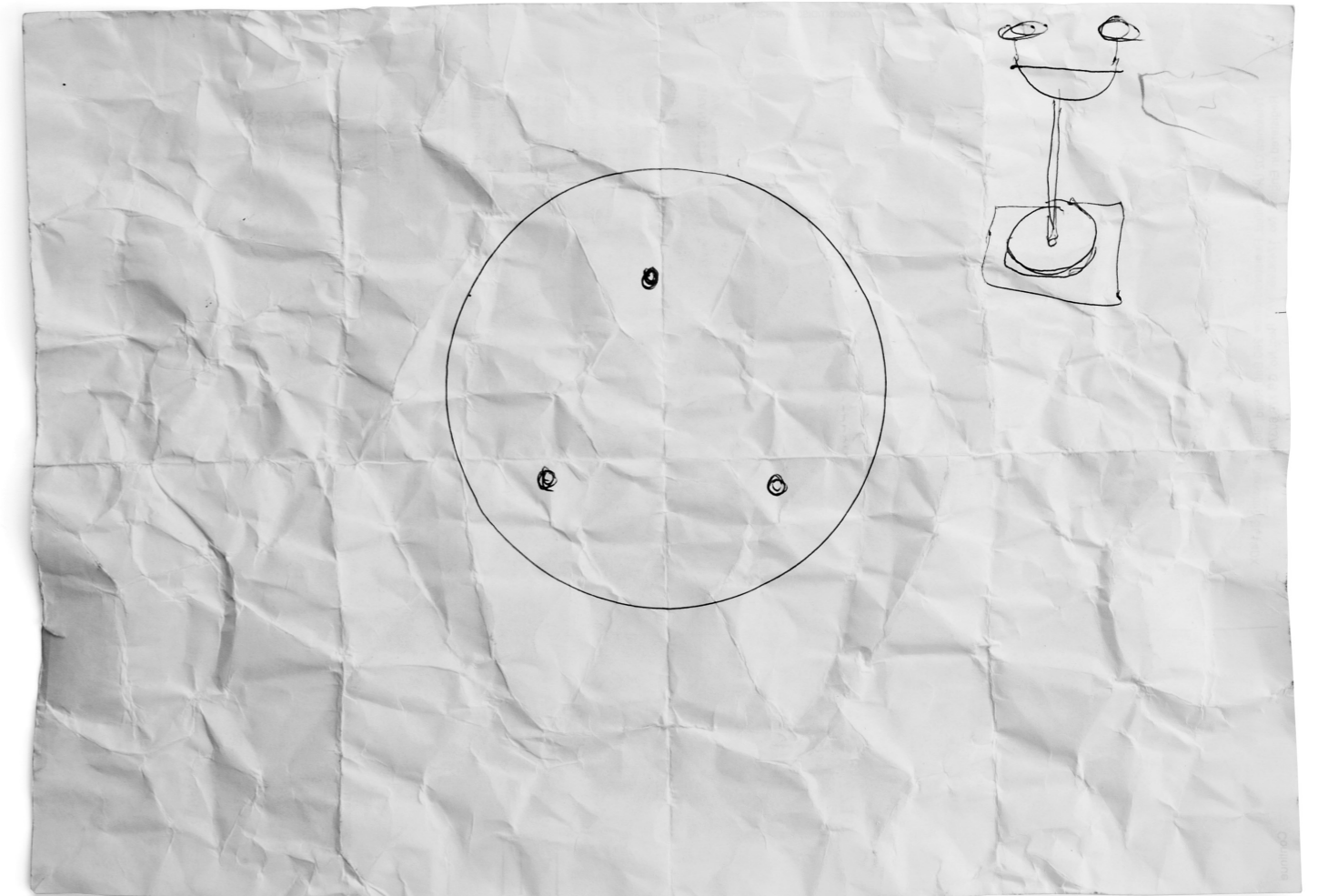


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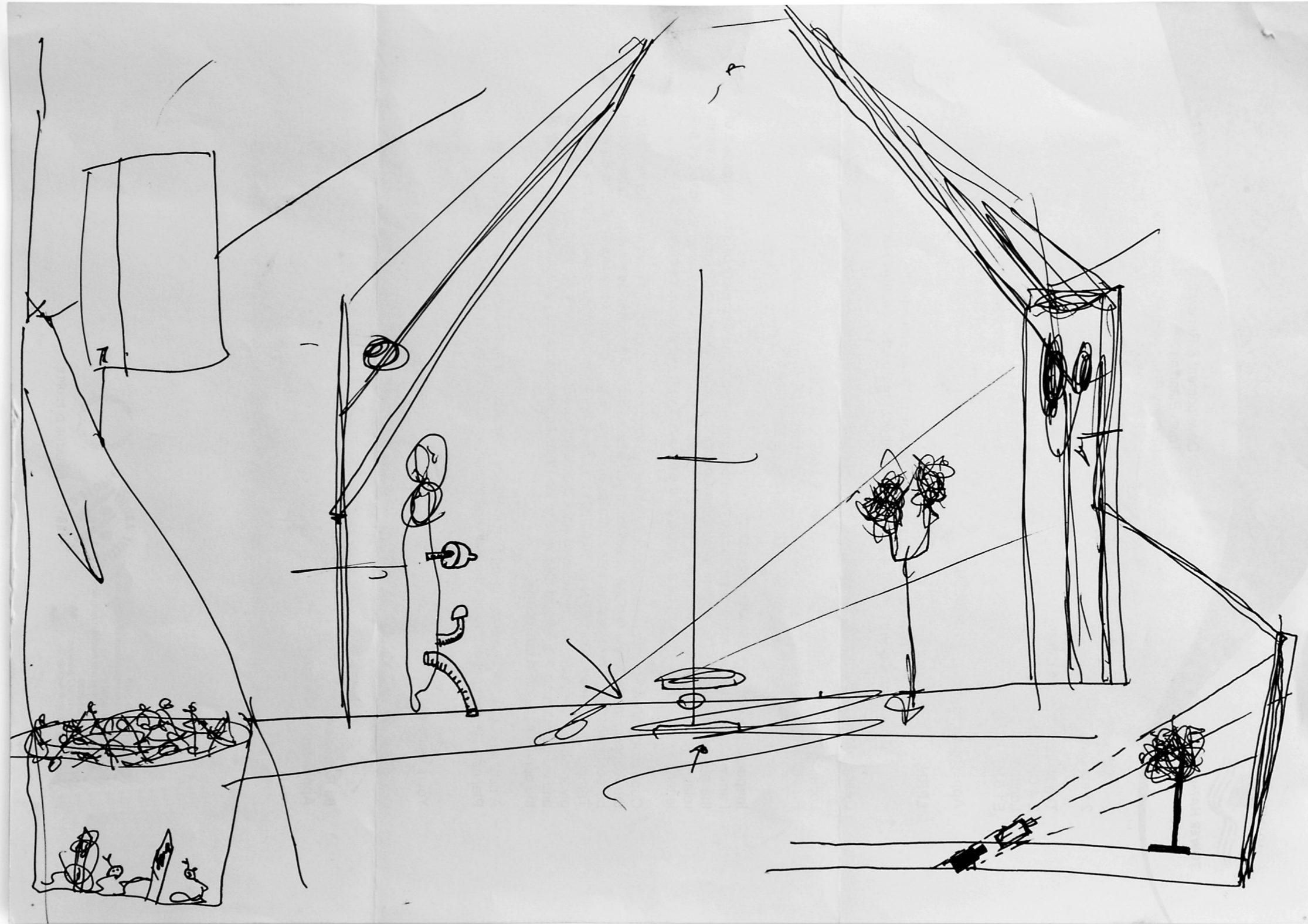
[19] Head weights of the sculpture after being cast in silver.



[19]



[20]



[21]

16

Sue and Tim Moulds

First moulds. 19. 10. 10.

Crow/Raven foot (A)	£45.00	—	4 cast off each.
Crow/Raven foot (B)	£45.00	—	
Vulture foot (A)	£70.00	—	
Vulture foot (B)	£70.00	—	

Second moulds 21. 10. 10.

Small Frog	£40.00	?	
Frog (with fluff)	£50.00		

Third moulds 9. 11. 10.

Rat	£100.00	4 casts.	
Paper thin Mouse	£100.00	Reclining mouse?	
Frog (A)	£50.00		
Frog (B)	£50.00		
Frog (C)	£50.00		
Squirrel (A)	£300.00		
Squirrel (B)	£300.00		
Hornet	£40.00		
Spider	No charge		
Bee	No charge		

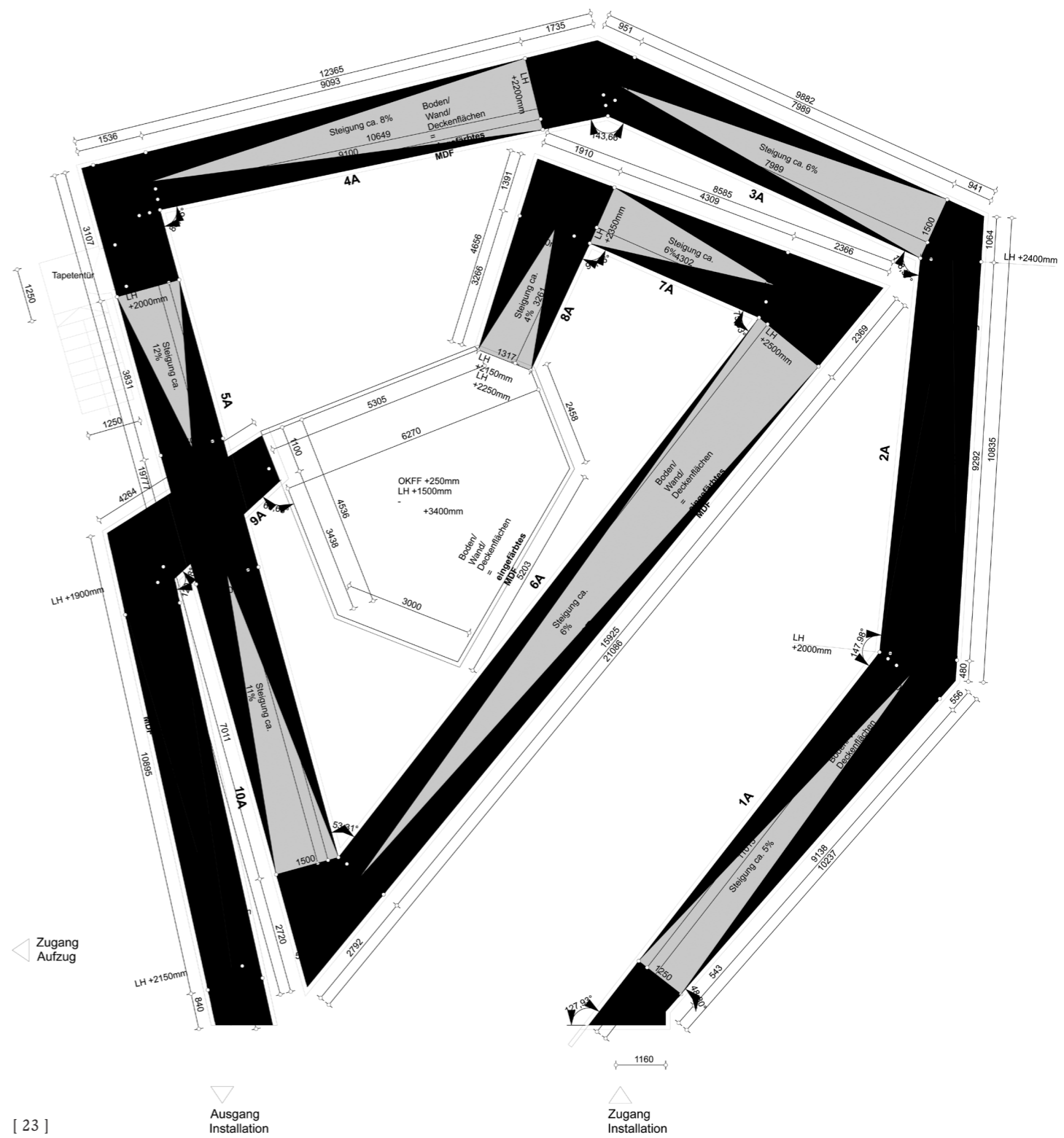
Our services £100.00

All prices + vat.

+10
246.75 VAT
1656.75

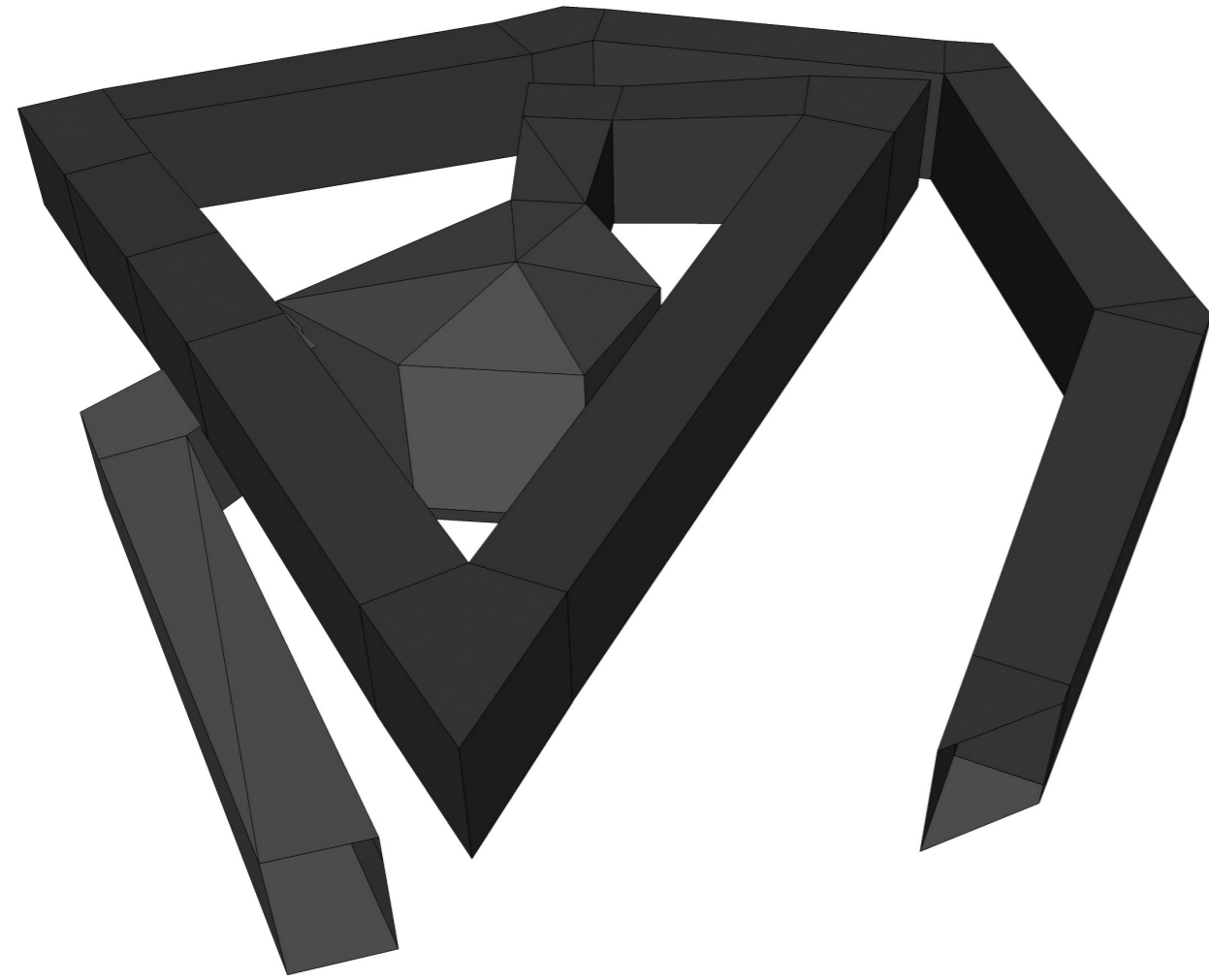
(4 casts of each fast Frogs. —

— Squirrels 2 of each. (6 total.

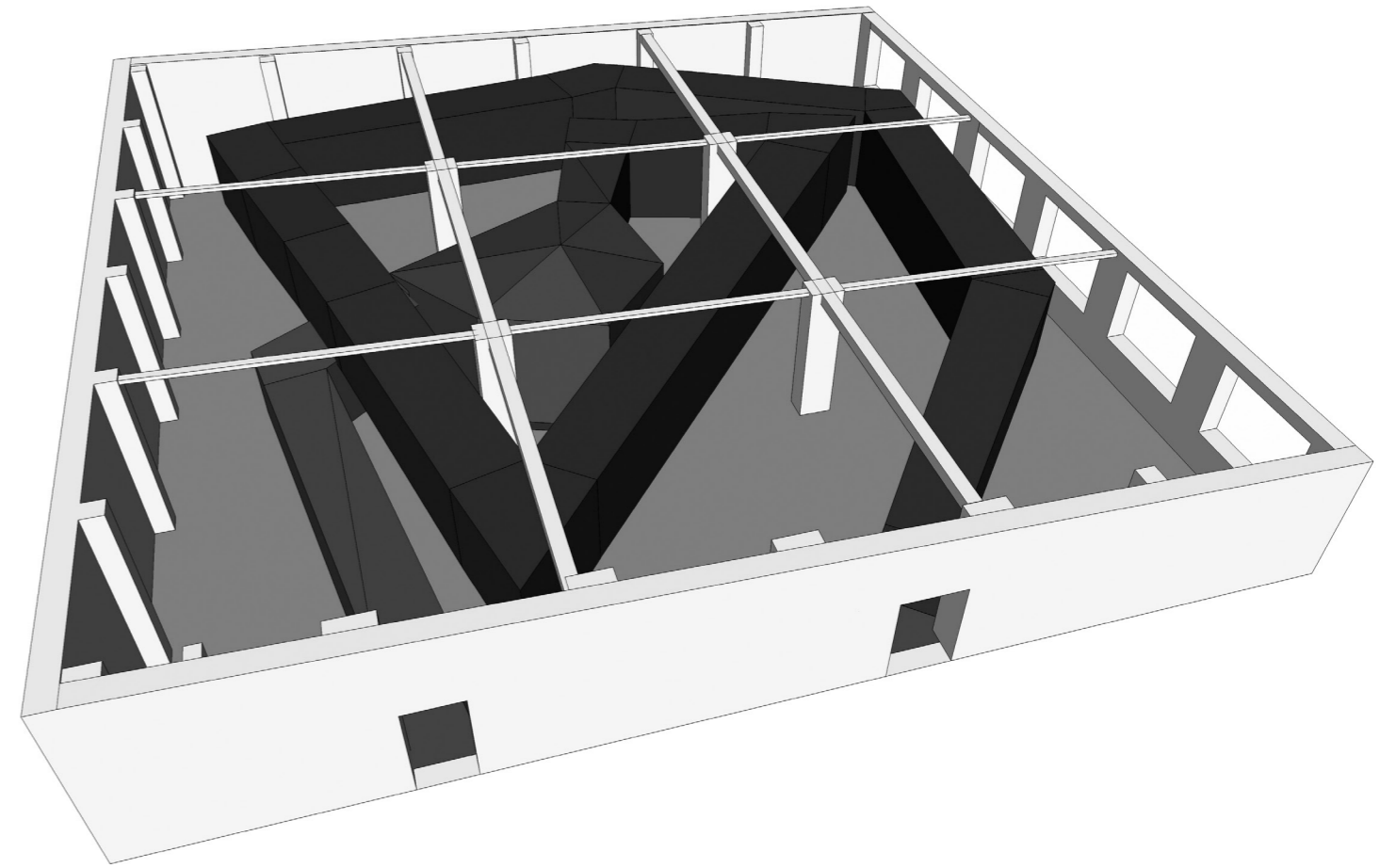


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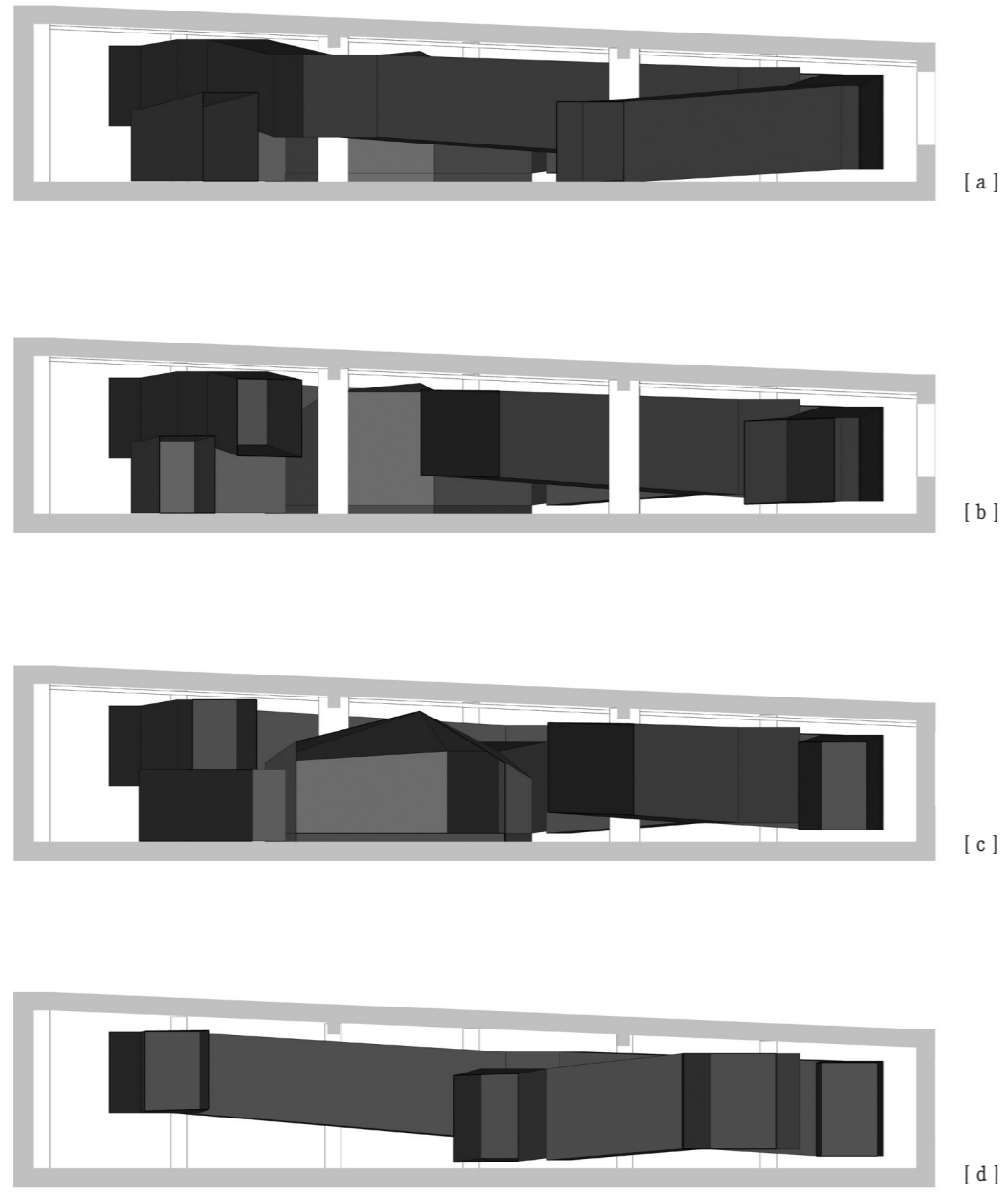
[24] Materials used: 910m² MDF, 3200m timber, indirect fluorescent lighting at the seven corners.



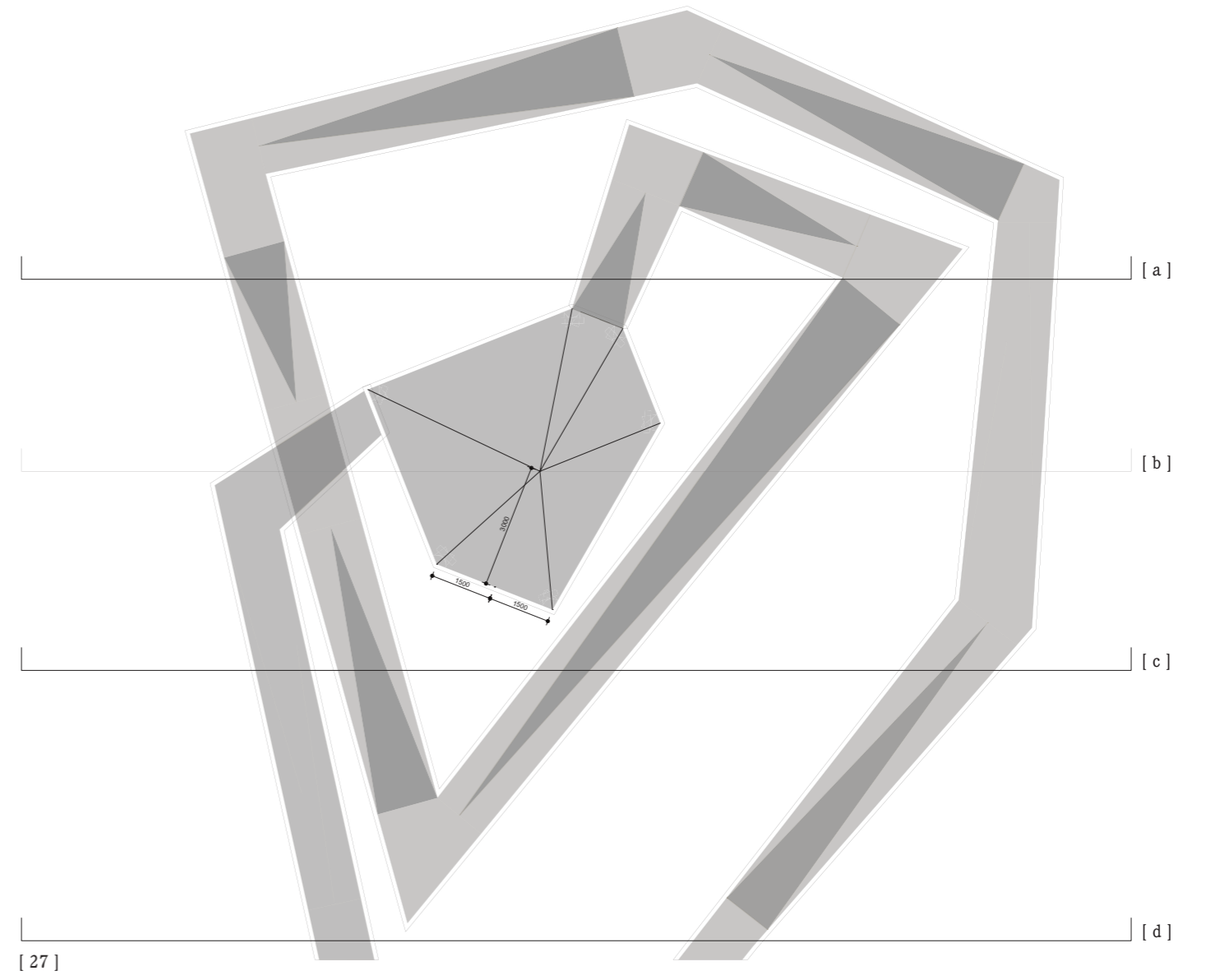
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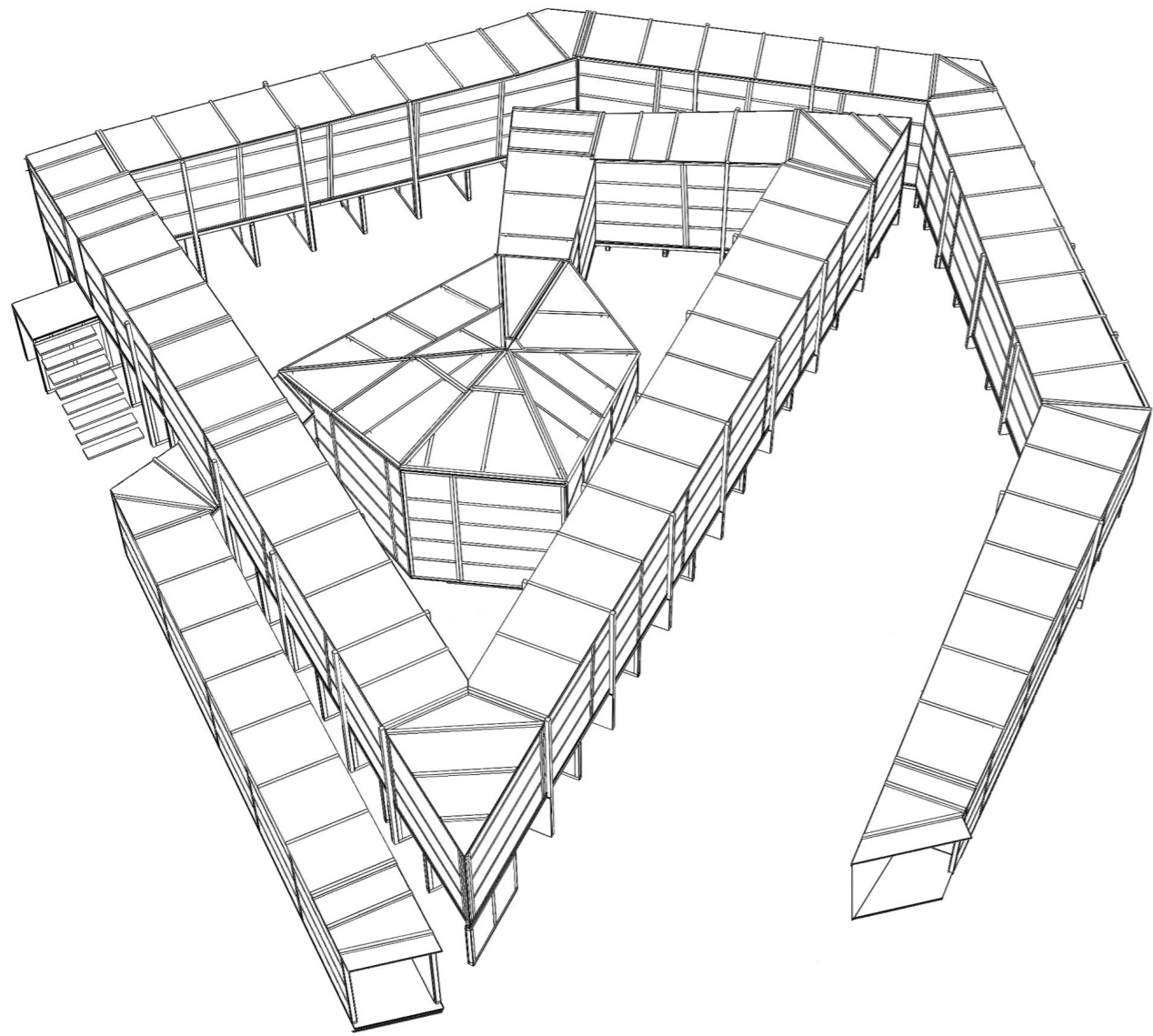
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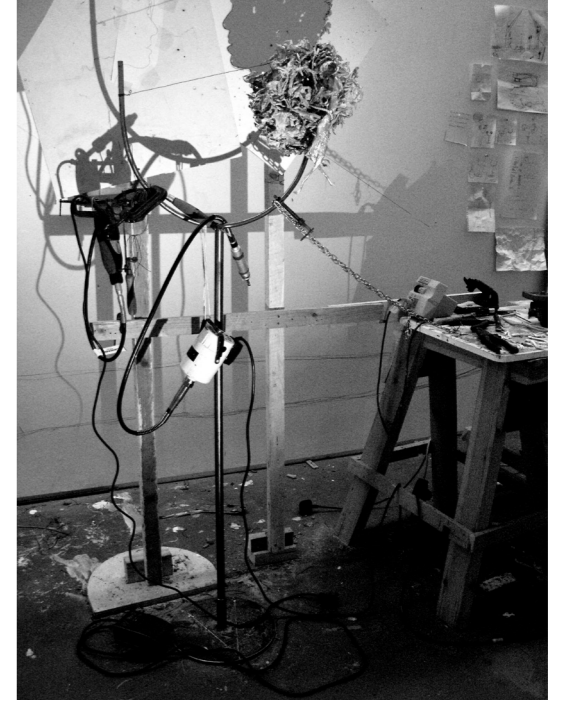
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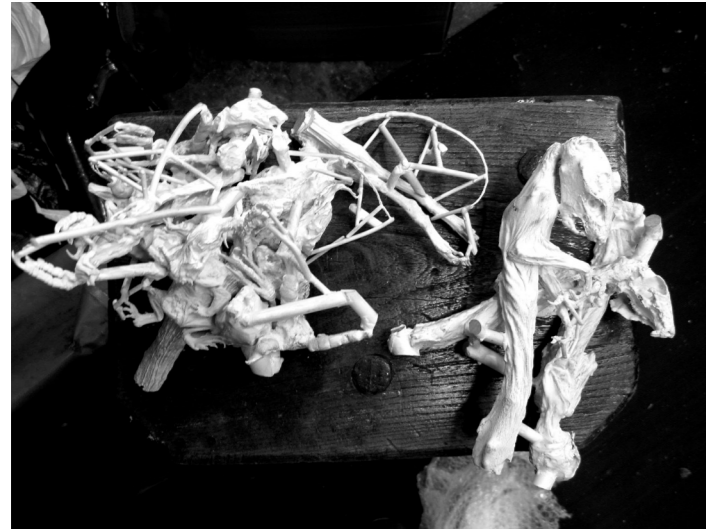
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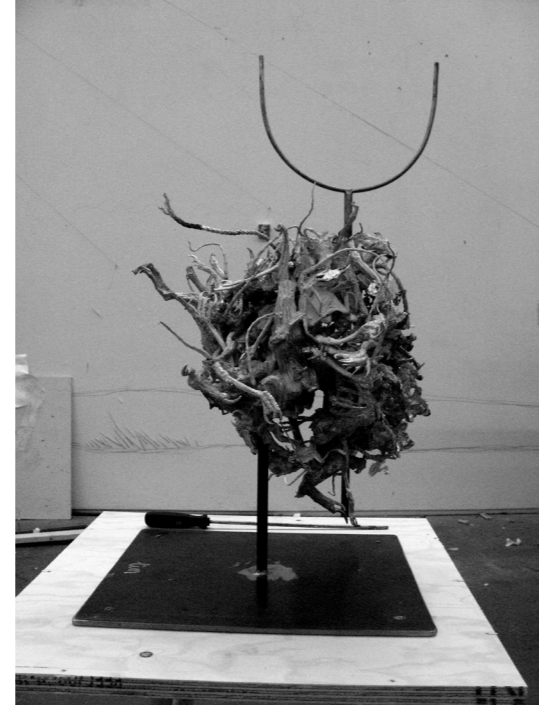
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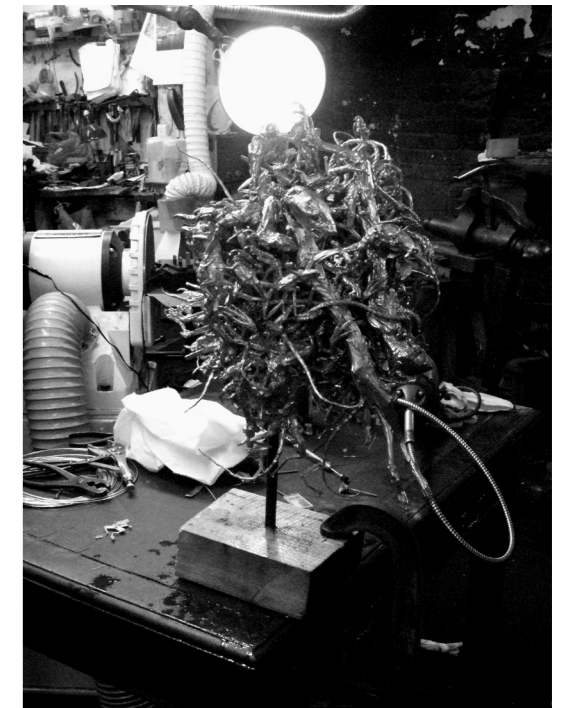
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[51-52] Taking the sculpture to be assayed.



[49]



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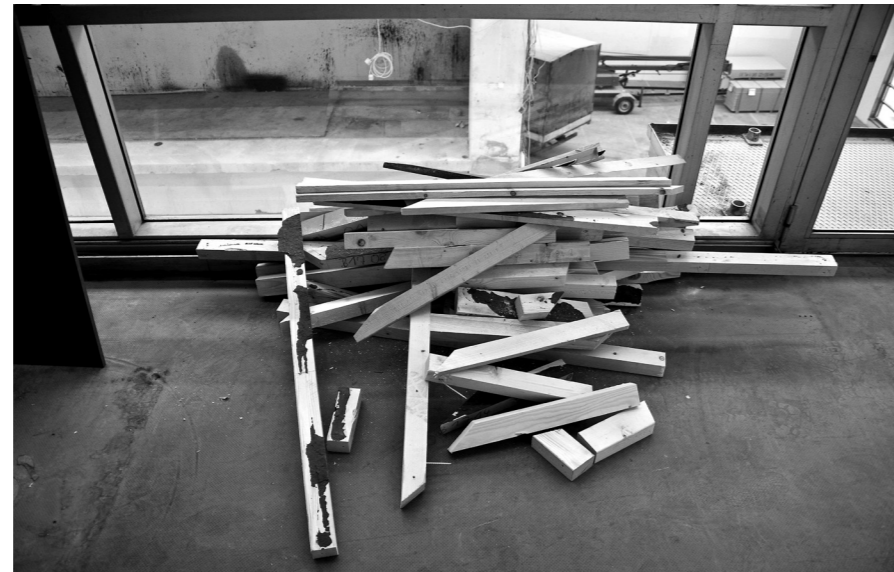


RERUM COGNOSCERE CAUSAS THE FORMER DER TAGESSPIEGEL BUILDING, BERLIN





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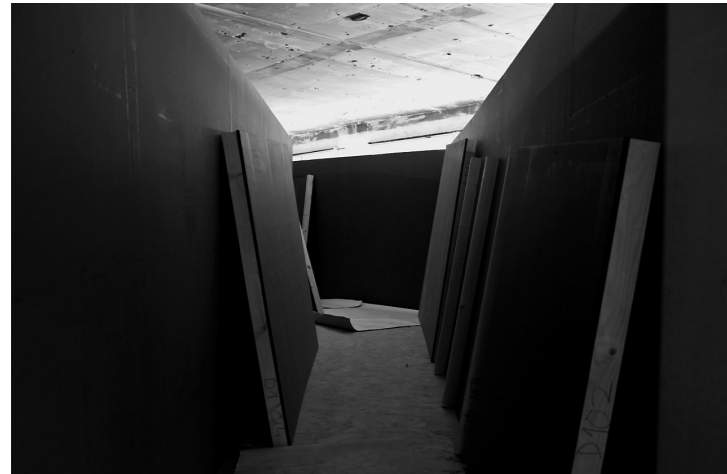
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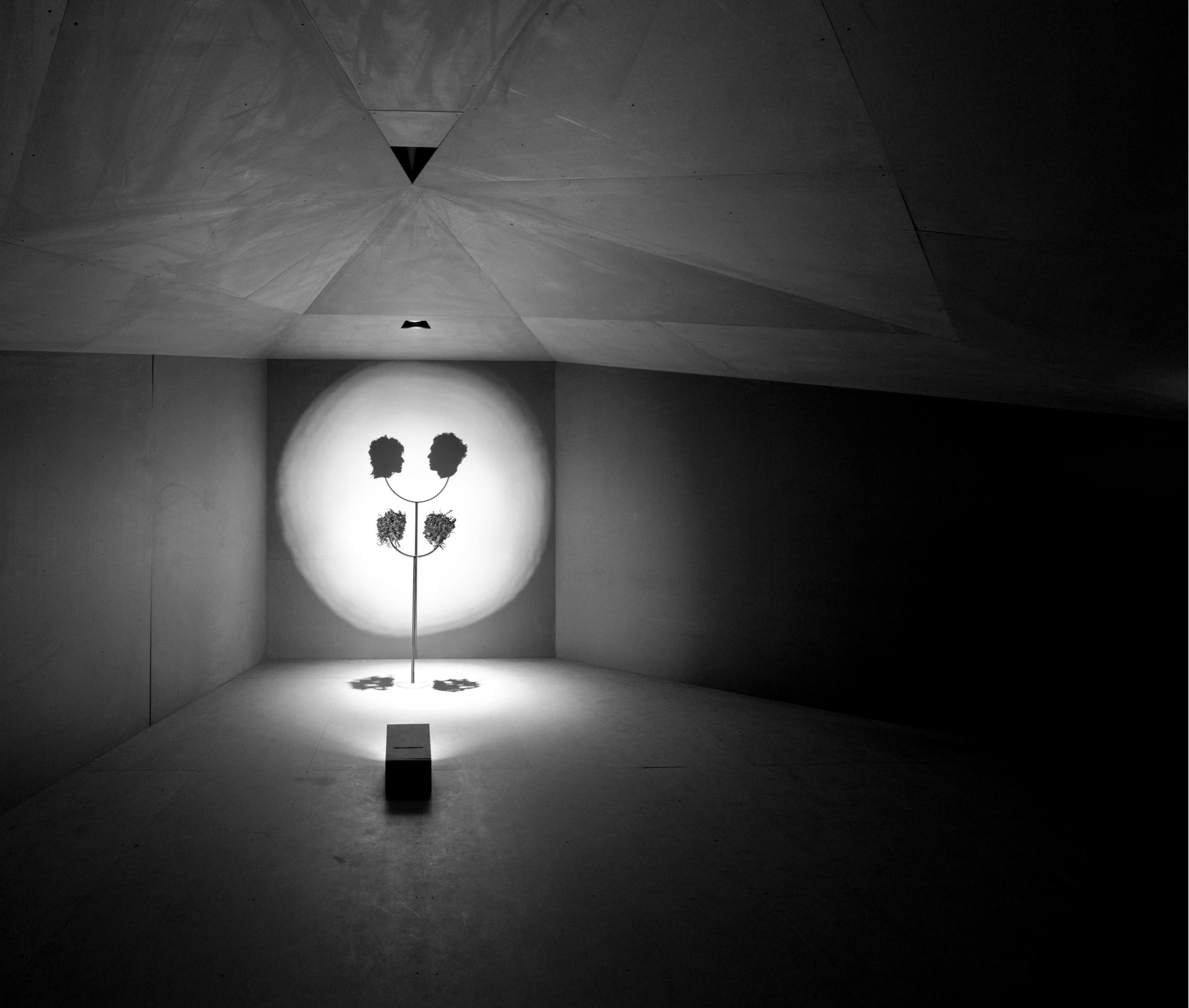


























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