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FAWN KRIEGER

RUIN VALUE

* INTERVIEW BY : ANNETTE WEHRHANN
MUNRO + GALLOWAY

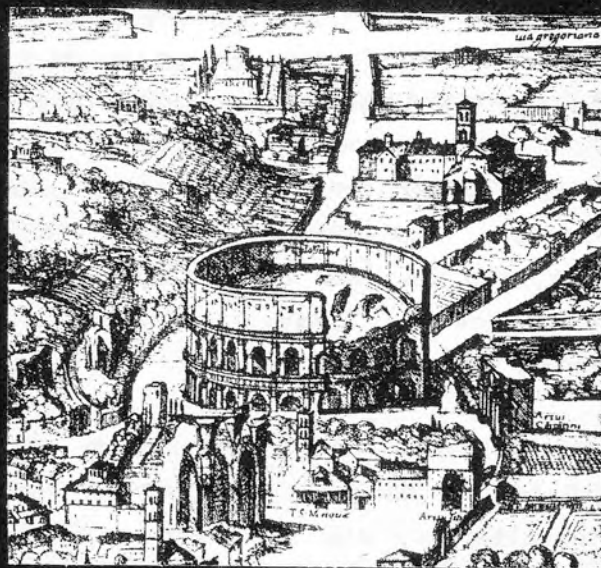
* ESSAY BY : PAUL BRANCA

* LETTERING AND LAYOUT ; PAT PALERMO

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FRONT
(COVER DESIGN BY MUNRO GALLOWAY +
BRYAN BAKER)

FAWN KRIEGER



INTERVIEW

CONDUCTED BY
ANNETTE WEHRHAHN
AND
MUNRO GALLOWAY

ILLUSTRATION: DETAIL, MAP OF ROME (COLOSSEUM), 17TH CENTURY.

ANNETTE WEHRHAHN:

You and I have been talking about your show at Soloway since I first got the keys to the space. Pat and I thought of you as an artist we would like to work with while roaming around the Greek statues at the Met. It's quite a scene with figures missing noses, arms and legs. Looking back, this now seems like the perfect place for us to have had the idea. Can you talk about your interest in ruins and architecture and your title for the show?

FAWN KRIEGER:

How wonderful--this is the first I heard about this little story!

For the past 5 or 6 years I've been working primarily with American architectural imagery and themes, often looking at how bodies construct, inhabit, and navigate through spaces. The work came out of my thinking about how we inherit and inhabit the histories and structures presented to us.

One of the first impulses with my current body of work involved making parts that could become whole. This series began with a curiosity around merging architecture and the body, a move into seeing form as something that flips between subject and object.

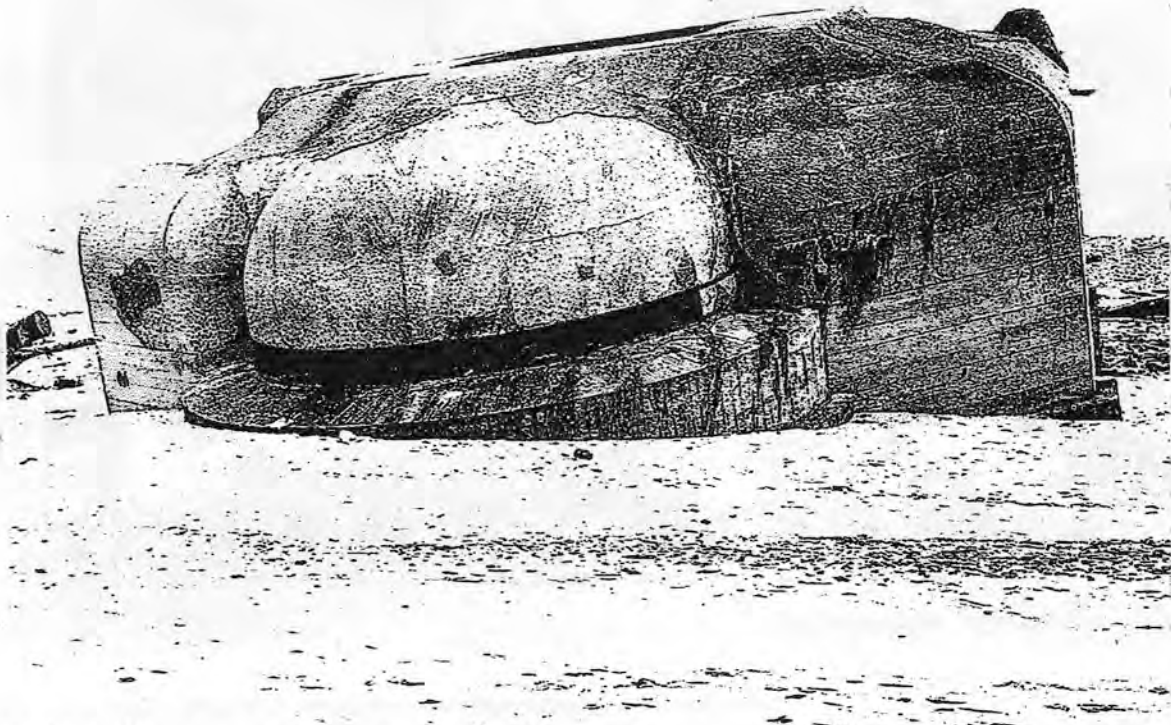
The diminishing threshold between the body and architecture in my work has been surfacing quietly over the past few years parallel to some long-term research I've been doing in Germany. I've been studying and documenting mountains of rubble produced from the architectural wreckage of WWII by a primarily female labor force. In this work, I'm looking at how embodied experience moves from ruin into shaped, green landscape. I am drawn to ruins because they ask us to confront the complexity within societal notions of triumph and failure, and because they tell me about lives erased.

That matter remembers and always remains-- even if its form changes-- is one of the many things that makes sculpture so magical to me.

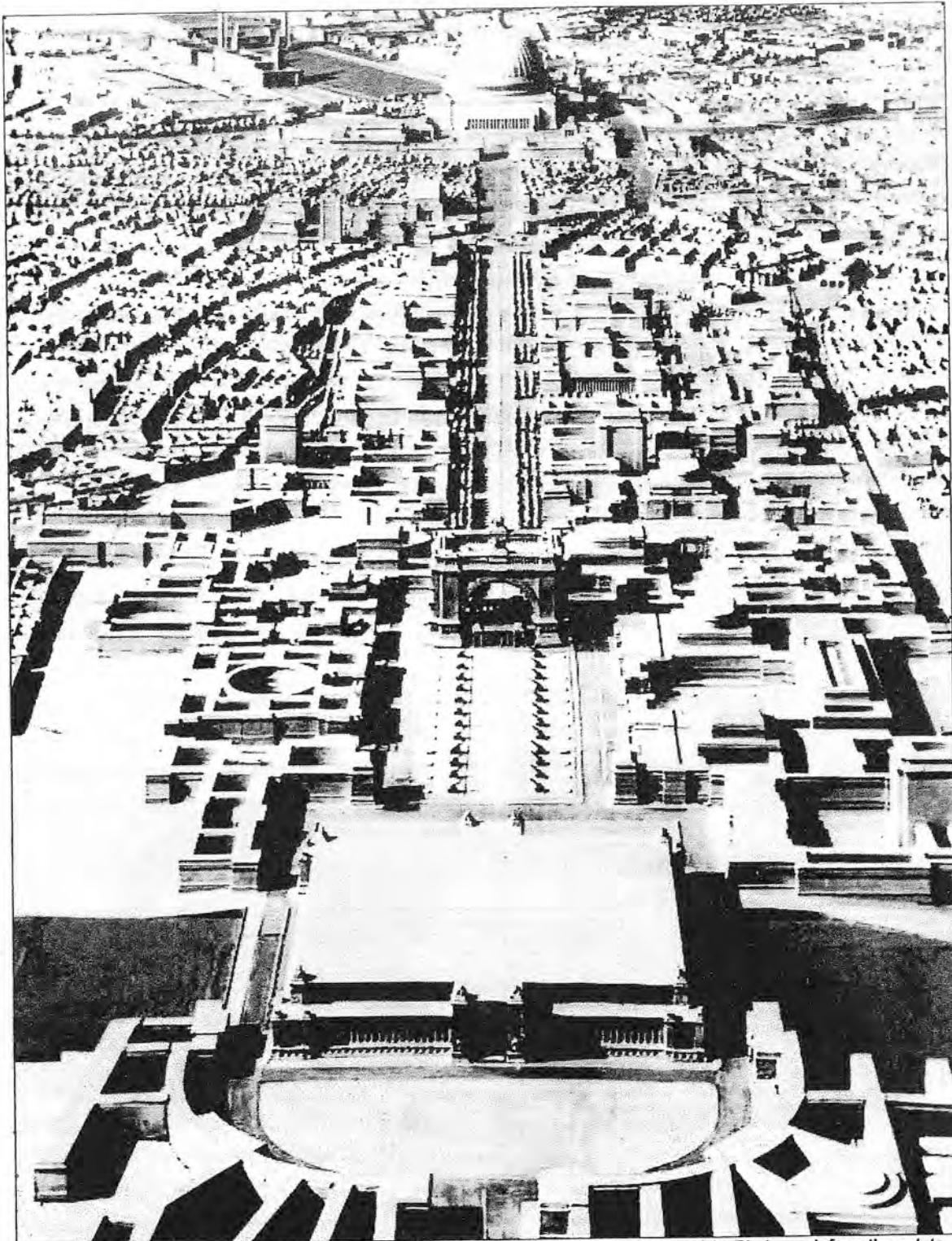
The title for this exhibition, *Ruin Value*, is a term used to describe the cultural significance of ruins as a place-marker for the imposing greatness of previous civilizations. It became widely known through

the work of Albert Speer, Adolf Hitler's head architect, who sought to design buildings that would one day function like the ruins of classical antiquity. Embedded in the notion of buildings with high Ruin Value, of course, is that the very prospect of realizing is accompanied by the anticipation it will one day collapse, or simply fail and remain. Failing as an intentional built-in to realization is compelling to me.

Ruin Value is an idea I've been drawn to for a very long time, however it revealed itself to me as a prospective title for this show only when I began consciously connecting my visual sources (the Colosseum, National Socialist bunkers, etc). I am not interested in looking at the term as a superficial image of brokenness or wreckage, or only as Nazi propaganda, but as series of idea-pathways that are complex in their contradictions of promise and destruction.



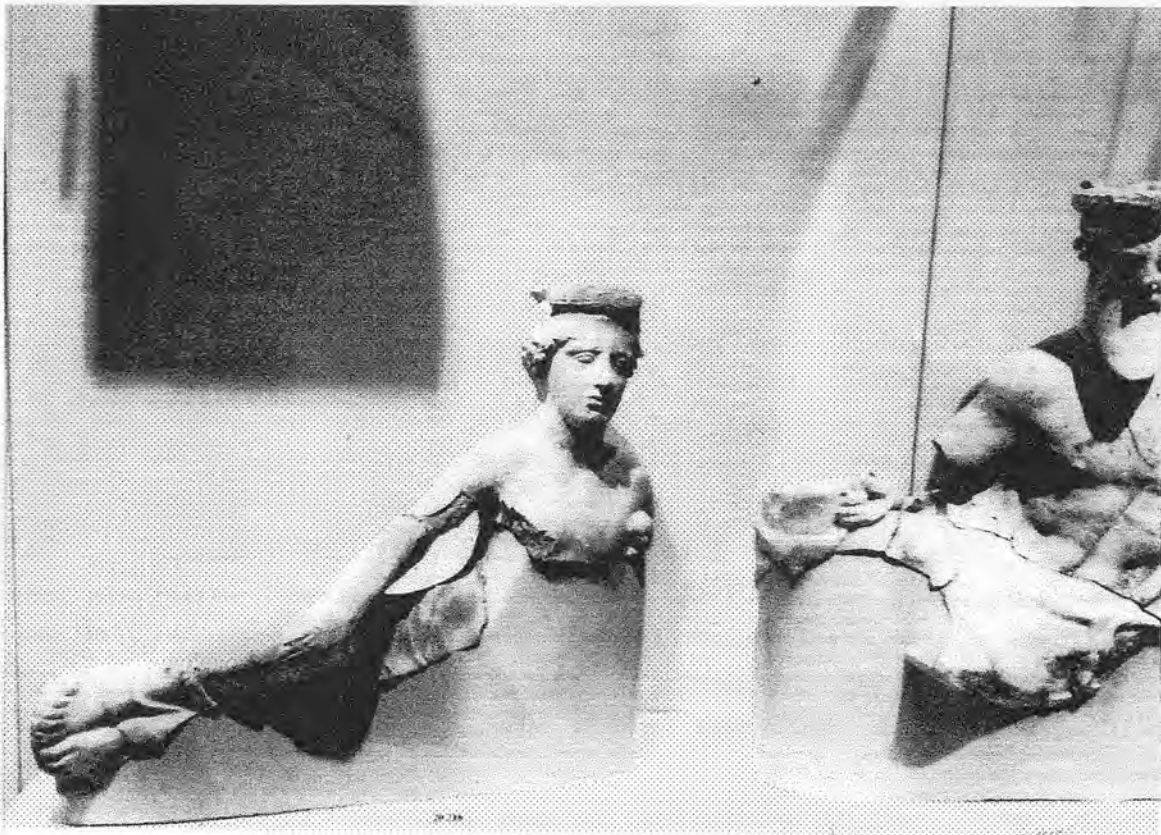
A photograph from Bunker Archeology, by Paul Virilio,
Courtesy © Paul Virilio



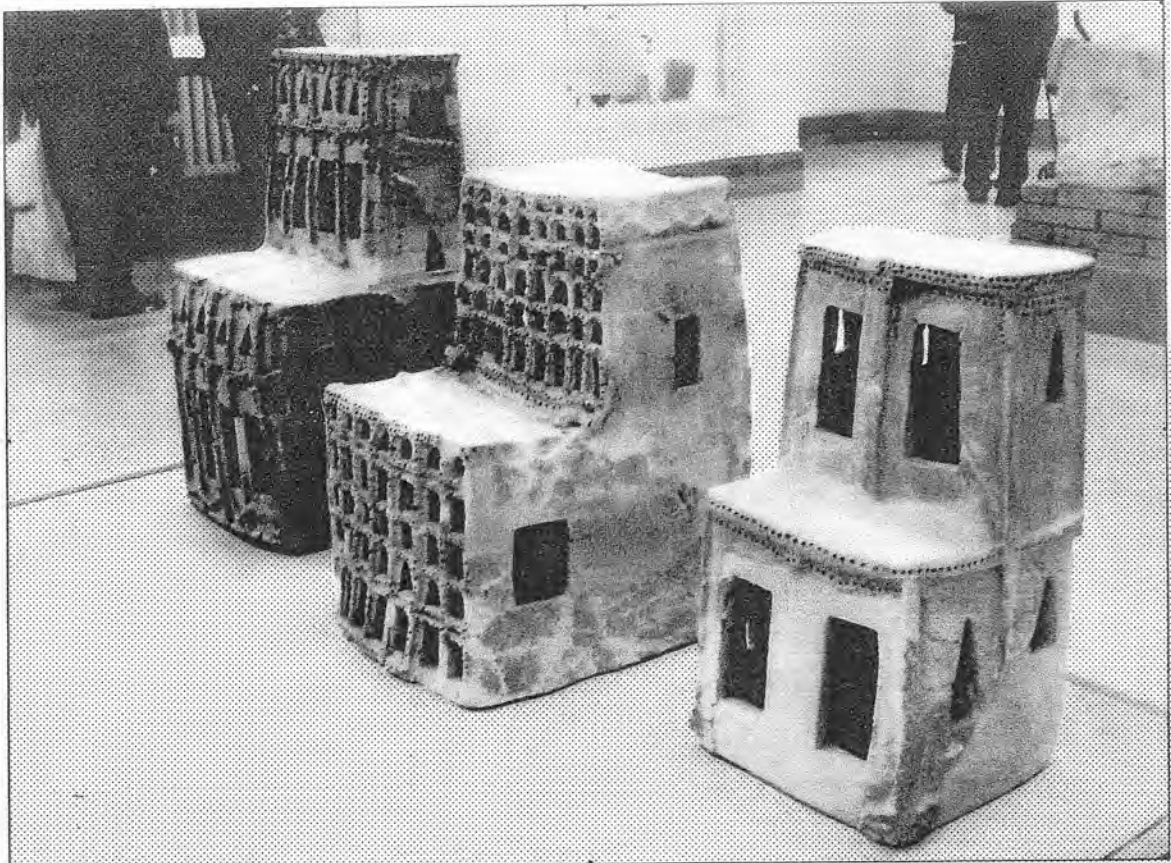
Berlin, Model of Speer's reorganization plans (World Capital Germania), (North-South axis). Photograph from the estate of Albert Speer, 1939
Courtesy © Bundesarchiv. Bild 148111-373

AW: What sources have you been looking at lately that have informed this project?

For Chanukkah last year I was given Paul Virilio's Bunker Archeology. It was around this time that I also saw and subsequently obsessed over some ancient Assyrian clay altars in the shape of architectural models at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. I've also been looking at medieval maps and cross-sections of the Colosseum. And some Tarentine (ancient Greek) terracotta figurines, as well as the ancient Egyptian architectural models from the tomb of Meketre, and some 4th century BC burial ossuaries that held bones, all from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (where I've been employed as a freelance educator for the past decade).



Reclining terracotta figures, Tarentine (Southern Italian Greek), 4-3rd century BC
Courtesy © Metropolitan Museum of Art



House model sacrificial altars, Assyrian (now Iraq), 2400 BC
Courtesy © Pergamon Museum

AW: What is the idea behind painting all the ceramic pieces pink?

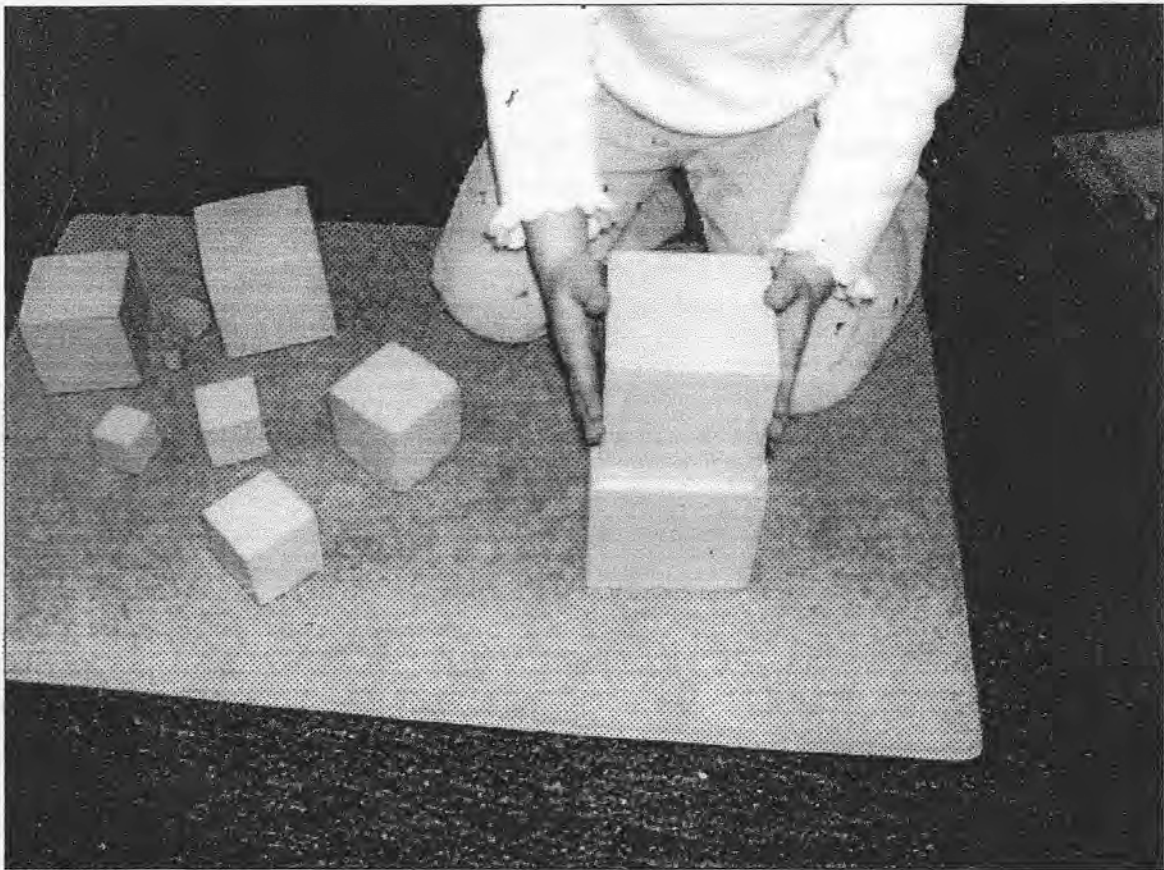
I knew I wanted something chalky, powdery, gummy. A surface that, when received by the eye, contrasted with the hardness and brittleness of the fired clay. I tried lots of different color pinks, starting first with underglazes, and later deciding on Flashe paint, which is a water-based vinyl. Only one pink felt right, and I either applied it or in occasional cases, didn't. As the pieces began to accumulate, I started to see them as a model city, and wanted the virtual uniformity to communicate with a history of planning and building, one that for me personally, goes back to some of my earliest memories of touching building forms, in Montessori school with my favorite toy, the Pink Tower.

I identify the ceramic works individually as *Architectural Organs*—I see them as both body and building.

Munro Galloway:

Mauve was the first synthetic color to be developed. In this body of work, you make extensive use of a pinkish color that could be interpreted as organic (flesh, organs) but also synthetic (mauve.) How important is this duality or distinction to the color in your drawings?

The pink I've chosen is a cartoon version of internal organ color—I am aware that its garishness has toxic associations with Pepto Bismol and bubblegum, as well as gender. In this work, pink has a role of both coating and exposing interior.



The Pink Tower

AW: In some ways this installation looks like a model of a city - either abandoned or beginning to be built. Does this have a special personal meaning for you?

Yes, the territory between abandon and attention does have personal meaning for me. I am interested in a simultaneity of—or rather, inscrutability between—dismantling and constructing, taking apart and putting back together.

Often I work through ideas for participatory installations by making sculptures in sub-scales. In a sense, my *Architectural Organs* are imagined performance spaces.

AW: Often your work and projects directly address the space in which they are shown. I'm thinking of your project COMPANY, in which you turned a not-for-profit space (Art in General's storefront) into a retail shop, which included your sculptures as products for sale. How has this figured into your project here at Soloway?

COMPANY began as an experiment for looking at value in relation to the things we consume, own, and covet. As it grew, my thoughts shifted to a slippery line between *COMPANY's* objects for sale, and their lives as wanted, held, and owned subjects, inhabiting someone's home or grasp. My current exhibition at Soloway, *Ruin Value*, also proposes questions of value in relation to consumption, ownership, and desire. And similarly, it continues my examination between object (architecture) and subject (body).

In many ways this is also a question of moment. *COMPANY* was open for business at Art in General, a non-profit art institution, as the market bubble began to burst here in NYC. When commercial galleries do not require [or suggest] admission, their role takes over where our museums have begun to fail us. Both *COMPANY* and my installation at Soloway, reveal questions around public and private.

When I first visited Soloway, before you all had even given it a name and when it was still quite raw and occupied with the remains of previous inhabitants, you spoke to me about plans for renovation—removal of the numerous drop ceilings and layers of vinyl floor; sheetrock replacements for the wood paneling, etc. You expressed a desire to not turn it into a white box, but still to renovate it so it is not a disruptive or competing environment to experience art within. You also spoke about potentially calling the gallery by the same name the space possessed as a plumbing shop in two distinct lives before your time. How to honor what comes before, build again, and on top of the "before", are deeply important and pressing questions to me. During this time, the first *Architectural Organs* were coming back to my

studio from their kiln fires, and my recognition of the overlap between my questions and those of Soloway's, began to emerge.



AW: Your drawings are an inventory of all the sculptures you made for the show. Can you explain how the drawings function within the work?

The drawings were initially a way for me to keep track of what I had made—I would only draw what I had already created, not what I wanted to create. I had the idea to paste all the little drawings on to larger pieces of hard matt board, which I could then cut apart and I'd have little studies to play around with and imagine as part of an environment. But I became attached to the wholeness of the collaged drawings, and realized I could just scan them in and use copies as maquette pieces. As my collection of sculptures grew to 99 works, the scans also became an obvious way for me to identify and catalog each of the sculptures.

MG: What is the importance of the fragment or cut-out in regard to both the drawing/collage process and the objects?

The primary technique I used for constructing the ceramic sculptures is called "slab construction". It involves rolling out clay to a consistent thickness and then cutting out shapes that are then secured together. Similarly, the corresponding drawings were cut out and placed onto another surface. I liked that I was finding "shadow" shapes where my chosen and removed chunks (of clay, of paper) had been. They felt to me about quieter voices, and about what's not said. There is a certain playfulness in cutting out and assigning a new context, most especially when the sticky, raised, edges of meeting points are not disguised or accommodated... this playfulness is not a digital act of omission or recontextualization, but one produced by hands and through touch and physical displacement, which makes it something quite serious to me too.

When I first started making the ceramic sculptures, I had crudely cut out a bunch of photos of buildings from an old magazine. I photographed my hands holding them, and felt excited and confused by a scale collision the images created. The photographs function as studies for me.

AW: The platform you built is made out of used materials. Where did these come from?

All of the wood is from a collapsed Quaker Meeting House in Milton, NY.

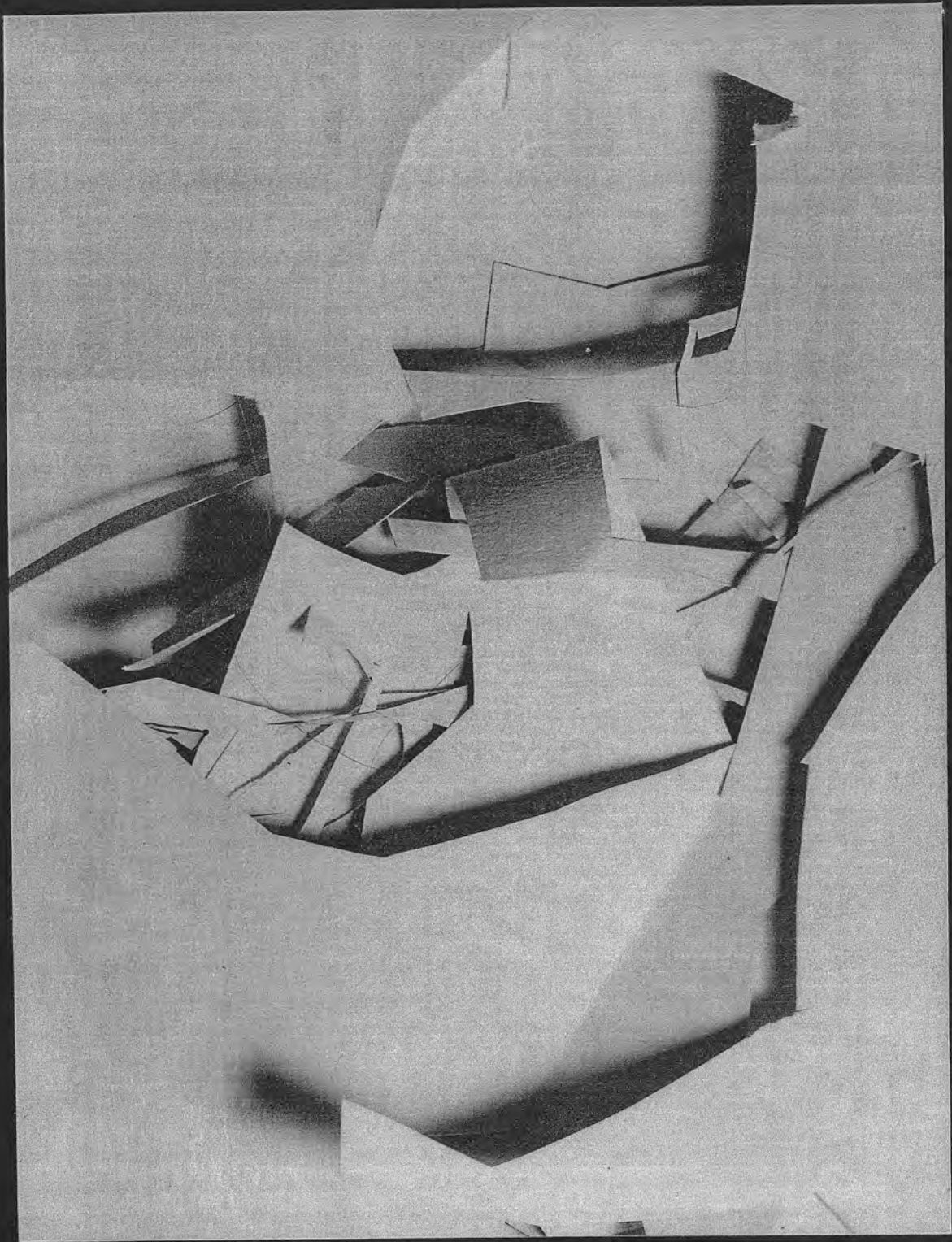
MG: What is the relationship between the depicted object and the actual or physical object in you work?

The drawings are like models of the sculptures, which themselves are sort of models. So they are models of models. And like all models of models, they affirm the physical existence of the primary model.



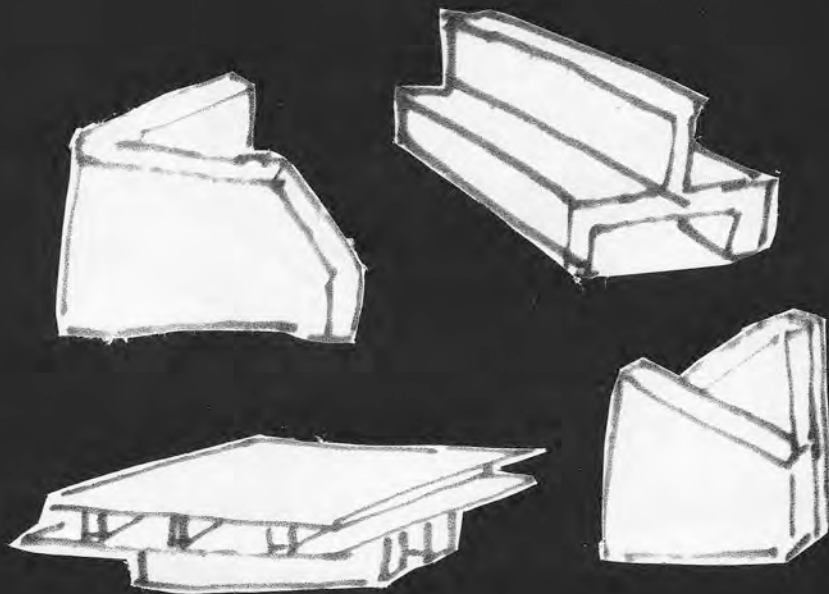
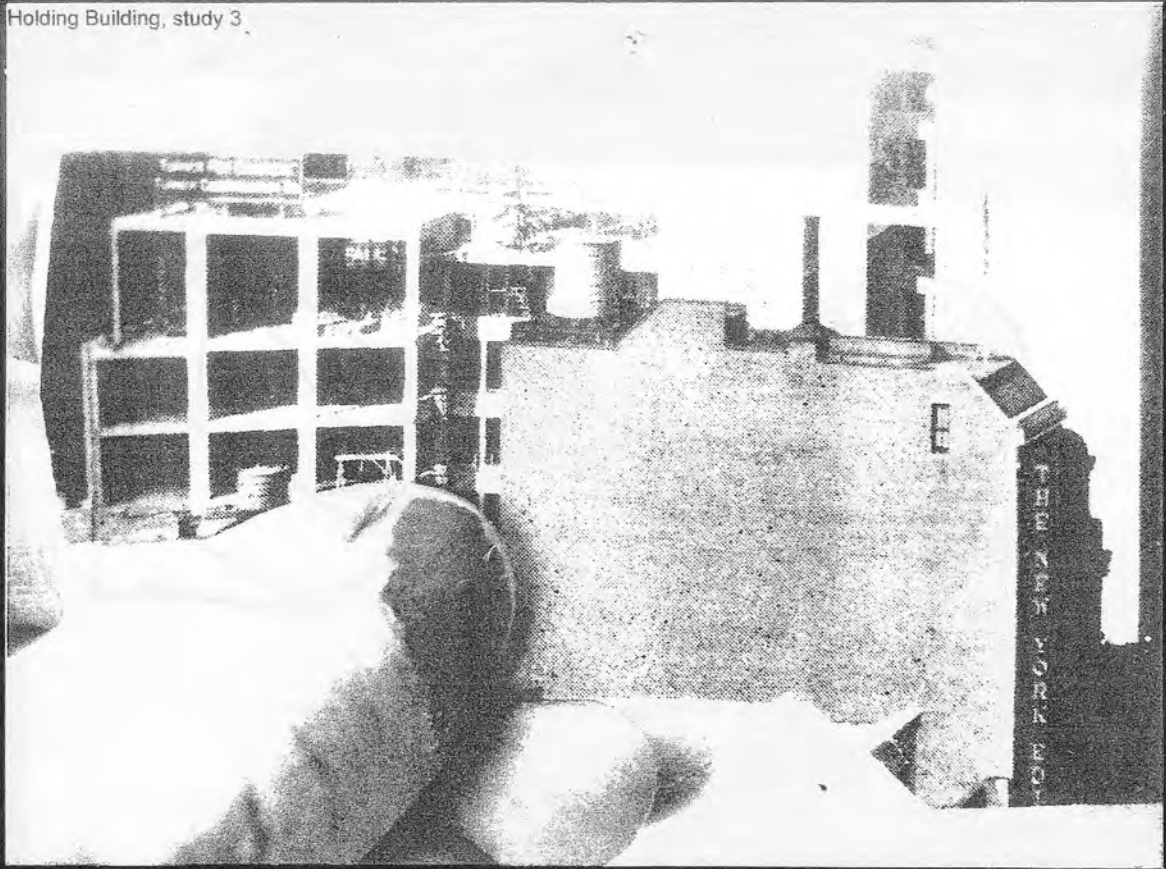
Remains of the Quaker Meeting House

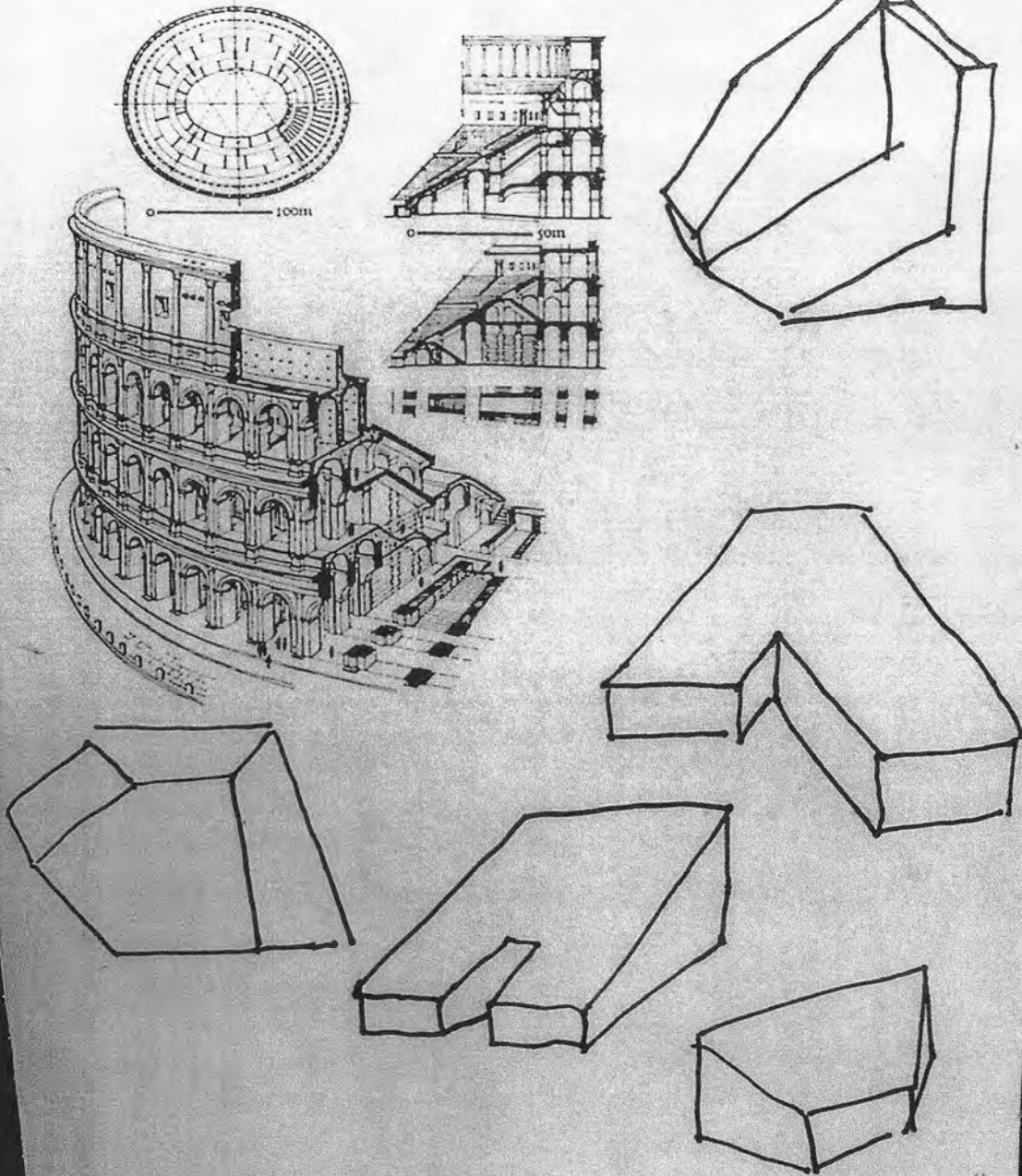
All photos © Fawn Krieger, unless otherwise noted.



cut outs remaining from my drawings

Holding Building, study 3







ESSAY

BY
PAUL BRANCA

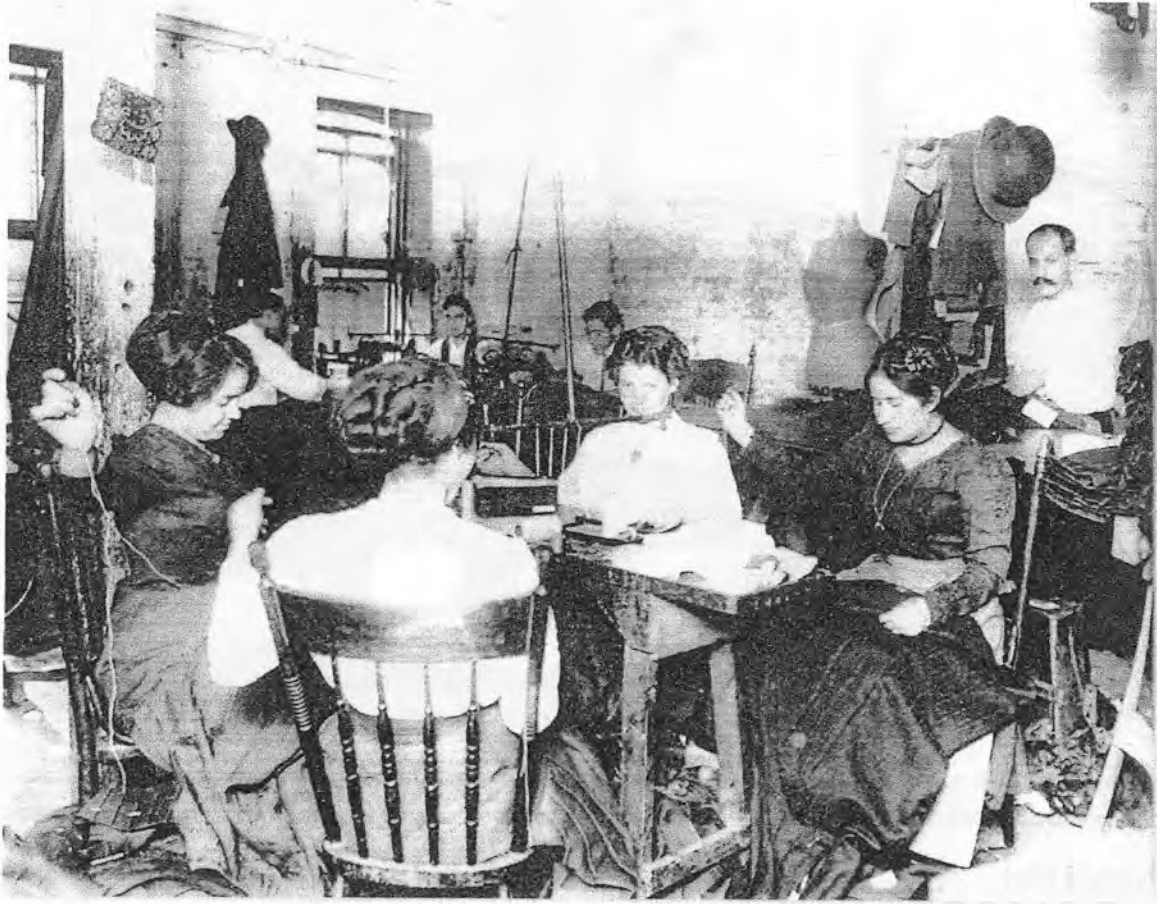
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Notes Around Fawn Krieger's *Ruin Value*

By Paul Branca



Perhaps one of the greatest scenes in Francesco Rossi's 1963 film *Hands Over the City* (*Le mani sulla città*) shows a group of architects, city planners, and politicians hovering above a landscape of utopian and futuristic architectural scale models. These models not only propose a rapid *soluzione* to the population boom in Post-World War II Naples, but also strive to cure certain pre-Modern living conditions of unsanitary life. What interests me the most about this scene is the relationship of the group's size to the scale models, and the proposition of new modern spaces that inevitably will wipe clean not only past squalor but also their cultural identities. The process of both hovering above and gazing down, along with the scale relationship of the gargantuan, excessively dapper men to the diminutive buildings adds up to a hegemonic non-dialogue. At this moment, the voiceless potential inhabitant remains nowhere to be seen. At cost-cutting effectiveness, the *dregs of society* are intended to be fit into these new clean structures efficiently while architects postulate amongst themselves on what it means to be modern. That said: getting anything done in Naples is another story.



In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen writes:

Hand labor is a more wasteful method of production; hence the goods turned out by this method are more serviceable for the purpose of pecuniary reputability; hence the marks of hand labor come to be honorific, and the goods which exhibit these marks take rank as of a higher grade than the corresponding machine product. Commonly, if not invariably, the honorific marks of hand labor are certain imperfections in the lines of the hand-wrought article....The ground of the superiority of hand-wrought goods, therefore, is a certain margin of crudeness. This margin must never be so wide as to show bungling workmanship, since that would be evidence of low cost, nor so narrow as to suggest the ideal precision attained only by the machine, for that would be evidence of low cost.



When wondering what makes Pepto-Bismol pink, I turned to google, who then took me to answers.com who then answered my query as follows:

A:

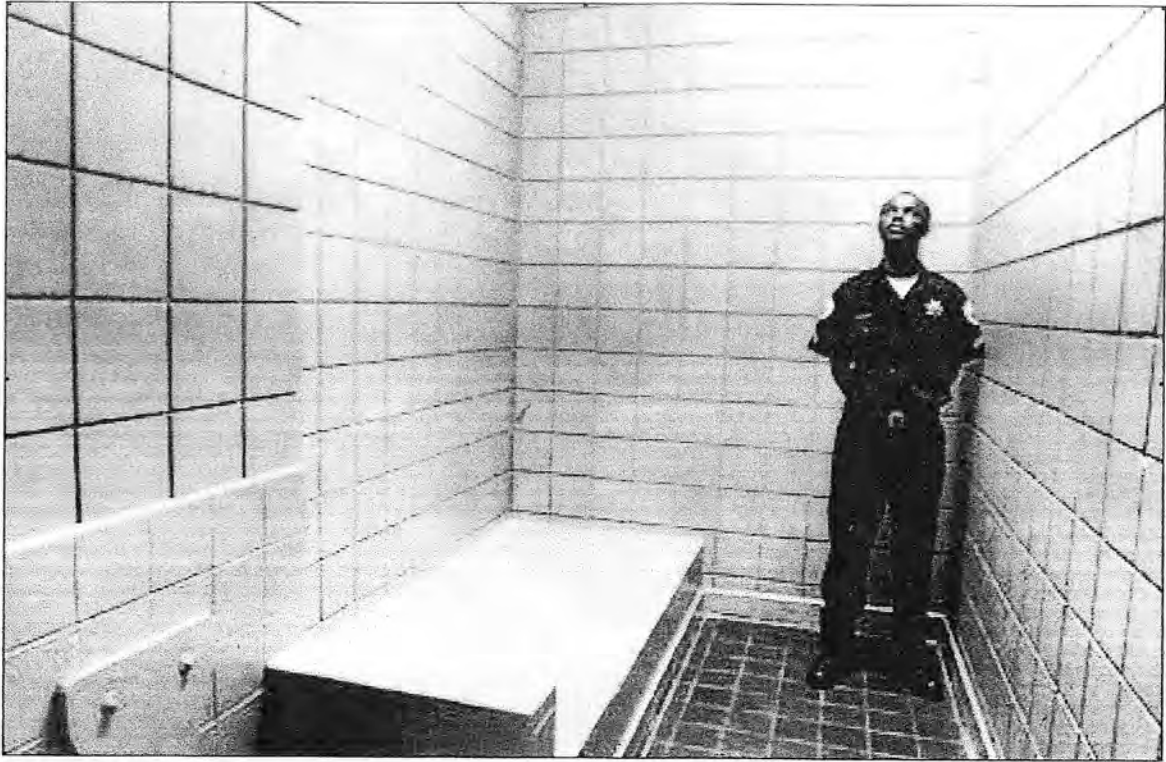
Pepto's Pink Color

Bismuth subsalicylate is the active ingredient in 'Pepto-Bismol' and many people believe that this is what gives Pepto its distinct pink color.

But that is Wrong, wrong and mister wrong!
It is red because it has chemical colorants inside !!!!

Each mL contains: *bismuth subsalicylate* 17.6 mg.
and Nonmedicinal ingredients: benzoic acid, **D&C Red No. 22, D&C Red No. 28,**
flavour, magnesium aluminum silicate, methylcellulose, sodium saccharin, salicylic acid,
sodium salicylate, sorbic acid and water. (these ingredients add to flavor, color, and
preservatives)

Bismuth subsalicylate occurs as white or nearly white, tasteless, odorless powder and contains about 58% bismuth, therefore, it is artificial coloring which is responsible for its distinctive pink color.



A slightly deeper version of Pepto-Bismol's pink known as Baker-Miller pink was used by decorators of a juvenile detention facility in Florida as a color which was found to "lower heart rate, pulse, and respiration."

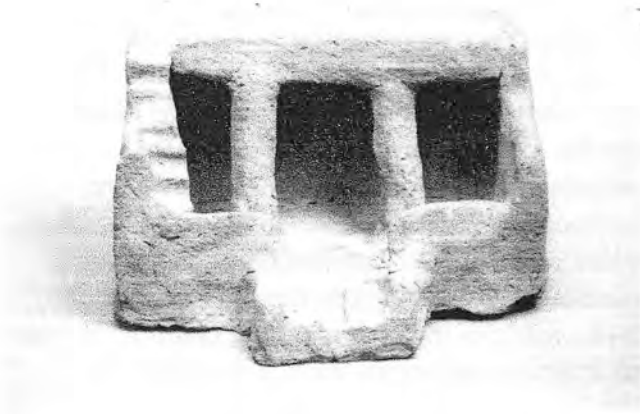
In the *Physiological Effect of Color on the Suppression of Human Aggression: Research on Baker-Miller Pink*, published in the *International Journal of Biosocial Research*, volume II, 1981, by Alexander G. Schauss, Ph. D. of the American Institute for Biosocial Research Inc. Tacoma, Washington, indicates how this newly discovered color has a "measurable and predictable effect on reducing physiological variables associated with aggression in subjects of normal intelligence. Quite surprisingly, the study continues confirming that, "the effect has also been seen in both the non-visually impaired, those color-blind, and some blind subjects, suggesting a physiological mechanism." Dr. Schauss says, "Even if a person tries to be angry or aggressive in the presence of pink, he can't. The heart muscles can't race fast enough. It's a tranquilizing color that saps your energy. Even the color-blind are tranquilized by pink rooms."

After reading this report I thought back to the bodily destination of Pepto-Bismol, and how it manages to calm certain aggressive digestive behaviors.



The dollhouse-like wooden models unearthed from the Tomb of Meketre, at Thebes, are amongst the most pedagogic devices of Egyptian art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These almost miniature theaters speak volumes of how certain aspects of life were lived during the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2030–1640 B.C.). There are containers of figurines mulling grains, brewing beer, making bread, and slaughtering cattle, with clear indications of the division of labor, class, and gender.

Frontally viewed, these minimal box-like objects appear cool in their subtle geometries. They are neither hard-edged or clean, but rather wobbly and misshapen in a Morandi-esque sense.



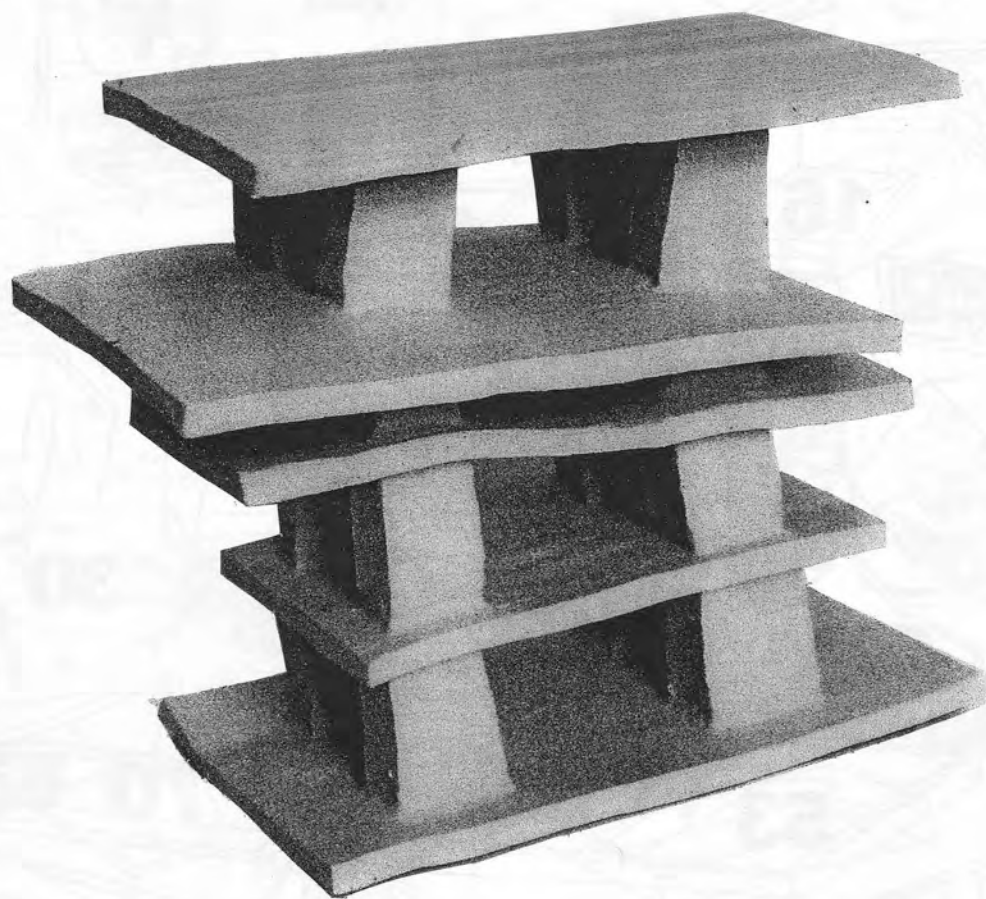
An even wobblier, albeit less descriptive version of an Egyptian Middle Kingdom model house (ca. 1750–1700 B.C.) can be found not far from the previous example in the same museum. Made of unglazed terra cotta, this model's function is not for the documenting of daily life (i.e. grain harvest and production), but instead as a votive table placed above a grave to accept various prayer and offerings. The two-column portico was rendered crooked over time, while the staircase is worn down and can no longer propose use in its current formless state.



On March 4th, 2007, *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* was screened to Canadian audiences on their VisionTV channel. Unfortunately viewership was relatively low as VisionTV is number 59 on the dial- the channel most commonly utilized by lobby security cameras in

residential apartment buildings. *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* was directed by Canadian documentary filmmaker Simcha Jacobovici and produced by yet another Canadian film director James Cameron. The film's objective was to dramatize and describe the event surrounding the excavation and inquiry upon the Talpiot Tomb in East Jerusalem, discovered during a housing construction project in 1980. At least ten ossuaries were found, many in the form of quite simple architectural structures. Jacobovici and Cameron created controversy while seeking to prove that some of the ossuaries house the remains of Jesus' family. Amos Kloner, current professor of archaeology at Israel's Bar-Ilan University, dissociated himself from the claims made in the documentary, claiming it was in no way the tomb of Jesus' family. "I think it is very unserious work. I do scholarly work...(This film) is all nonsense."

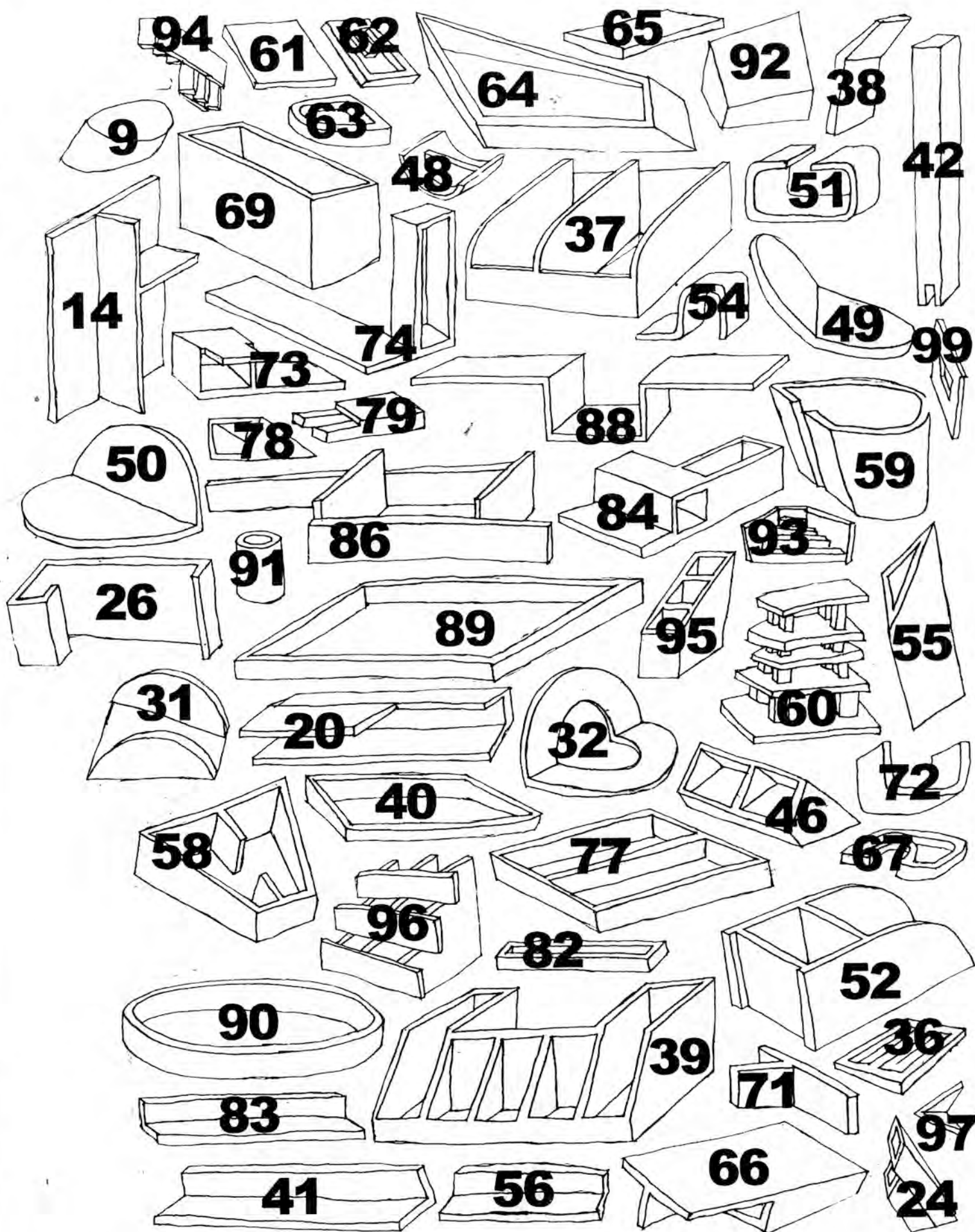
Not unsurprising, the same director of such mainstream blockbuster films as *Titanic* intended to produce and capitalize upon his team's reportage and moving images allegedly documenting the first Christian ruins. In the image provided, we see Cameron and company hovering above the supposed bone containers of Jesus' family accessing potential for a new filmic commoditization of these *sacred* geometries. We now witness an abuse of power, both serious and trivial. The intended function of an ossuary is to merge the skeletal remains of a body, which had been temporarily buried, into a vessel or container, in order to obtain a more proper burial- the body and architecture merged.



Special thanks to:

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Jörg Jakoby, Patrick Palermo,
Annabel Roberts-McMichael,
Amanda Shea, & Annette Wehrhahn

following page: 'ORGANS' Inventory,
Fawn Krieger, 2010.



HERE, IN THE
WILDERNESS, YOU HAVE
TRANSFORMED DEFEAT
INTO VICTORY!

HEAR
HEAR



SOLOWAY



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