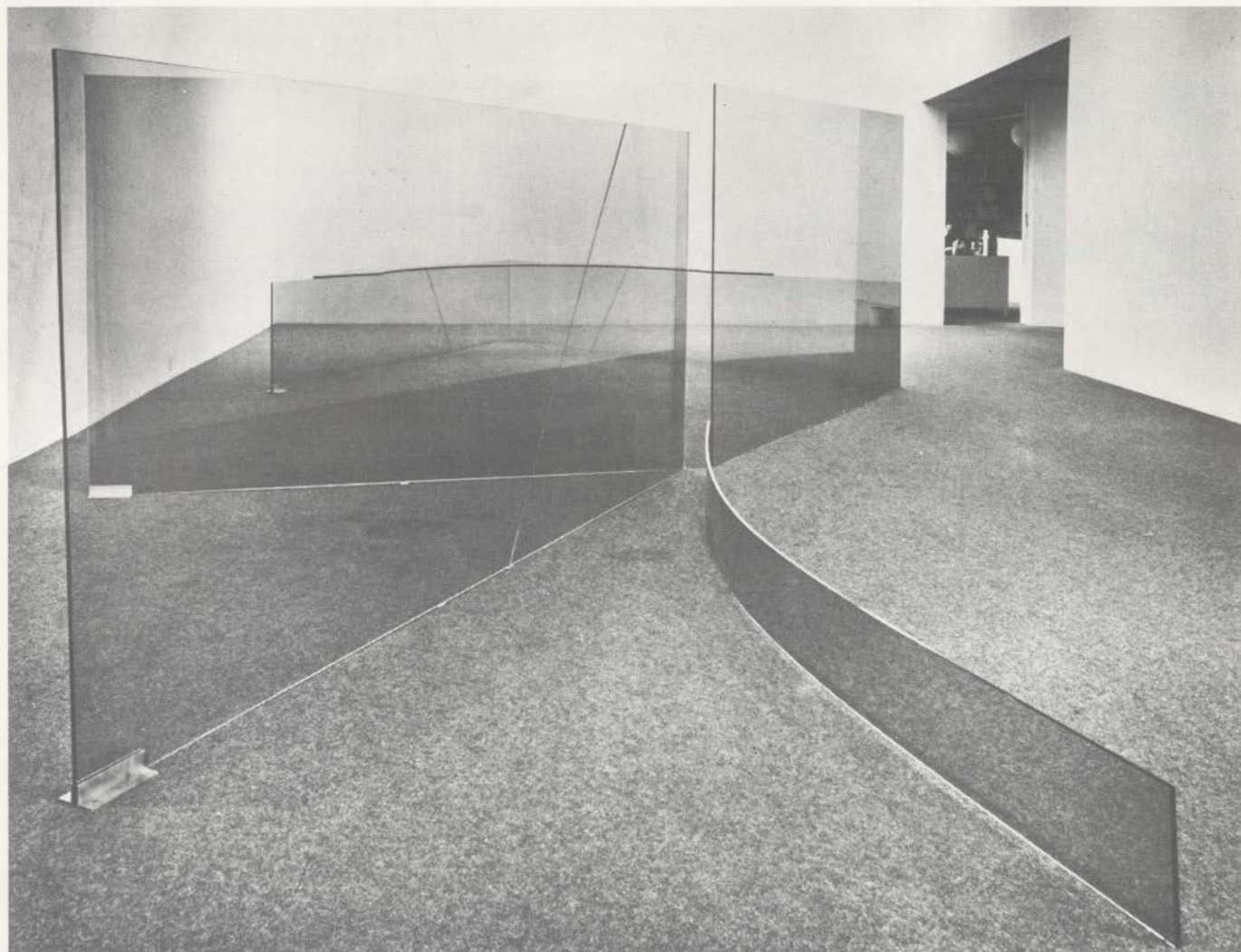
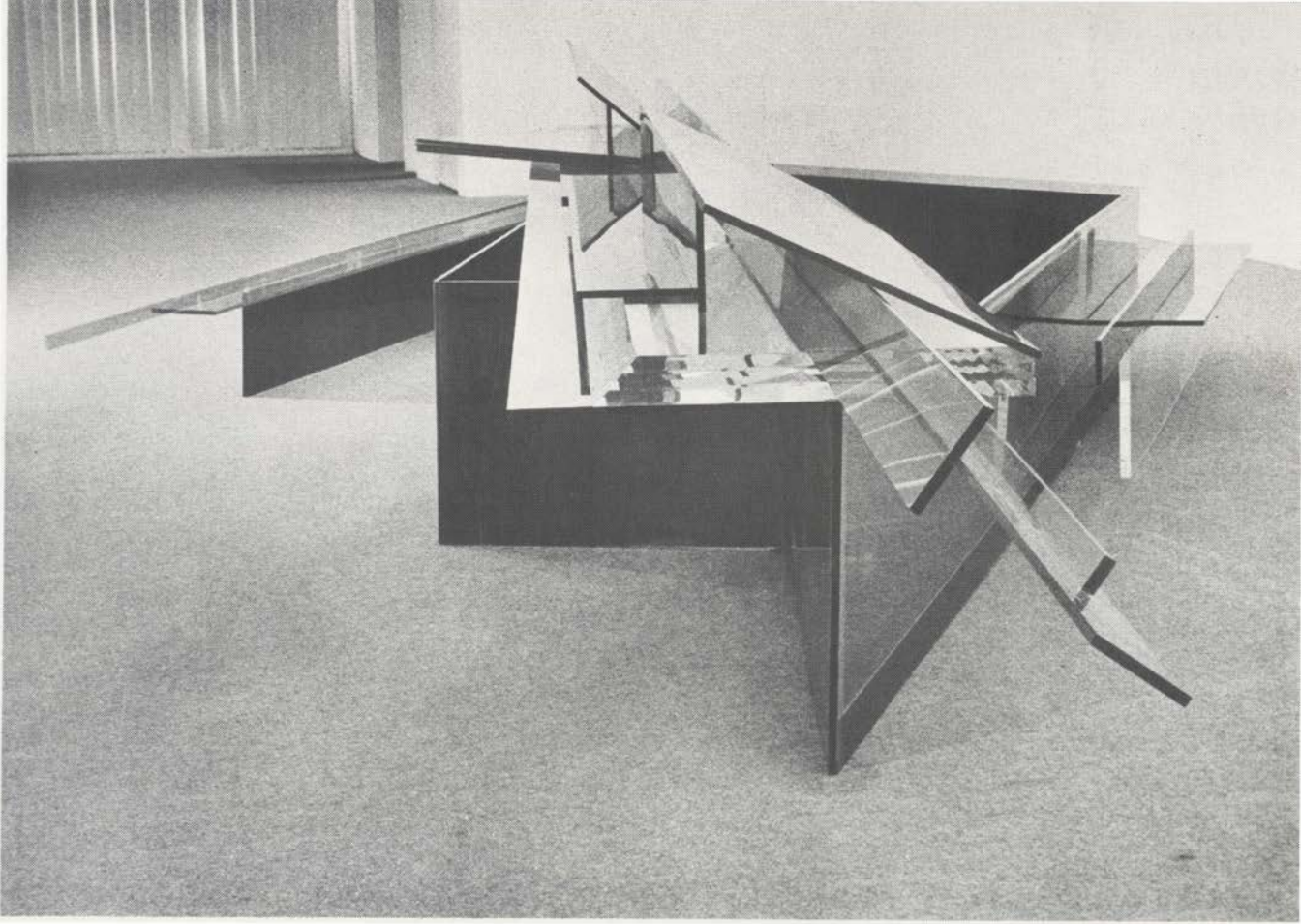


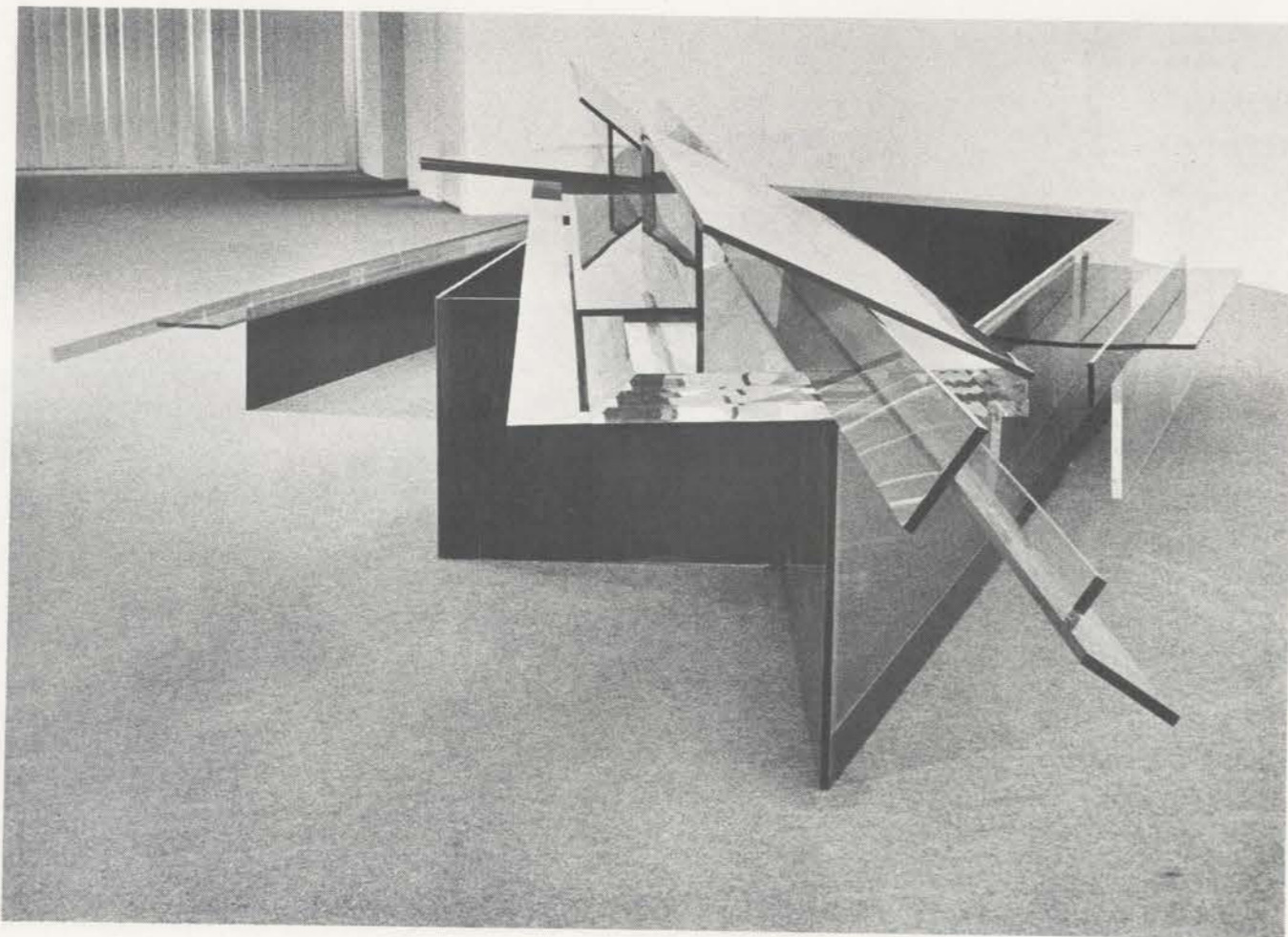
*Sylvia Stone*

B E N N I N G T O N C O L L E G E



*Another Place - 1971 - 72 Plexiglas: 6'8" x 28'2" x 17'*





Manhattan Express - 1974 - Plexiglas - 3'6" x 30'6" x 10'

## SYLVIA STONE

"— Stone has consistently solved her problems in past works. She has succeeded again and brilliantly in her largest work to date, *Egyptian Gardens*, 7' 9" high by 26' long by 18' wide. It synthesizes the basic concepts in the major constructions of her last two shows: *Another Place* (1971-72) and *Manhattan Express* (1974).

As in *Another Place*, the primary components of *Egyptian Gardens* are vertical planes that section an immense space, but they are active triangles rather than stable rectangles. The two elongated triangles of different shapes are almost parallel, splaying out somewhat, creating a dynamic horizontal and diagonal thrust, a directional energy akin to that of *Manhattan Express*. The new work partakes of both the objectness of the low-lying, compact *Manhattan Express* and the environmental, open-field character of *Another Place*. The dominating, larger than human scale triangles and wedge-like elements that support them hold the viewer at a distance while the 6' 5" corridor-like space between the uprights invites entry, but only for a few steps, because most of the ground area within the sculpture is covered with triangulated plexiglas. This plastic carpet and the wedge-shaped props set up a floor-hugging counterpoint to the vertical projection—a kind of sprawl that Stone has long cultivated in her work.

*Egyptian Gardens* soars majestically, and this appears to be Stone's intention. But she also seems to want the opposite of monumentality, for she dissolves much of whatever mass there is in her transparent medium, using its reflections and refractions to produce a shimmering, cool green-tinted light, a poetic atmosphere that pervades and surrounds the plexiglas elements, and changes surprisingly with the viewer's slightest shift in position. In this, the new piece relates to *Another Place*. But Stone also introduces some of the mass of *Manhattan Express* by sanding a number of her surfaces to produce varying opacities, the most dense of which becomes rest stops for the eye within the perpetual, luminous flicker."

—"Stone uses a clearly legible geometric design and a dissolving flux of lights—the first focused and clear in conception, the second unfocused and confusing to the eye—as foils for each other. The one strives but never succeeds in overcoming the other, and this provides the dialectical drama in her sculpture. She has been venturesome in her use of both components. When minimalism dominated taste, she risked working in a de-materialized, planar medium which generated "pictorial" or "illusionistic" light effects at a time when sculpture was supposed to be only "sculptural." She also dared to employ a complex design which demands a slow part to whole reading when primary objects were in vogue and any concept related, no matter how remotely, to historic Cubist and Constructivist relational design was suspect. But that was before the "isms" and their slogans expired. Now, without the blinders of dogma, her work may be seen—finally.

Stone's originality stems first of all from her strong sense of artistic identity, but also from her desire for freshness and from her contemporary stat of mind. The last needs to be stressed, for although she seems to work in and extend the Constructivist tradition in modern art, she uses it only as a point of departure, rejecting its main premises and thus utterly transforming it. That is, she is unwilling to accept the suprapersonal, rationalistic, doctrinaire, and utopian ideal that motivated the earlier artists and replaces it with a multi-referential, spatially disorienting, intuitive, and lyrical vision."

Excerpts from Irving Sandler's Article "Sylvia Stone's *Egyptian Stone's*" - Arts - April 1977

"— Walk into the domain of Sylvia Stone's new work, and edges and boundaries dissolve. The formal sculpture, her geometric arrangement of horizontal and diagonal planes of colored plexiglas disappears. A mirrored sheet on the floor changes bronze to brown and green to gray prisms. A series of frameless windows open on to each other, opening distances the eye alone can travel. Interior space, the mind's eye, the storer of visual and verbal reflections has no final place, no specific location in human geography. Reflection's depth, we know, is simply a matter of light. And yet this inner space that Cubist painting first revealed, the traveling and intersecting lines of our vision is every day life. Only a blow or a car crash, a head-on collision by hand or machine can blot out the angles and corners of daily sight. Up, down, around and through, peripheral objects in space preoccupy us, objects always just beyond the reach of tactile impression. This simultaneity of vision is, of course, one of the conventions of analytic cubist art. Modern sculpture has, up to now, been most concerned with asserting its presence vis - a - vis the space around it. A mysterious, monolithic form, a concrete object preferably monumental in size characterized the sculpture of the sixties. This form often existed in tension, in uneasy balance with the open negative space around it, but the concreteness of its shape was never in question. Sylvia Stone's *Grand Illusion* at the Emmerich Gallery, 20 feet long and 10 feet wide in terms of actual floor space, is a sculpture that calls into question the whole idea of silhouette and overall shape.

*Grand Illusion* is a series of horizontal planes, one resting, one abutting a mirrored sheet, one reaching diagonally across the other two while balancing on their top surface edges. It is a sculpture to be simultaneously looked down into, across and through. It is a sculpture of shifting light. Light slides through the piece and catches on its darkened edges. The complexity of Sylvia Stone's light is heightened by the prismatic quality of each plexiglas sheet. Bronze, light brown and pale green plexiglas, the colors cast to make each plane a screen. Thus color and light are inherent in the materials the artist works with, and these very qualities, characteristic of show rooms and shop windows, in turn receive their discipline from the artist's constructivist heritage. With *Grand Illusion*, Sylvia Stone liberates sculpture from its large object limitation and turns it into a series of shifting surfaces in space, questioning, risking but finally not losing its actual physical presence. The work remains an object to be walked around.

In terms of height, *Another Place* and *Crystal Palace* are Sylvia Stone's largest pieces. Her most recent works, sculptures such as *Grand Illusion*, sit lower on the ground and are more self-contained. The environment lies within the sculpture. One looks over and into it, and yet the work itself becomes a more exciting place. The tinted edges of its diagonals, the reflections, the angling of the low-lying horizontal walls force the eye to continuously travel its subtly colored surfaces. *Crystal Palace* and *Another Place* were pieces that visually barely moved, the glass's reflection serving simply as an invitation to enter their confines. One imagines them as places of silence, as all glass worlds should be. But *Grand Illusion* and all the newer works' color is speaking color, giving definition to their environmental reflections. The magic, conjuring rainbow shapes are gone. Contours zig-zag and are fiercely modern. Sharp edges are no less beautiful for their sharpness, and all Stone's seams now act as visual reinforcements. Nothing is clear and simple. Never-never land is gone, confronted with the immediate drama of point-to-point moving light and shade. Everything comes in parts as in a Cubist painting. Glass balances on glass with a clear cutting edge that triple reflections make a triple experience. How many times do we learn where our barriers are? Seeing past them is sometimes the most deadly of all illusions. But finely edged illusions of all kind are the substance of Stone's work, beautifully done in one of the most challenging and durable materials man has yet invented.

There's no getting away from—or any reason to want to get away from—the strongly Cubist flavor of Sylvia Stone's sculpture. She has learned from the entire tradition, perhaps more from Cubist collage and painting than from Cubist sculpture. Her slim angular slabs—some transparent, other the same but tinted—translate the Cubist painters' and collagists' ambiguities of space and shadow, shadow and object, surface and depth into large, horizontally sprawling sculptural form. The very transparency of her glass and plexiglas prevents her from being weighed down by the awkwardness of early attempts to translate Cubist concerns into bronze, limestone and other traditionally opaque sculptural materials. One looks through her structures into spaces endowed with something very like pictorial complexity. A patch of dark orange will, for example, turn out to be a vertically placed length of plexiglas fundamental to a work's structural stability. Prior to this discovery, one might have read the orange as a horizontal slab or even as a patch of colored shadow cast by another element. Stone's command over these ambiguities is so great that they don't disappear when one figures out the structures of these works: structure is complex enough to preserve its ambiguities. One can't decipher ambiguity out of existence. Rather, one grows self-conscious in the continued experience of it."

"— Sylvia Stone's new plexiglas and mirror sculptures affirm the extraordinary virtuosity with which she handles her materials. The compositional complexity of these new pieces comes as a surprise after the spareness of her previous work, but they acknowledge a similar repertory of structural and optical concerns, while offering somewhat different interpretations.

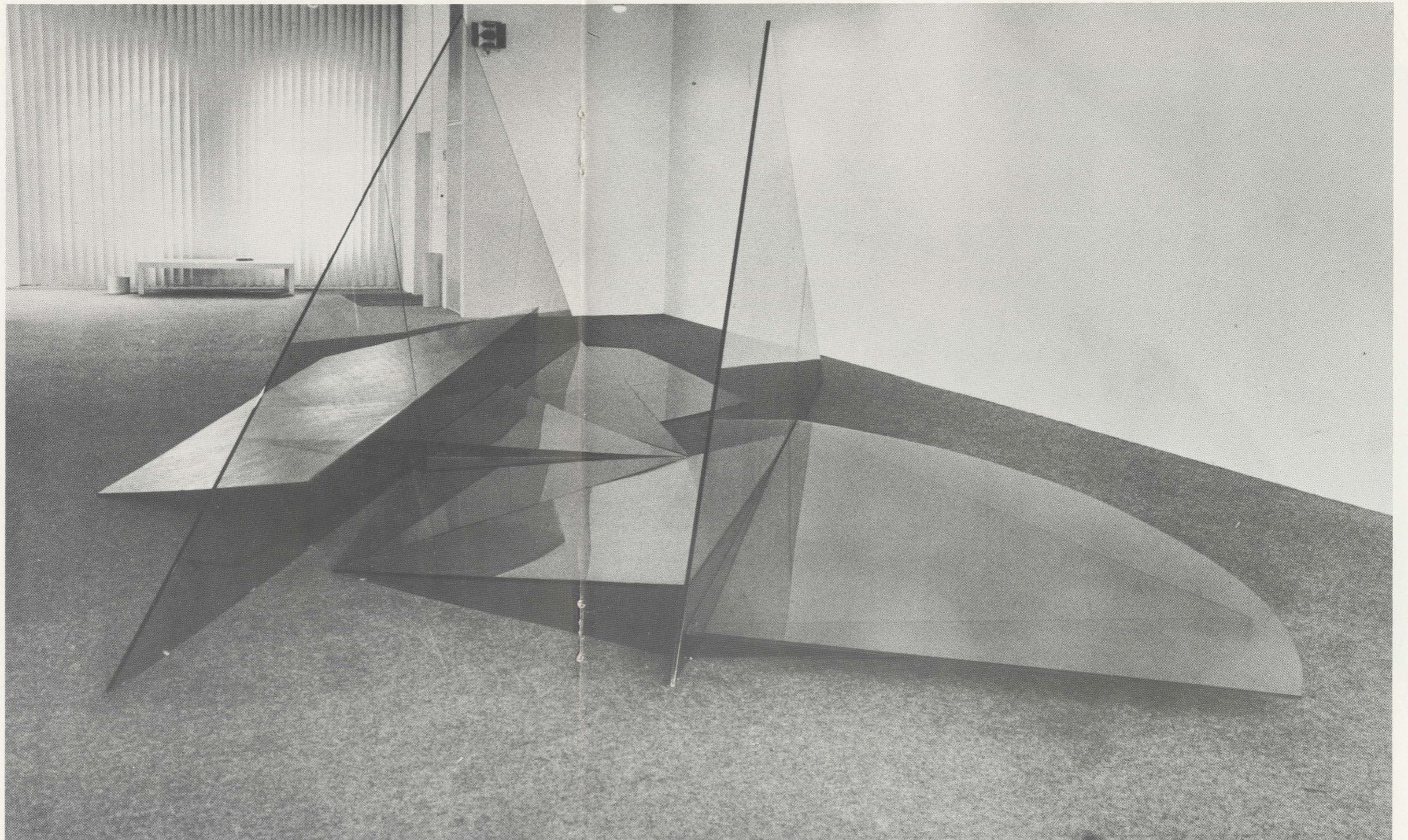
In a loosely constructivist mode of large-scale on-the-floor sculpture, long rectangular panes of plexiglas and mirror are juxtaposed at angles, some lying flat, parallel to the ground, and others standing up on their sides. Unlike her earlier pieces, which were composed of a few very large more or less frontally positioned slabs, the new works contain many elements which overlap considerably and in all directions, adding a sense of solidity, weightiness and full three-dimensionality not previously present. This impression of mass is unusual in work made with material which is characteristically transparent and reflective.—"

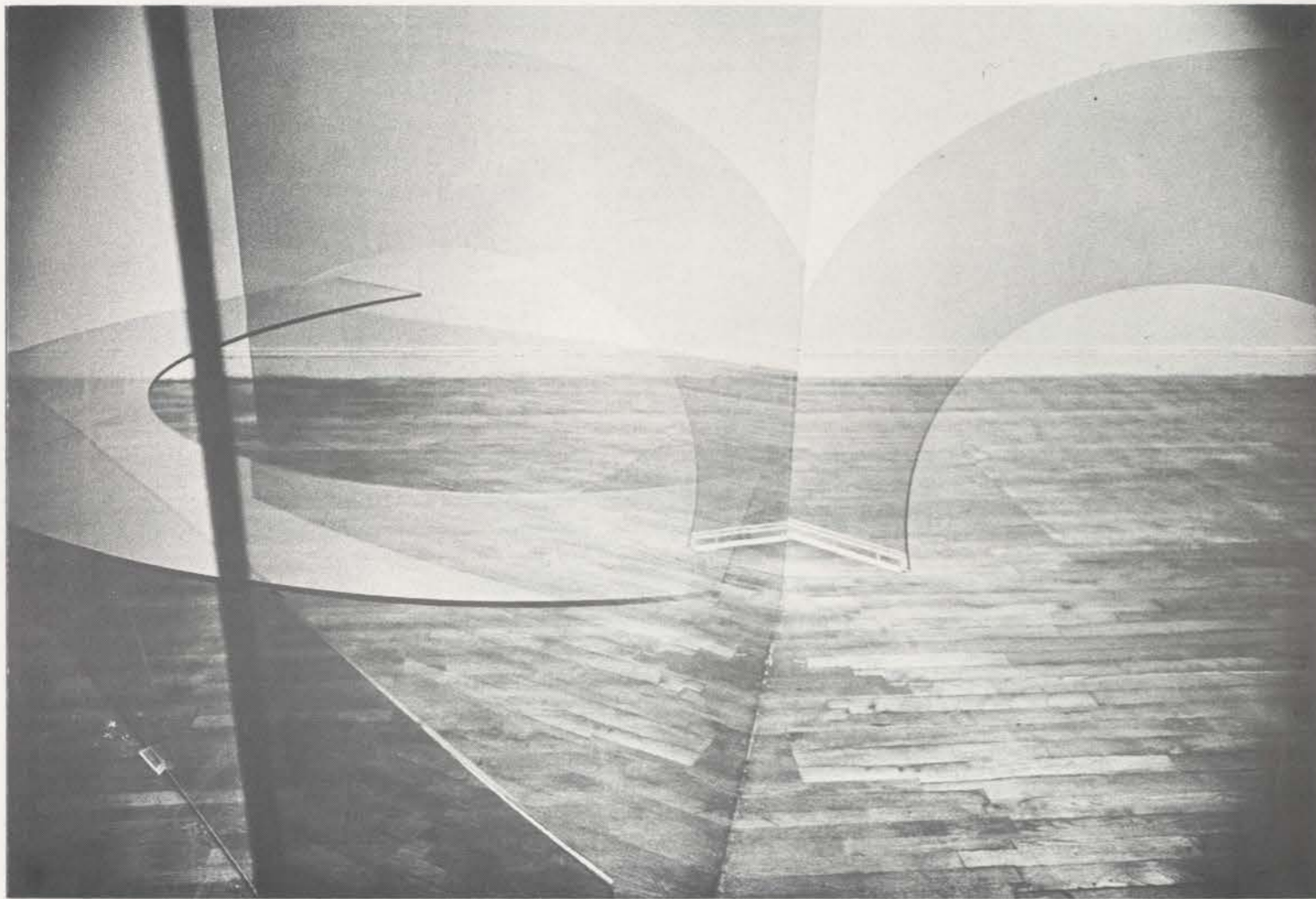
"— The key to these sculptures lies in the illusion of structural complexity created by all the reflective surfaces. The faint ghostly reflections in the light areas, the stronger but unobtrusive images perceived on the darker surfaces and, of course, the mirrors themselves, produce a sense of multiplicity which belies the works' simple planar construction. When combined with the different gradations in color, the result is a complex range of interconnected images that change as one moves around the work. It becomes difficult to isolate the individual components of a piece or to establish its actual boundaries.

Dispite this intricate set of reflections, it is remarkable how seldom one's own presence is perceived in these pieces. You can see yourself if you try, but it isn't an issue. This brings up the questions, integral to Stone's work, of just how her pieces function in relation to the viewer, and how they establish and control their space. Her previous pieces shared the space completely with the viewer—you were looking through them, into them and out of them simultaneously and also were reflected in them, and, since they were quite tall, you had the feeling of being surrounded. The new pieces, though very large (the biggest, *Manhattan Express*, is over 30 feet long), hung the floor. Individual elements extend into the viewer's walking territory, but they do not intrude upon the viewing space at eye level. This accounts for one's absence from the reflections, which remain contained within the works themselves.

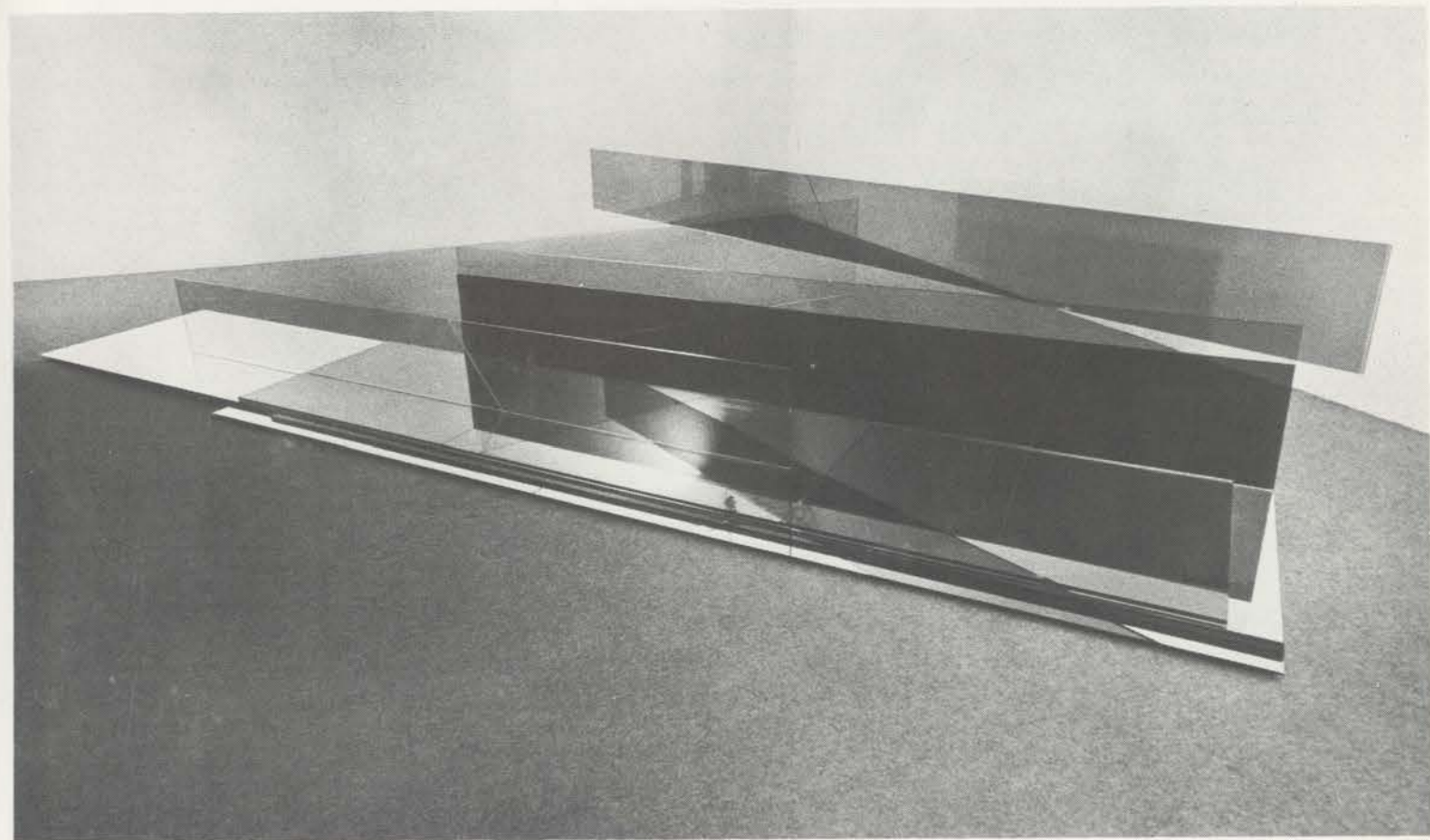
Stone skirts many issues raised by recent art; though it is possible to identify Minimal, environmental and technological elements in her work, she charts her own course. With her newest work, she restores to respectability a much-maligned sculptural concept—the beautiful object—through inventive and skillfull reinterpretation.

*Egyptian Gardens - 1975 - 77 - Plexiglas - 7'9" x 16' x 28'*

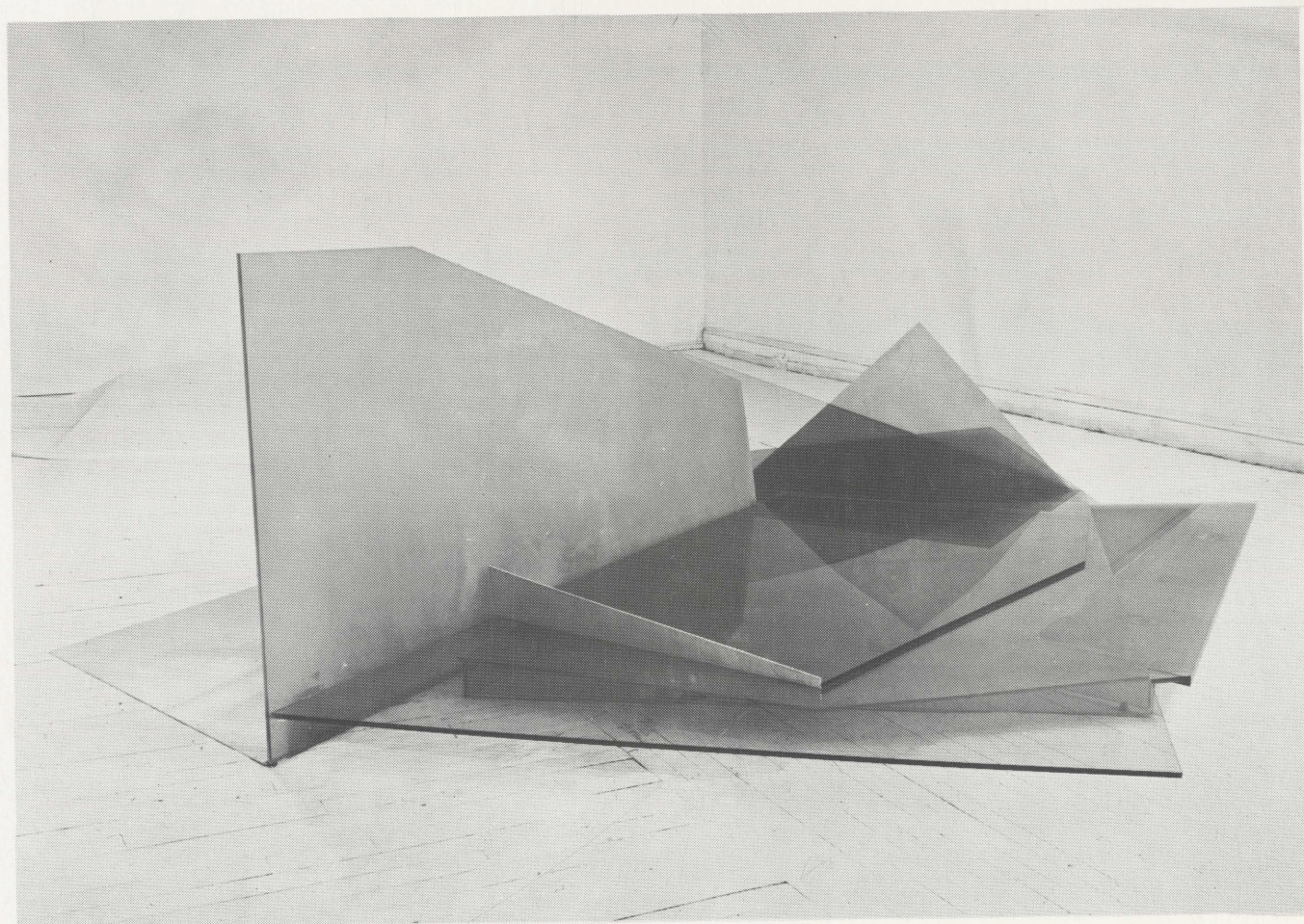




*Detail, Crystal Palace - 1971 - Plexiglas - 6'6" x 14' x 16'*



*Grand Illusion - 1973 - 74 - Plexiglas and Plate Mirror - 3'4" x 21' x 10'*



*Shifting Greys - 1977 - Plexiglas and Aluminum - 4' x 14' x 16'*

## **SYLVIA STONE**

Born - Toronto, Canada

Studied Painting at Art Students League, New York, 1946, 1951 - 1953

Commenced Sculpture, 1965

### **One Woman Shows**

Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York 1972 - 1975 - 1977

Tibor Nagy Gallery, New York, 1967 - 1968 - 1969

### **Two Man Shows**

"Ronald Bladen Sylvia Stone" Brata Gallery 1960

"Second Hofstra Invitational" 1968

### **A Selection of Group Exhibitions**

Brata Gallery 1959

Martha Jackson Gallery 1960

Easthampton Gallery, Easthampton, New York

Bertha Schaefer Gallery (4 man) 1963

Park Place Gallery 1966

Loeb Student Centre, New York University 1966

"Out From the Wall" Des Moines Art Centre 1967

"Cool Art" Newark Museum 1968

"Highlights of the Season" Larry Aldrich Museum 1968

"Some Younger American Painters and Sculptors" American Federation of Arts, 1968

"Transparencies" Visual Arts Gallery 1968

"Made of Plastic" Flint Institute of Art, Flint, Michigan 1968

"Embassies Program" Museum of Modern Art, Mexico 1968

"Plastics and the New Art" Museum of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia 1968

"Plastic as Plastic" Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York 1968

"Whitney Annual of American Sculpture 1968

"14 Sculptors, The Industrial Edge" Walker Art Centre 1969

"The Plastic Presence" Jewish Museum, New York, Milwaukee Art Centre, Wisconsin,

San Francisco Museum 1969

"Critics Choice" New York State Council on the Arts 1970

"Summer Exhibition" Knoedler Gallery 1970

"1973 Biennial", Whitney Museum, New York 1973

"Painting and Sculpture To-day", Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Ind. 1974

"The Condition of Sculpture", The Hayward Gallery, London, England 1975 British Arts Council

"Third Biennial of Small Sculpture", Budapest, Hungary 1975

"The Year of the Woman" Bronx Museum of Art, New York 1975

"Two Hundred Years of American Sculpture", Whitney Museum, New York 1976

"Small Sculpture", Andre Emmerich Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland 1976

### **Museum Collections . . .**

Whitney Museum of American Art

Aldrich Museum

Witherspoon Art Gallery

Hartford Antheneum

Walker Art Centre

### **Grants**

CAPS Grant 1971

National Endowment for the Arts, Individual Artists Grant 1975