

FIRING THE IMAGINATION



ARTISTS AND ARCHITECTS USE CLAY



Introduction

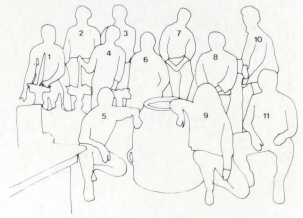
The clay pieces and installations as well as the working drawings and architectural models on exhibit in *Firing the Imagination: Artists & Architects Use Clay* are the result of six collaborative projects developed by six artist/architect teams in 1986-87. Working closely together in teams of two and three, all the members of the project also met regularly as a group to discuss concepts, esthetics, and techniques. By decision, the objectives were kept simple: to explore new possibilities for the uses of clay in contemporary architectural settings and to investigate the differing nature of the creative processes in art and architecture. Additional guidelines were based on the realities of the production process, the budget, and exhibition space.

The renewed interest in terra cotta among contemporary architects is very promising. However, the potential for new uses of this versatile building material have yet to be fully explored. Since the lack of communication among manufacturers of terra cotta, architects, and artists working with clay contributes to this situation, we sought to create a setting where serious

exchanges might occur. This project provided an opportunity, one where architects learned to understand the unique qualities of clay, while artists experienced firsthand the multifaceted thinking required for creating architecture. The team interviews that follow highlight some of the issues raised by this collaborative effort.

In addition to looking toward the future of terra cotta, a portion of this exhibit is devoted to archival images that reveal much about the remarkable past of this material. On view are historic photographs and watercolors from the Gladding McBean & Company Collection of the California State Library. (This company is the oldest extant terra cotta manufacturer in the United States.)¹ The photographs portray various steps involved in the manufacture of terra cotta—from the clay pits to the shipping yards where tractors transport finished work. Particularly interesting are the group photographs of the modelers posing before their enormous clay models. These pictures offer a glimpse into the human side of life in the factory. They remind us of the fine craftsmanship and skill required to produce the complex terra cotta ornament so popular in the early 20th century.

Accompanying this archival material is a selection of contemporary photographs



1. Richard Rudich
2. Donald Clinton
3. Milton Newman
4. Marjorie Hoog
5. Mark Robbins
6. Sylvia Netzer
7. Jill Viney
8. Ron Levy
9. Beth Kamenstein
10. Susan Tunick
11. Jeff Elghanayan

by Mary Swisher, a Sacramento (California) photographer. These were taken in various parts of the Gladding McBean & Company factory, and capture the powerful experience of visiting it, one of opening up a time capsule. Looking closely at these photographs, one can sense the spirit and human presence that has long inhabited the factory and that has been responsible for many of the great terra cotta structures, so appropriately dubbed "the last of the hand-made buildings."

1. Additional historical information on American terra cotta companies may be found in SITES 18, New York, 1986.

All interviews were conducted by Jill Viney.

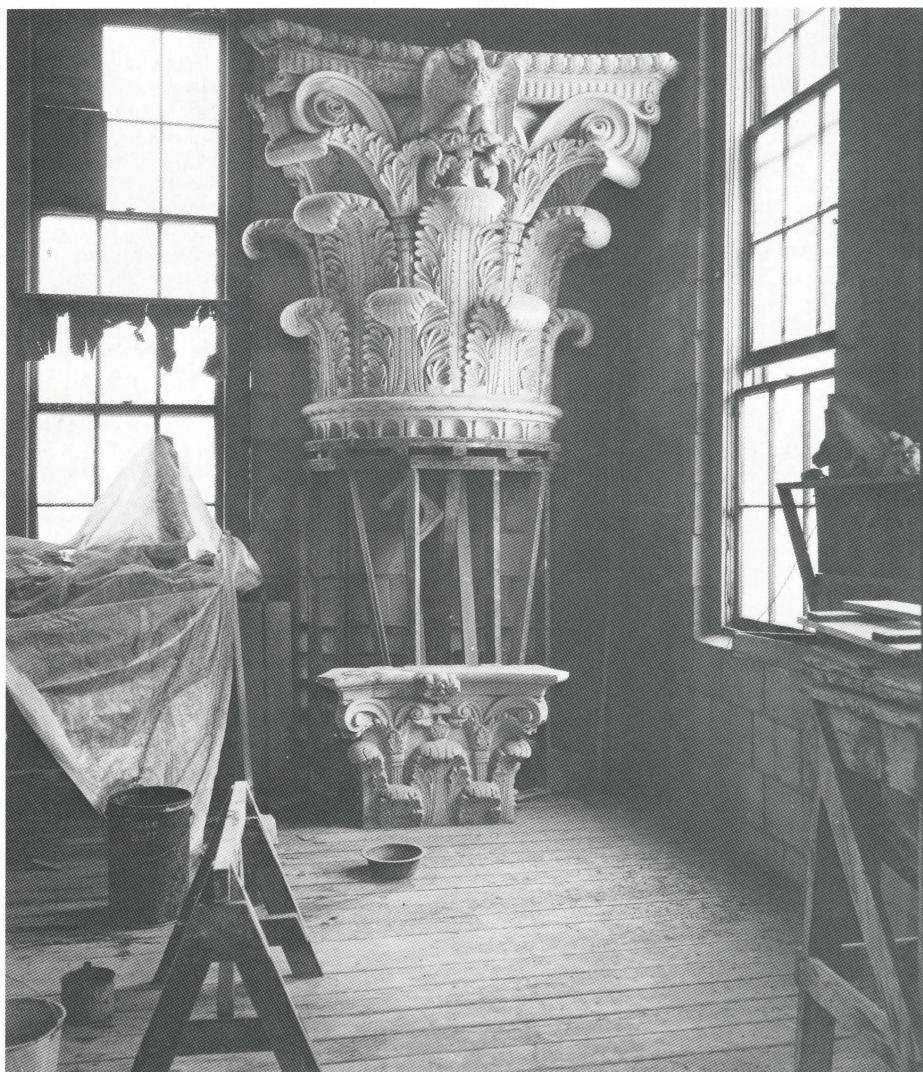


Photo: Mary Swisher

Plaster Capital, Fireman's Fund Insurance Building, San Francisco, 1914.

Plaster Deer Head, Modeling Room, Gladding McBean & Co.

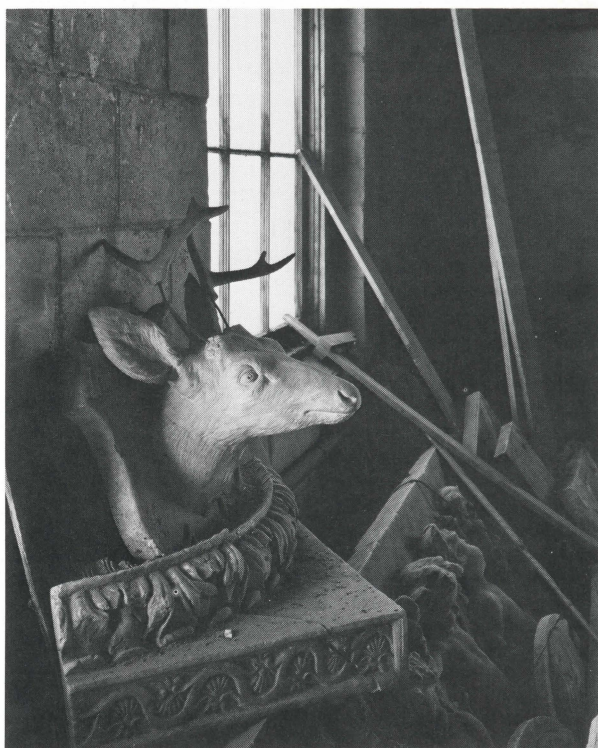


Photo: Mary Swisher

Pass Through

Beth Kamenstein, artist
Ron Levy, artist
Jeff Elghanayan, architect

J.V. *How would you describe your project?*

J.E. Our project consists of the largest slab you can make out of terra cotta as part of a modular building system. The modularity is practical and allows for variation but has not caught on yet in contemporary building.

R.L. It will be freestanding but not solid, and measure four feet square and four to ten inches thick. Both sides will be functional, beautiful, and finished in different ways.

B.K. It is supposed to be a universal building unit that can function as an outside and inside wall—even garden walls. The slab will have a hole in it for purposes of design or windows or vents.

J.V. *What previous concerns in your own work have you brought to the project?*

J.E. I have worked a great deal with modular factory-built systems that attempt to provide low-cost buildings without monotony.

R.L. I am interested in large-scale building. I just finished a seven-story residential building on 104th Street with a terra cotta facade.

B.K. My love of clay with all its qualities—plasticity, textural, and reflective—are a continuous concern. I found working with two people made me more aware of my own sensibilities.

J.V. *Have any of you had experience in the others' field?*

J.E. I built a large electric kiln with Margie Hughto at Syracuse University and work with clay now to explore visual forms.

B.K. Ron and I designed and made our building's facade. We also made tiles for our home.

J.V. *Was any role of clay in architecture important for you?*

B.K. & R.L. We researched Etruscan clay architecture in Italy last year. Different towns had shows that illustrated an amazing range of what tile was like during that period.

J.V. *How did you divide the responsibilities of collaboration?*

J.E. We didn't split the responsibilities. It was a joint effort.

B.K. We have had clay sessions pounding the clay together.

J.V. *What are the rewards of collaboration?*

J.E. I enjoy being able to work with people on an equal basis.

B.K. I've appreciated the interchange: imagining how other ideas make sense.

R.L. Alone I tend to ponder ideas; with Jeff and Beth I was forced to come to decisions. Also, the difference of opinions makes one more open-minded, certain ideas wouldn't have developed otherwise.

J.V. *What has been most challenging?*

J.E. Making up our minds! At first we changed ideas every couple of weeks.

B.K. The most challenging step has been to make something we all like, that matches all our sensibilities, and that we are committed to make.

R.L. Yes, a concept big enough to meet all of our goals.

J.V. *Were any previous collaborations a stimulation?*

J.E. The nature of day-to-day work as an architect is collaborative. For me all designers, architects, and artists fall into one creative discipline.

R.L. I think of collaboration as architects and tradespeople. There was a story about Gaudí having such a great rapport with his craftsmen; all he needed to do was describe what he wanted and the finished

pieces were exactly what he described.

We all share a hope that this project will appeal to other architects. This design suits us but the value of a modular system is that others could alter the design to their own needs—that is to say, the surface could be anything, while the basic design remained ours.

J.V. *What future do you see for collaboration in art and architecture?*

J.E. Buildings have become more complex and specialized. The only way to get expertise is to turn to specialists. The best jobs are ones in which the client collaborates as well. I worked on one of the buildings at Battery Park City and felt good urban planning went into public space.

B.K. I think there are tremendous possibilities if people have the desire. Certainly parts of buildings could be done by artists as well as architects.

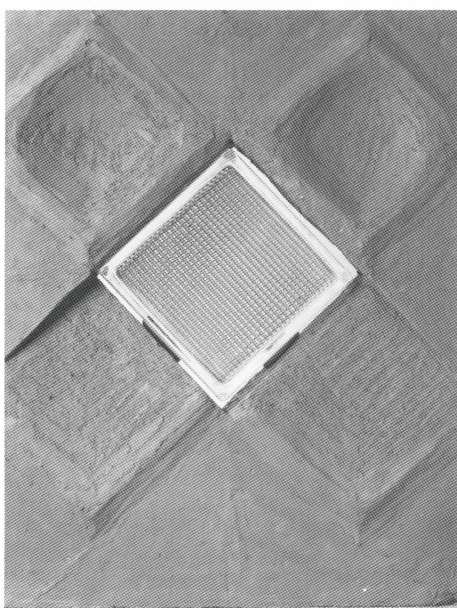
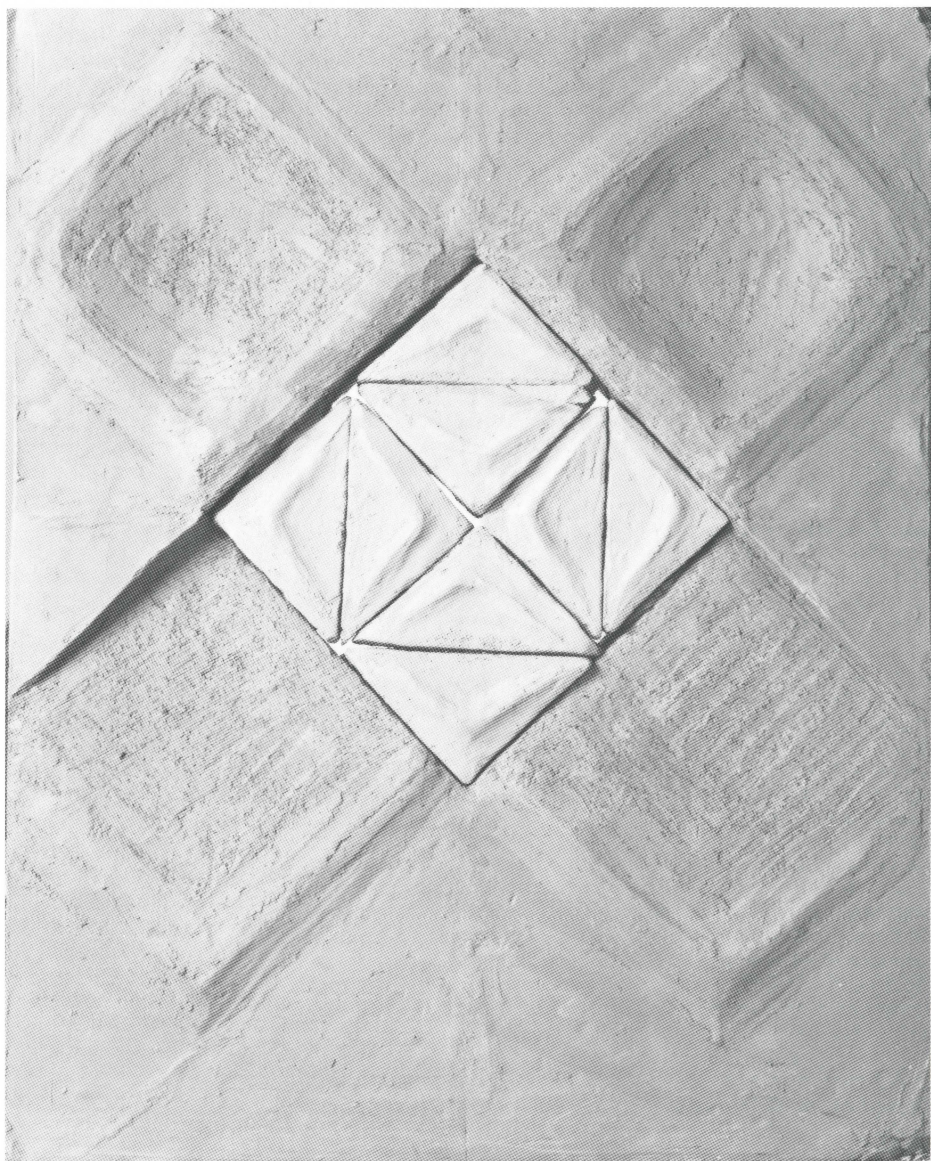
R.L. I think there is a future for collaboration. There aren't many Frank Lloyd Wrights around who do the architecture, design, and furniture for one building. One alternative is to combine several minds and skills to make the whole greater than its parts.

J.E. It's harder to work with more people but you get more into the building sites and more tension in a positive way.

Jeff Elghanayan is a New York architect who has worked on new and rehabilitated housing; he was a partner in Rockrose Development Corporation.

Ron Levy is a ceramicist and builder in New York City. He has recently completed two buildings with tile facades.

Beth Kamenstein maintains a ceramics studio in New York City. Her work has been included in several juried exhibitions in the New York metropolitan area.



Terra cotta units with central opening.

ParkWall

Susan Tunick, artist
Mark Robbins, architect

J.V. *How would you describe your project?*

S.T. Our project transforms a 25 x 100-foot vacant lot into a flexible community space. An 18 x 18-foot canted clay wall serves as the focal point for the site. It is constructed of repeated terra cotta units, some of them placed in reverse so that their rough, hollowed-out backs create niches or pockets within the glazed surface of the wall.

M.R. On a visit to the Lower East Side we found many open lots filled with people tending vegetables, listening to music, dancing, or sitting with friends. Our intention was to create a space that might enhance this local activity and become a part of the community street life. Most of the ground area is to be planted with gardens. The angled wall element is a backdrop for the lot's activities as well as a connecting through-block link. Over time the small niches in its surface may fill with earth and seedlings, or people might place a Budweiser or a doll there—sort of a combination of an altar and Wailing Wall.

J.V. *What previous concerns in your own work have you brought to the project?*

M.R. I have been interested in how one designs in the city—anywhere from a small-scale room to several blocks on a large scale. This is reflected in the terra cotta block. The unit has been designed with two faces: one convex, the other concave. The wall, constructed of these elements, has a very different interior and exterior facade. A doorway cut into the tilted plane allows an inside view. In all, reduced architectural elements are used to imply enclosure and habitation on the scale of a room while also providing a sense of place within the neighborhood.

S.T. My interest in working with the given conditions of a particular site has carried over into this project. Here, for example, we have designed clay elements in addition to the terra cotta block. One of these, a slender sculpted form, is the depth of a standard brick, and our intention is to remove an entire course of brick from the walls surrounding the site and then to insert this 3-inch-high element in its place. The result will be a 100-foot, glazed clay band along each side of the lot that draws attention to the dimensions, module, and fabric of the existing space.

J.V. *Have either of you had experience in the other's field?*

S.T. I studied terra cotta over a period of years—its history, development, and manufacture. My experience in architecture has been tied to this material, and frequently to issues concerning its preservation.

M.R. I have worked on a potter's wheel, blown glass, and watched my father work in clay. My earliest sculptures involved clay, and I'm currently working on a series of bas-reliefs in clay and plaster.

J.V. *What was the nature of the collaboration?*

S.T. We both have been involved in each step, but as we got closer to finishing the project we divided certain responsibilities. Mark is designing the metal structure that will hold the blocks in the exhibition as well as preparing the drawings. I'm doing most of the wet clay work, firing, and glazing.

M.R. We have tried to get away from the notion that the architect sets the infrastructure and the artist creates a work located in or on it. Through our many meetings and presentations, ideas were suggested and dropped; others evolved and were refined into the final scheme.

J.V. *What has been most challenging?*

S.T. The hardest thing was to realize that one solution to a problem, which took time and effort, would then be discarded. However, that effort would lead one step further, then one more, and, eventually, to a final project.

M.R. Specific goals were open-ended, and time and budget constraints were also of our own making. We were in a position to redefine the limits of the project, and its form did change radically within the first 7 months of the collaboration.

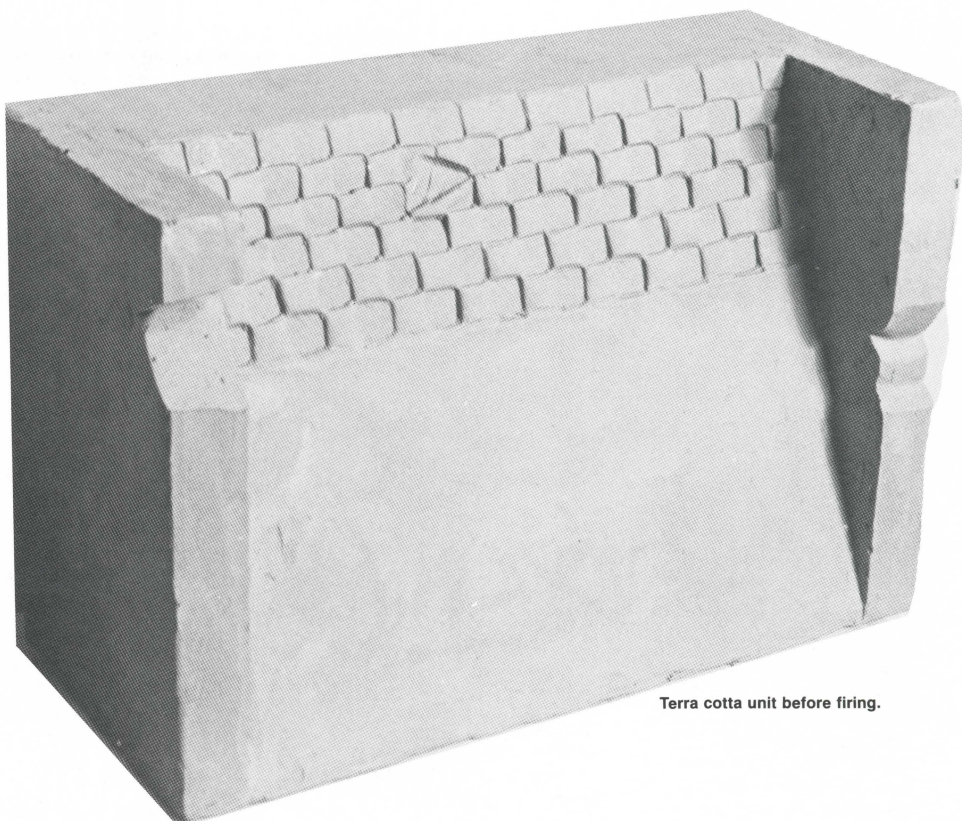
J.V. *What future do you see for collaboration in art and architecture?*

S.T. At a recent conference on public sculpture it became clear that all over the country collaborations are beginning to occur, and that an artist's involvement begins at the initial stages of the project. Much of this has been generated by the public sector as a result of the Percent for Arts Programs.

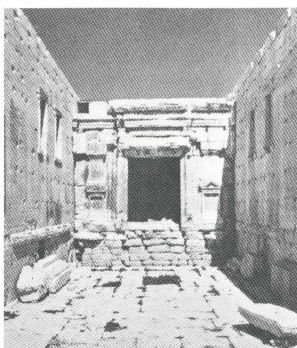
M.R. The idea of collaboration between art and architecture is not new. From Raphael to Le Corbusier there has been a tradition of a creative individual's designing in the broadest sense: sculpture, painting, building, and urban design have all been appropriate fields for exploration. Increasingly, though, architects have become specialists, fitting neatly into the framework of the given marketplace. But there is a segment of the current generation that is looking to a wider, more inclusive view of architecture. I'm also interested in seeing a collaboration of public art in architecture.

Susan Tunick is an artist working in New York City, where she often exhibits. She is President of the New York Branch of the Friends of Terra Cotta and is a frequent contributor to publications dealing with artistic and preservation matters.

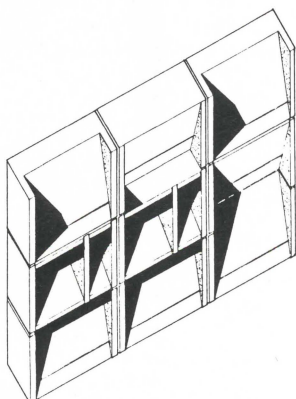
Mark Robbins is an architect and principal in M. R. Design, New York. He currently teaches at the Parsons School of Design.



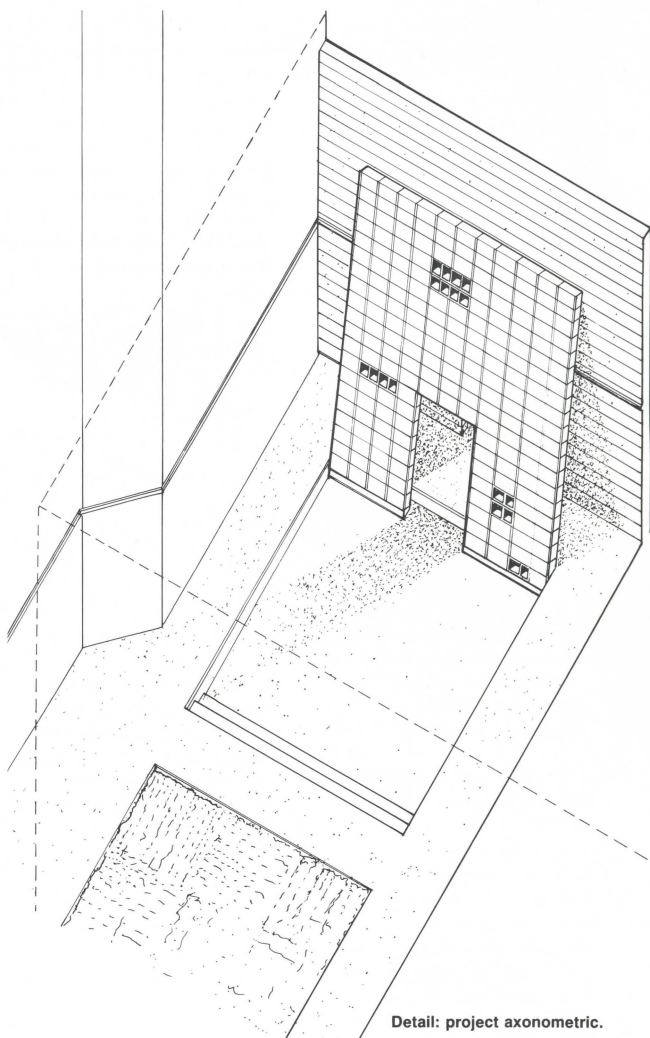
Terra cotta unit before firing.



Roman ruin: one historic source.



Detail: 9 stacked terra cotta units.



Detail: project axonometric.

Gateway to Second Avenue

Sylvia Netzer, artist
Marjorie Hoog, architect

J.V. *How would you describe your project?*

M.H. We wanted to build at a monumental scale combining architecture with sculpture in the urban environment of New York City. Our site is Houston Street between the Bowery and First Avenue, because the urban fabric there is peculiarly rich and varied. When Houston Street was widened, the north sides of the street were eviscerated, creating oddly shaped blocks, exposing sides and backs of buildings. Our goal was to design elements that reintegrate the torn fabric into a cohesive whole for the neighborhood, while creating a stimulating environment for the passerby.

S.N. We also wanted to create sculpture by using colors, depth, juxtapositions of textures and planes, to create an axis and visual focus at the beginning of Second Avenue. We wanted to use a variety of elements to unify the environment and bring beauty to it: we designed paving, fencing, and street furniture to tie into the larger sculptural components. It is people oriented: we want it to be viewed as art providing visual privacy and public delight.

J.V. *What previous concerns in your own work have you brought to the project?*

M.H. Linkages of layers and their relationship with a site has long held a fascination for me. Sylvia and I discovered a similar interest in transparency and light.

S.N. A lot of my earlier work refers to and comments on architectural elements—walls, columns, and fences; the capturing, dividing, and dissolution of space.

J.V. *Have either of you had experience in the other's field?*

M.H. My limited experience with terra cotta includes some restoration work and usage of the material in a new building in Beijing: the Chinese recommended the

material because it offered flexibility and color variety.

J.V. *Did you know about the role of clay in architecture?*

M.H. We were both aware of and admired some of the late 19th-, early 20th-century, and Deco designs. In terms of a hands-on familiarity, however, I had none, and I have learned much from Sylvia.

S.N. Yes. I devoted much time studying its use as building decoration; reading about it, going on walking tours, and attending lectures. I love the stuff.

J.V. *How did you divide the responsibilities of collaboration?*

S.N. The basic concept came from Marjorie, but from that point on, it has been a cumulative process built on responses to each other's thinking.

J.V. *What are the rewards of collaboration?*

M.H. One is being able to conceptualize a project at a large urban scale. Second is the opportunity to develop a working relationship with a person whose visual thinking is very different from mine, without the constraints of function and good sense. I hope some of the freedom that Sylvia enjoys in her work will stay with me after this project.

S.N. It has been rewarding on several levels. It's been fun to work with Marjorie. Her initial ideas are breathtaking, while her thinking is more analytical than mine. It was exciting to explore the site with her. This collaborative effort has had a real effect on how I look at things.

J.V. *What has been most challenging?*

M.H. Time is probably the most challenging dimension in my life, and it's been difficult to find a way to get our schedules to work. Another challenge has been the process we've been through: I'm accustomed to teamwork, I'm not usually working with artists and with unfamiliar materials.

S.N. As an artist, I'm used to working alone in my studio. I was concerned about being able to work with another person, but our discussions have been as equals, and thus very rich. It's been a joint process and it's difficult to remember who did what.

J.V. *Were any previous collaborations a stimulation?*

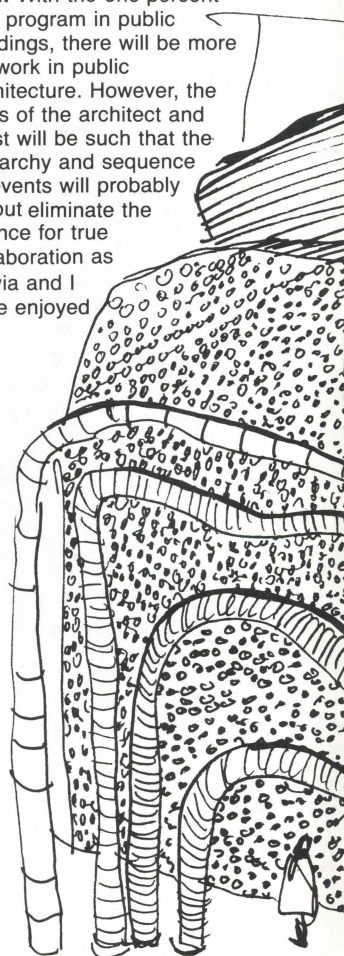
M.H. We discussed the work of architects that we admire (Ledoux, the Constructivists, Terragni, Aalto, Gehry), and artists that have inspired us (Robert Smithson, Joan Snyder, Steven Antonakis, Dan Flavin). We also showed each other our work.

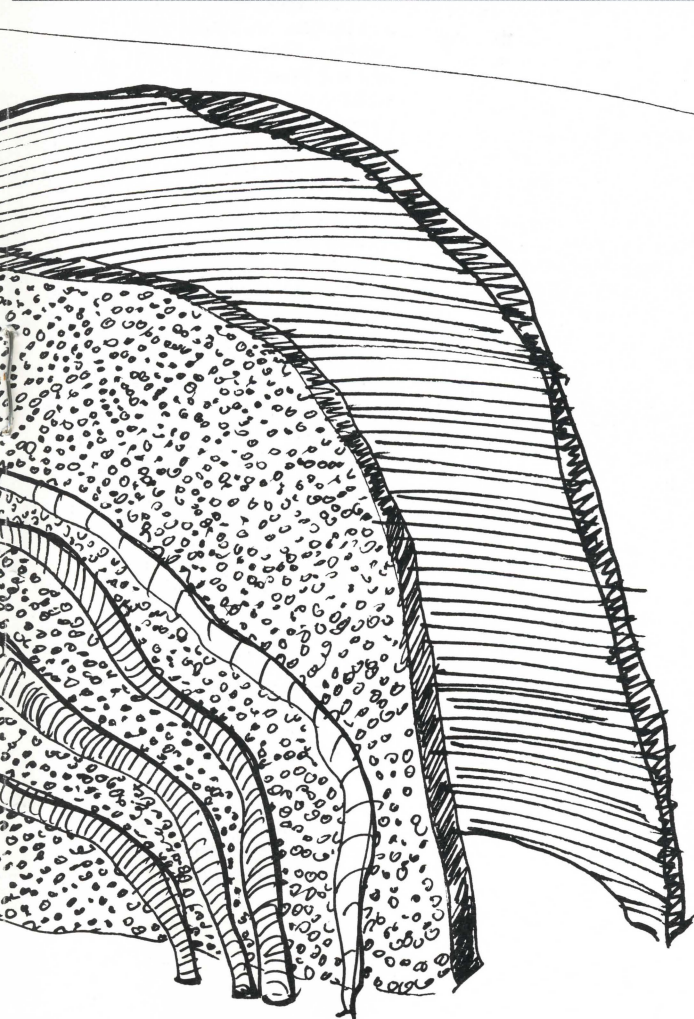
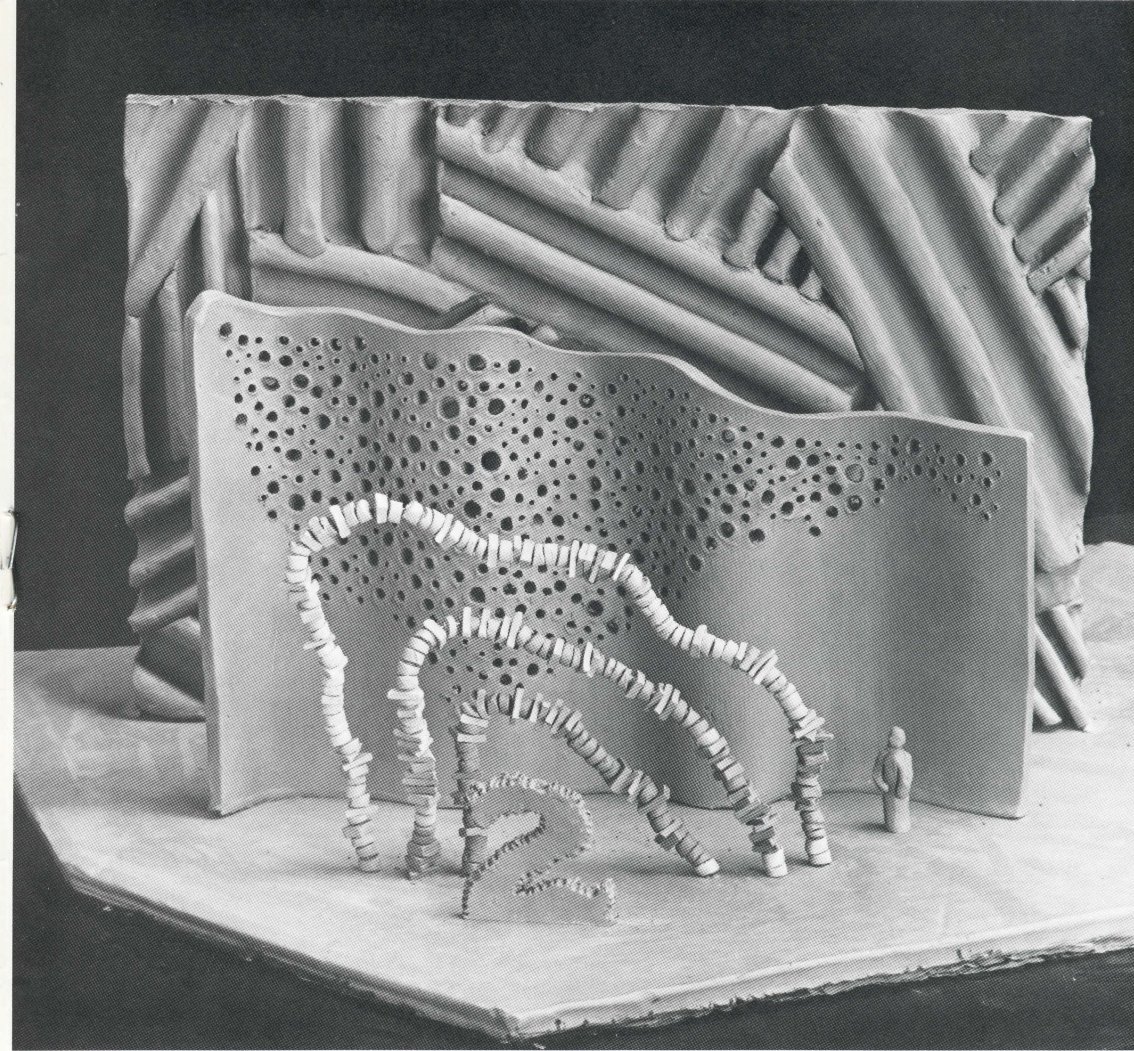
S.N. I think we have been most influenced by the site. It gave us strong clues about what to do.

J.V. *What future do you see for collaborations in art and architecture?*

S.N. I think we have been very generous and respectful of each other. Collaboration is different in that it asks that the participants give up control of an uncertain return.

M.H. With the one-percent arts program in public buildings, there will be more art work in public architecture. However, the roles of the architect and artist will be such that the hierarchy and sequence of events will probably all but eliminate the chance for true collaboration as Sylvia and I have enjoyed it.





Above: project model.

Left: project study.

Sylvia Netzer is a sculptor working in mixed media, often relating to architectural elements. She teaches at The City College of New York, The New School, and Greenwich House Pottery.

Marjorie Hoog is an architect trained at N.Y.U., Cooper Union, and Harvard. She is an associate at Beckhard, Richlan & Associates.

Row House

Bennett Bean, artist
Donald Clinton, architect

J.V. *How would you describe your project?*

B.B. We have two results—a model and a section of a brownstone—that were generated by Don's idea of doing a brownstone.

D.C. I focused on the row house building type because of its presence in the city. I thought it was an architectural problem that would benefit from collaboration with an artist, and terra cotta is a wonderful material for trying out ideas about the architecture of the row house.

B.B. After we settled on the territory we toured city streets to see thirty or fifty buildings in a day. I began to see these buildings as a series in a row—in ways I had never thought about buildings before.

J.V. *What previous concerns in your own work have you brought to the project?*

D.C. Generally, I have been interested, for some time, in brownstones as a building type. What interests me in this process is a different way of exploring the nature of an architectural problem.

B.B. I brought painting ideas. Because all city brownstones are attached, you have a serial situation. For a single element in series, its importance lies in where it hits its edges. You also have street as edge below and sky as edge above. Stella's idea in the '60s about edge-generated shape intrigued me to let edge as frame generate the interior brownstone form.

J.V. *Have either of you had experience in the other's field?*

B.B. My architectural experience is tearing houses apart and putting them back together.

D.C. I have done some things in clay, and followed the use of terra cotta in buildings.

J.V. *How did you divide the responsibilities of collaboration?*

D.C. We dispensed with drawings because they can become a device that stands between you and the actual work. We thought we could best show the nature of the project by making two objects. I made a clay model of the facade and Bennett made a large terra cotta section of the building.

B.B. I'm inclined to embellish the surface with ferocious color. Much of contemporary architecture reads beautifully from a distance but not close up. I would like to develop a wonderful, seductive surface that takes on Don's idea about materiality. The most beautiful building we saw was an aging mossy brownstone; it had patina.

D.C. On one hand, there are the row houses in Bath, England, that are made of local stone. Although monochrome, the cumulative effect of a whole street is beautiful and gets richer with age. In contrast, Victorian frame row houses in San Francisco have elaborately painted variety. Clay has the potential of dealing with three-dimensional issues and of being a rich, satisfying material in its surface characteristics.

J.V. *What are the rewards of collaboration?*

B.B. The most intriguing thing is coming up with an idea and then letting it go for another that is equally as good. I've enjoyed dealing with Don because he has a certain gentility of touch, developed through his extensive relationships with clients, I would guess.

D.C. I collaborate all the time, working in a firm with partners, associates, and many others. Ideas are often discarded; no building is the product of one imagination. I enjoy being party to Bennett's thinking process, and even though my ideas are different, being able to layer the ideas together into a final project. I also liked the open-mindedness of the larger group involved in this project; showing their work and being interested in the results of others.

J.V. *What has been most challenging?*

B.B. The density of my life. There is austerity and grace to what we have done without much waste. It would be different if we had lots of time.

D.C. Because I have the same problem, we have this great rapport. Our sessions are very focused and we were forced to advance our ideas from one step to the next. I regret the lack of time because we could have tried out more things. There is a kind of critical mass of time needed to build up a momentum of ideas.

J.V. *Were any previous collaborations a stimulation?*

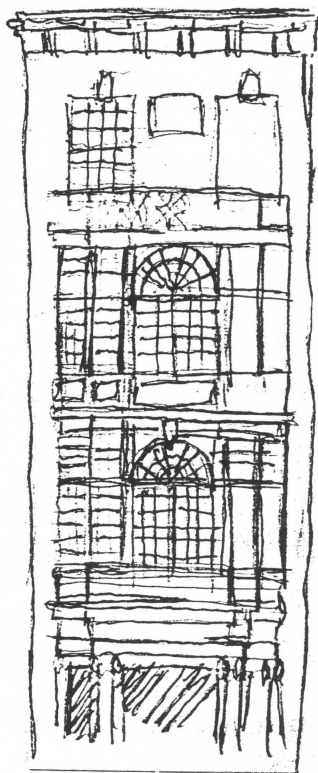
D.C. I have worked on collaborations before. We are talking about two things here—collaboration as result and process. We have focused more on the project itself. One important point in an architect-artist collaboration is that the nature of the project can depend on the artist's medium. With a metal sculptor I might do a linear project—stairs or a bridge.

B.B. I came to the project without preconceptions, I didn't think a lot about what it would be like, and plunged right in.

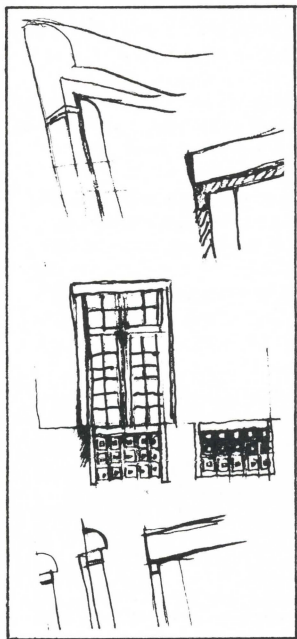
J.V. *What future do you see for collaboration in art and architecture?*

B.B. There is a withering away of the anti-social artist of the 1880s. Art is settling back into an economic niche—beyond idea-generated art to situation generated art. Modern art was an analytical process that tore the nature of painting, for example, apart. More art is connected to the public arena now.

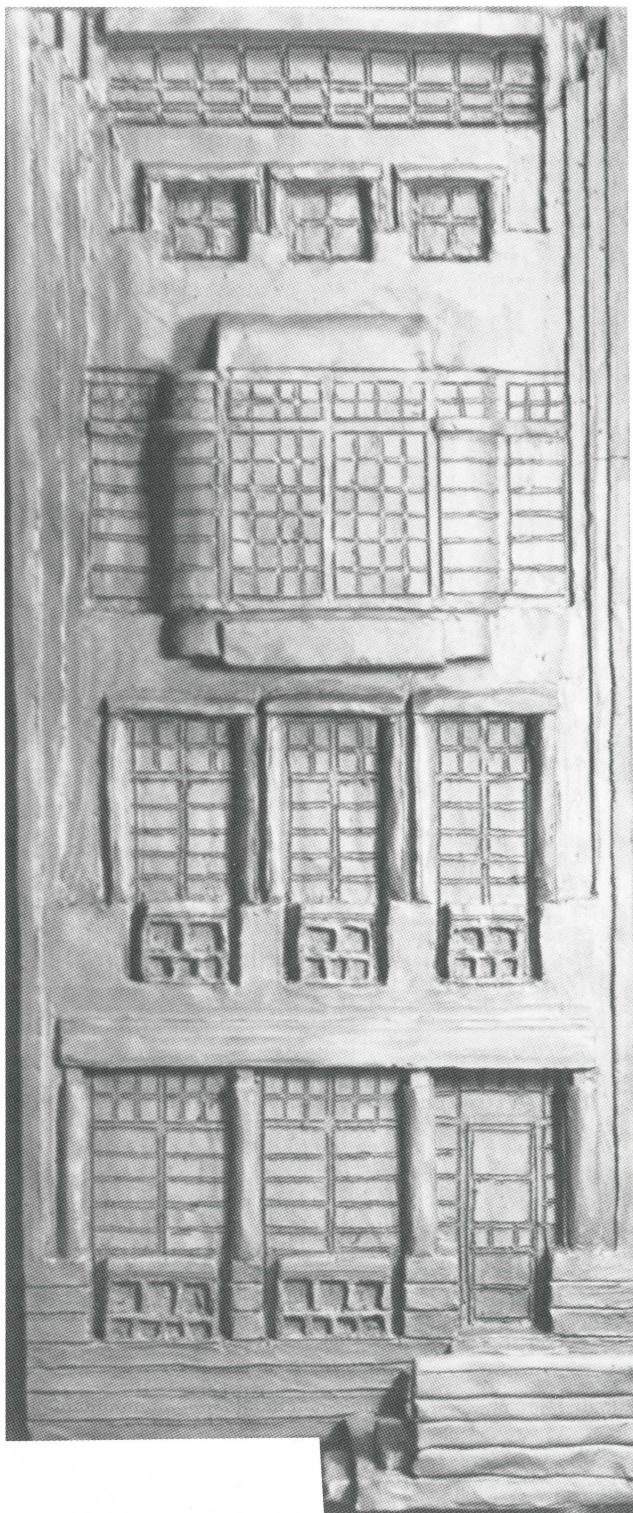
D.C. The collaboration process for art is complicated. Inexperienced artists who have to make presentations can be doomed. Some artists accustomed to working in their studios produce things that lose their meaning in public places. Others have taken the public realm and its problems as their art premise. For an artist to engage in public art, he has to be intrigued by problems specific to its nature.



Study of row house front,
Murray Hill.



Studies for balustrades and
window moldings.



Clay facade model.

Bennett Bean is a potter and clay sculptor. He has recently formed a company, *Columbine*, for the production of large-scale, glazed terra cotta.

Donald Clinton is an associate with Alexander Cooper and Partners. His previous work included theaters, offices, apartments, houses, and a museum.

2-D 3-D

Richard Rudich, artist
Milton Newman, architect

J.V. *How would you describe your project?*

R.R. Our project is not site specific but rather a generic terra cotta product that could be used in many situations, like a ceramic tile. We are designing a block compatible with mass-produced concrete block that would enhance the appeal of this economic material.

M.N. Our goal is to develop a simple, standardized terra cotta block, compatible with standard concrete blocks, that would be widely accessible for use in small-scale projects. In the past terra cotta was used in a monumental way in primarily architect-designed contexts. The units were large and therefore both unwieldy and expensive. We are interested in both reducing the unit size and in utilizing new technologies for the application of both glazed and relief finishes in order to benefit from the economy of mass production. I am particularly interested in the possibility of changing the way ordinary concrete block is perceived, juxtaposing it with this similar, but slightly more refined material.

J.V. *What previous concerns in your own work have you brought to the project?*

R.R. My work often deals with layers of associations in traditional imagery. The ornamental aspect of this project invites this kind of reference to the rich historical use of terra cotta.

M.N. I like to use simple materials in a straightforward way. So my impulse has been to make terra cotta a more simple material, easily produced and accessible to many people.

J.V. *Have either of you had experience in the other's field?*

R.R. I went to architecture school where I first met Milton. After I left, I began to work in clay and painting; my interest in architecture still continues to affect my work.

M.N. I took a ceramic course Richard taught almost ten years ago.

J.V. *Was any role of clay in architecture important for you?*

R.R. I have been interested in the frequent use of clay to enhance architecture—like in Babylonian relief bricks, and glazed tiles of Persian Islamic art. Even the possibilities of decorative patterns using common brick are exciting.

M.N. Historically, I believe, terra cotta was thought of and used primarily as an exterior veneer. I am interested in exploring its potential both in interior applications and as a structural material that could work with brick or concrete block to embellish a wall as it is being built, rather than being applied in a later stage of construction.

J.V. *How did you divide the responsibilities of collaboration?*

M.N. Richard did most of the clay work. I worked with photographs that could work in terms of the silk-screen idea.

R.R. There was a lot of interplay of ideas from the beginning. Milton tended to think of larger conceptual concerns. I was interested in the physical realization, but both of us made esthetic judgments as the project evolved.

J.V. *What are the rewards of collaboration?*

M.N. For me it has provided a way to break out of somewhat rigid, habitual thought and work patterns.

R.R. Collaboration forces you to reconsider comfortable and predictable aspects of your work. It was very instructive to work with Milton, who is very clear-thinking and totally uncorrupted by art world jargon and fashion.

J.V. *What has been most challenging?*

R.R. Because of the dynamic of our collaboration, I'm often uncertain about the final direction of the work. My priorities and sense of process are different from Milton's and frequent communication is necessary to make some decisions.

J.V. *Were any previous collaborations a stimulation?*

R.R. I'm generally interested in the use of relief sculpture in classical Greek architecture and in the ancient Orient. I like the idea of public interaction with painted or sculpted surfaces and how these surfaces comment on the architecture itself.

M.N. Function and esthetics are collaborative to me. I'm interested in a building that works well and seems to generate its own esthetic—like the Guggenheim Museum.

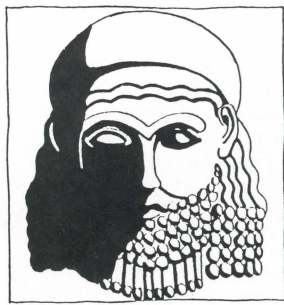
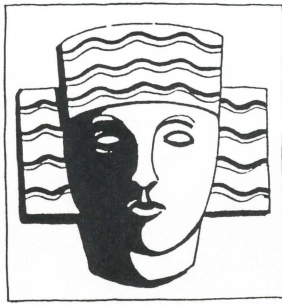
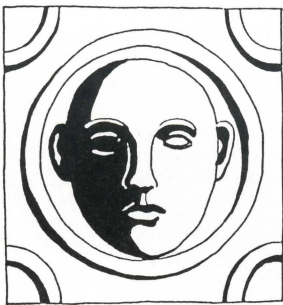
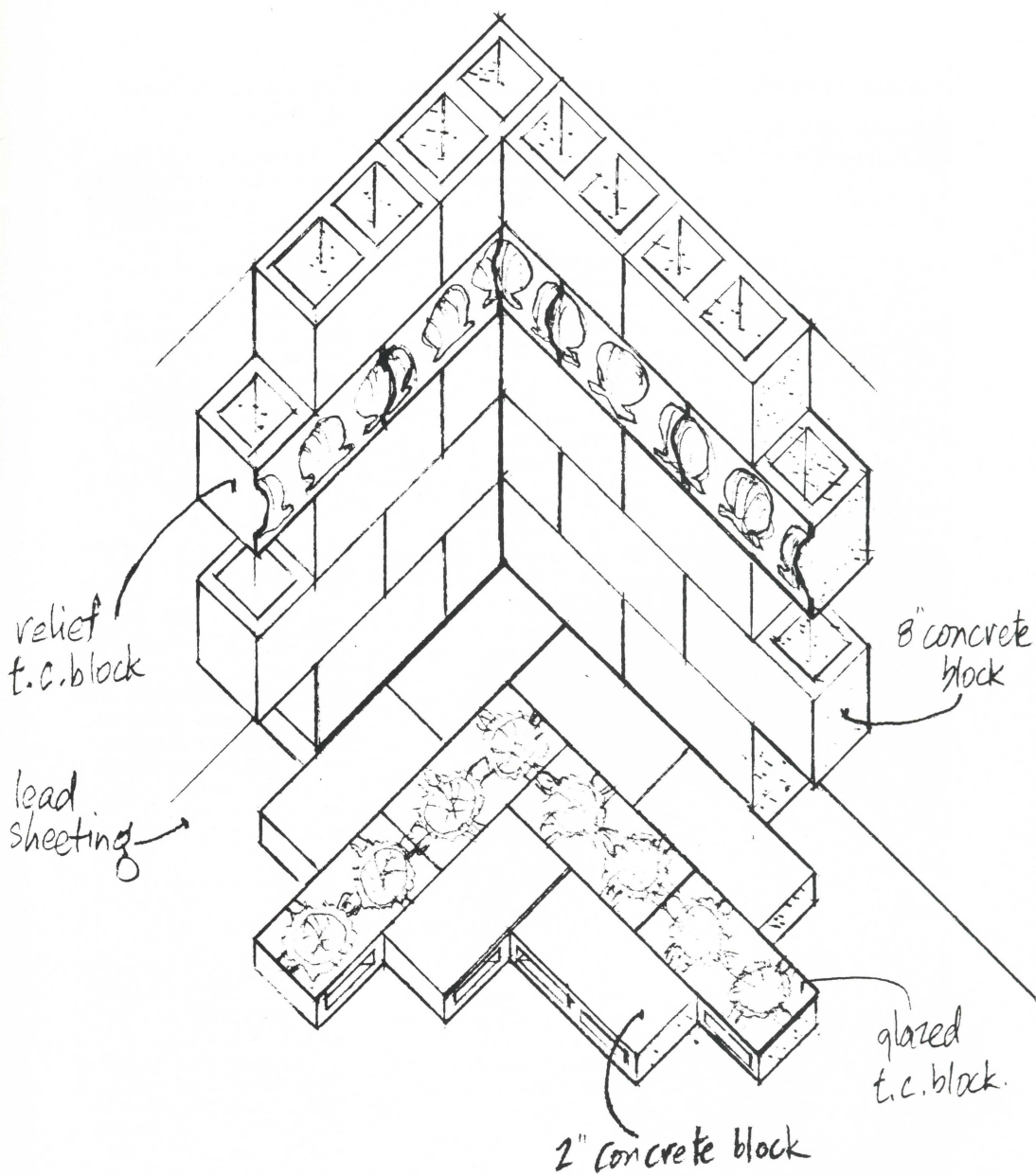
J.V. *What future do you see for collaboration in art and architecture?*

M.N. Originally, the architect was both artist and architect. In an enlightened situation, a good artist and a good architect can work together, but it doesn't happen that often. Today, two separate things happen, just leaving space for each other. The future does not look promising.

R.R. I would like to see more successful integration of public art and ornament with architecture. Artists cannot just use architecture as a backdrop for otherwise irrelevant art.

Richard Rudich is a New York painter and sculptor working in bas-relief ceramic. His work has been shown in group and solo exhibitions.

Milton Newman, architect and lawyer, was a member of the New York City Planning Commission's Urban Design Group. Recently he was architect and developer for the conversion of a Manhattan factory building.



Top: relief and ornamental blocks interspersed with concrete blocks.

Middle: studies for terra cotta relief blocks.

Right: ornamental study for glazed terra cotta blocks.



Clay in Support

Jane Agnew, artist
Ted Bieler, artist
Gail Swithenbank,
architecture student

J.V. *How would you describe your project?*

T.B. We wanted to produce columns of clay that could be used independently or integrated into an architectural structure. Terra cotta is a modular material that can be fabricated in quantity and placed in patterns. My column will be a series of stacked clay pots that is an object in its own right but whose sections could also become a base for something else.

G.S. I think the use of a modular mold with surface texture is important. For example, the components could be placed around reinforcement bars of a building site. The columns are both functional and art objects.

J.V. *What previous concerns in your own work have you brought to the project?*

T.B. For twenty years I have worked on projects that integrate art into the fabric of a building. I have used cast masonry and cast-iron units, poured-in-place concrete walls, and molds of ceramic to bring art and architecture together. Wood columns have been a frequent form for me as a sculptor using modular units as a way of building an image from smaller elements.

G.S. I have been making site specific sculpture in various spaces. I wanted to use the column because it was a new form for me; it will be split open with a Roman ruin inside because architectural change in scale interests me.

J.A. I am interested in the textural and plastic qualities of clay. I am committed to the idea that the material and forming process influence the final piece.

J.V. *Have any of you had experience in the others' field?*

G.S. Ted is an artist who had collaborated frequently with architects. I'm a sculptor now in architecture school, and Jane is a potter and a sculptor.

J.A. I have owned and managed, for several years, a pottery company that makes stoneware for the table.

J.V. *Did you know about the role of clay in architecture?*

T.B. My column will be based on elements of a brick tower built in North Persia. Beyond that I am familiar with Sullivan's reliefs in Buffalo, as well as piece molds and clay reliefs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

G.S. I didn't know much about clay but I spent some time looking at buildings in New York, as well as cast-iron columns in Soho.

J.V. *How did you divide the responsibilities of collaboration?*

G.S. As a sculptor studying architecture, I found the idea of columns the most feasible. Each of us will make a column using the same system of production and place them in a group exhibiting three different esthetics. Ted brings an extensive use of styrofoam mold making and Jane has a factory that makes clay objects. By combining resources, each of us has been pushed further in techniques and thinking by the project.

J.V. *What are the rewards of collaboration?*

T.B. I worked with clay as a student and this project has opened up possibilities of clay for the future which is exciting for me.

G.S. The reward has been new techniques and thinking. I had used clay in the past as slip but never used styrofoam as molds for casting in clay as a building unit.

J.A. Although I have never worked with an architect before, this project has allowed me to experiment with clay body formulation and explore the capacity of the material.

J.V. *What has been most challenging?*

T.B. It has been hard to function within a tight budget and time frame. Each of us has command over only one technical aspect and must depend and trust another's expertise.

J.A. The challenge for me was to find a clay body that offered a glazing surface that is industrially produced, meets market needs, and artistic preferences. A column of repeatable units presents problems of size, weight, and transportation.

J.V. *Were any previous collaborations a stimulation?*

T.B. I have worked with a number of Toronto architects. There is an initial excitement among the collaborators for the possibilities of the site. Imaginations run wild on all sides. Then practical considerations and hard facts define responsibilities leading to an ultimate resolution.

G.S. An exhibition earlier this year of SITE at the Urban Center of a wall made of modules with a portion disintegrating inspired me. It made me think of an architectural unit that could then become art.

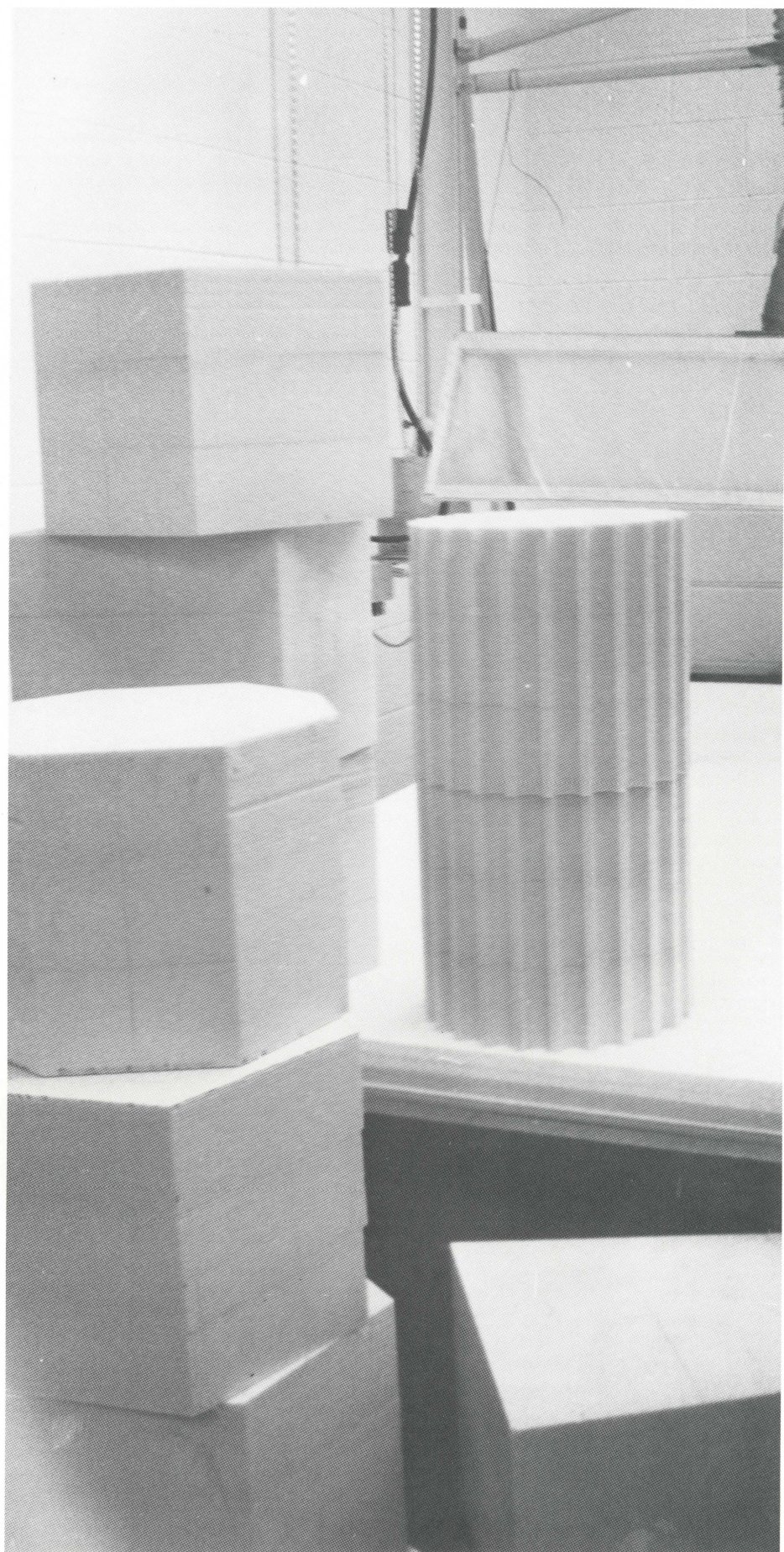
J.V. *What future do you see for collaborations in art and architecture?*

T.B. In pre-cast concrete projects one gears up for a project and that's the end of it. Here there is potential for scaling up or down—making three units or one hundred units. Terra cotta lends itself to the post-modern movement. However, there is a question whether architects really want artists' input and think they are reliable in producing their commitment.

Ted Bieler is a sculptor and professor at York University in Toronto.

Jane Agnew is a sculptor and managing director of Jane's Pottery Factory in North Bay, Ontario.

Gail Swithenbank is a sculptor and graduate student of architecture at Princeton University. She was curator for "The Building of Architectural Vision" shown at City Gallery, New York, in 1986.



Styrofoam modules.

Curator: Susan Tunick
Design: Dennis L. Dollejs
Logo: Janice Carapellucci
Interviews: Jill Viney

Jill Viney is an artist and Yaddo Fellow. She conducted the interviews in this publication and turned them over to the artists for editing or rewriting.

This catalogue was prepared to accompany the exhibit **Firing the Imagination: Artists & Architects Use Clay**, shown in 1988 at the **Urban Center** in New York City and at **Bennington College** in Vermont. The exhibit was sponsored by the **Friends of Terra Cotta, New York State**, and was funded, in part, by the **New York State Council on the Arts**, and **The J. M. Kaplan Fund**. Special thanks to **Gladding McBean and Company**, **California State Library**, **MJM Studios**, **Boston Valley Pottery**, and **Urban Archaeology**.

Publication produced by **Lumen, Inc.**, a tax-exempt, non-profit organization providing design services to other non-profit agencies.

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