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### The three-dimensional painted construction

William Phelan

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I. Title Page

Title: "The Three-Dimensional Painted Construction"

Author: William Phelan

Candidate for the Master of Fine Arts in the  
College of Fine and Applied Arts of the Rochester  
Institute of Technology.

Date of Submission: May 29, 1967

Advisor: Professor Frederick Meyer

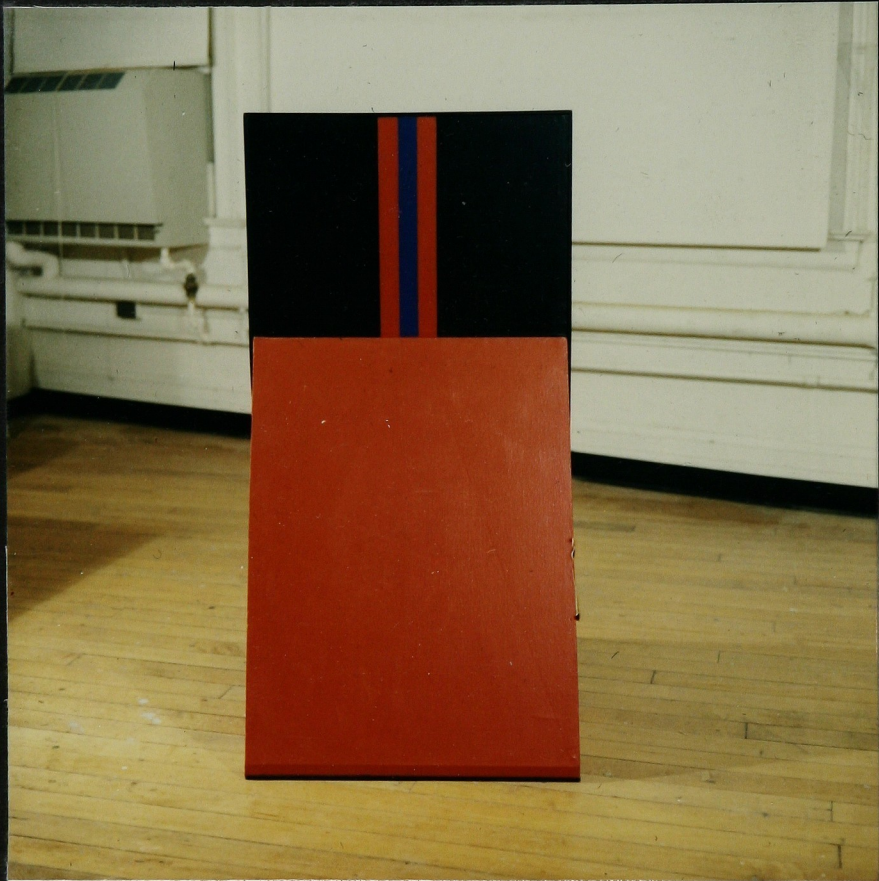
a



b



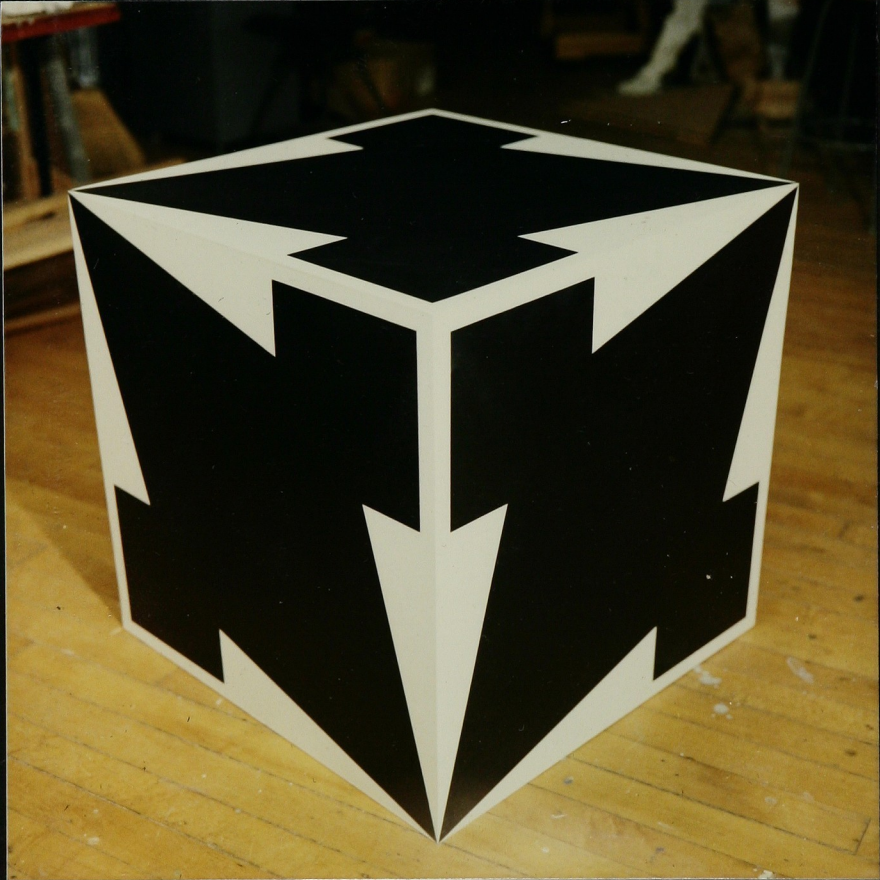
C



d



e

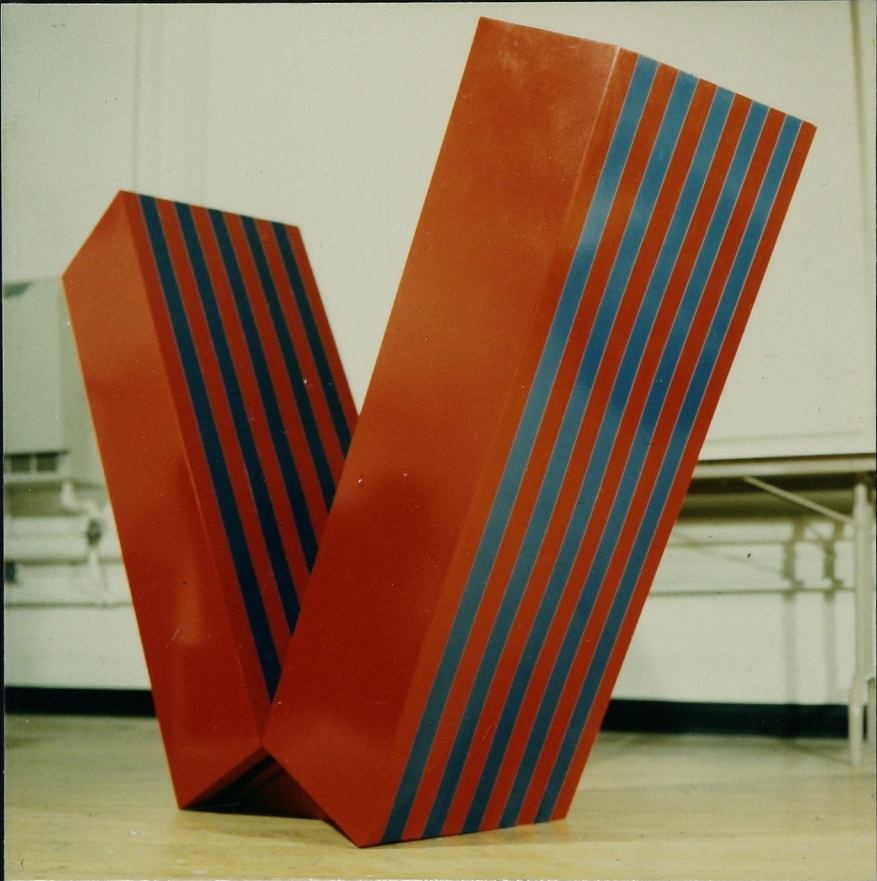


f





g



h





## II. Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the following persons because without their help it would not have been possible:

to Mr. Meyer for his inspiration and advise.

to Jack Clement for the use of his electric sander and drill.

to Fritz Lipp for the use of his garage to spray in.

to Richard LeFevre for the use of his compressor.

to Alan Friedman and Alan Lazarus for so patiently cutting masonite sections.

8/13/68 R.I.T Thesis A+D

97270

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1.

During the past year I have proceeded somewhat systematically towards an involvement with the third-dimension - that is, physical depth or real space.

This procession was accomplished by expanding upon and gradually applying the phenomena and techniques of my previous two-dimensional work to the three-dimensional free-standing construction.

Both the phenomena and techniques changed intrinsically as a result of moving off the wall out into the room.

So much so that I now consider the product of my labor a mutant - neither painting nor sculpture but rather a synthesis of both and hopefully generating in a direction of its own.



2.

" dialectic - the art of proving anything and therefore at last the habit of believing, nothing." 1.

---

1. Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy, p.155

3.

In order to elaborate verbally about the three-dimensional painted construction, certain of its inherent characteristics must somehow be ferreted out. Not without much difficulty on my part however, since these properties are somewhat ineffable and have heretofore been considered in purely visual terms. Consequently, I can only hope to touch upon the proximity of these elusive properties with the right words.

When an art object stands physically against space, its very nature undergoes a change: it is capable then of becoming more than a combination of artistic shapes. Like Stonehenge it can indeed effect a presence. The permanence of its existence is then signaled and by its very nature it seeks out an order and calmness within its own solemn, ageless formation - in direct contrast to the chaos around it. <sup>2</sup>

---

2. Alfred Neumeier, The Search for Meaning in Modern Art, p.44

4.

" What is fundamental in all the arts, ... is the desire and ability to give shape and definition to space. The composition common to all the plastic arts is a dialectic of voids and solids. " 3

---

3. Ibid., pp. 4,5.

5.

The three-dimensional free standing construction is a vehicle which enables the flat surface to extend into space, thus projecting and providing for three-dimensional painted space simultaneously.

It is ideally monumental\*, linear\*, modular\*, and poignantly simple in its peculiar sort of reluctant eloquence.

Its primary intention is to effect presence - precipitating from a body that concomitantly involves surface delineation and hue.

Presence is at once peaceful,  
yet seeks dramatic lighting to enhance its quiet  
form.  
It is simple in derivation,  
yet becomes intricately exciting-  
when resolved in precarious balance.

---

\*monumental - straining towards heroic proportions

\*linear - crisp mechanically calculated lines, thin  
curtains tilted on edge - dissecting invis-  
ible voids

\*modular - re-occurring units of rectangular tangents

6.

" They may at first tease only the eye, then occupy the mind. Finally they can suddenly attack our innermost pattern of experience. Thus the brain lacks an explanation for the phenomena straight lines can produce. Irritation, wonder, discovery, and pleasure result. "4

---

4. Josef Albers, Despite Straight Lines, p.9

7.

Color is relative - to other colors. There is no such thing as a good one or a bad one. A hue can be used in the right proportional relationship with another or not. This alone determines its effectiveness for me.

I attempt to combine hues of close value to make them vibrate, sing to one another, pulse and flash, and in so doing their scintillations satiate the retina causing a new pattern of awareness.

The straight line is capable of re-enforcing this process by enabling flat color planes to lift and shift, jump forward or recede in the most direct manner possible.

My particular involvement with selecting, placing, and combining colors requires the spectator to do as much of the work as possible. The hues are mixed in his eyes not on the work itself or beforehand on the palette. For this reason even factory selected paints straight from the can are useful and play their part.

8.

" The art and poetry of Zen create involvement by means of the interval, not by the connection used in the visually organized Western world. Spectator becomes artist in Oriental art because he must supply all the connections. " 5

---

5. Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media:  
The Extensions of man, p.vi.

9.

I am caught up with and fascinated by the propensities of simplicity. To my mind's eye simplicity of form offers the most direct route to those senses most directly involved with perception; like a symbol it gathers up and formulates the ideas of inward experience.<sup>6</sup>

" A work of art differs from a genuine symbol - that is, a symbol in the full and usual sense - in that it does not point beyond itself to something else. " <sup>7</sup>

Simplification is capable of reversing itself.

It becomes complex by intensifying experience, reflecting intangible forms in a way that provides insight and feeling in depth.

It rejects the concept of mimesis, which is the representation of natural phenomena or mirroring of objective realities. Instead, nonobjective symbol structures indicate inner states of mind. It is in this way we look inside ourselves.<sup>8</sup>

" Art has always tended to move away from contemporary actual realities - even to the point where the artist creates for himself worlds that have not existed before ... it constitutes a new way of looking at the world, it also projects a new content." <sup>9</sup>

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6. Langer, p. 80

7. Ibid.

8. Neumeyer, p.V

9. Ibid, p.2.



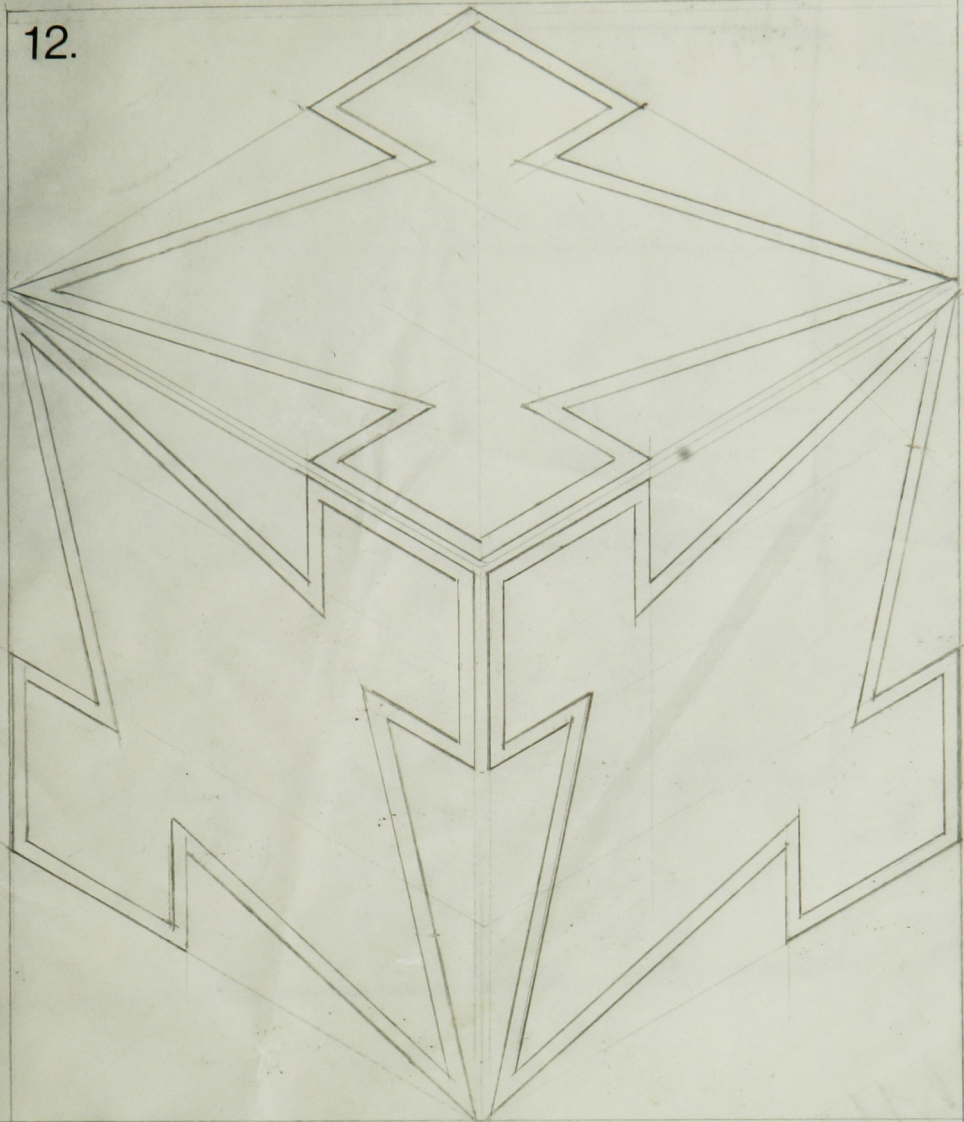
10.

" The question is, of course, whether nature as the modern scientist conceives it can be represented at all, except in spectral mathematical equations. Philosophers of science concur in saying it cannot ... Our understanding of nature has now reached a stage, says J.W.N. Sullivan, when we cannot picture what we are talking about. But this utterance of the philosophers contains an unwarranted assumption: that whereas man's capacity for intellectual abstraction is ever widening, his visual imagination is fixed and circumscribed. Here the philosophers are reckoning without the host, since our visualizing powers are determined for us not by them but by the men who paint. Our visual imagination thanks to those in whom it is creative, is also in perpetual growth ... Thus the art of the last half century may well be schooling our eyes to live at ease with the new concepts forced upon our credulity by scientific reasoning. "

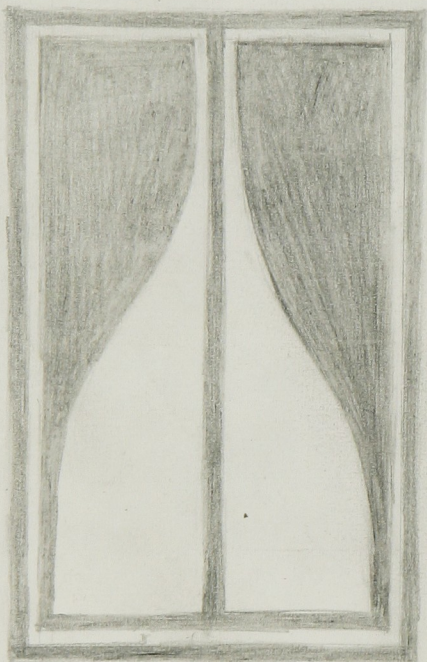
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8. McLuhan, Marshall. Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. New York: Mc Graw-Hill, 1966.
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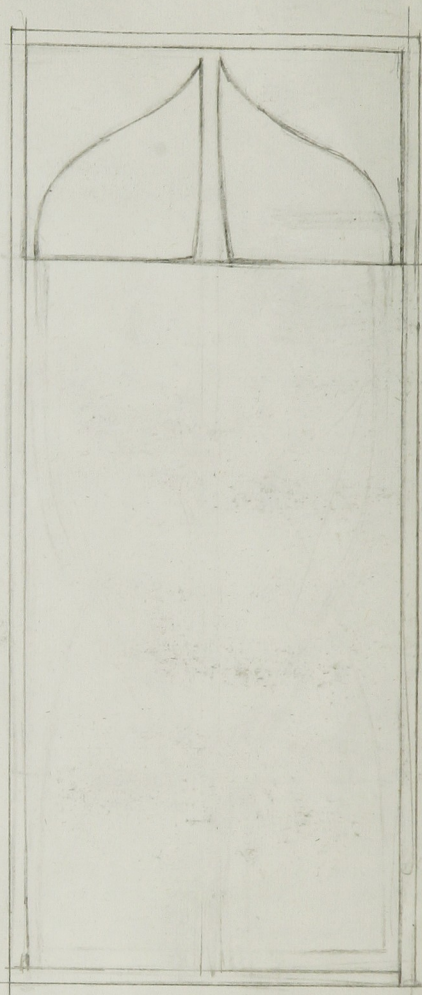
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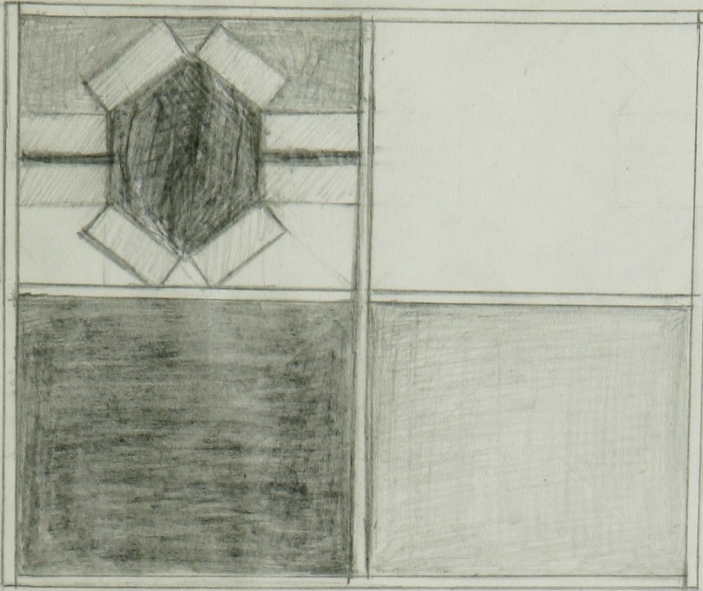


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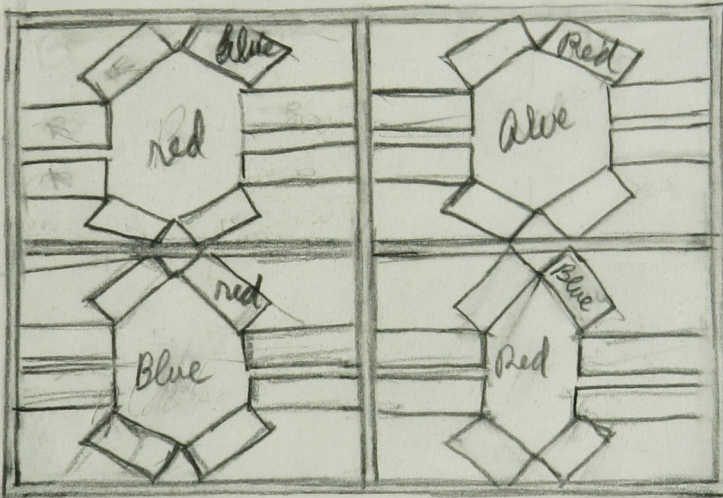


*yellow & white on canvas -  
one becomes the other.*





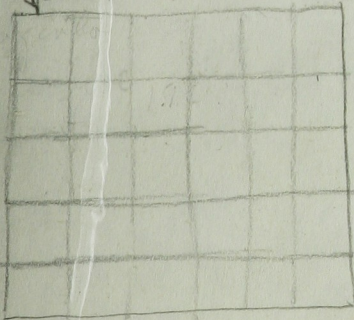
final result



~~square~~ square  
 staves with  
 stripes running  
 horizontally. ~~then~~  
 vertically.  
 method of construction  
 on insulating material  
 1. wood (ply) too thin  
 should be at least  
 1/2 inch thick  
 2. too difficult to  
 paint on when  
 assembled.  
 3. mistakes an  
 surface show.

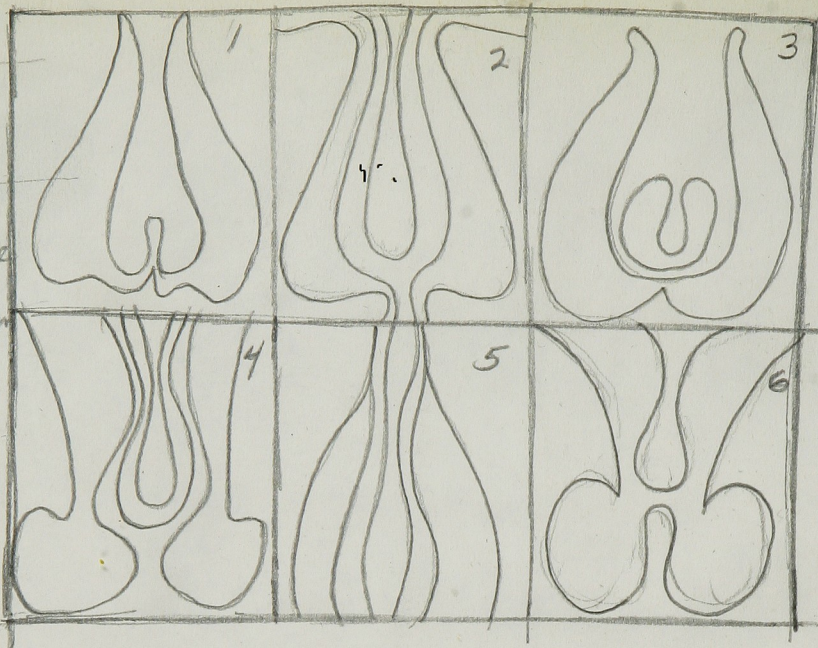
alk  
 in ship  
 eted.

etching



exactly  
 paint big large  
 enough to fit  
 through door.  
 individual square  
 panels silk screened  
 on wood & assembled

cod.  
yellow  
light.



mixture of  
cod. red. light  
yellow orange  
azo E white  
(titanium)

1. gray (purplish)

mixture of 3 parts  
~~red~~ Titanium White  
1 part cod. yellow light  
1 part ~~red~~ yellow orange azo  
1 part cerulean blue

2. cadmium orange  
pink - cadmium red light & white

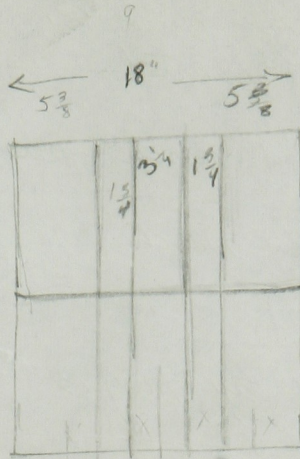
3. light green - mixture of 3 parts titanium white  
1 part cod. yellow light  
1 part cobalt blue

4. cadmium red light & white  
light green ?

5. ton ?  
yellow light

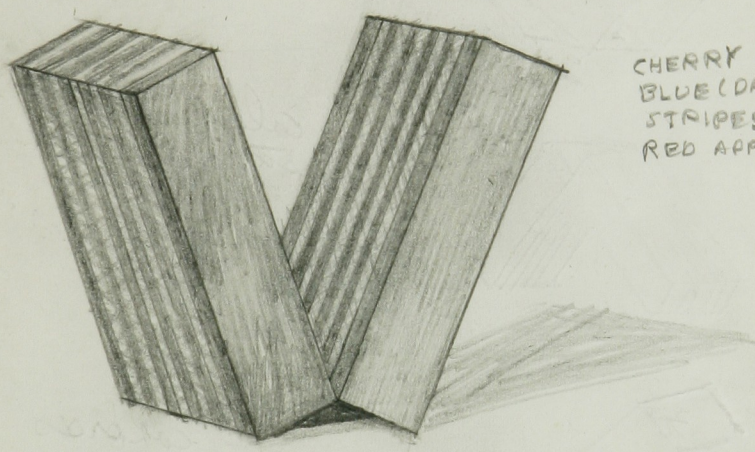
6. gray (blue) cadmium red medium  
cobalt blue  
white.

16.



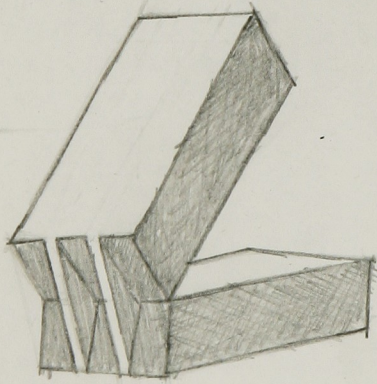
$$\begin{array}{r} 11\frac{1}{4} \\ 3\frac{1}{2} \\ \hline 14\frac{3}{4} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 17\frac{4}{4} \\ 14\frac{3}{4} \\ \hline 3\frac{1}{4} \end{array}$$

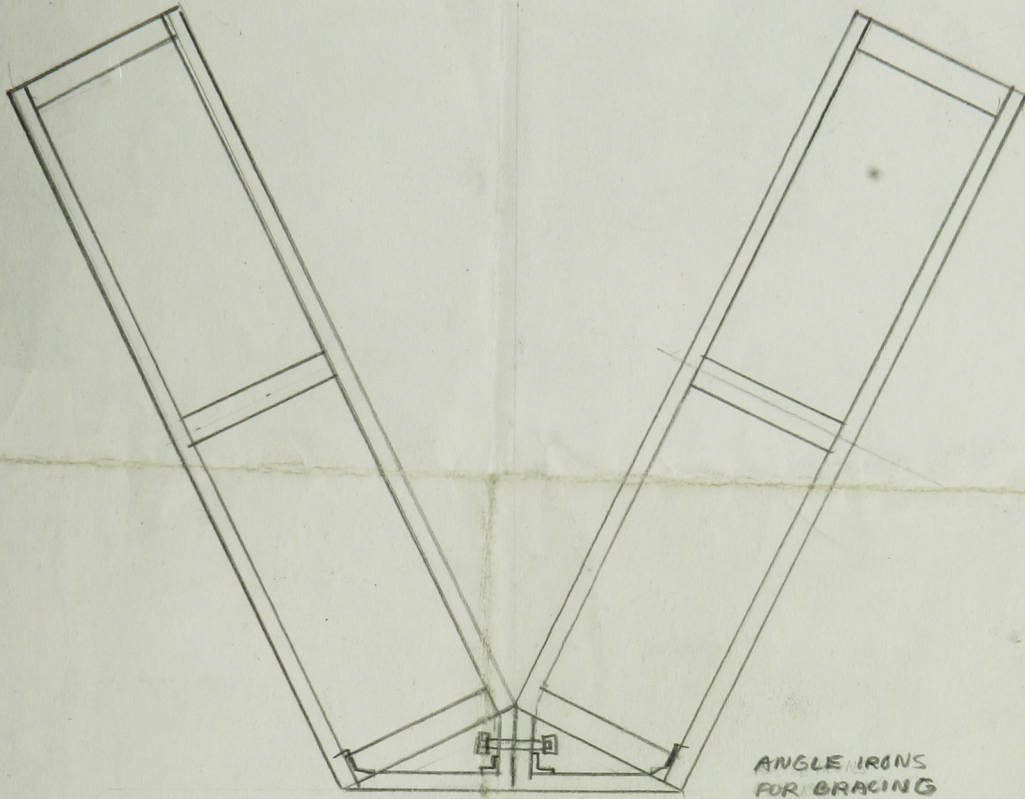
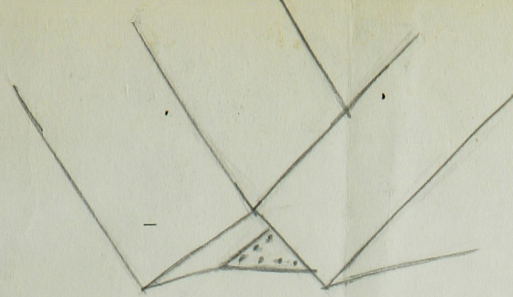


10  
8  
CHERRY RED  
BLUE (DARK)  
STRIPES.  
RED APPLIED 1ST.

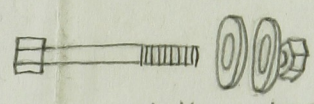
17.



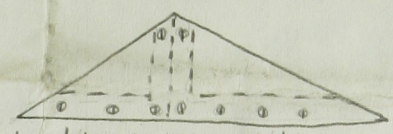




ANGLE IRONS FOR BRACING



2 special bolts at base TO LOCK-TWO SIDES TOGETHER.



hard board skin would be screwed in place to permit assembly & disassembly for movement

alternate method

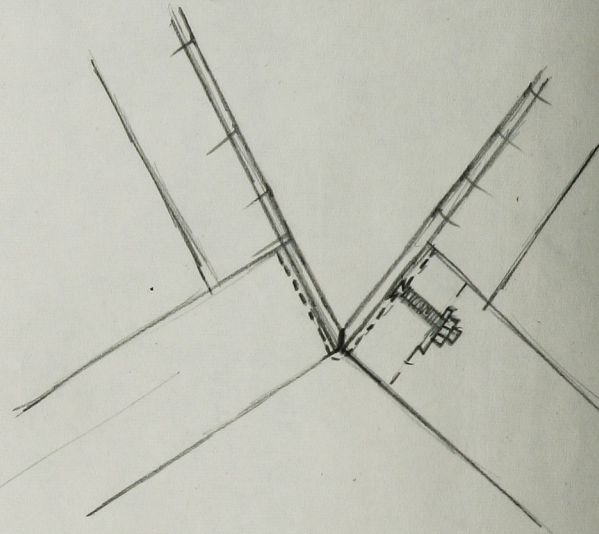
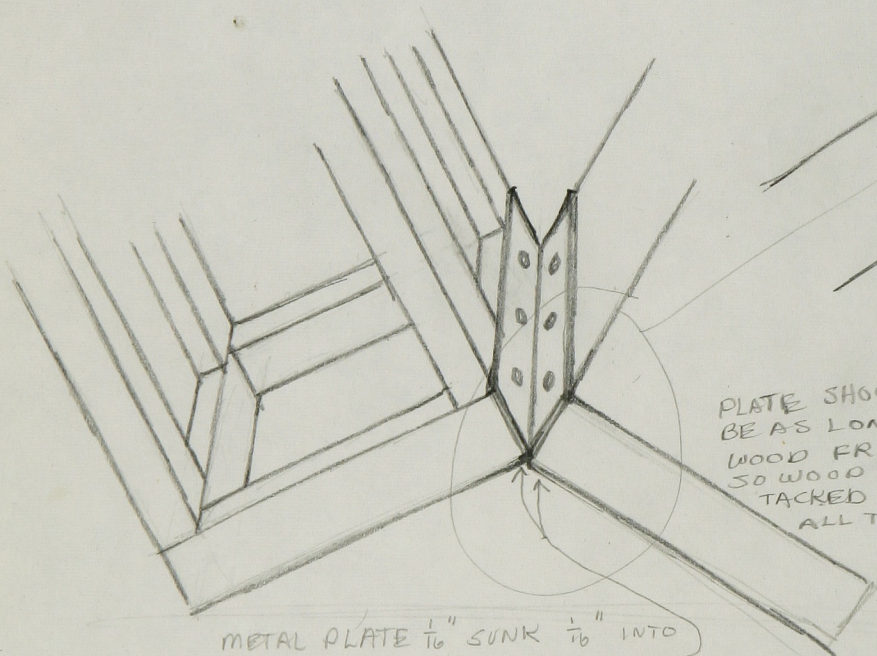
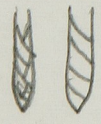


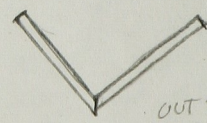
PLATE SHOULD NOT BE AS LONG AS WOOD FRAME - SO WOOD CAN BE TACKED ON SIDE ALL THE WAY TO 45° SEAM

METAL PLATE  $\frac{1}{16}$ " SUNK  $\frac{1}{16}$ " INTO WOOD OF FRAME  
OUTSIDE SKIN IS THEN MOUNTED OVER &

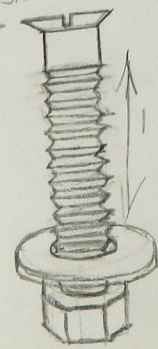


2 METAL DRILLS  
ONE FOR SCREW HOLE  
ONE FOR SINKING HEAD  
OF SCREW.

SCREWS SHOULD BE PLAT HEAD TYPE →



OUTSIDE SKIN 45° to glued



$1 \frac{3}{8}$ " nut & bolt.

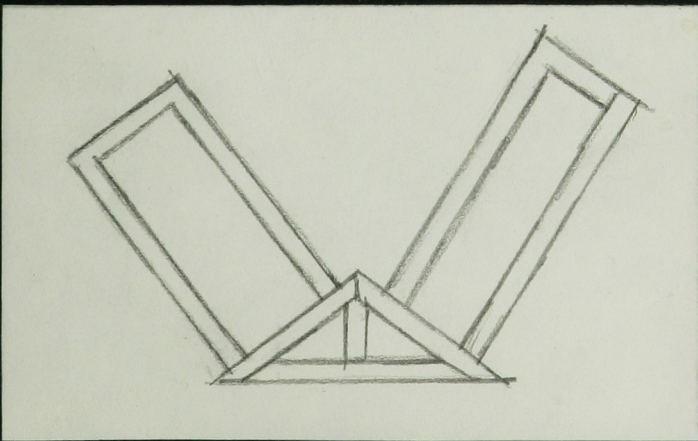
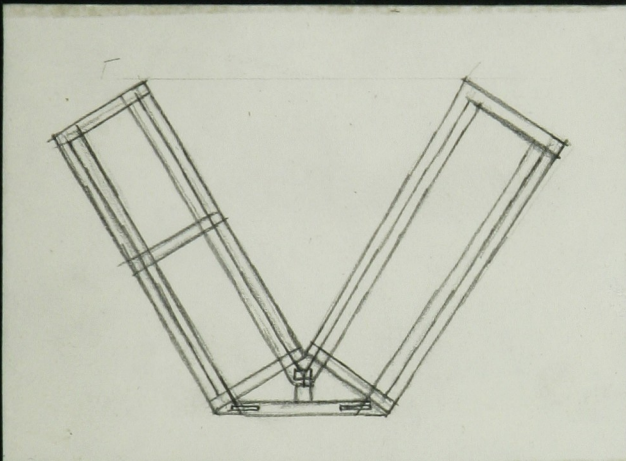
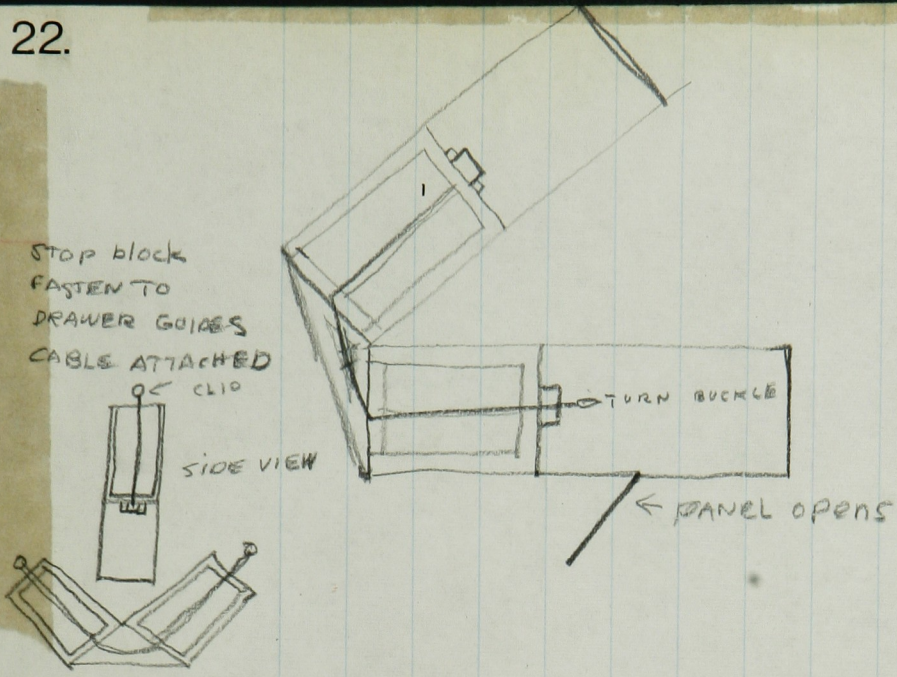
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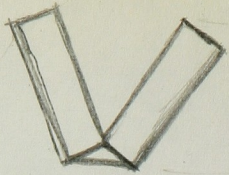


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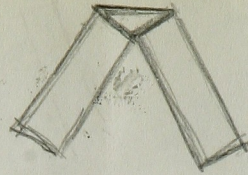


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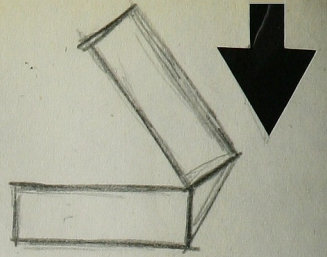




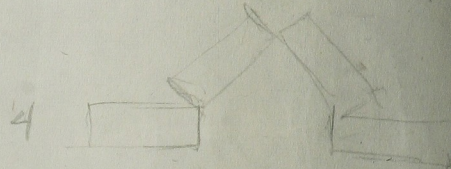
1. disassembled from the bottom no bolts  
drawer mechanism.  
Painted 2 solid colours  
epoxy paint  
sprayed clear epoxy  
huffed



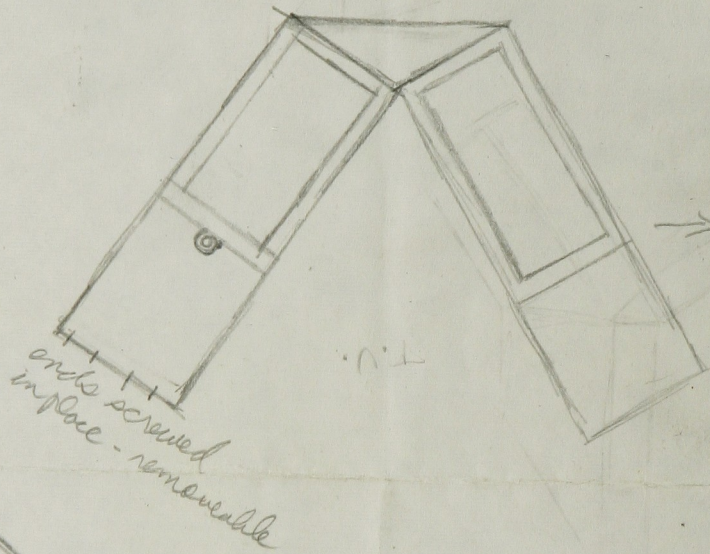
2. drawer mechanism slides in from top and is bolted from bottom



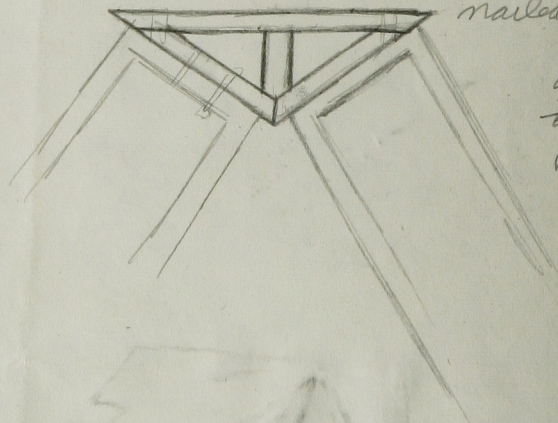
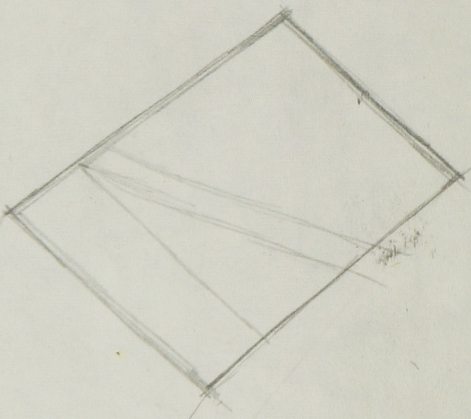
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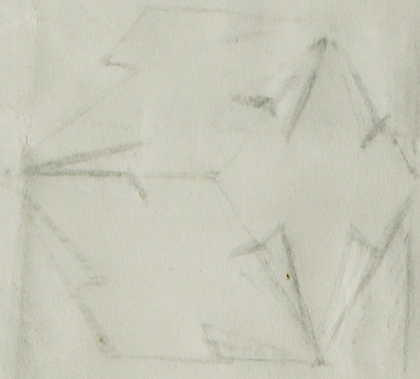
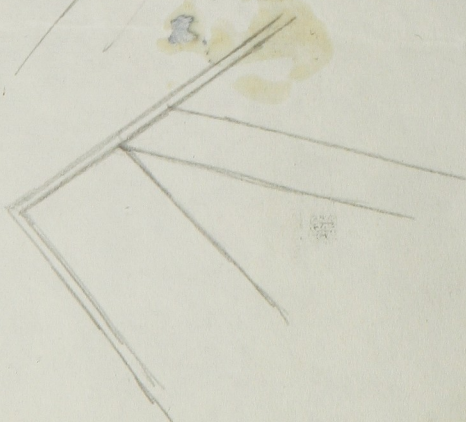
4.



ends screwed in place - removable



nailed & screwed  
when fitting  
tack pattern  
pieces to  
outside for  
for flush



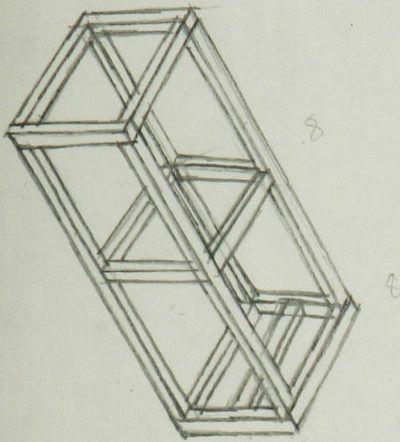
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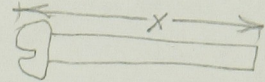


FRAMING



50 braces L with screws  
for 2 rec.  
(nails depending  
on size of framing)  
 $1\frac{5}{8}$ " = 2" finish nails

- 1 hammer.
- 1 elmers glue
- 1 sandpaper (rough fine)
- 1" fine finish nails



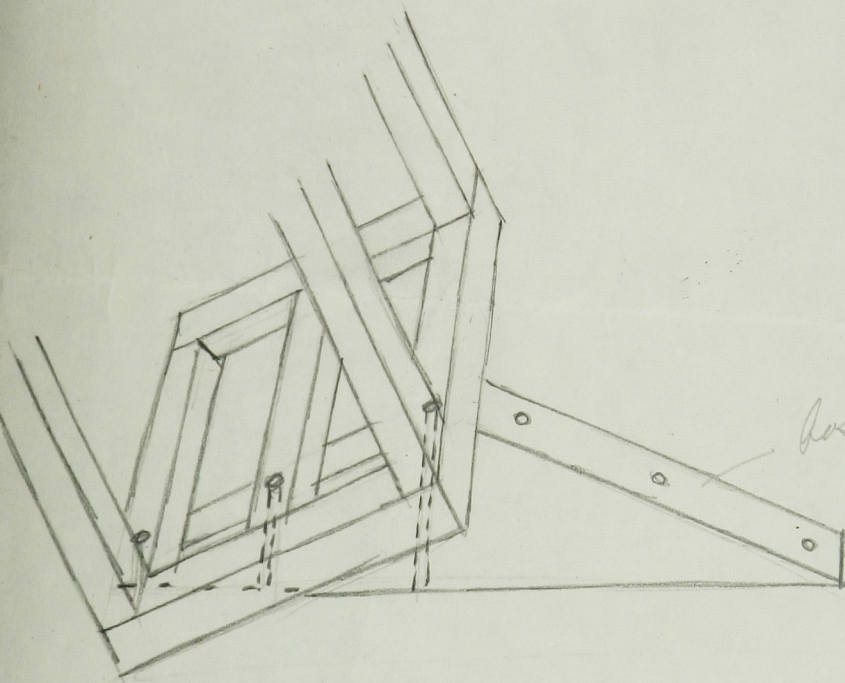
bolts & nuts per base

9" quantity - (2) width  $\frac{1}{4}$ "  
width of  
bolt  $\frac{3}{8}$ " or  $\frac{9}{16}$ "

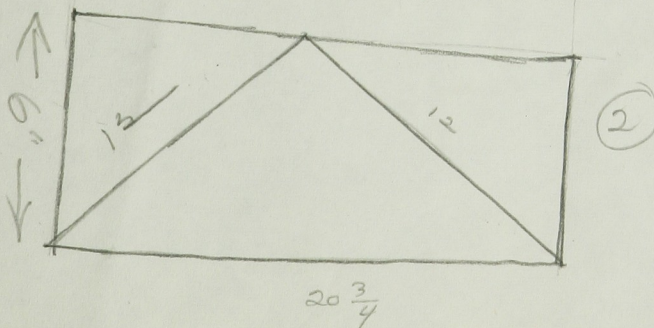
$2\frac{1}{8}$ " x  $\frac{3}{16}$ "  
bolt  $\frac{3}{8}$ " (2)

12 bolts in all  
2 sides

5" quantity (2) width  $\frac{1}{4}$ "  
bolt nut -  $\frac{1}{2}$ "



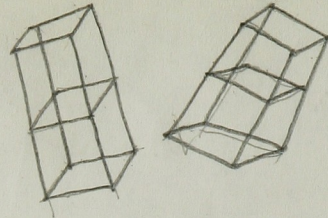
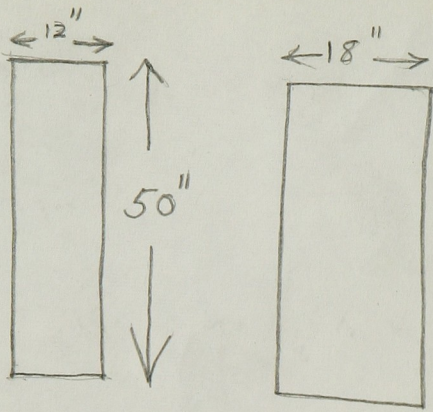
base hardwood



$11\frac{3}{4}$

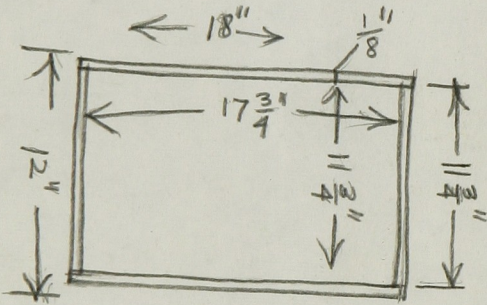
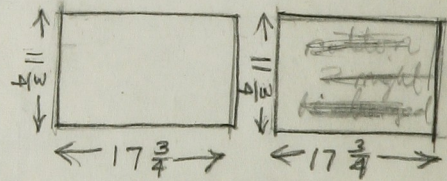
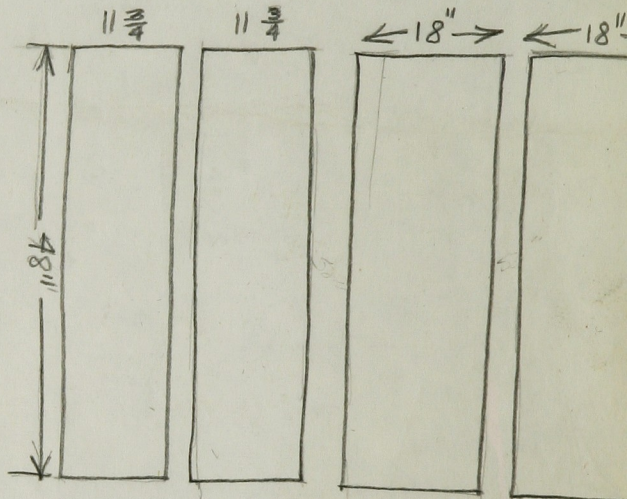
27.

parts needed for 1 construction

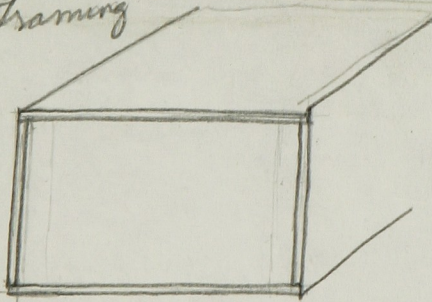


48

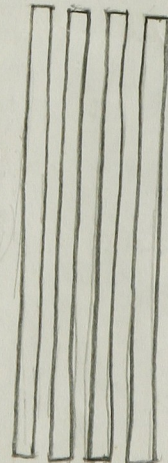
1 segment =



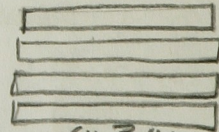
Framing



framing not figured exactly  
rough estimation. - depending on 1/8" of frame  
1 segment

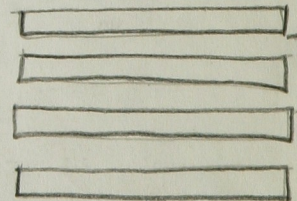


sides



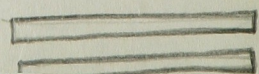
top & bottom

(11 3/4") 12"



top & bottom

(14 1/2) 18"



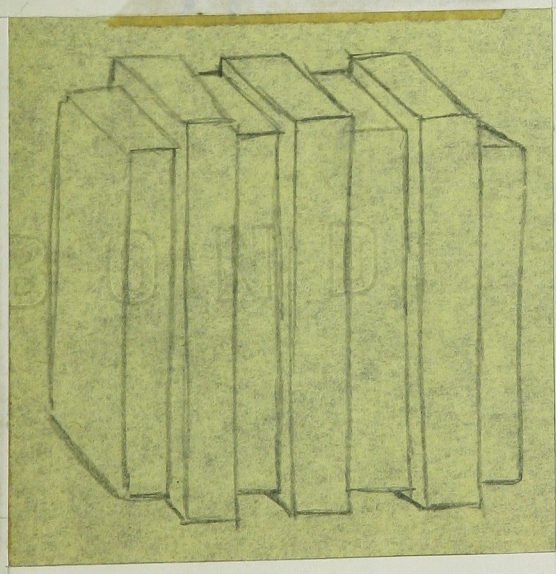
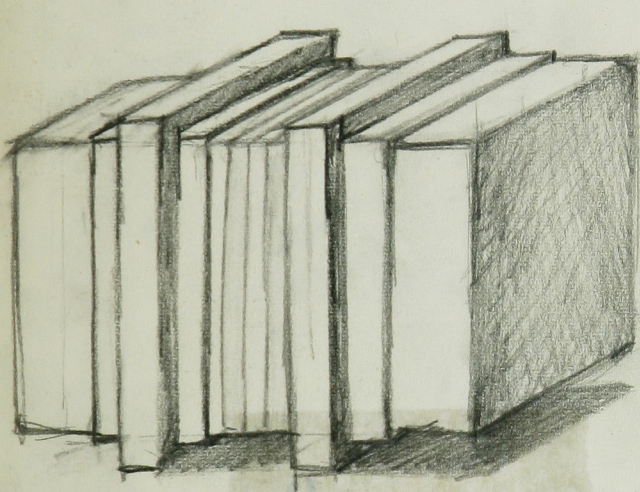
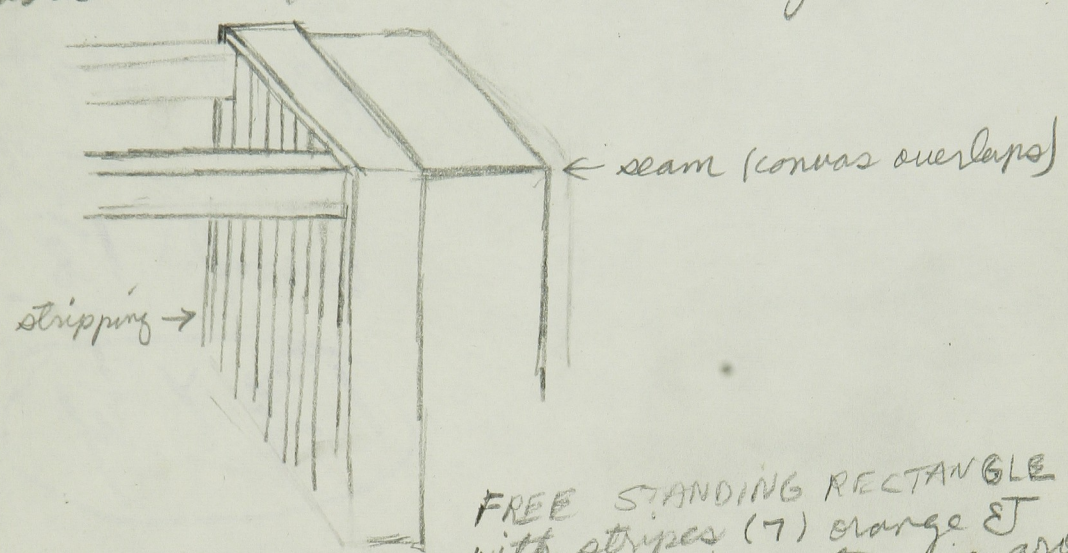
side fram

$$\frac{4 \times 12}{48}$$

$$\frac{17 \frac{3}{4} + 3 \frac{1}{4}}{14 \frac{2}{4}}$$

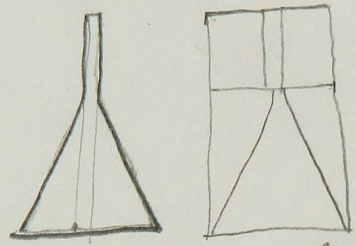
double →

if the center had been left open (usually) so that the inside structure could have come into play with the outside a more exciting solution would have been possible. Unfortunately the materials used prevented doing this. Perhaps if constructed of plywood & transparent plastic with transparent striping on the plastic were executed a more exciting piece might evolve. ↓



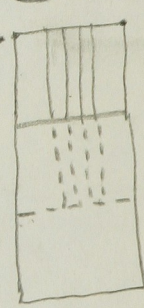
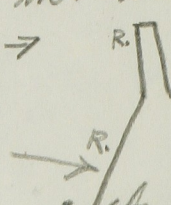
FREE STANDING RECTANGLE with stripes (7) orange & white running centerwise around all four sides. legs worked as planned - to support structure and elevate it from resting surface. assumed an organic - animal like quality even though only straight lines are used. A sort of architectural quality is present but not in the direct way of monumentality. Although it is an unsuccessful work it leads to several other possibilities. The construction & materials used defeat what I was after. Even if it were constructed with more rigid materials the end result (as previously expected) would not contain enough forceful projection. Perhaps because I have reached a state of mind wherein more static projection into space is not enough in itself. It falls short by answering conventional sculptural requirements - which it does not do all that well anyway.

1. a rectangular - triangular stretched canvas.



restating the physical shape of the side by painting it on the front does not result in meaningful break up of the space.

the canvas itself - protruding ~~towards~~ outward is too powerful to allow lines in positions other than verticle (perhaps) - to result in a pleasant break up of frontal - sideal ~~of~~ areas involved. - experiment al use of "one shot" sign paint proved ~~less than~~ unsatisfactory. - acrylic dries with semi-sheen when used with water and waxes - creates a new dimension by adding a rubber like quality to the materials.

after pushing all aspects as far as possible the total esthetic experience is not satisfactory because of warping the lines and edges do not junction properly. Desired result with reverse after images on both sides achieved which also divides canvas in 3. →  also direct overhead lighting creates 2 different intensities in the same color applications → 

initial experiment with row exposed canvas in part proved disastrous because it left ridges or raised areas on the surface. - possible for future use if exaggerated. - raising entire structure 2" off the floor resulted in a floating effect. but had no relation to what in the totality.