30 YEARS
Martin Field



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Thank you Michael Pullee for our fortuitous meeting on the stairs of Huddersfield Art School and for accepting me there and then onto the Foundation studies. You set the course for the rest of my life.
Thanks to my teachers - Bill Cowper, Nick Stevens, John 'Pop' Shaw, Peter Gorge, and many others who inspired and supported me in the early days.
Nigel Slight, you said I was a fool if I went into teaching.....
I think it was all for the best.

My apologies to the unknown photographers on page 71 who I am unable to credit.

Finally; Thank you Roz for all your patience and forebearance.

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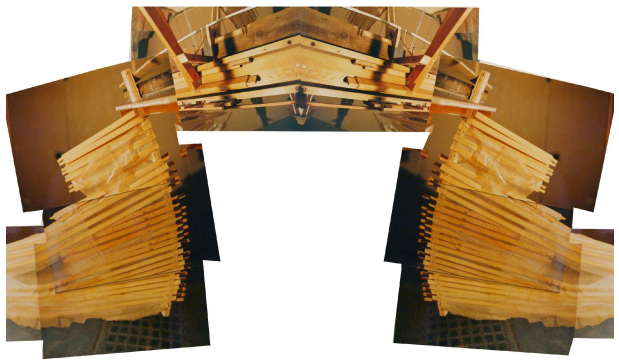




Cheltenham 1975 - 1978

30 Years and more

More than 30 years ago I became an art student. How quickly the years seem to have passed by. What is there to show for the time?

This is a summary of my periodical return to, and development of various sculptural themes over the last 34 years.



Photo booth nightmares from student union ID cards.



An exercise in colour in year 1 using a limited palette (no blue) shows my limitations as a painter.

The photos (left) from student union cards show the limitations of the subject.

I arrived at Cheltenham in the autumn of 1975 aged 19 and with little in the way of art qualifications. I had an 'O' level in Art. I had no 'A' levels having crashed and burned at sixth form doing sciences. I had managed to put together enough of a folio on foundation at Huddersfield to get me past the interview even though they judged my drawing inept (I saw the interview summary later by accident).

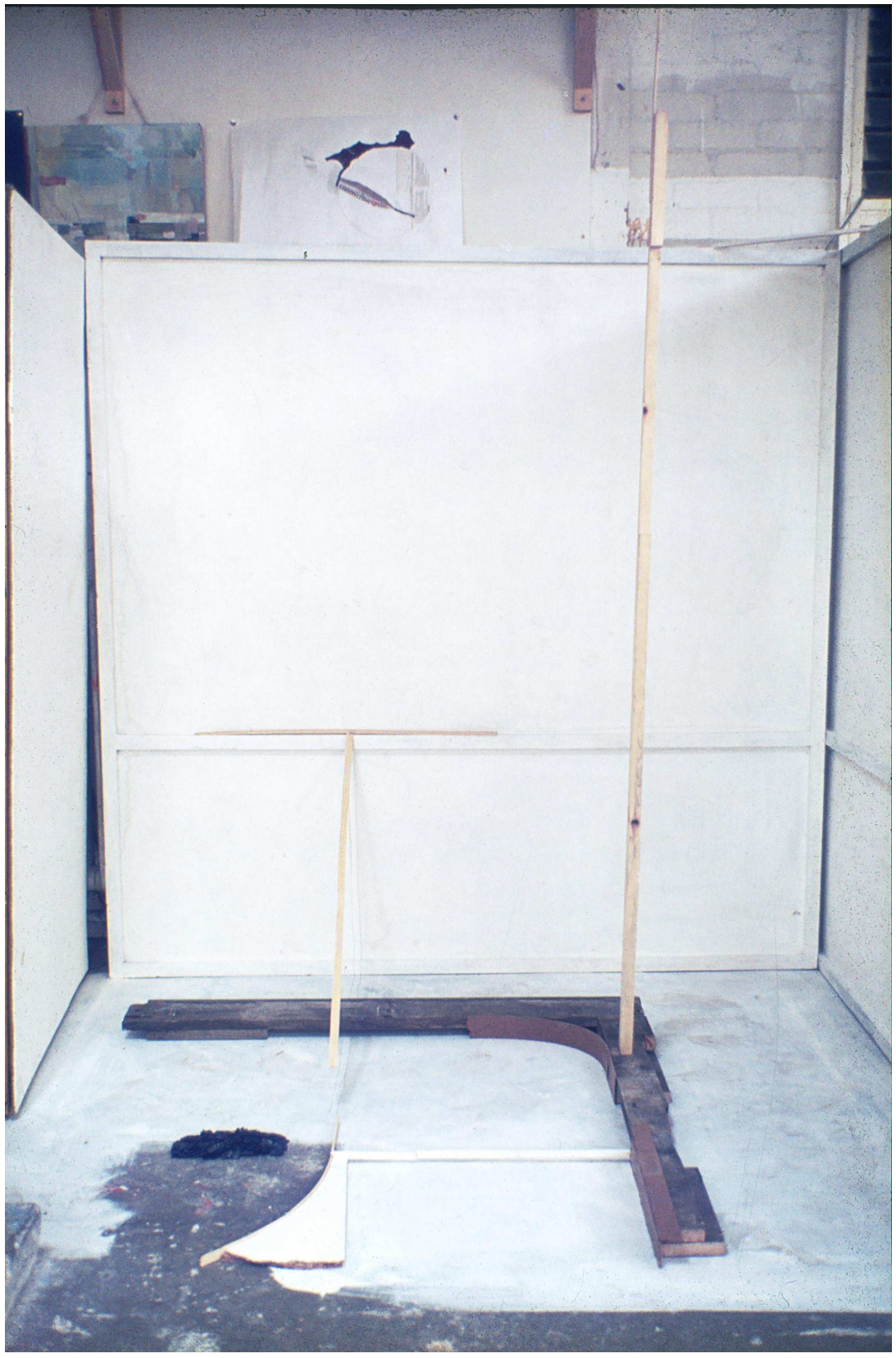
And so it was that at that stage I was somewhat lacking in confidence. I was away from home for the first time, in the unfamiliar south, surrounded by a crowd positively buzzing with the excitement of their talent and potential. I looked on in awe and tried to reinvent myself. I painted a lot of self portraits.

Over the next year or so I slowly realised that I could probably hack it, that I could be creative, and I began to find a direction in my work. Towards the end of the first year we had to decide on a course, my decision was to opt for sculpture.

The second year was probably the first time that I began to make work which had a meaning. We were given a project to research an artist or art movement and to produce work based upon our learning. I chose the Futurists and became, for a short while, engaged with their aims and manifesto. I was also influenced by the work of a fellow student and his use of Perspex. The material had all the right qualities for me. It transmitted light and almost lost its physicality becoming a line of energy. Dynamism, force and controlled energy became themes in my sculpture.

About this time I discovered the possibilities of casting and began casting and working with inflated forms.
The most readily available of these were inner tubes sourced as scrap from a local garage. I used the compressor in the workshops to inflate them. Angus, the technician had serious misgivings about my capabilities with a hefty compressor and a four foot inner tube. He insisted I put the cable through an opened window and blow the tubes up outside. Despite his worries, or more likely because of them, I never actually exploded a tube.
The circular form initially represented a controlling force around a beam. Later the surface of the form itself became the 'controlled event' with built or added structure to represent expanding and compressing forces in balance. As the work progressed the forms themselves took on symbolic significance.

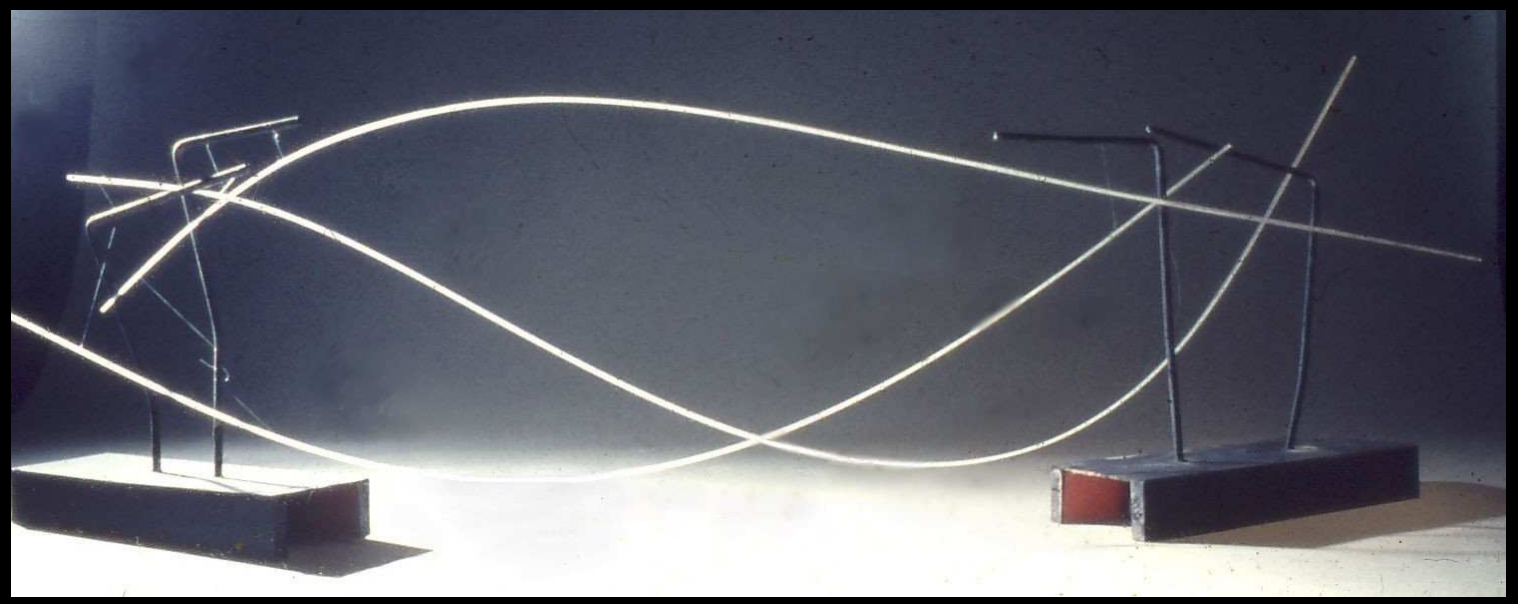




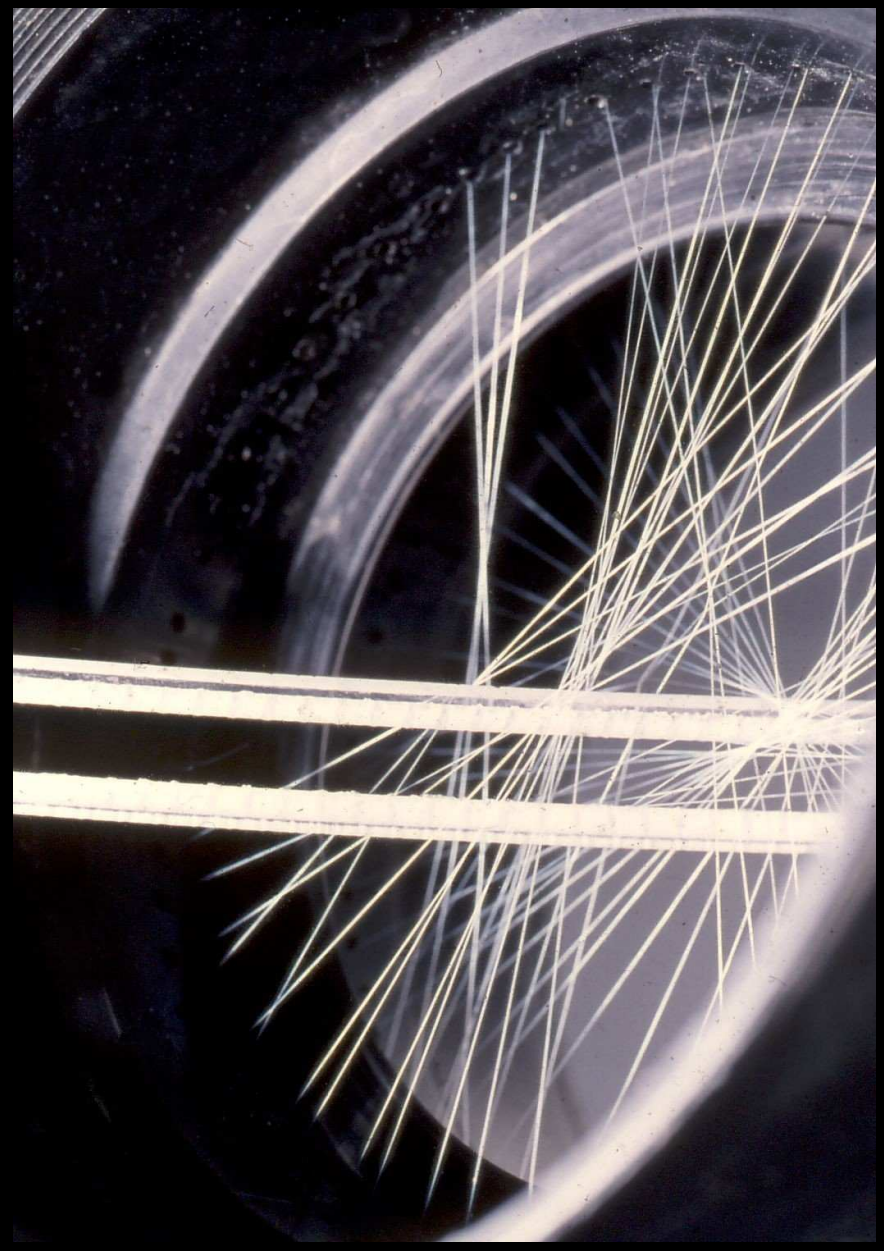
The end of year 1.

At this stage I was very raw, and completely lacking any confidence. This piece was influenced by Mike Kenny. I never really understood his motivations or intentions but liked the aesthetics of the rough wood creating harmony of proportion and precise geometry.
I came back to the studio and tried to imitate it but with no message or meaning of my own. I was so dispirited that I was thinking art might not be for me after all. Nick Stevens picked up the pieces, gave me a robust 'talking to' and suitably polished my ego . This was one of those life changing moments, I believed his affirmation of my ability and returned to the fray with renewed vigour.

This bleak white space with the bare outlines of an idea sketched in rough material reflected my state of mind at that time.



Futurist inspired perspex 'speed' form from the 2nd year at Cheltenham c1976



'Force' form Plastic, pespex and fishing line
from the 2nd year at Cheltenham c1976

Whilst other students seemed confident in their ideas I could not find any deep personal message to convey. I felt limited by a lack of art knowledge. The 'forces' theme had come almost directly from thinking back to physics lessons at 'A' level.

In 1976 I went on the yearly trip abroad at Christmas organised by Mike Shinn the head of painting. We went to Leningrad (as it was known then) now St Petersburg. We were all warned about not drinking the water and about a nasty little bug called giardia with unpleasant effects on the bowel. Several of us still managed to return infected and the 'worm' as I saw it entered my work as well as my body.

I had been making casts from the tubes and then constructing or adding structures to symbolise the forces holding the form in shape. The worm became a twisting inversion of this idea. I built a structure and the tube wormed its way through it.

I was still making things that looked like they were meant to do something but didn't. Pseudo scientific looking forms but not connected to the artists I knew and liked such as Hockney.

The idea of scale also began to operate as the sculptures became like models for structures of architectural proportions. I had seen the work of John Cobb and Paul Neagu and wooden structure became more important in my work

Seeing their work I realised that a quasi-functional symbolic idiom was not only valid but relevant to contemporary work and began to relate my ideas to the



output of others. Another important influence was Peter Startup whose totemic sculptures (exhibited in London about that time) were inspirational. I responded to the way that he used leather with crafted wooden forms to create modular changeable shapes

I was slowly beginning to get a little more craft skill into the work. This was something I always sought but didn't have the patience to practise. My making and use of materials was always hectic unplanned and spontaneous. I particularly enjoyed using components of a piece in different formations, playing with the possibilities before settling on a final construction.

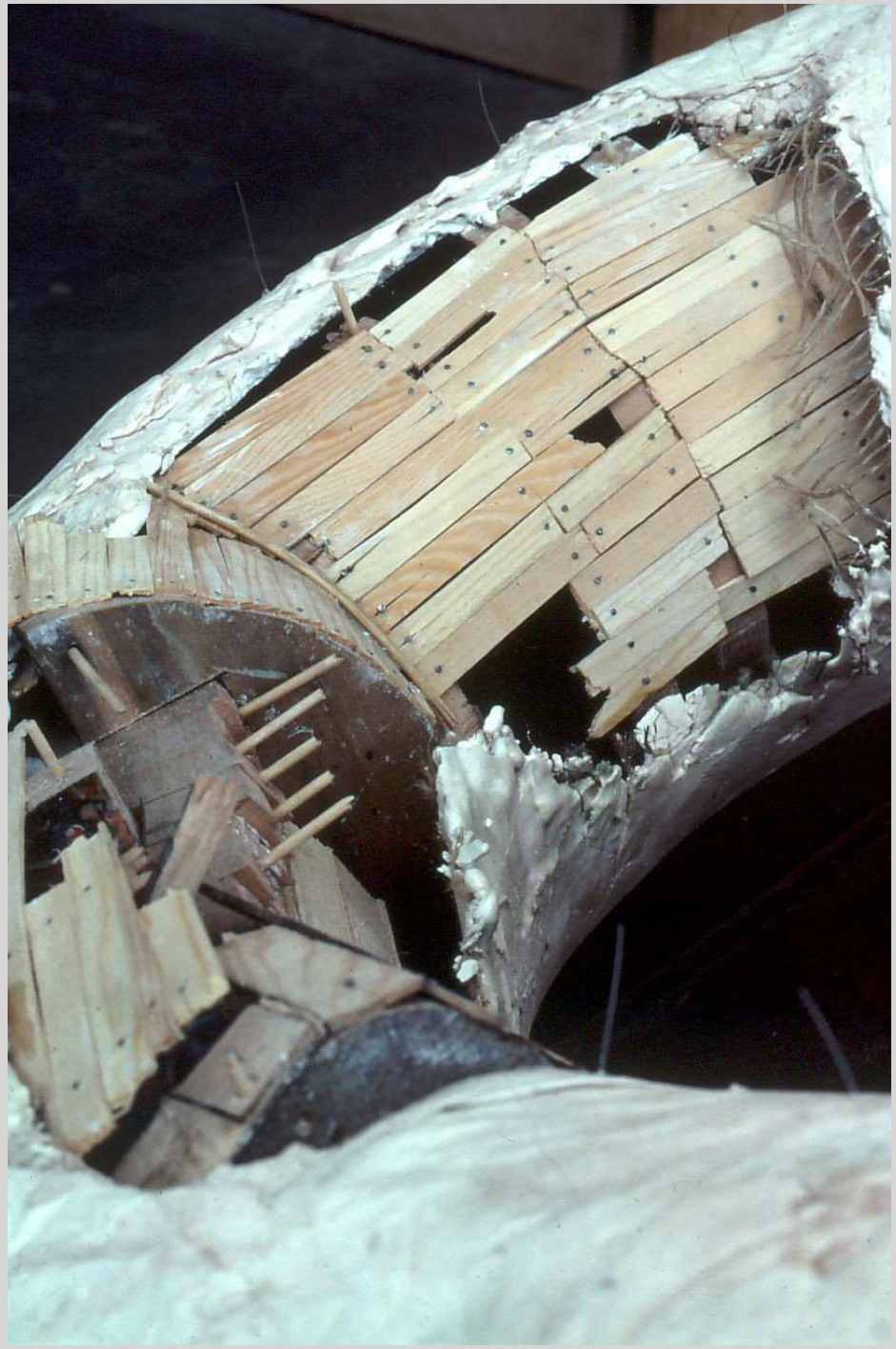
I was still interested in forces - the way one thing affects another. I had been thinking about pure physical forces such as gravity or magnetism. Eventually more personal and human concerns began emerging. When I reversed the idea again the tube form became a body, a female body. I had partly made that step with the giardia 'worm' pieces but in the third year made the move to forms based on women.

A student in the year above was dismantling his show and throwing out his work which was of constructed wood and canvas forms. I cadged the bits I thought looked useful hacked them up and played with them in the studio. Putting new bits together with chopped old bits and inflating the inner tubes around and within the structures. There was a lot of brightly painted work around the college so I went out to a hardware shop and got some gloss paint to spray my work. I chose a lurid pink, feminine in the most ghastly way, and sprayed firstly the tube and then the wooden structure.



Many of my materials were sourced from scrap. I scavenged skips around the town and derelict buildings. Each day I walked or cycled from one side of the town to the other always on the look out for useful bits to use. Later I would use the college minibus with the sculpture fellow John Rummens. We would bring back great lumps of old building, lathe and timber, pipes, allsorts. Angus in the workshop did his best to stop me running lengths of 'distressed' wood through his band saw. I wanted to create strips to imitate lathes. I would make every effort to get all the nails out first. We both failed and many a band saw blade snapped in protest. The revealed structures in the derelict properties created their own architecture which fed into the internal and external appearance of the pieces throughout this time.

Sculptor Nigel Slight was one of many exciting and inspirational visiting tutors. He was once exasperated with what he saw as a bunch of lacklustre students lacking energy in their work and showed us how to cast big plaster forms on plastic sheet on the floor. They were reinforced with twigs, sticks - whatever. That quick fire, get on with it style of working suited me perfectly.





An early cast work made shortly after seeing work by John Cobb at the local gallery. The squeezing part was influenced by Paul Neagu. Note the fine fishing line 'hairs' on the surface.

This is the 'worm' piece. It reversed the idea of the plaster form being pushed out and held in place by the wooden structure. Now it wormed its way through the structure. It is part symbiotic, part destructive. The broken house structure symbolised a body. Clive Barstow, a fellow student (now a Professor of Art in Perth) drew from a book of carpentry and joinery extensively in his work at the time. His incredibly detailed and polished drawings of revealed timber constructions were always around the flat. I was influenced by his work at that time. Later I bought my own copy of the book, 'Advanced Carpentry & Joinery', by Frank Hilton.

Another source which cemented the move towards the body as a subject was a copy of Gray's Anatomy bought for a fiver one Christmas in Hull.

By using the two together, analogous structures could be imagined, part wood part body form. These could be visualised from internal perspectives with ambiguous scale. Geiger did it much better but I didn't see 'ALIEN' until much later.



My tutor at this time was Nick Stevens, a talented figurative sculptor whose life size ceramic work was in the tradition of the Della Robbias. His reaffirming support and relentlessly harsh criticisms were vital to me. I had great respect for his opinion. If he told me something was working I knew I could trust the judgement because he would be merciless in his appraisal of that which he didn't like. As a consequence of his honesty and lack of tact Nick was not universally adored but he was one of my heroes. He stopped me giving up.

For some reason the local paper did a story about art students and I was photographed with this piece. I don't think it ever made it into print, and I was glad at the time. I really wasn't ready to be the 'artist with his work'. The hideous paint job was one of my many disasters on the way to understanding how to harness colour more effectively in my work. There was some reference to nature in that beasts often have one colour above and another beneath. I suppose because the worm was horrible I wanted to show it as such. Some compromise with aesthetics would have been better.

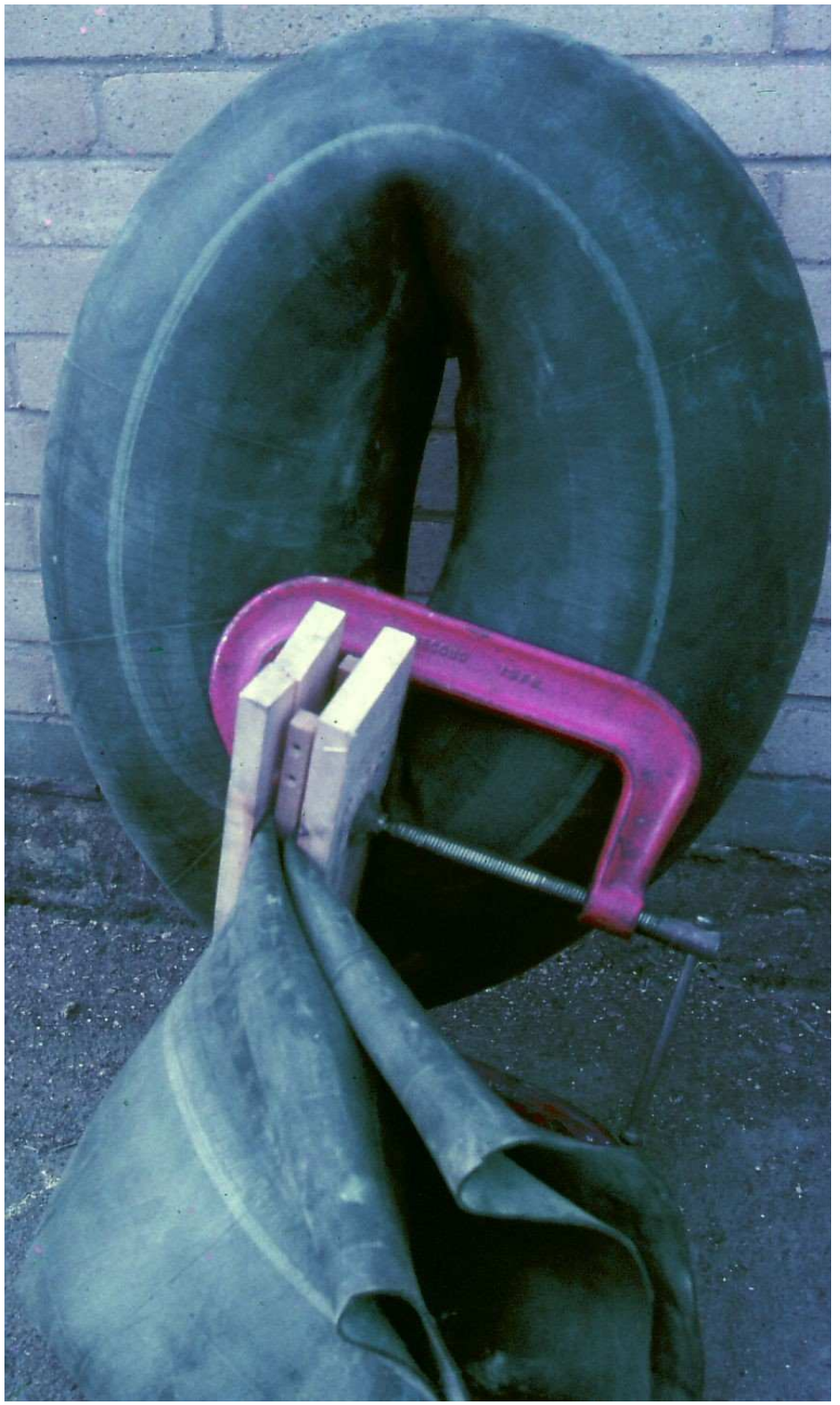


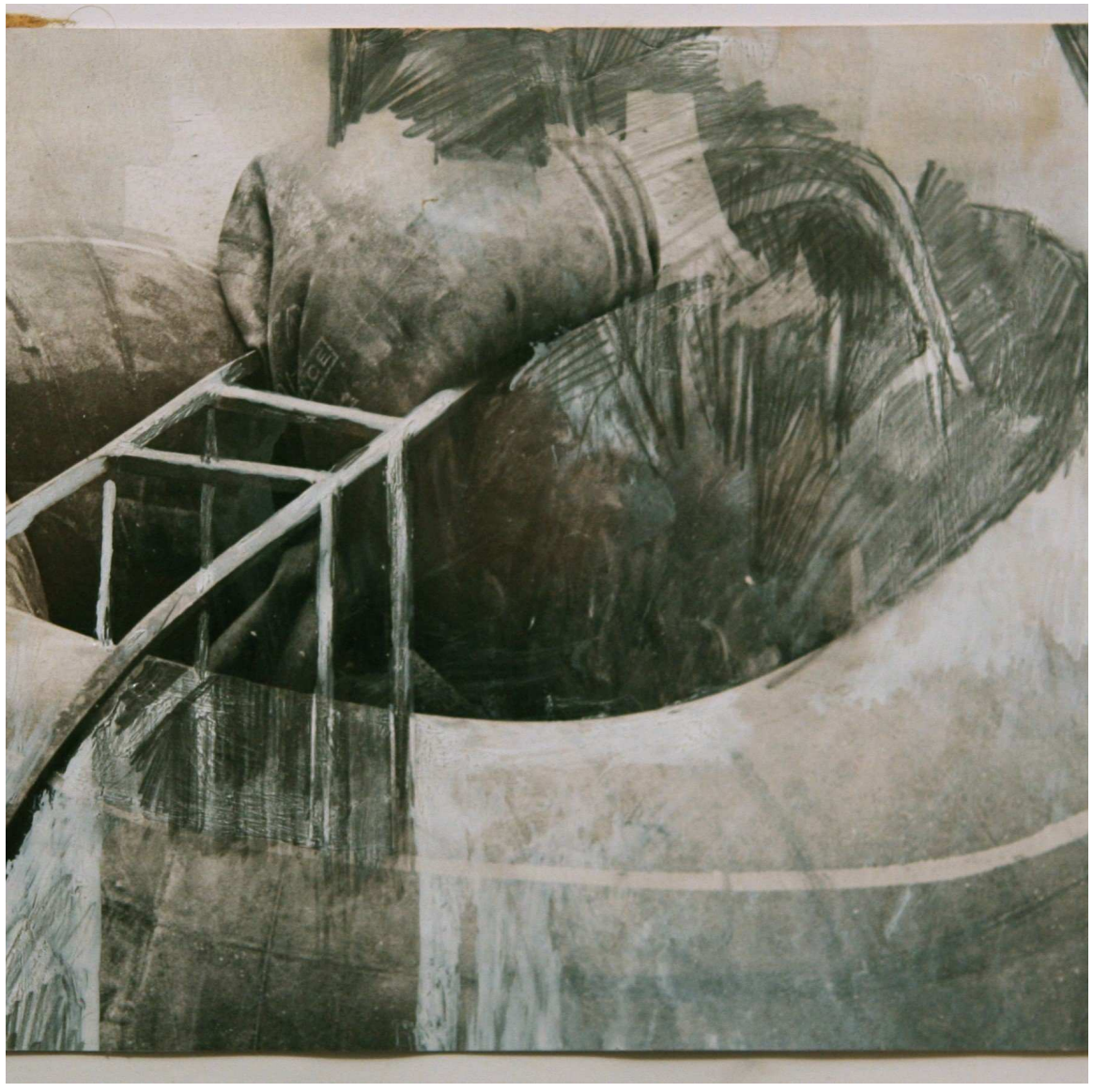
Worm' c 1977
Plaster, scrap wood, piping, gloss paint, varnish etc.

Looking at this photograph it is easy to see why Angus was so worried by my escapades with the compressor. It is a very big inner tube - from a tractor? And it isn't even intact; I was clamping it to maintain the pressure. I notice also that the wood used in the clamp has snapped with the pressure. It is too easy to imagine what might have happened if it had exploded or the clamp had come undone.

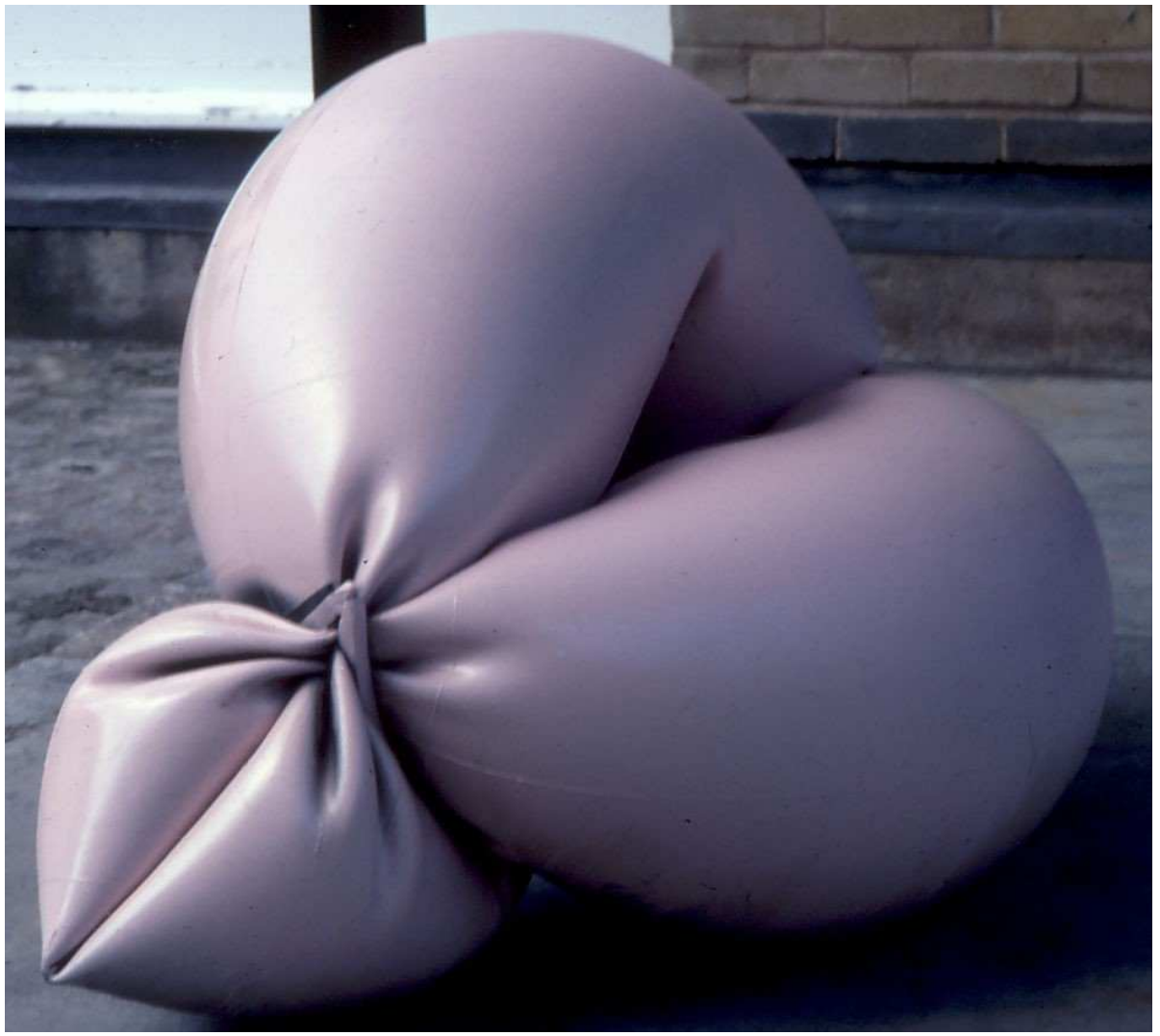
The lip form is obvious but spraying with pink paint transformed it into something very different. The welded steel frame used to create the form did eventually snap under pressure with alarming effect. My welding skills were not too good. Indeed my craft skills in general left a lot to be desired. My strength was an ability to 'play' with materials and forms in a very creative way. There was always a lack of finish as I rushed impatiently to the next idea. It was a better place to be than having no ideas at all.

The wooden forms became more controlled and the construction became less ramshackle. I took the wood off the tube and throwing caution to the wind hacked it in two and re assembled it in a mirrored formation. The skipping dancing movement created by the structure was pleasing and this became the 'Dancing Lady'. The transformation described can be seen in the photos on page 22-23.





Photograph with added drawn detail in pencil and white paint.
c1977



The first 'Pink Lady' or at least her lips made in Cheltenham around 1977. This was a whole (no pun intended) amalgam of feminine 'soft' forms. Like legs and lips in one.



Visualisation
Pink Lip Structure
Drawing in fibre tip pen and paint on paper
c1977



Internal Body Forms
Inner tube with steel frame.
c1977



Internal body form
Inner tubes with steel frame
c1977
The poor quality welding is clear for all to see. A bike inner tube is added, loosely tucked into the creases of the bigger tube.

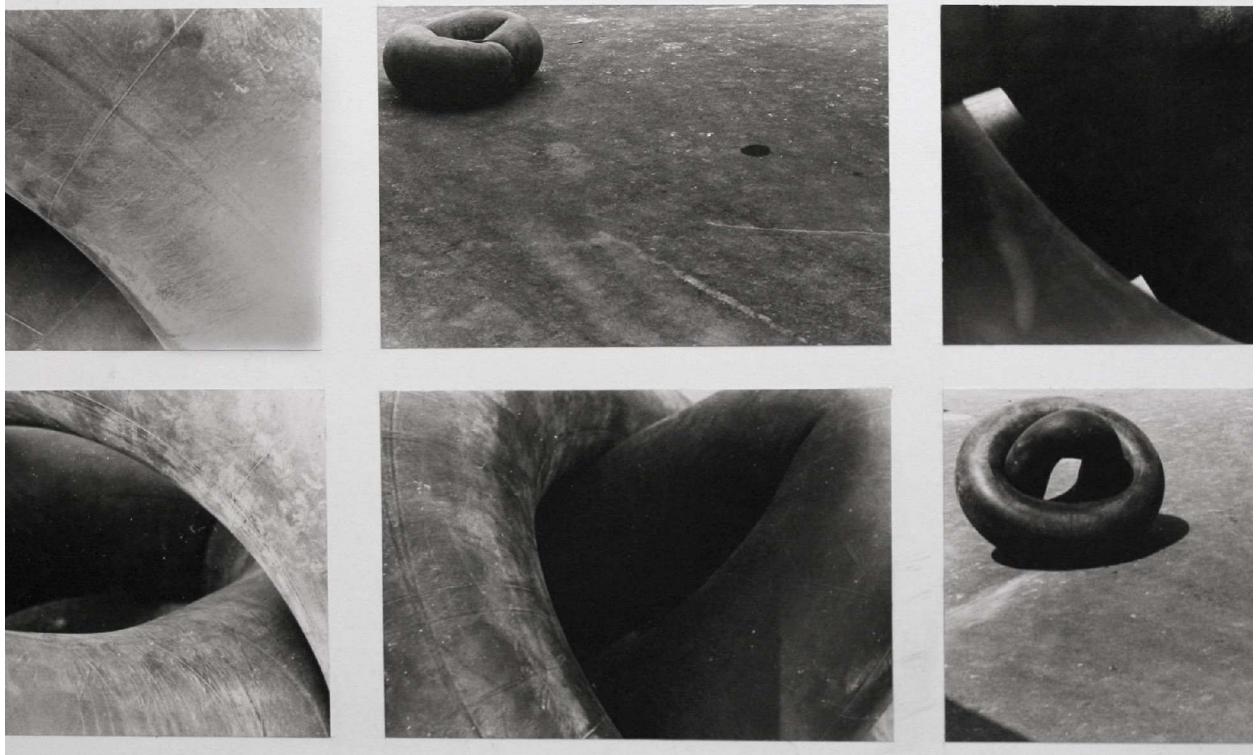
Pink Lip Structure
Drawing in fibre tip pen on paper
c1977

As a student I cut corners with materials often to save money. I had a set of cheap felt tip pens from Woolworths or somewhere which probably cost about 10p and a sketch pad with the thinnest cheapest nasty paper imaginable. I can't believe I used such rubbish. Later I would use lovely soft pastels on cartridge paper.



Body Form Permutations
Inner tubes
c1977

The use of elements juxtaposed in different formations became a regular working method for me allowing speed and creativity with fluency. It was a sort of 3D montage or a constructing kit like Meccano, Lego or Airfix. Many years later the technique would return with collage into pastel drawings. The reference to Airfix kits which came attached to a grid as components would also return.





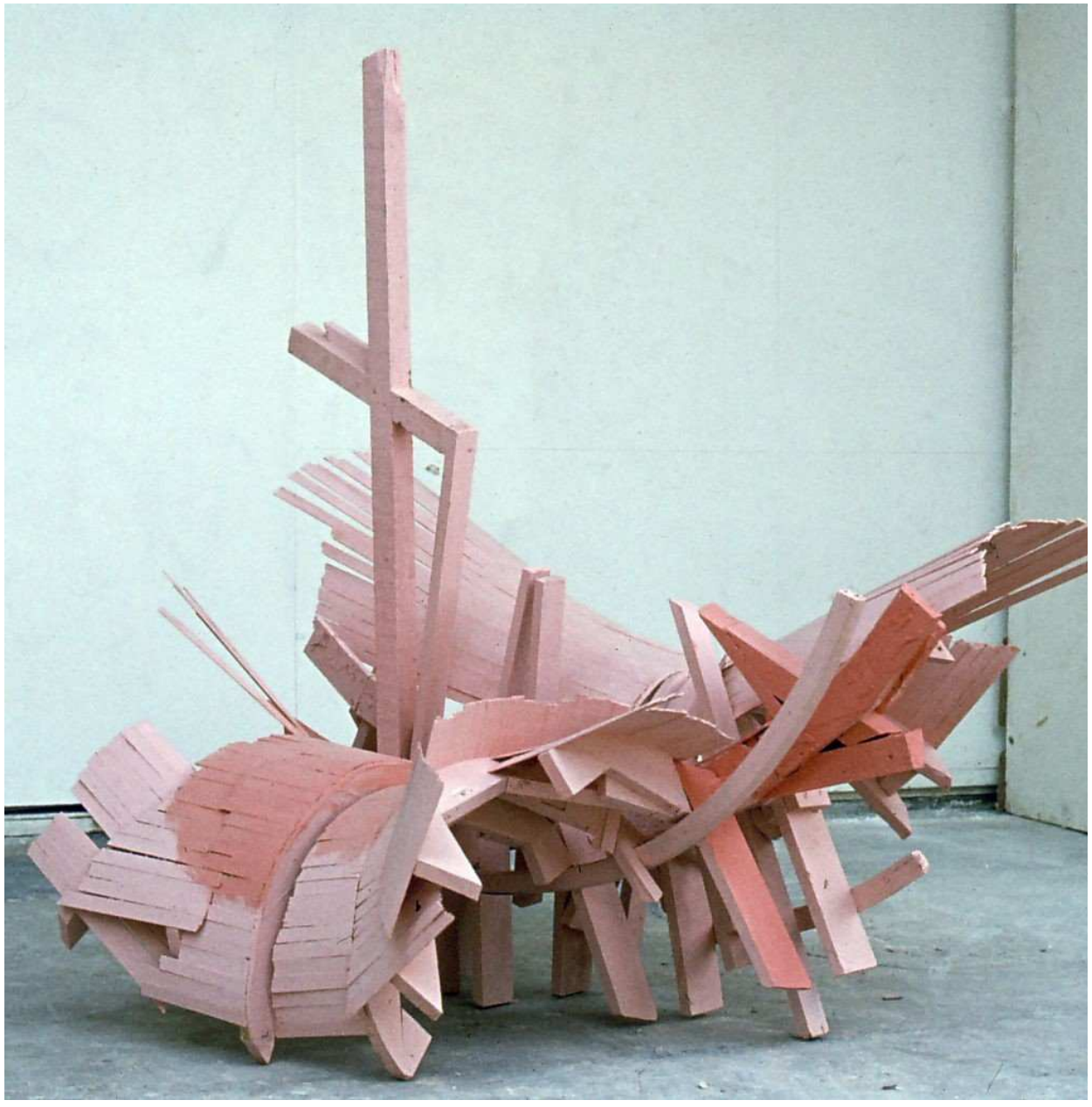
Tube with Steel frame
c1977



Tube with formwork in progress
c1977



Tube with formwork in progress
c1977



Dancing Lady
Painted wooden structure
c1977

The structure came from the formwork built around the inner tube in new and reclaimed wood. A rythmical movement is created by the sweeping arc with its repetition.

The Dancing Lady had been a step forward; it seemed to consolidate a range of loosely connected ideas. The futurist movement, the forces and dynamism, the body forms, symbolism with colour and the 'image of woman' were all present in some form. I had seen more work by John Cobb. He called a piece 'loose cover' (as in furniture) it was a wooden structure to describe a form. I was also aware of 'formworks' as used in building. The formwork idea particularly interested me and I photographed them whenever I saw them, admiring the simplicity of their rough structures.

Nick took me in his car to a local caravan factory where I was able to get quantities of glass fibre and resin. The result was an explosion of scale.
Using plastic sheet laid out on the floor as we had with Nigel Slight I layered glass fibre over a simple weave of stripped wood. These were then attached to a long laminated centre piece to form a belly or sail. The ‘inflated’ form became a sail rather than a tube. The sail was a section of the tube in a sense but took on new meanings of its own. Whereas the tube had contained and was static, the sail suggested direction and dynamism.

For some reason I painted it, despite the fact that the wood and frosted glass effect of the resin was quite aesthetically appealing. Perhaps I wanted it to be less cute - cruder. I used gloss paint liberally applied, a lurid red on the back and a deep blue on the front. Drips from both colours stained each other where they seeped through holes in the resin. The paint job was less than perfect. With typical foresight I also failed to check if it would fit through the studio doors once constructed. I was lucky, they were big doors.





Large Sail
Painted Glass fibre construction



Large Sail
Painted Glass fibre construction and canvas



Large Sail
Painted Glass fibre construction showing central stays

For some reason I painted the large sail despite the fact that the wood and frosted glass effect of the resin was quite aesthetically appealing.





Drips from both colours stained each other where they seeped through holes in the resin. This was less than perfect.

A final touch to this piece maybe as a nod towards the sail idea was to add some canvas. This eventually trailed in knotted strips to the floor. The effect was to add another layer of meaning with the contrast in textures and surface.

Despite the disappointment of the botched colour, the scale of the piece gave a strong sense of achievement. It couldn't be ignored.



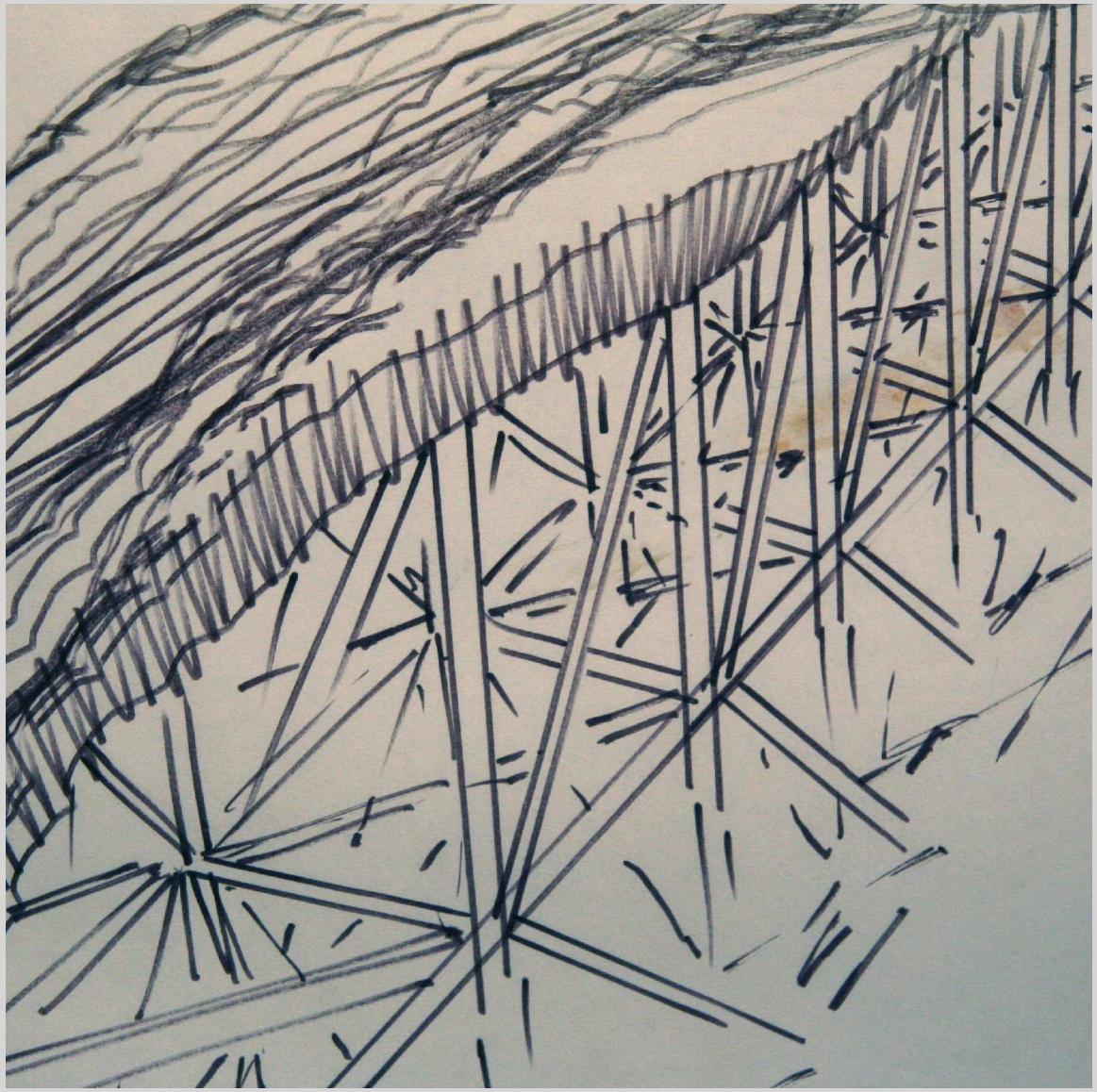
Sails Reverse Reflected with Flesh Colour
Photmontage with painted addition
c1978

A reinterpretation of the Large Sail with added lurid flesh pink; a big part of the grid effect here was not that created with the lathes but the glass panes in the studio ceiling. I chopped and rejoined photos in the same way that I had done with the wood in the Dancing Lady.



Inner tube vision
Collage of drawing in fibre tip with etching.
c 1978

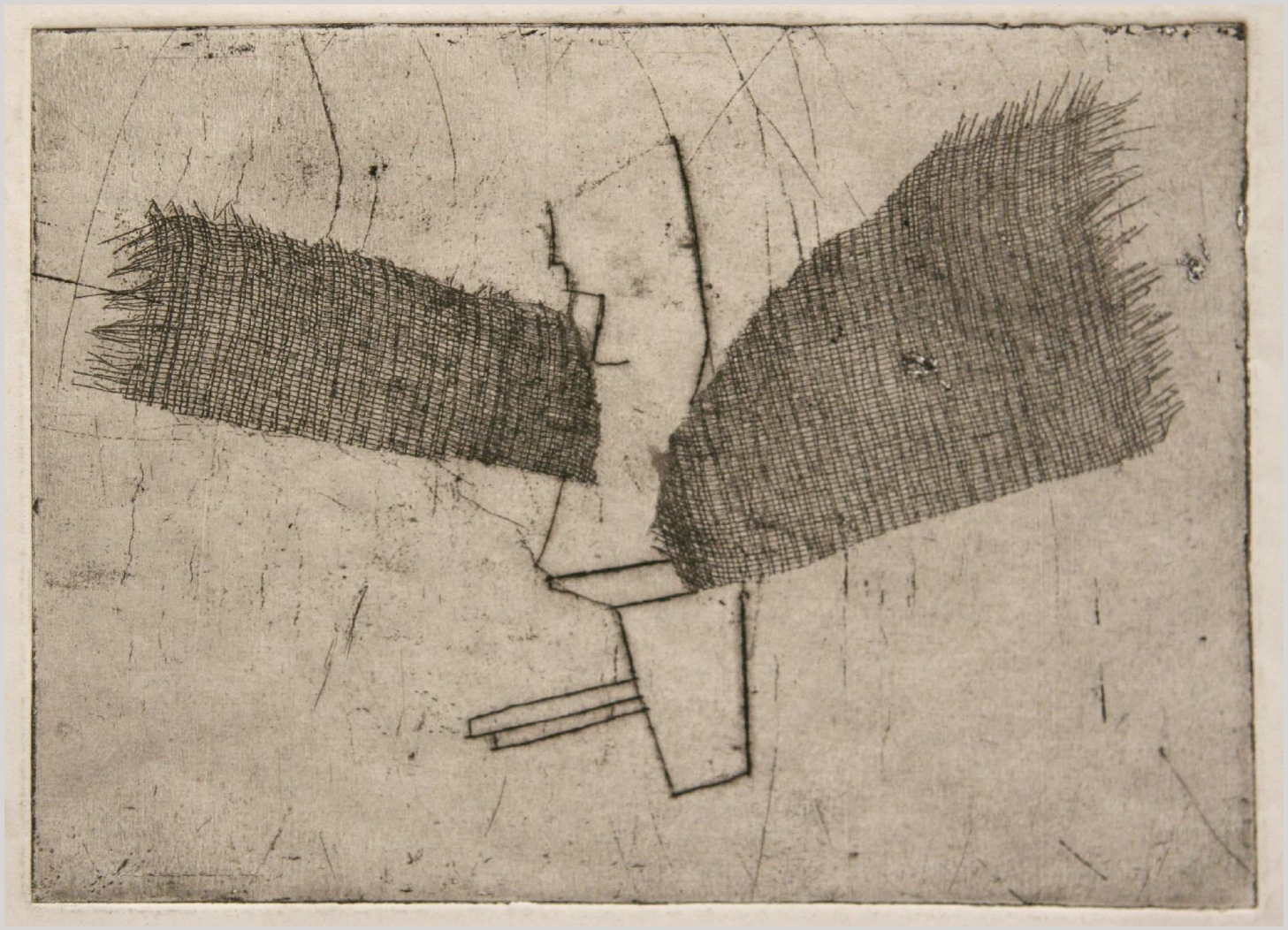
The opportunity to try etching resulted in two prints based upon the 'Sail' theme. This drawing reverts back to the tube lips and adds the sail structure (torn etching) inside. The shapes beyond the tube hint at some sort of wooden extension. I had large pieces of lathe and timber frame work in the studio at this time and was working out how to use them.



Supporting formwork for surface form
Drawing in fibre tip pen.
c 1978



Structure in 3D
Drawing in pencil crayon on newspaper.
c 1978



Two Sails
Etching.
c 1978

Dancing Sail
Wood, Canvas
c 1978



The wooden sweep in this piece is clearly related to the Dancing Lady. The use of stretched canvas to describe a form relates to tents but also to ships. Of course ships are usually referred to in the feminine.

We had many interesting visiting lecturers and speakers. I have mentioned Paul Neagu. We also had a lecture about a project to construct sculpture to realise Picabia's drawings. These drawings were a revelation to me and the idea of translating drawings into sculpture and *vice versa* became central to my practice.
Describing form in space as in the arcs and lines in this piece was logical. Picabia's work encouraged me to create an overall sense of a mission with the effects, textures, shapes and colours like a modern mood board. The work became an evocative statement rather than a specific description.

Twisting Totem Version 1
Wood, Canvas, Glass Fibre
c 1978

Stretching the canvas to create complex curved forms was a natural progression. Other elements such as the nailed strips continued to surface. I notice now that the nails are in a more precise row and not completely knocked in. They also have a patch of resin to highlight them. The glass fibre sail is deliberately not visible at this angle. I had been impressed by Giacommeti's figures in the Tate. They were wide from one angle and virtually disappeared from the front. This piece only just balanced without falling over at this stage.

A trip to Oxford had enabled me to see the Pitt Rivers collection for the first time. The natural materials used in ethnic artefacts such as wood, reeds, grasses, cloths etc were interesting and inspiring.

The later adaptation of this piece had two chunks of lathe and timber frame added with a meticulously screwed linking panel to join them together. It used more than 150 screws all put in by hand. This task prompted me to attach a screwdriver to my trusty Black & Decker drill (to invent the powered screwdriver) but I couldn't control the torque and nearly had an accident.









Twisting Totem
Version 2
Wood, Canvas,
Glass Fibre,
Reclaimed Scrap
c 1978

Somewhere, I saw an image of Kurt Schwitters' 'Merzbau'. This was the first time I had considered installation as a possibility. The totem piece with its added lathe & timber suggested a move towards installation using similar techniques and materials.
Next to the year three studio was a chair store, which with help from the teaching staff and grief from the caretakers I took over. In time for the degree show I made an installation that utilised the whole space from skylight to alcove, front to back. Inside it was lit by a sequenced set of lights run by a mechanical timer. At times it was pitch black and quite cave like. There was a false floor at the back lit from underneath to add to the illusion that it was a structure in space. This illustration shows the outside of the tower to the skylight.
I only fell off the tower once and amazingly never electrocuted myself on the loosely wired mains powered lighting system.
My transistor radio played away in the background buried at some stage behind panelling. That wasn't art - I wanted to listen to the radio.

At the private view evening it was packed with giggling explorers fumbling in the dark getting splinters.



Chair Store Installation
Reclaimed Wood with Sequenced Lighting 1978



Chair Store
Installation
Reclaimed Wood
with Sequenced
Lighting 1978

The early stages of construction taken from the inside looking back to the blocked off door



Form works and other builders' constructions were a real inspiration. I was always keen to gather this sort of reference. The form work is intended as a temporary device to act as a makeshift mould usually for pouring concrete. Brick and stone are also built against similar timber forms. I used the same quick methods to put together the installation.



Another example of a builders' timber construction, the rhythmical repetition within the structure and the way it seems to cling to the face of the building is interesting.



Chair Store Installation
Reclaimed Wood with Sequenced Lighting 1978
The door partly boarded allowing access to the right.



Chair Store Installation
Reclaimed Wood with Sequenced Lighting 1978
In the tunnel.



Chair Store
Installation
Reclaimed Wood
with Sequenced
Lighting 1978

The false floor looking back towards the tunnel and tower.

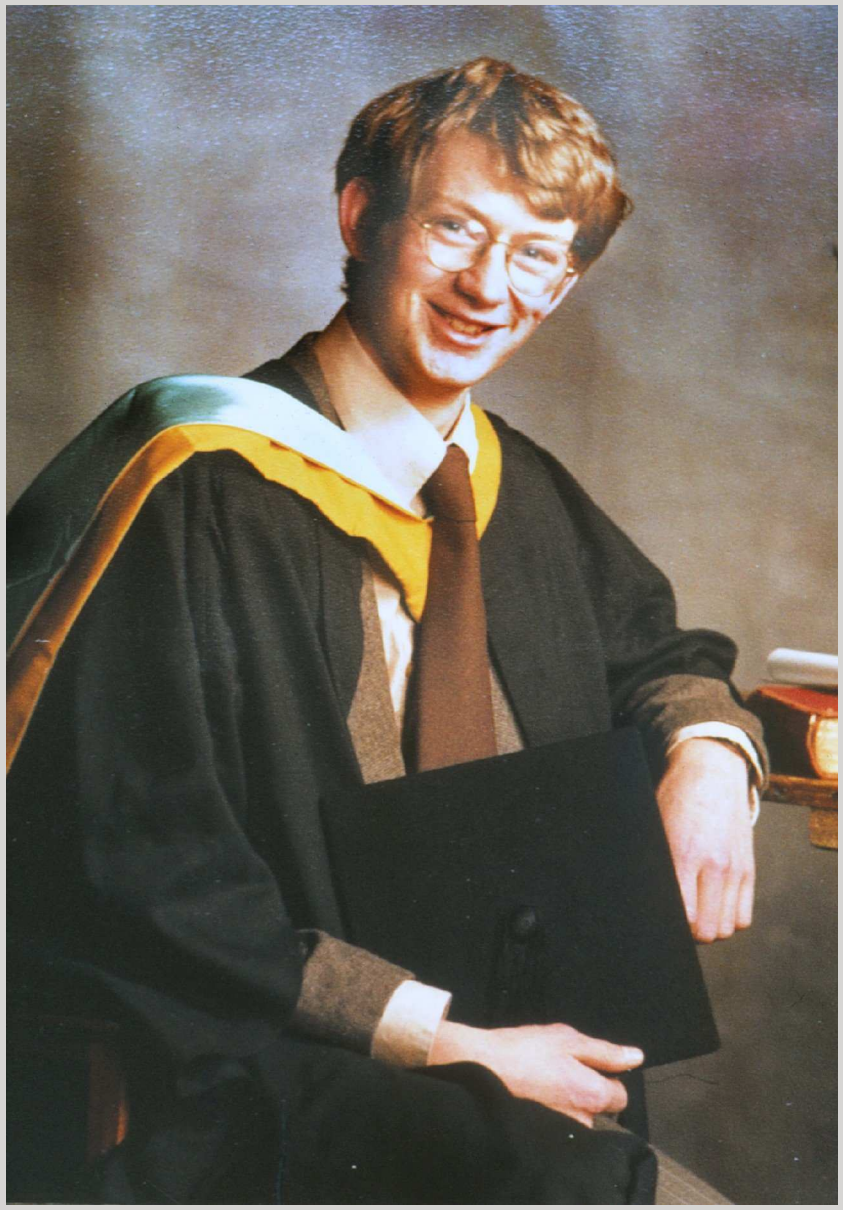


Chair Store Installation
Reclaimed Wood with Sequenced Lighting 1978
The second tunnel section.



Chair Store Installation
Reclaimed Wood with Sequenced Lighting 1978
The alcove section with shuttered end.

This was the final piece made at Cheltenham.
Afterwards all the work was destroyed.



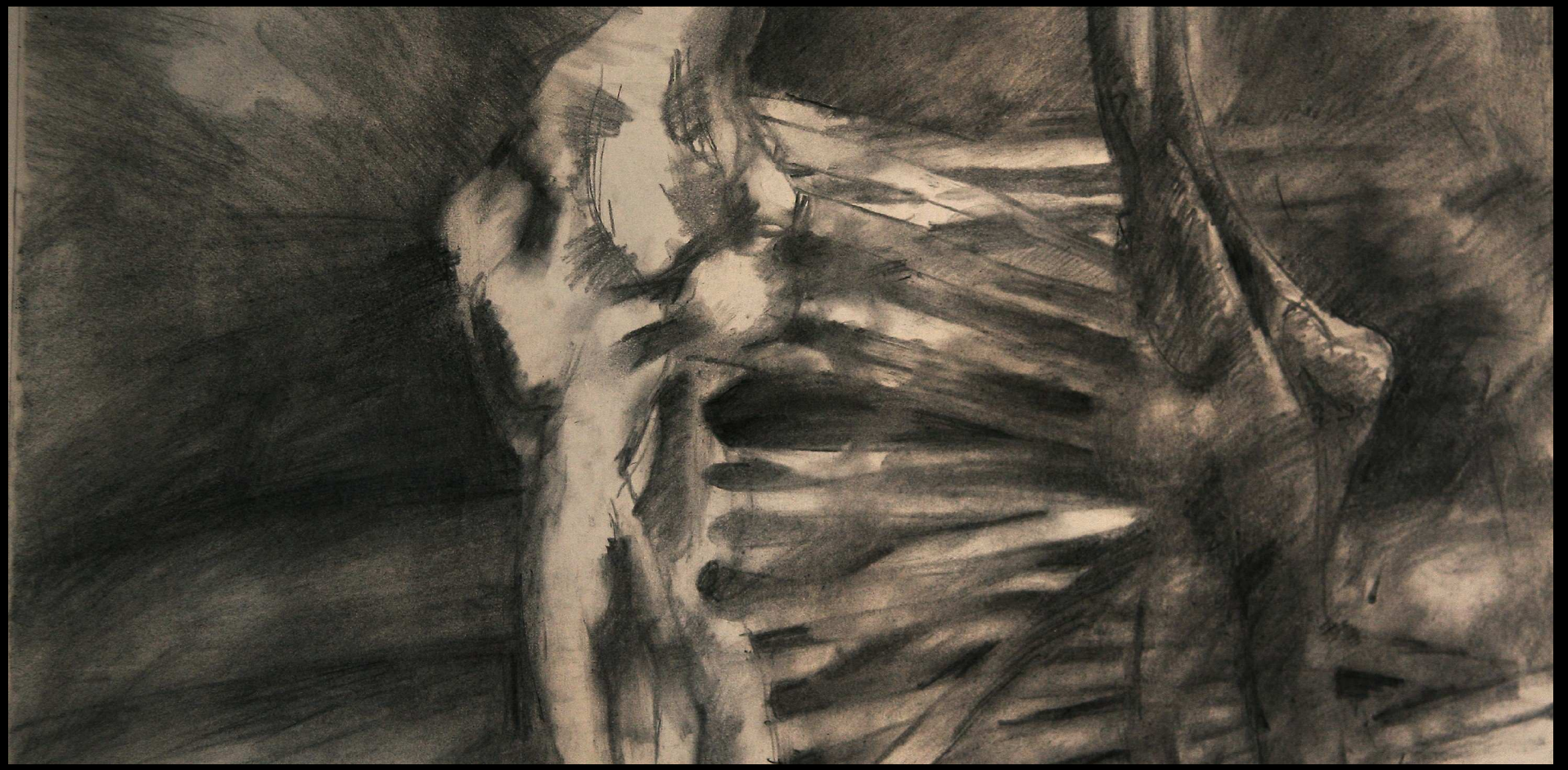
A smug looking graduate looking far too pleased with himself. Cheltenham 1979

photographer unknown

In the Real World 1978 - 1980



With Q.T. at Park Hill Rd Moseley 1980.



Intercostal Bonding
Charcoal and pastel on paper
c1979

Whilst studying for a teaching qualification in Birmingham I drew in an attempt to keep some ideas alive. I continued to refer to Gray's anatomy and used shading techniques to try to create a visualisation. Space and scale became increasingly ambiguous and the body references became more explicit.
This is like the lathes (which had first come from a John Cobb sculpture, and then from real lathe structures from skips) as a ribcage between two leg bones.



Grey Anatomy
Charcoal and pastel on paper
c1979



Grey Anatomy # 3
Charcoal and Pastel on paper
c1979



Grey Anatomy #4
Charcoal and Pastel on paper.
c1979
These drawings were made in the 'Winter of Discontent' on the floor in front of the fire in a rented place in Hollywood near Birmingham.



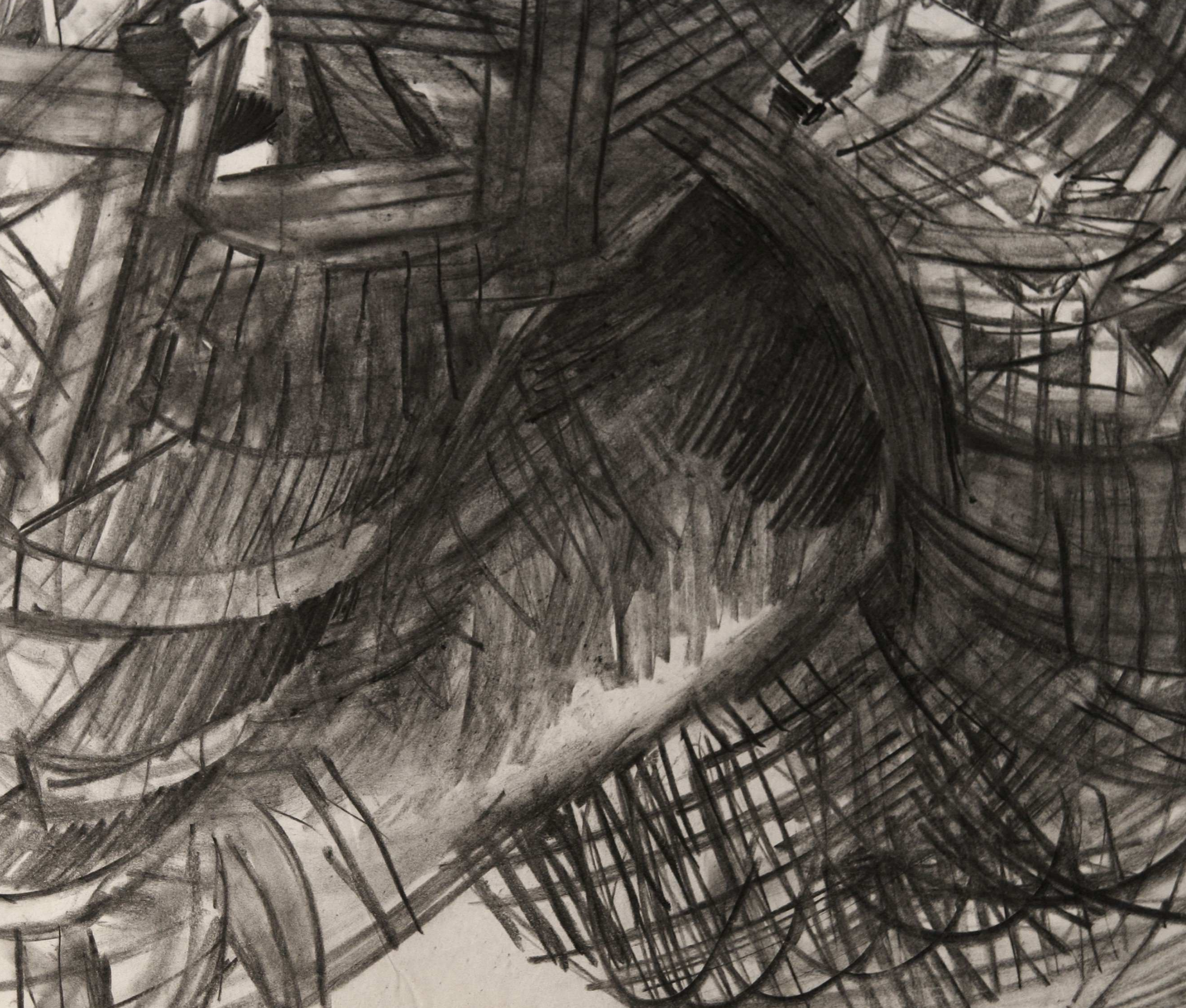
Another Grey Anatomy
Charcoal and Pastel on paper
c1979

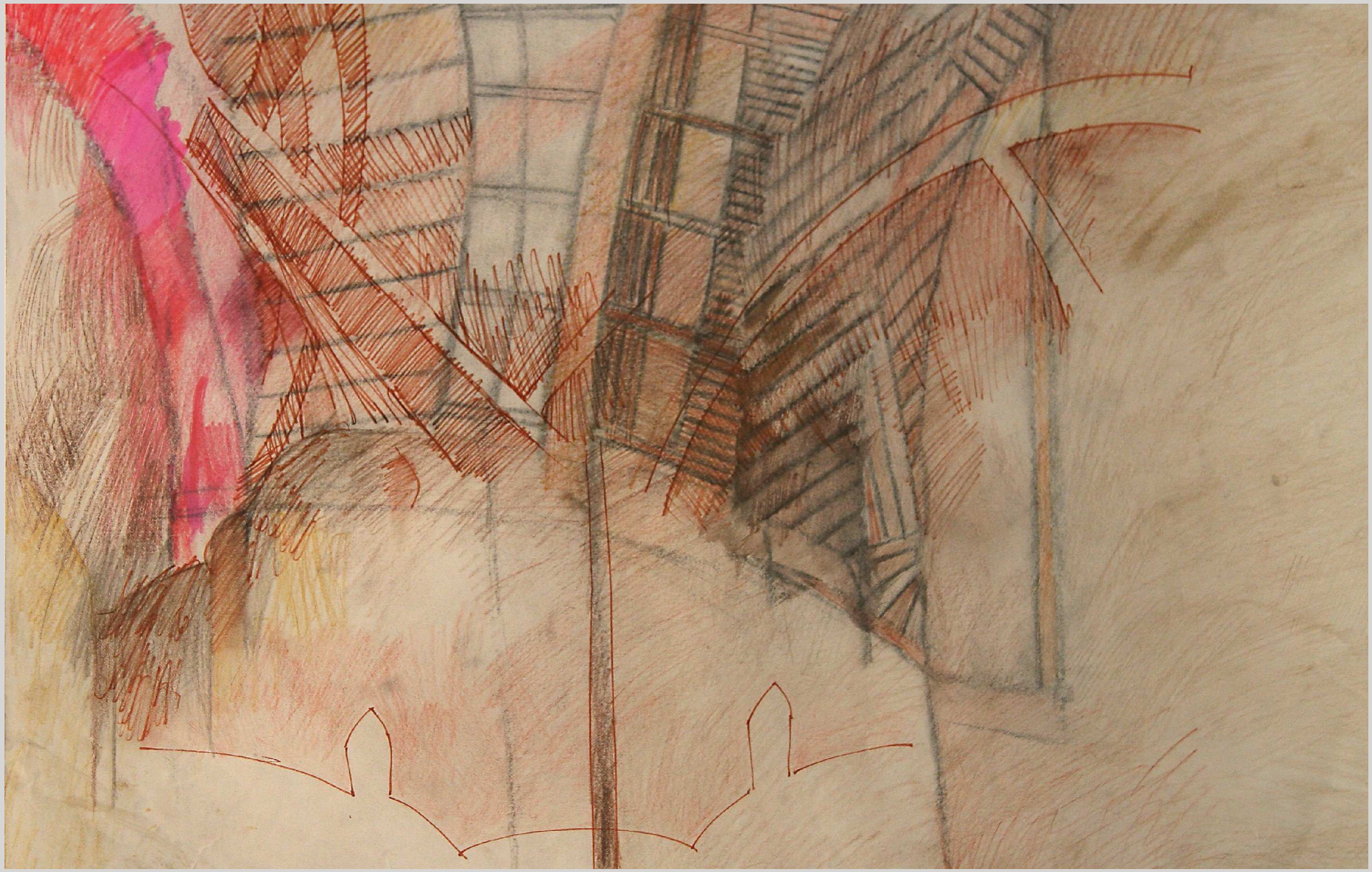


Body Structure
Pencil and Pencil Crayon on paper c1979



Tube Drawing : detail
Charcoal and Pastel on paper c1979



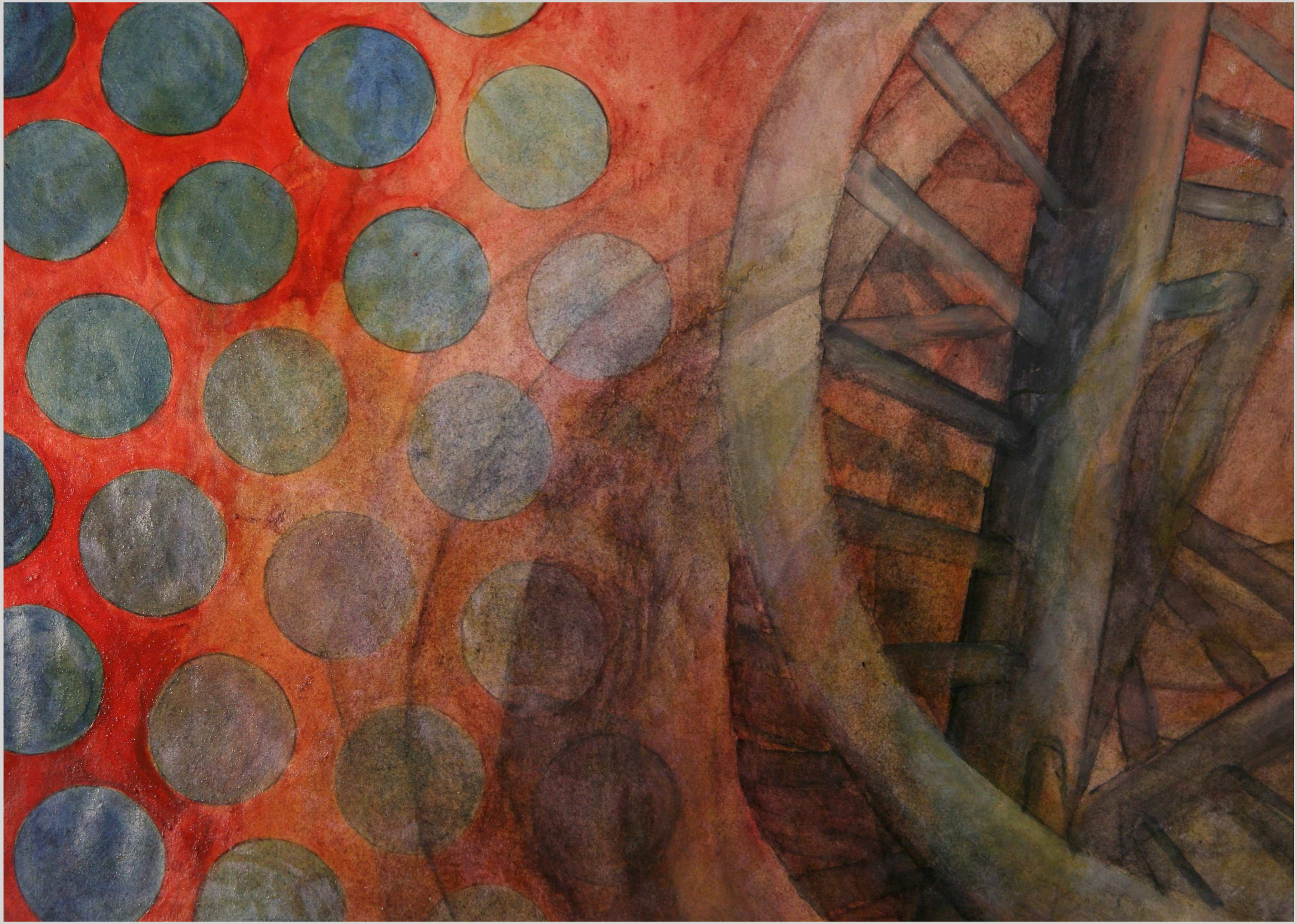


I think this was made after a move to Woodstock Rd in Balsall Heath. Some of the shapes came from a wardrobe in the room. I had a big table under a window which was a fine place to draw. My flat mate Jerry Tew was very appreciative of the work and constantly gave encouragement.

Above: Woodstock Body
Charcoal and pastel on paper
c1979
Left: Tube Drawing
Charcoal and Pastel on paper c1979



Internal space
Mixed Media on paper c1979



Surface to Structure
Poster Paint and Mixed Media on paper c1979

Back North 1980 - 1985

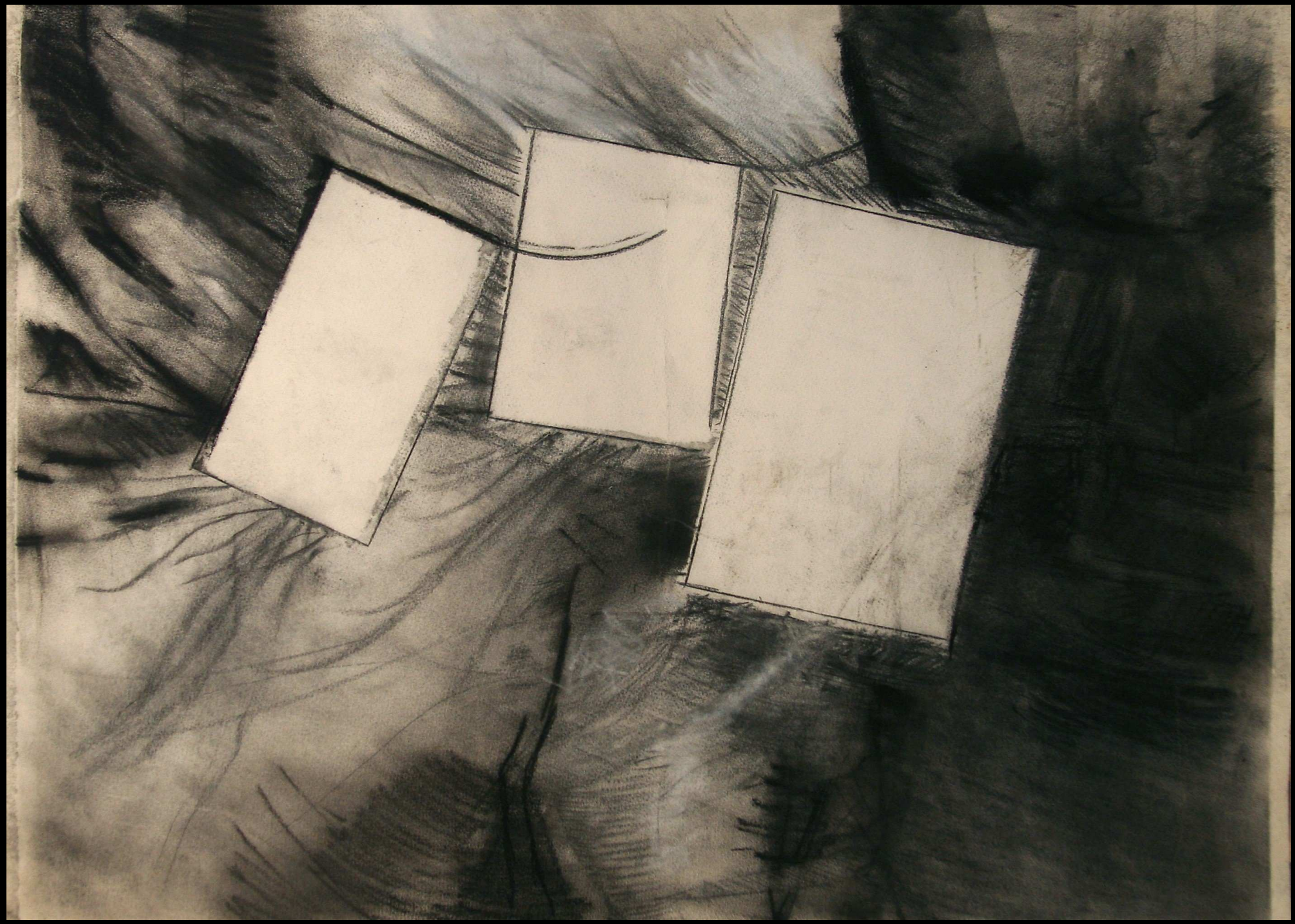


Plough 1980



Catalogue Models
Pastel & Conté on Paper c1981

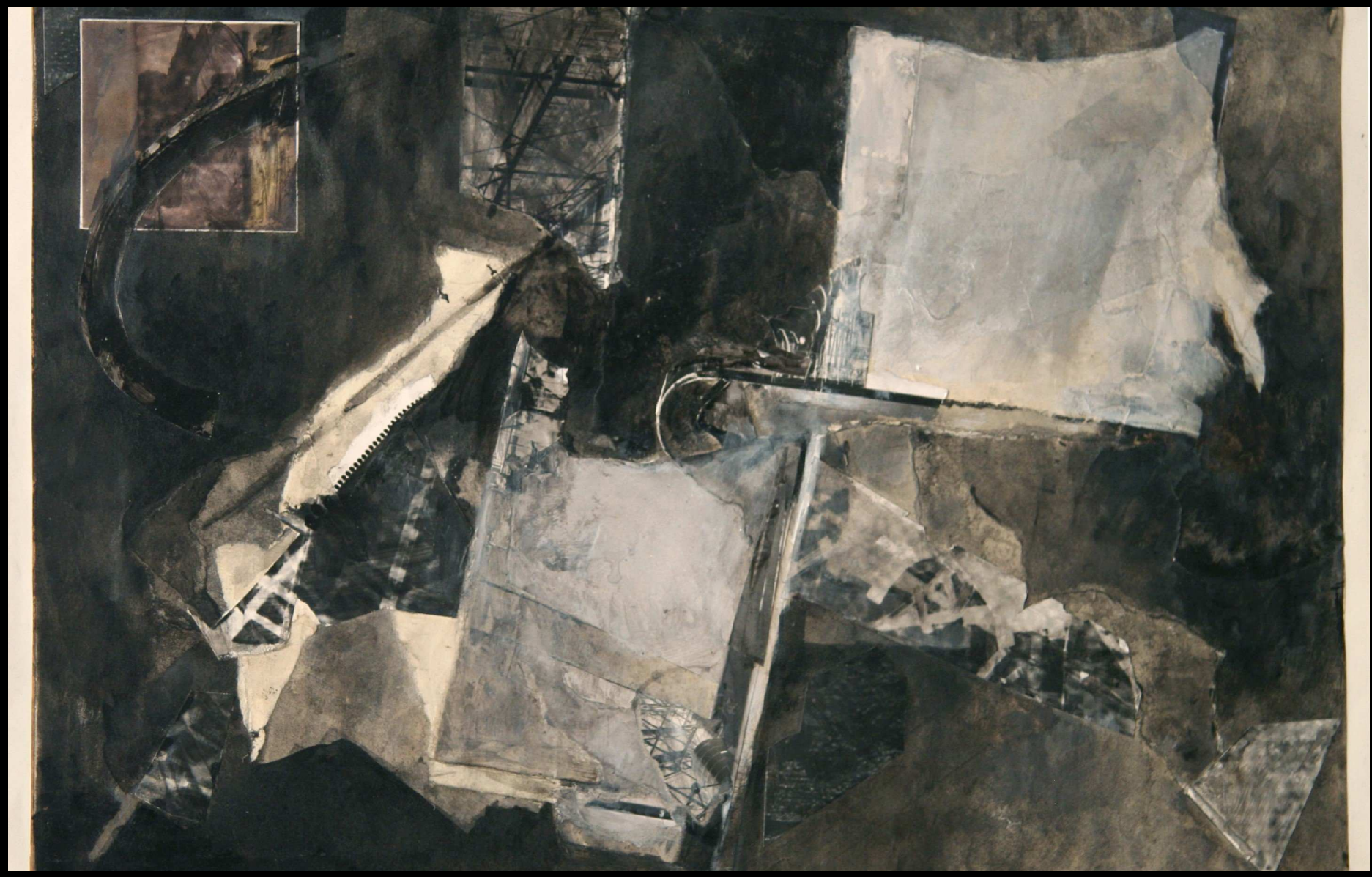
I returned to Huddersfield in 1980 but did not draw again for some time. I met David Blackburn, a well established artist who worked exclusively in pastel. I travelled to America with him, visiting Washington and New York. His encouragement & interest in pastel led me to return to the medium, and to return to drawing.



Three Sheets to the Wind
Pastel & Conté on Paper c1981



Three Sheets to the Wind #2
Pastel & Conté on Paper c1981



Falcon St Sail
Paint, Collage, Ink and Mixed Media on Paper c1981

My influences at this time included Vladimir Tatlin's Tower and Corner Pieces. I made my own small corner piece.

Since leaving college I had become increasingly involved in photography. However, whenever I returned to thinking about sculpture, the same themes were there. I had broadened the Sail idea to include other elements. Sail with Air, Plough with Earth and Paddle with Water; Icons of endeavour.



In 1980 I began re-visiting previous imagery to recycle and develop. One of the ways that I worked was to re-photograph superimposed transparencies using an adaptor on a 35mm SLR. The resulting images were more complex and layered.

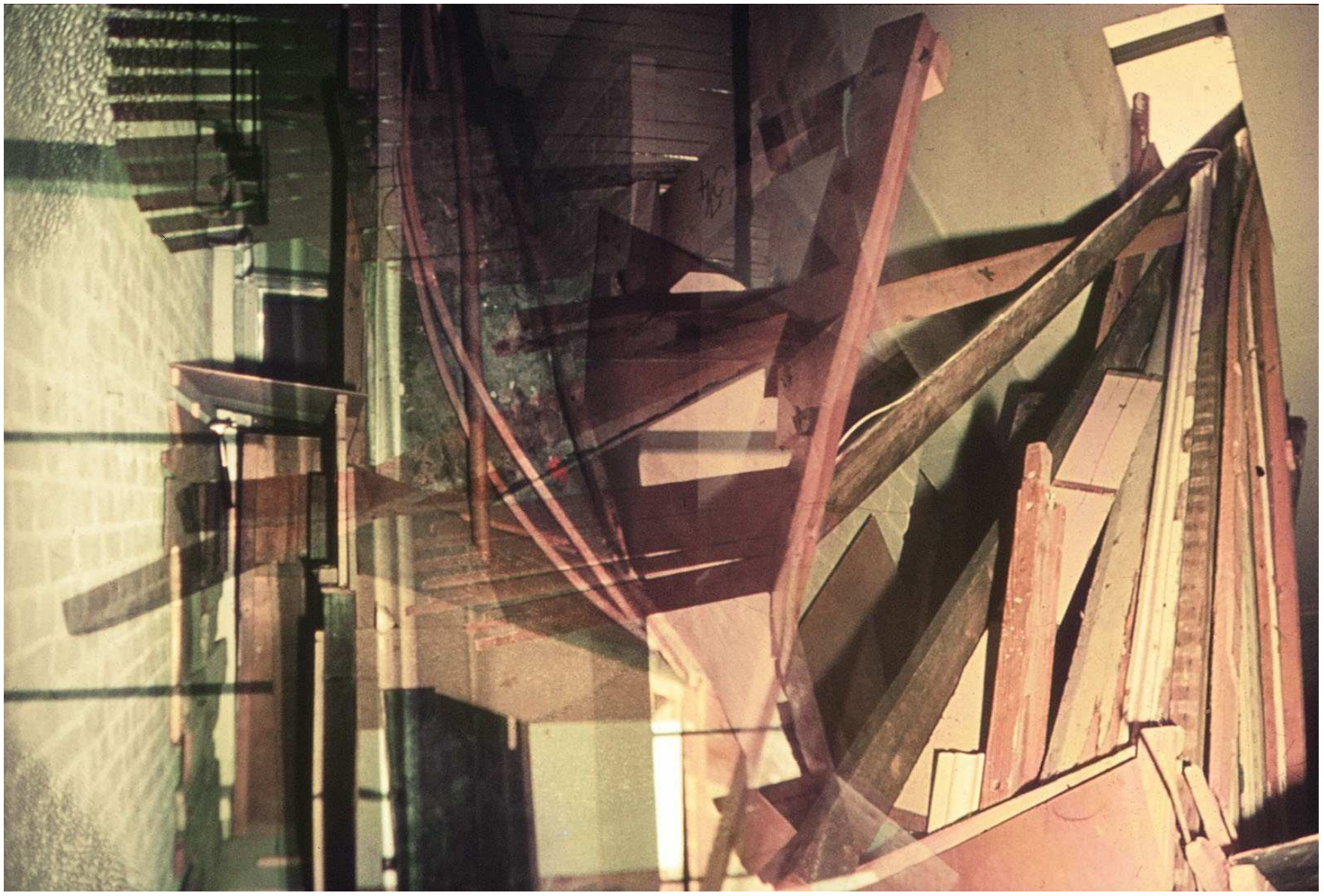


The montage technique allowed numerous outcomes to evolve from single starting points. New directions emerged as a result of unpredictable combinations.

The artists illustrated on the facing page are among many whose work provided inspiration for my work.



The overlay images gave multiple options from set starting material. This method was in keeping with the way I had manipulated components in the studio.



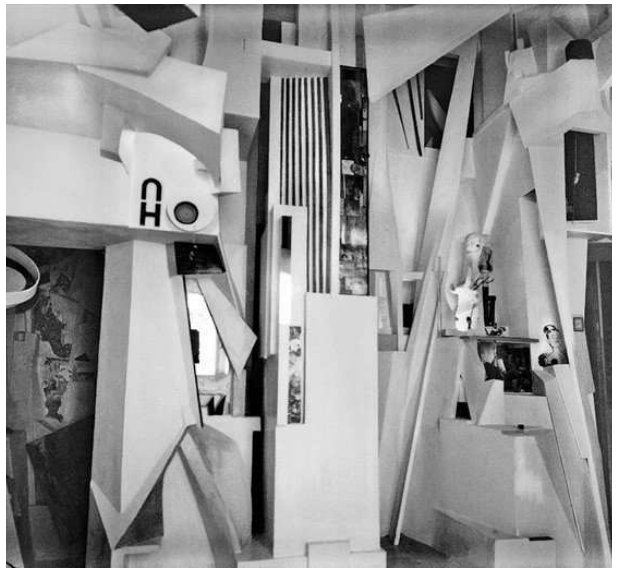
The overlay method was a precursor of the later pastel drawings and digital work. Existing imagery generated from real sculpture was re-visited with a montage technique.



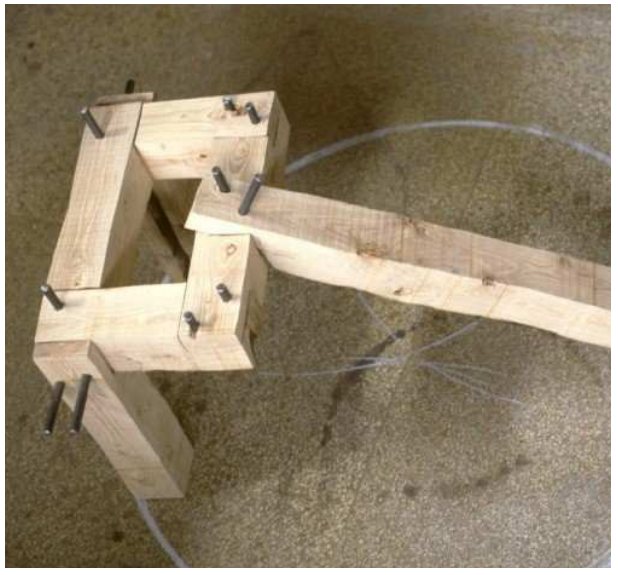
A montage made from superimposed transparencies of the installation. This gives a concentration of the Merzbau effect that I had been seeking. It is like a Picabia Merzbau.



Picabia *Embarassment* 1914
oseculoprodigioso.blogspot.com



Schwitters *Merzbau* 1924
www.answers.com



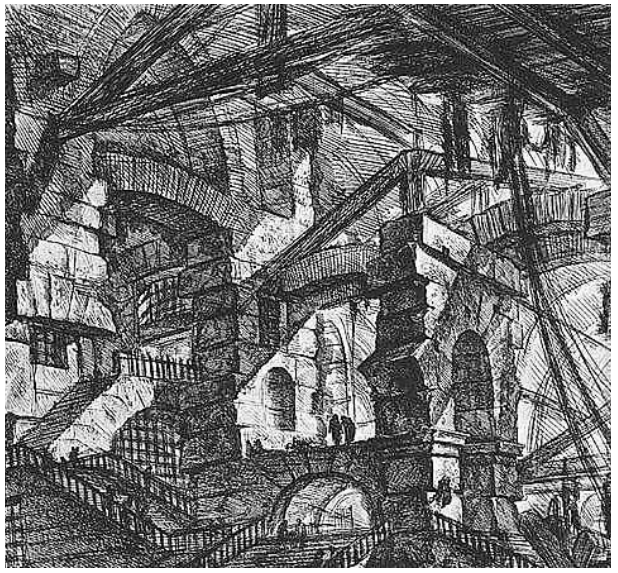
Paul Neagu *Hyphen*
amesadeluz.blogspot.com



Marcel Duchamp *Bride/Mariée* 1912
www.chess-theory.com



Anthony Caro *Child's Tower Room* 1983/84
www.anthonycaro.org



Piranesi *Carceri d'Invenzione* 1745
www.1st-art-gallery.com

Yorkshire Art Space 1985 - 1986



Montage effect using photo's of sculptures made at Yorkshire Art Space in 1985

Sculpture made at Y. A .S. in 1985.

Studio shot with standing forms



Sculpture made at Y. A .S. in 1985.

Studio shot with hanging forms





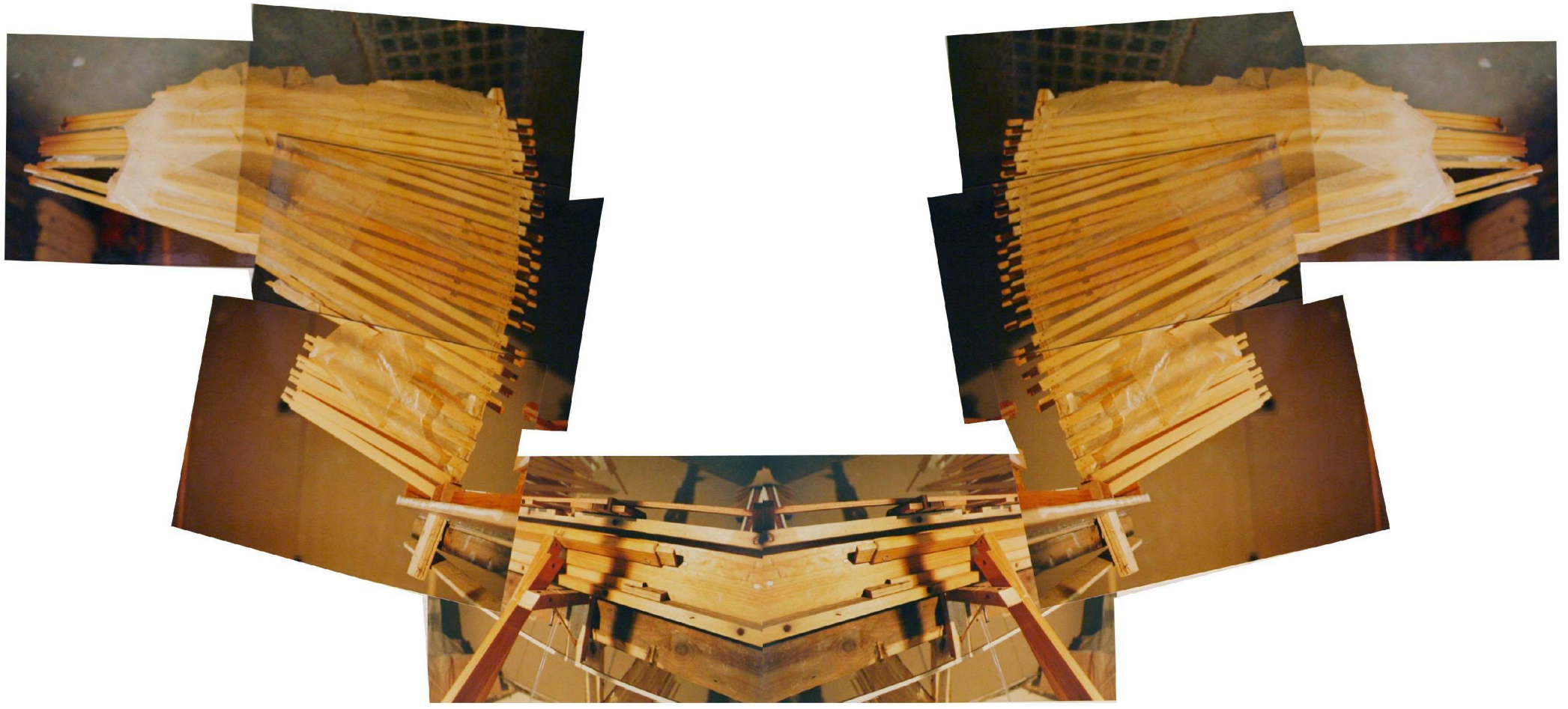
Sculpture made at Y. A .S. in 1985.
Studio shot with standing forms



This is one of several sculptures made at Yorkshire Art Space in 1985. I had my own bandsaw and used reclaimed school furniture. The surface effect is tissue paper in place of GRP.



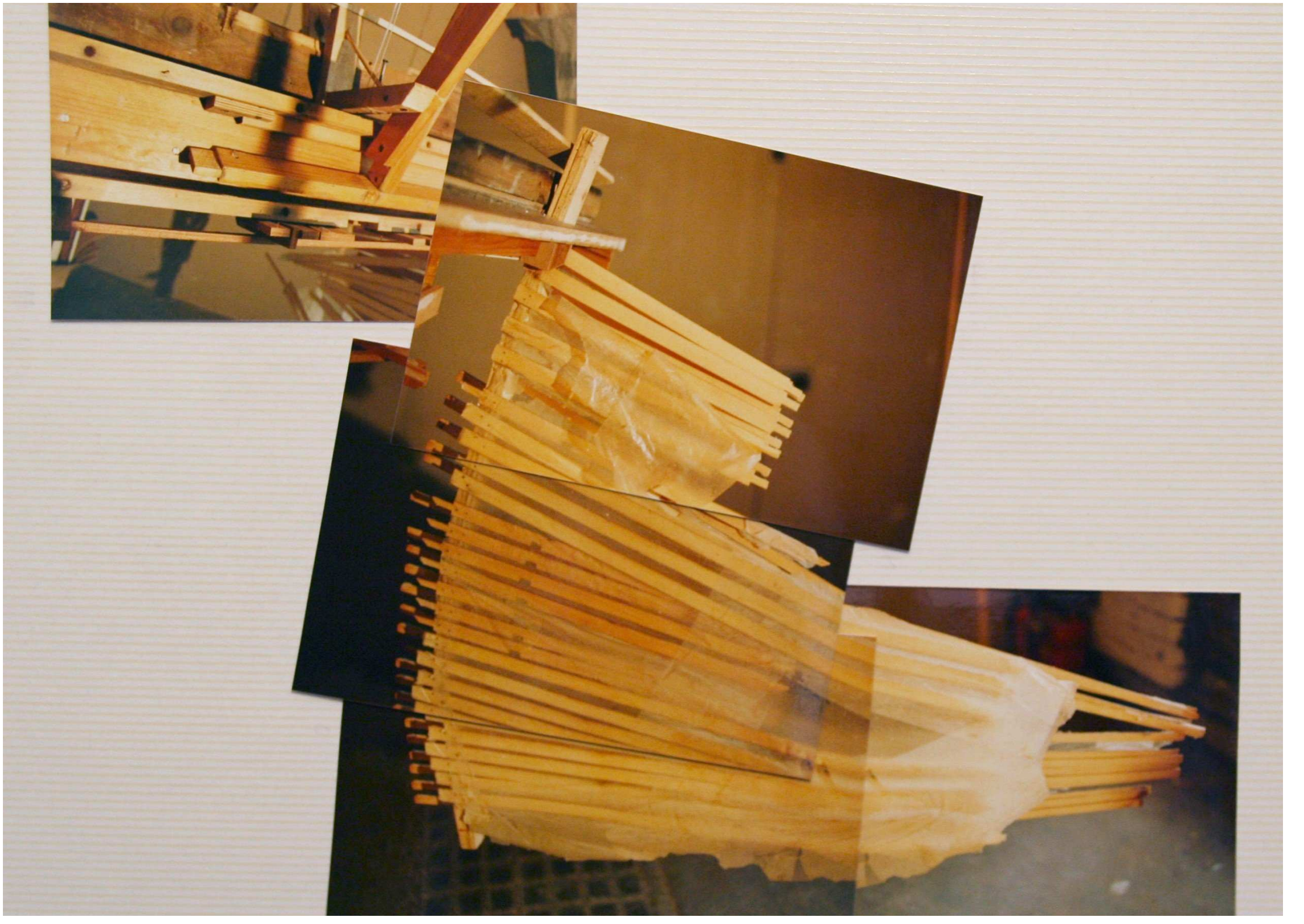
Standing form made at Y. A .S. in 1985.
Gallery shot from a group show.



A photo montage from sculpture made at Yorkshire Art Space in 1985. The idea was to create wings to suggest an angel.



A Photo montage of sculpture made at Yorkshire Art Space in 1985 to mock up an idea for an installation.



A detail of the construction technique used in sculpture made at Yorkshire Art Space in 1985

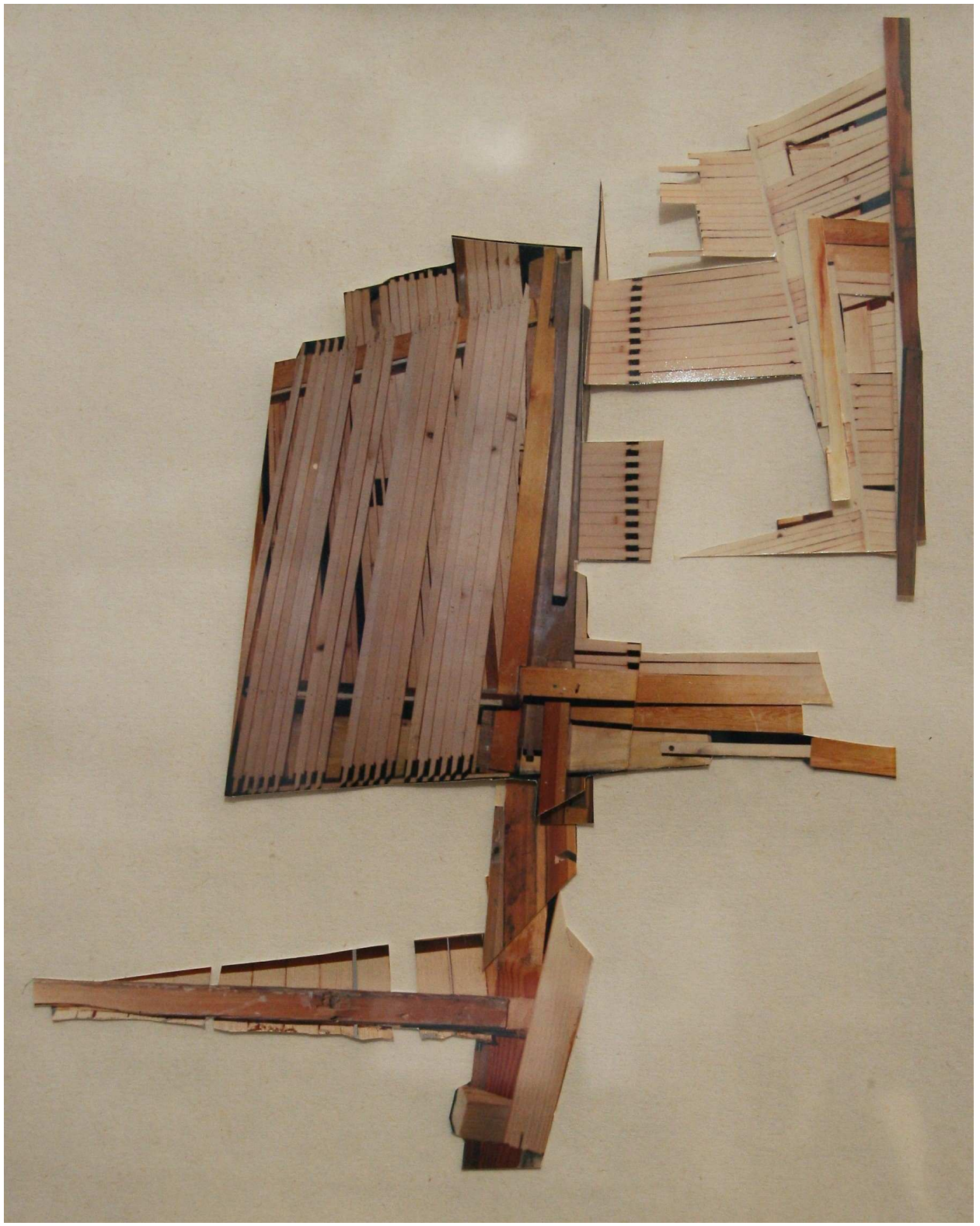
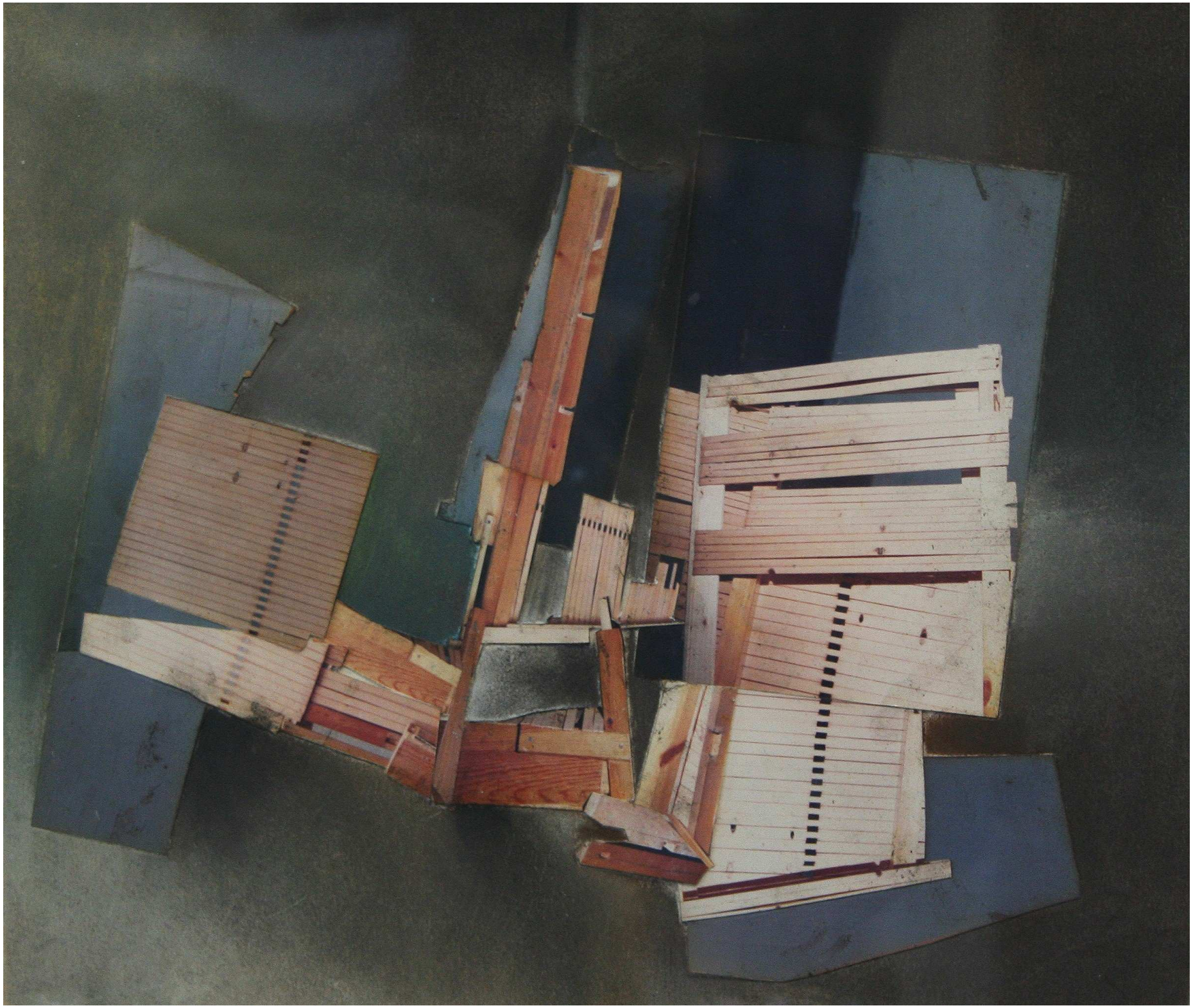


Photo montage of sculpture made at Yorkshire Art Space in 1985. This technique allowed me to chop up and re-assemble prints of sculptures to create new work which was never actually built.



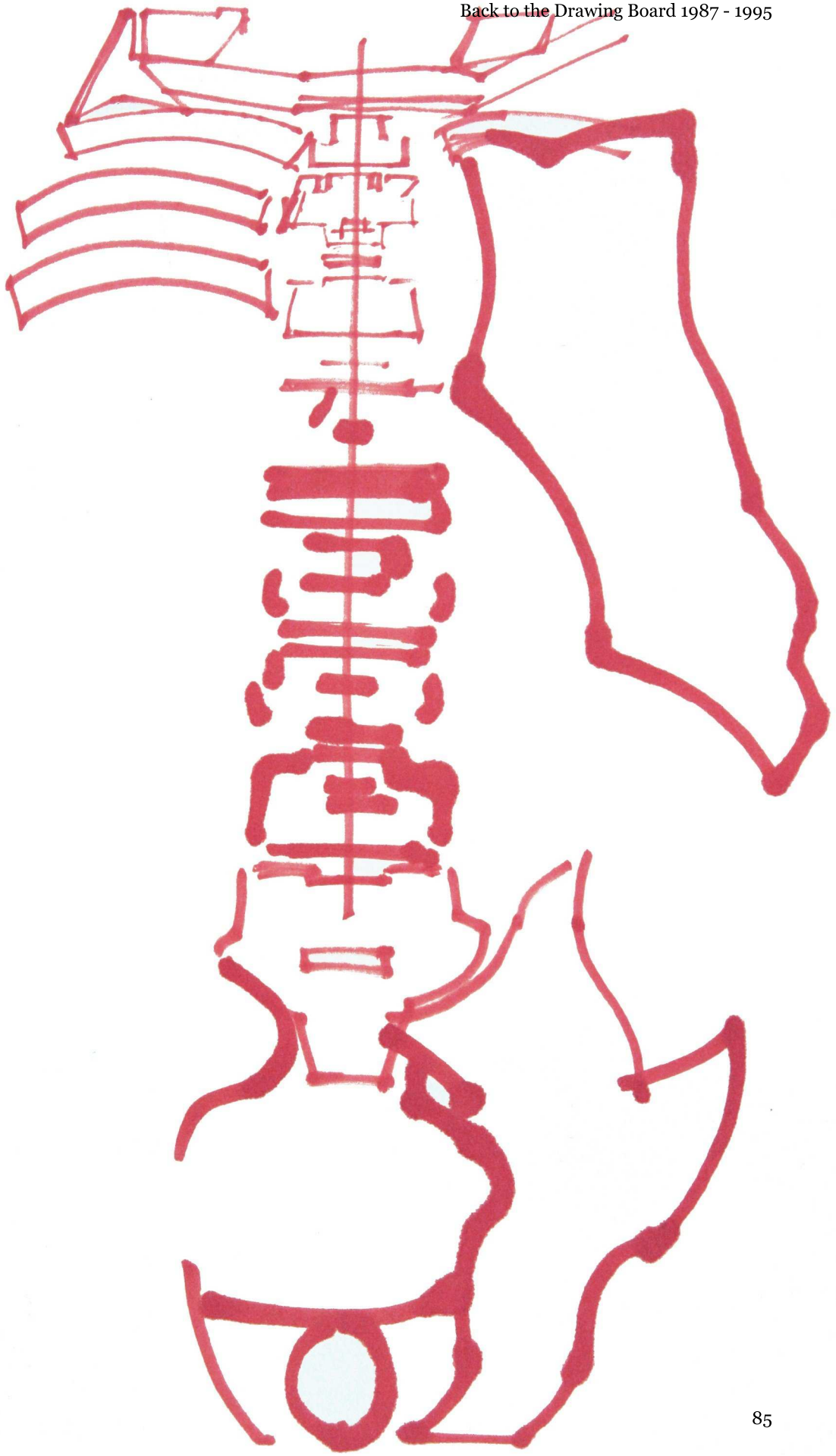
Chop and change photo montage from sculpture made at Y. A .S. in 1985.
Pre Photoshop this method gave creative options and suggested a modular 'kit' idea (as in Peter Startup's work) for sculpture.



Another re hash of the wooden work from YASS this time with an atmospheric pastel background

Back to the Drawing Board 1987 - 1995

It quickly became apparent that the Y.A.S. sculpture was not going to generate income. It was a luxury I could not afford for long. I exhibited there once as part of a group show and then teaching beckoned. Again, all the work was scrapped.





Ecorché 1988
My time at Y.A.S ended all too soon. I needed a way of keeping the creative momentum going and chose pastel as a medium (influenced by David Blackburn). I found a way of drawing using montaged fragments of collected pictures.

These were sometimes my own but increasingly were from glossy colour supplements. Car, or, (in the case of the Red Triptych) perfume adverts became the raw material that suggested possible structures. The pastel became a ground. The colours linked to the collage and evoked a mood or setting.

'Giardia Worm Perspextive'
c1998-99

This is one of a number of transitional drawings in pastel and mixed media. It clearly refers back to the early subjects. I was using technical drawing conventions and layout techniques to formalise compositions. The end result becomes idealised as part visualisation - part diagram. There is also an element of captured action. The pastel drawings from 1987 to 1991 were a substitute for making sculpture; they enabled ideas to be visualized / captured. At the same time the speed of production allowed for more idea development and range of expression. My technique, heavily influenced by the slick pastel practice of David Blackburn became more refined. The use of collage using fragments of glossy colour supplement printing and carefully applied pastel became a core method.
More layers of meaning emerged as I allowed current events, and prompts from the magazine pictures to filter through into the drawings.
New technologies such as colour photocopying and printing became more available.

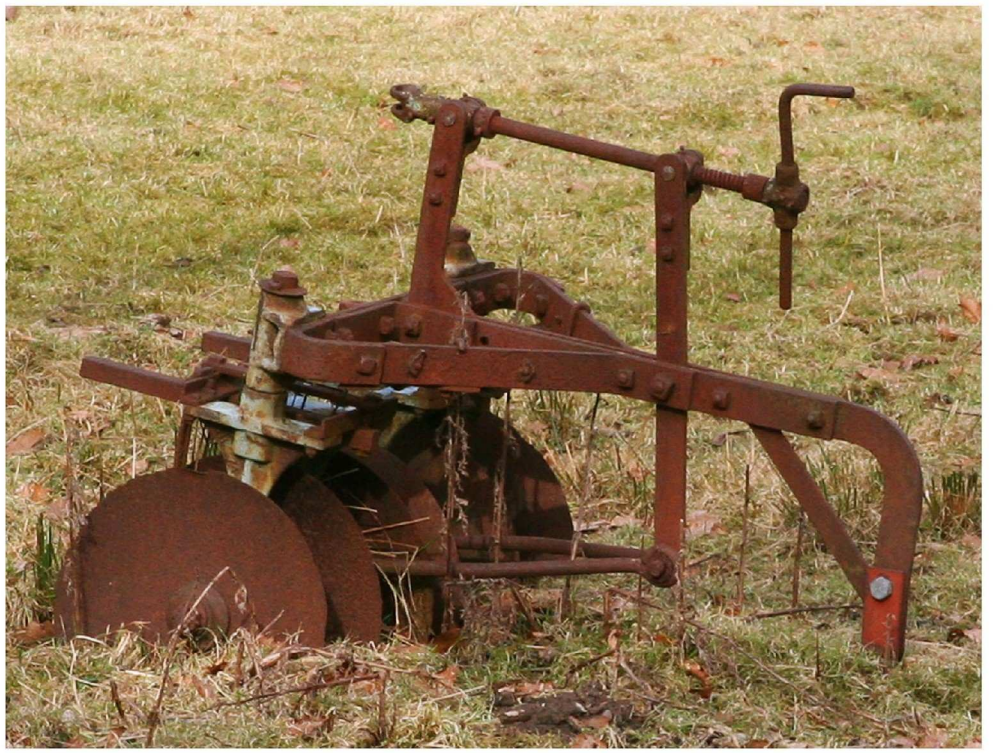


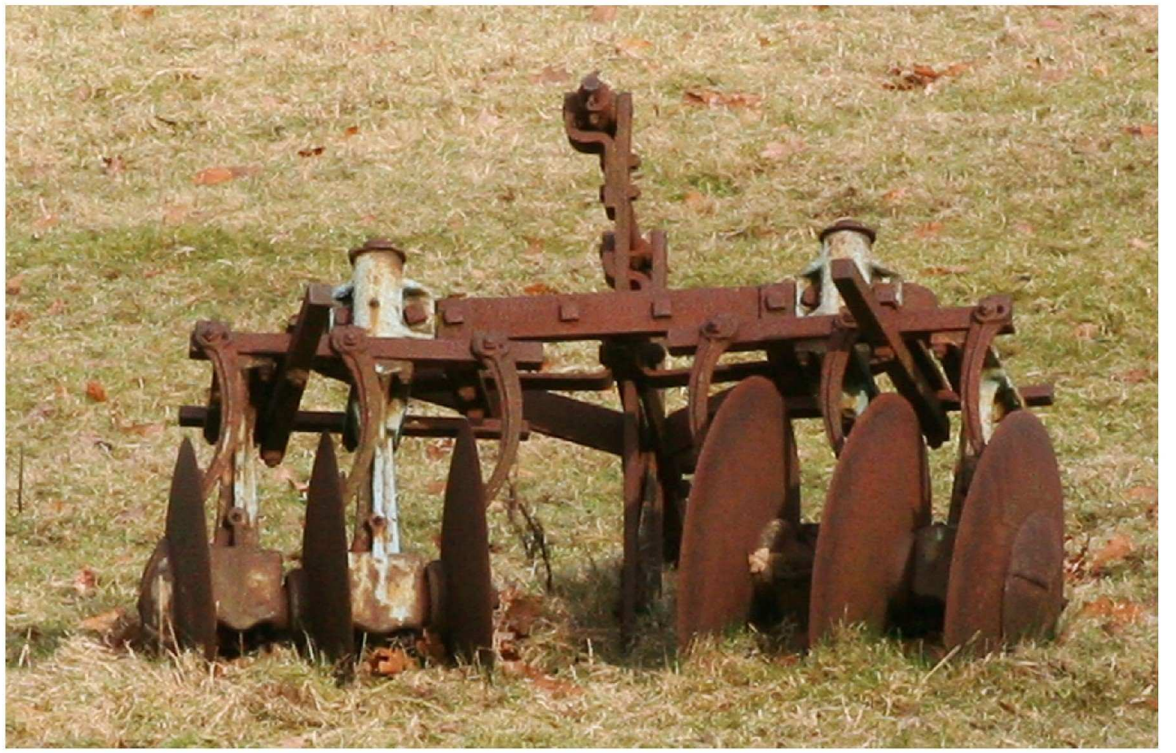


Mediterranean Boat
Pastel & collaged photographs on paper 1987



Between Two Stools
Pastel & collaged photographs on paper 1987

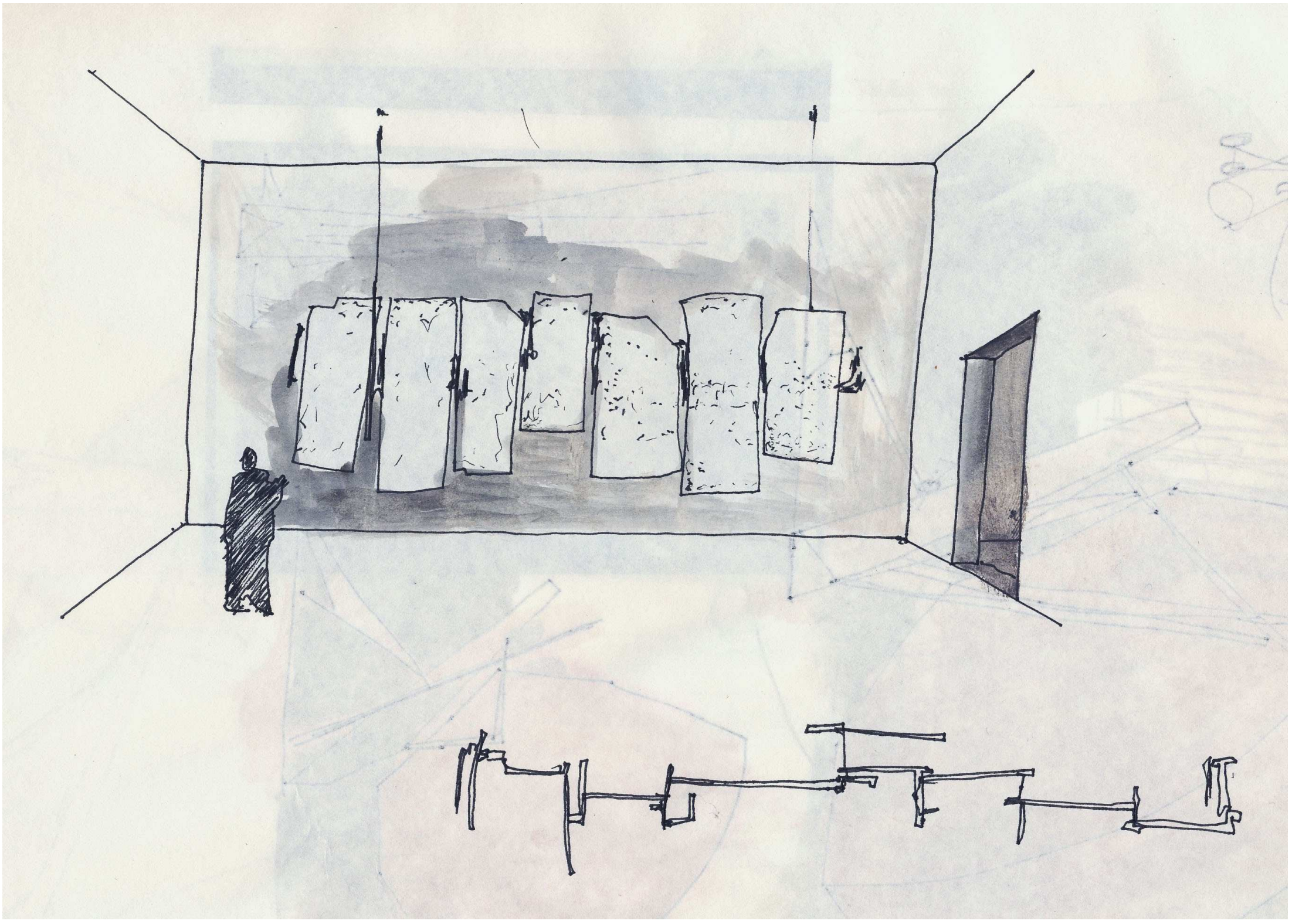




Farm implements
These forms and structures inform many of the pastel drawings.



Agricultural Revolution
Pastel & collaged magazine photos on paper 1988
Private collection



Sketchbook Page : Gallery Visualisation of hanging 'Sails'
with plan schematic.
Drawing from reverse shows through thin sheet.



Three Sails
Pastel & chalk on paper with added glued tissue and ink 1988



Collateral
Damage
Pastel & collaged
magazine photos
on paper 1988



Jellyfish X-ray
Pastel & collaged magazine photos on paper 1988



Felucca
Pastel & collaged magazine photos
on paper 1989



Mechanism Geode Triptych
(We Three Kings)
Pastel & collaged magazine photos on paper 1989



Red Triptych
Pastel & collaged magazine photos on paper 1989



Dream Machine Triptych
Pastel & collaged colour photocopies & magazine photos on paper 1990



Part Arrangement
Pastel & collaged colour photocopies & magazine photos on paper 1990

Here the idea is a diagram or schematic with parts arranged for assembly. The use of technical or engineering drawing conventions also seemed appropriate. I often referred back to the 'Airfix' kit layout. The drawing ceased to be a visualisation of what a sculpture might look like but more about its parts and their possibilities. The threads that were running through the work multiplied and with each new generation came changes of mood, or direction. Colour photocopying technology, available at a local newsagent allowed reproduction of design elements. This mimicked the 'industrial component' and mass production.

The technique of montage, collage and pastel rendering was starting to become repetitive. Looking for new ways forward I began to use allegorical themes suggested by collected imagery. This took the drawing away from sculptural intent and into picture making. However the themes from this work allowed more poetic and literary influences to enter into later sculpture.



Ideal for Conversion
Pastel & collaged magazine photos on paper 1991

The themes and ideas attached to the imagery varied widely. During the 1st Gulf War the term 'Collateral Damage' had been explained in the media. An 'Airfix' kit for collateral damage rather than a military machine was one idea influenced by current events. ‘Ideal for Conversion’ reflected a trend for customising, personalising or converting. Cars, property, (more recently bodies) are all fodder for conversion to an 'ideal' as extolled by media gurus.
The aesthetics of colour, texture and formal pictorial arrangement became important (and relevant) elements of the work.
An early mirroring of a sail sculpture (p72) had suggested wings and the wings in turn suggested the angel. The angel became a pivot with various plays on the word; Angel Heart, Fallen Angel e.t.c.



opposite
Height of the Boom
Pastel & collaged magazine photos on paper 1991

The boom is part of a ship and a financial situation. The sail (or sale) is also like an aerial view of land. Swatches in the top right show details.

right
Semi - Precious stones
Pastel & collaged magazine photos on paper 1991

The sample as a pictorial element was something I had used from the earliest pastel drawings. Swatches off-cuts, samples, spare parts, accessories were all relevant to the work as it evolved. Here they became the subject.



Virtual Sculpture 1995 - 2009



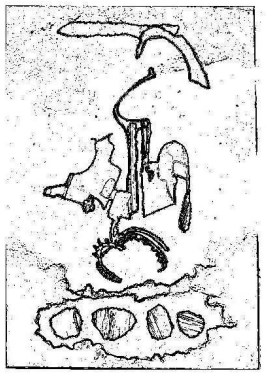
Self Portrait c1995

I began to experiment with digital imaging around 1995 having previously being resistant to using a computer to directly create art. I had used page making programmes such as Adobe and Corel to desktop publish but not Photoshop. It took a long time and much patience to learn the intricacies of layers, masks and filters. Gradually I was able to achieve results that realised my intentions. I also acquired a scanner and a digital camera enabling me to recycle and edit existing images. Digitally generated imagery, a manipulation of existing imagery, scanned elements and mixtures of all three became interwoven. As before when a new corner turned the themes and direction continued but new possibilities for realisation became available. I tried to use the software only to do what it was better equipped to deal with. This included tasks and effects like copy & paste, rendering, colour shifts and transparency.

Several of the other images in this section are small and limited in quality. I did not fully understand the implications of the difference between 'screen' and 'print out' resolution at the time. There was also the issue of limited capability with the hardware. The computer I had at that time struggled with the workload generated with imaging.



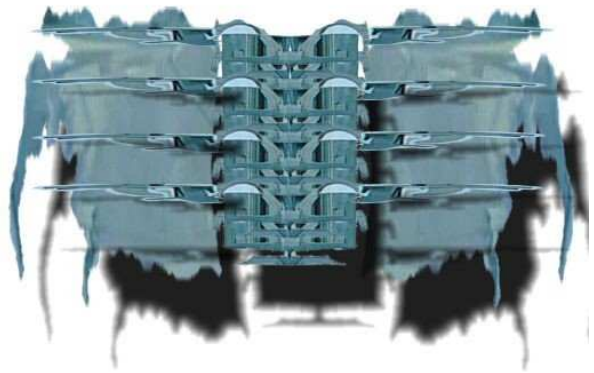




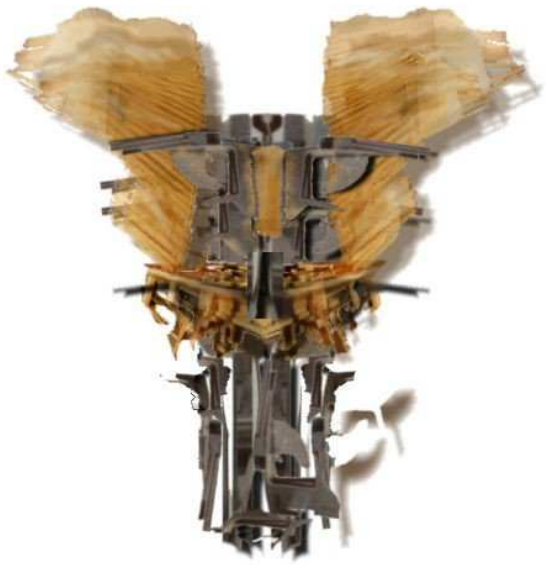




The computer allowed actions such as rendering and colour ways to be executed with speed and simplicity. The shadow and surface texture is computer generated. The shapes are from photographed drawings.



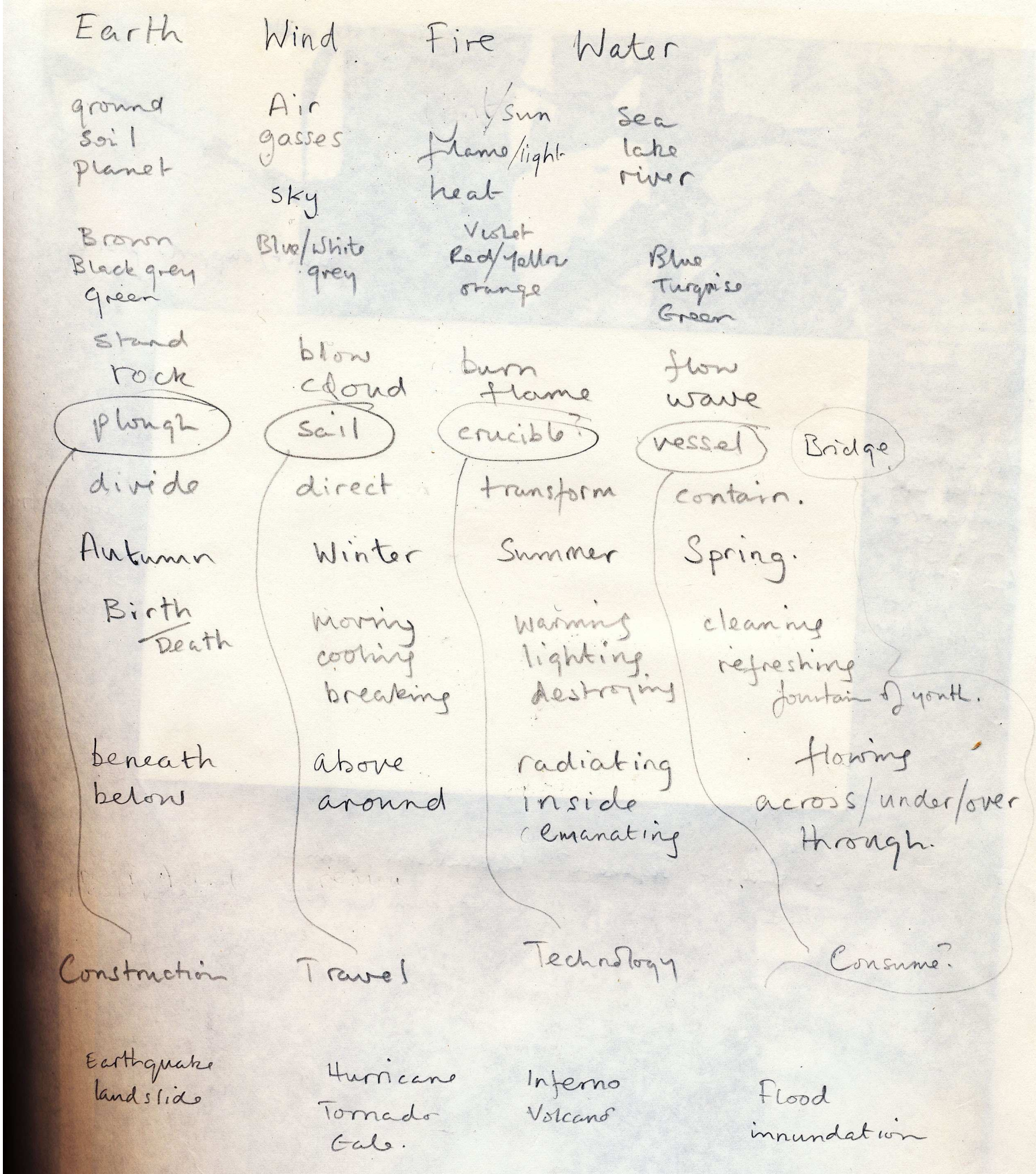
These images also illustrate the benefits of basic 'cut & paste' image making. The symmetry and repetition, tedious and time consuming to achieve accurately by hand is done in seconds.

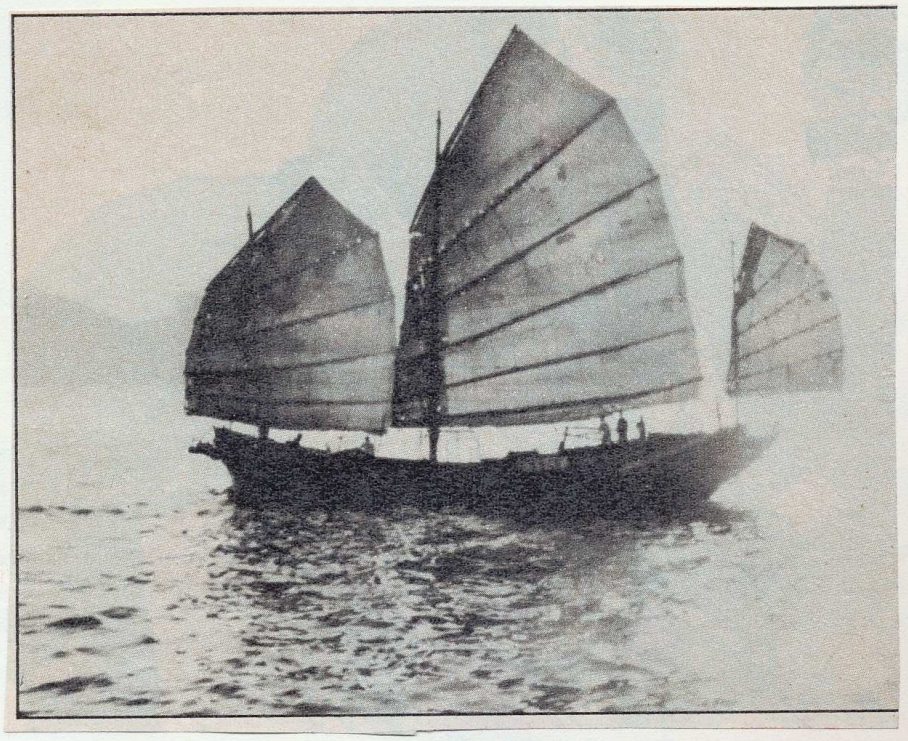


This image combines sculpture made in Y.A.S. with magazine collage from pastel drawing and computer generated repeats, mirroring and renders.

These sketchbook pages show how ideas are re-visited, revised and consolidated. Recurring themes are linked and amplified. References are collected often after the event to reaffirm and qualify the process. Decision making which may have been intuitive is clarified and justified by review.

Here the four elements are linked to 'formers' the plough, sail, crucible, and vessel (as in boat as well as container). Connections are made outwards from these points. A move forward is suggested with the bridge idea.







Sail
Component.

The sail

Element the wind

Filled suspended blown

Direction - decisive



Three sails.

and a scythe

float ent.

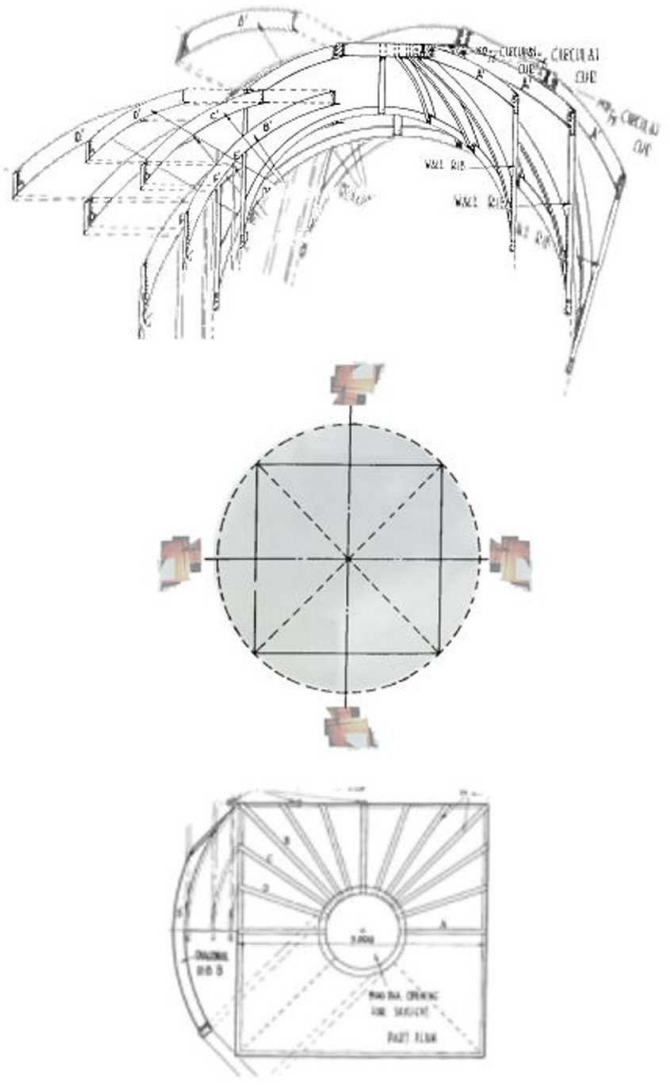
Sometimes a specific reference is made in a drawing but connections only emerge afterwards. An example of the process: A fragment of collage is generated from sections of magazine photograph re-assembled. There is sometimes no end point in mind, the colours and shapes in the magazine pictures suggest their own direction. The sail component on the left was one of several parts in a drawing. Later I found the image of the boat and made the link more concrete. Below an incarnation of a sculpture made at Y. A.S takes the same idea in a different direction.



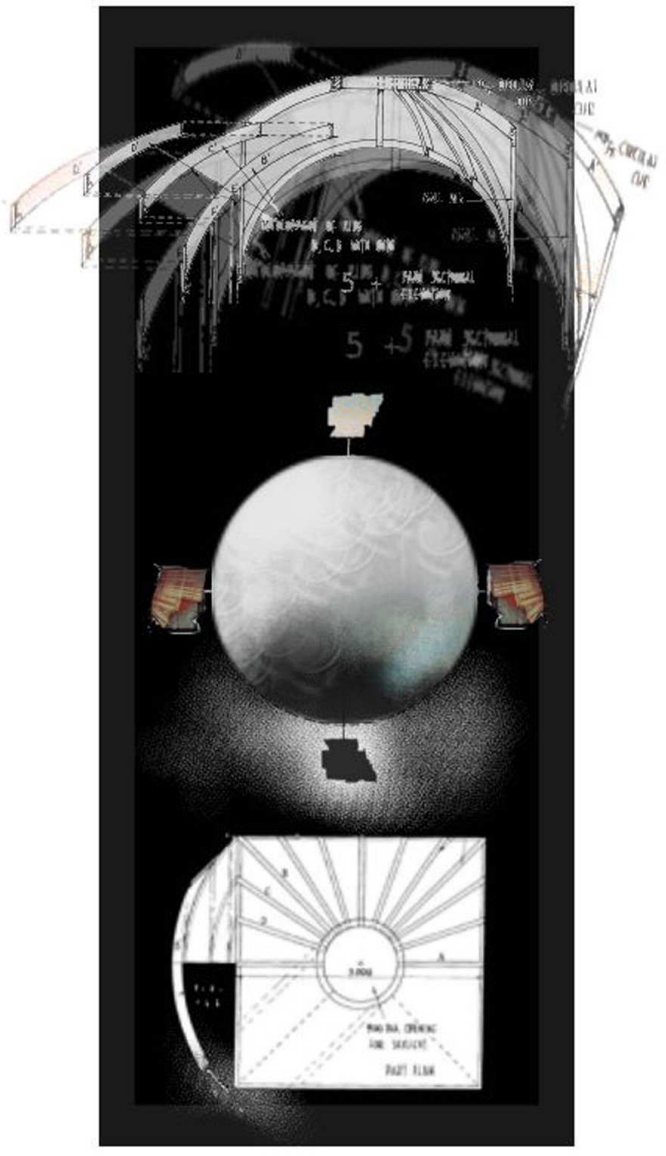


Selections from F. Hilton's carpentry book are mirrored and the images seen previously are reused & further manipulated. The perspective floor was a digitally distorted picture from an internet website about secret or hidden military installations.

The sails had become angel wings. In this instance I used a fragment of dried grasses found on a walk and scanned. A composite element generated previously is re-used in the body.



Here more selections from the carpentry book with the sail at the quadrants.



A rendered background is added to the previous elements.





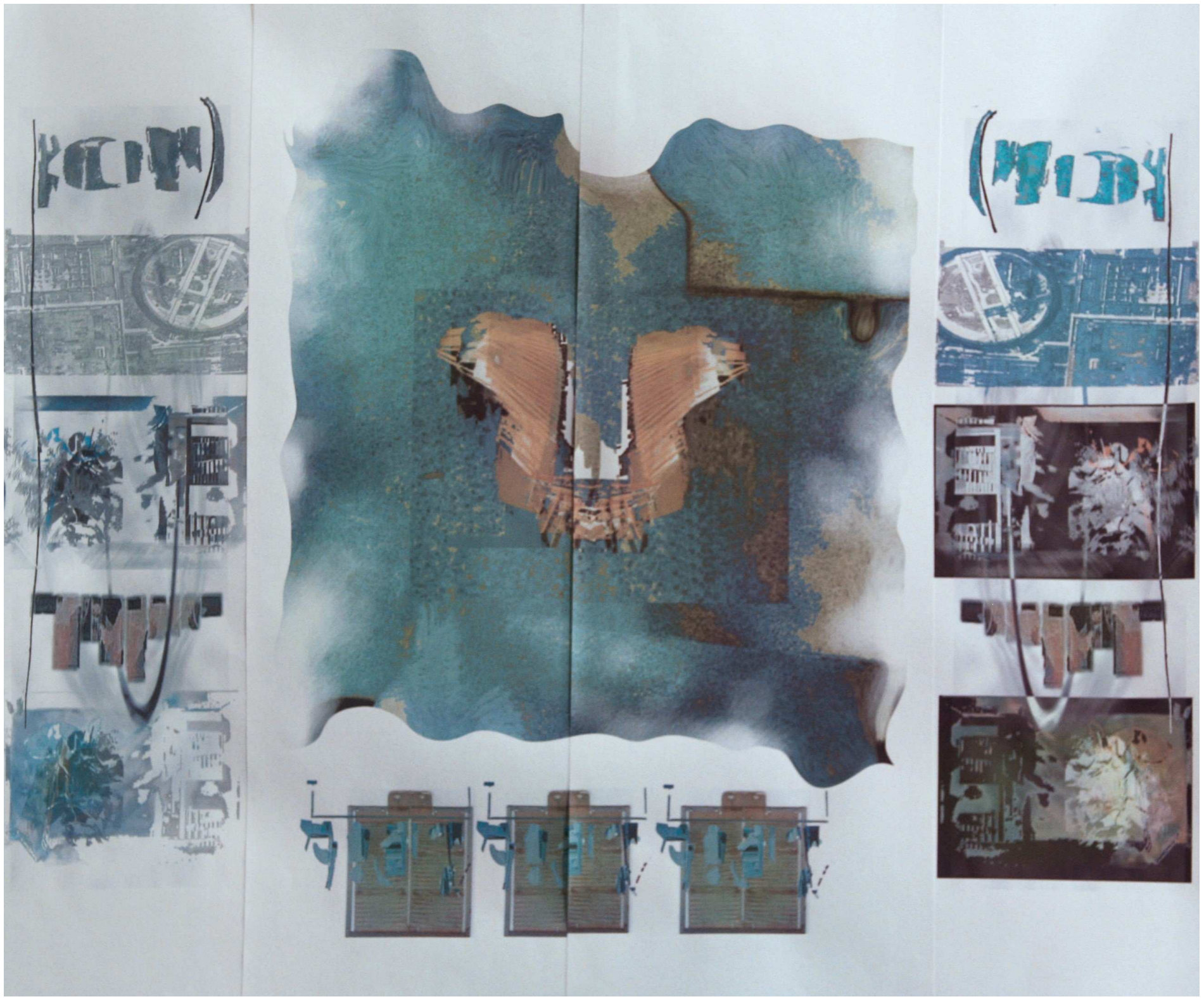
As I became more interesred in digital imaging layering and transparency became areas for exploration.



Heart of an Angel
A heavenly messenger has a bypass. An excuse to use filters, tools and effects on the computer.



Rendering. layering and effects. The apotheosis of the angel as it ascends heavenwards.



Putting together this retrospective recollection has been an enjoyable experience. The reviewing process done with a very different mindset has given a valuable insight into work from more than three decades earlier. I knew at the time what needed to be done but in a much more intuitive way. I hope I have made sense of it to weave a coherent explanation using the learning and experience gained over those years.

There is no better way to find out about art than to teach it. and more than two decades in the classroom responding to enquiring young minds has opened so many new ways forward for me. In just the same way I am sure that having an active involvement in my own work has kept me interested in the classroom.

Whilst recording the work for the book I came across this picture of a sculpture from 1974 -75. It was a response to a task set by John (POP) Shaw on the foundation course at Huddersfield. We had to make a cast in plaster and add to it to make a sculpture.
I realised this was probably the first time I made sculpture. It is a crude visualisation of a 'lift off' yet the assemblage of shapes from found parts is so similar to so much that I did later. The irony of creating the vaporous thrust from the solid plaster was only vaguely understood. The interest in collage and the effect of forces acting as a focus was always there.

I have for some time now switched my energies to photography but I am sure the need to revisit sculptural themes will re-surface again.



And now?

Putting together this retrospective recollection has been an enjoyable experience. The reviewing process done with a very different mindset has given a valuable insight into work from more than three decades earlier. I knew at the time what needed to be done but in a much more intuitive way. I hope I have made sense of it to weave a coherent explanation using the learning and experience gained over those years.