

AN INVESTIGATION INTO A
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
PERSONAL SCULPTURAL STATEMENT
AND POPULAR MATERIAL CULTURE

Angela Maria Ferreira



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BETWEEN PERSONAL SCULPTURAL STATEMENT
AND OBJECTS OF POPULAR MATERIAL
CULTURE.

Documentation and a commentary on the
body of practical work submitted to
meet the requirements for the degree
of Master of Fine Art at the University
of Cape Town.

November 1983

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TITLE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL SCULPTURAL STATEMENT AND OBJECTS OF POPULAR MATERIAL CULTURE.

2.1 I propose to create a body of practical work in the field of sculpture, over a minimum period of two years, to meet the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art (M.F.A.) at the University of Cape Town.

(Emphasis was placed on the body of practical work and the written explication is intended as a concise extension of this, incorporating a description of the work process and my ideas relating to each piece, as well as to the body of work as a whole.)

2.2 The work will take the form of structures and assemblages developed from an artistic investigation of objects of popular material culture ranging from traditional mechanical toys, automata and fairground props to modern electronic games.

(Artistic investigation was taken to mean a practical analysis of objects of popular material culture according to my needs as an artist, with particular reference to form, function and content. My intention was to work from direct observation of the objects chosen. The sequence in which categories were 'analysed' was as follows - music-making machines, video games, mechanical toys and finally fairground props and paraphernalia.)

- 2.3 The object of the 'practical thesis' will be to develop a set of original forms and images from this material.
- 2.4 Final presentation will consist of an exhibition of practical work supported by graphic and photographic documentation of source material, the creative process and the resulting works of art.

This section aims at categorising the source material and clarifying some of the ideas which were stimulated by this material and applied in the making of the sculptures. In addition a brief explanation of the historical context of the body of practical work is given.

3.1 Field of study.

Popular culture may be best understood in terms of Ronald Fletcher's general definition of culture as the "social heritage of a community". (1) That is to say "the total body of material objects (tools, weapons, houses, places of work and worship, government, entertainment, etc.) of collective mental and spiritual 'artifacts' (ideas, symbols, aesthetic perceptions, values, etc.) and of distinctive forms of behaviour." (2)

Popular culture, however, may be specifically related to "products (material and abstract) produced primarily for entertainment rather than intrinsic worth and with items created by mechanical reproduction such as the printing press, gramophones, records and art illustrations". (3) These usually correspond with mass taste

and demand.

This practical study is concerned with material objects of popular culture, necessarily limited by personal choice. Starting with music-making machines, as the work progressed my interests became more specific and included video games, mechanical toys, fairground props, participatory toys and sports (illus. 1-5, p.8). My intention was to initiate a series of analytical studies based on the chosen material, to extract formal principles from these, and to develop these principles in a series of more complex 'synthetic' sculptures.

3.2 Historical context.

In contextualizing this area of study it is useful to differentiate between objects of popular material culture and the so-called Pop art movement of the late 1950's and the early 1960's.

Most objects of popular material culture are made by laymen as an expression of popular concerns. These objects are substantive to this study. On the other hand, 'Pop' artists, such as Richard

Illus. 1
Music machines

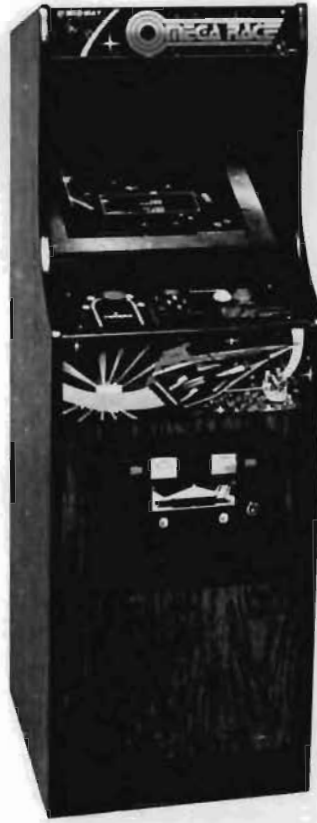
Illus. 2
Video games

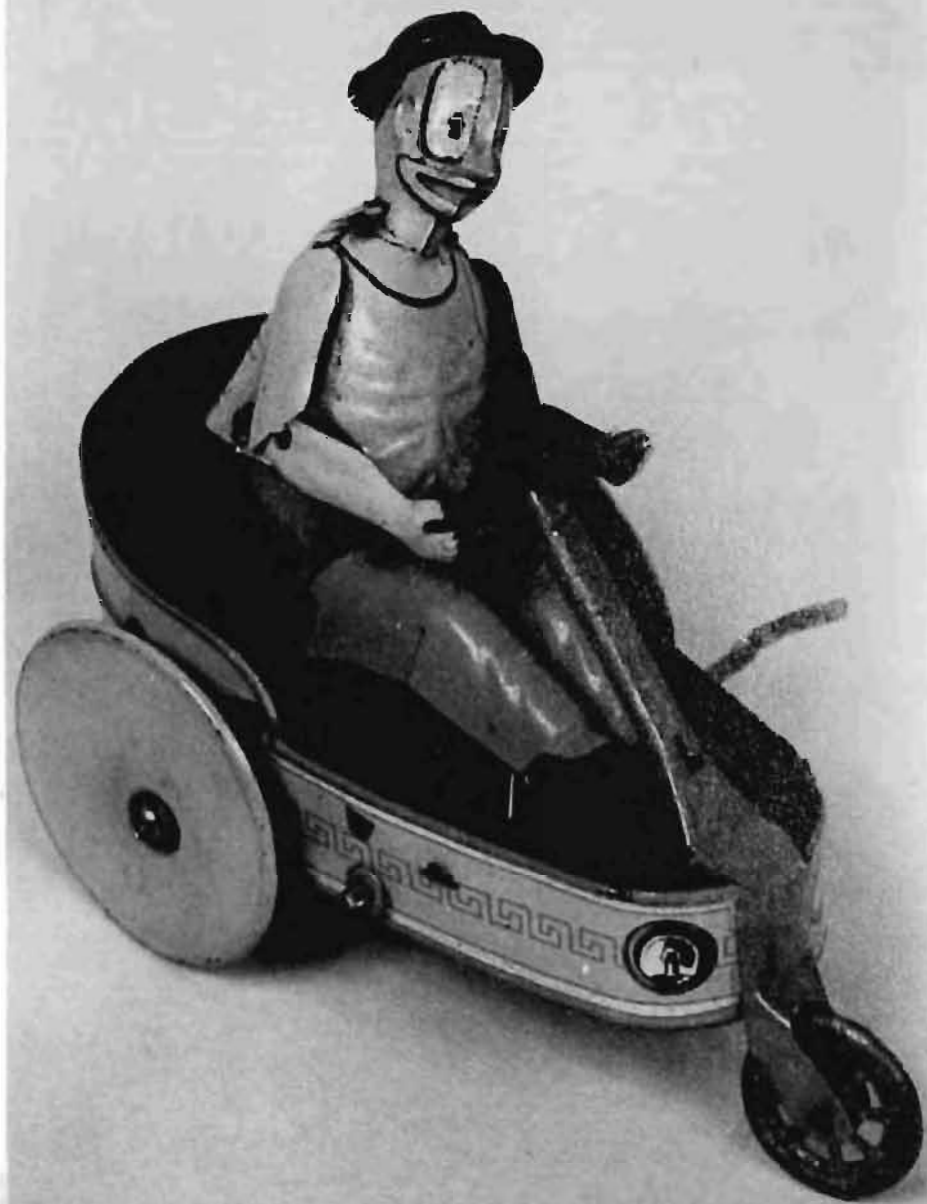
Illus. 3
Toys

Illus. 4
Fairgrounds

Illus. 5
Table games







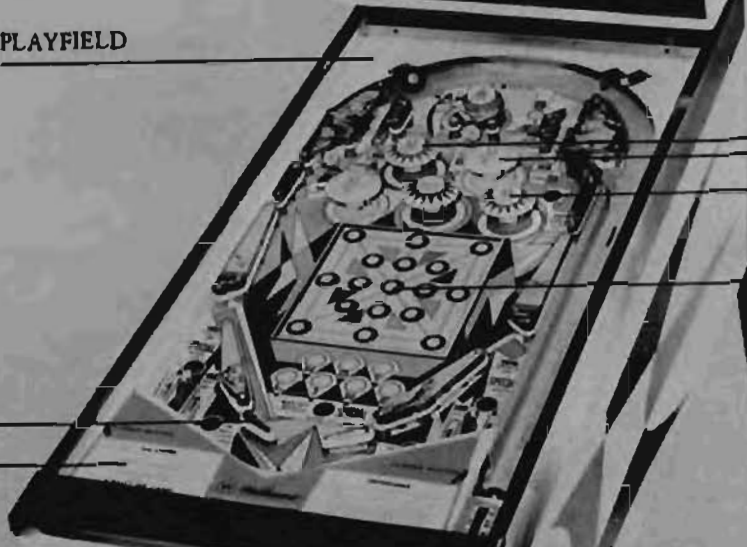


BACKGLASS
or
BACKFLASH



SCORE WHEEL
(single player machine)

PLAYFIELD



THUMPER
BUMPERS

ROLL-OVER
BUTTONS

FLIPPERS
BONUS SCORE CARD

FLIPPER BUTTONS
(one each side of cabinet)



Hamilton (b. 1922), Robert Rauschenberg (b. 1925), Andy Warhol (b. 1930), Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929), examined middle-class consumer society in terms of academic references to art (mostly pertaining to the twentieth century), in order to produce sophisticated works of their own. Although the aims of these artists differ from mine, the way in which they viewed the ethics of modern aesthetics, appealed to me.

The work of Eduardo Paolozzi (b. 1924) refers as much to traditional western European art as to the media of mass communication. It refers to sculptural, pictorial and literary phenomena (e.g. Disneyland) and to technology. Works such as Towers for Mondrian, 1936/66 (illus. 6, p. 10) reveal an enjoyment of the creative process and an intention to please through form and colour, but also lead the viewer into making associations demarcated by architecture and mechanics. His celebration of technology, related to the manipulation of associative meaning, is of particular interest to me.

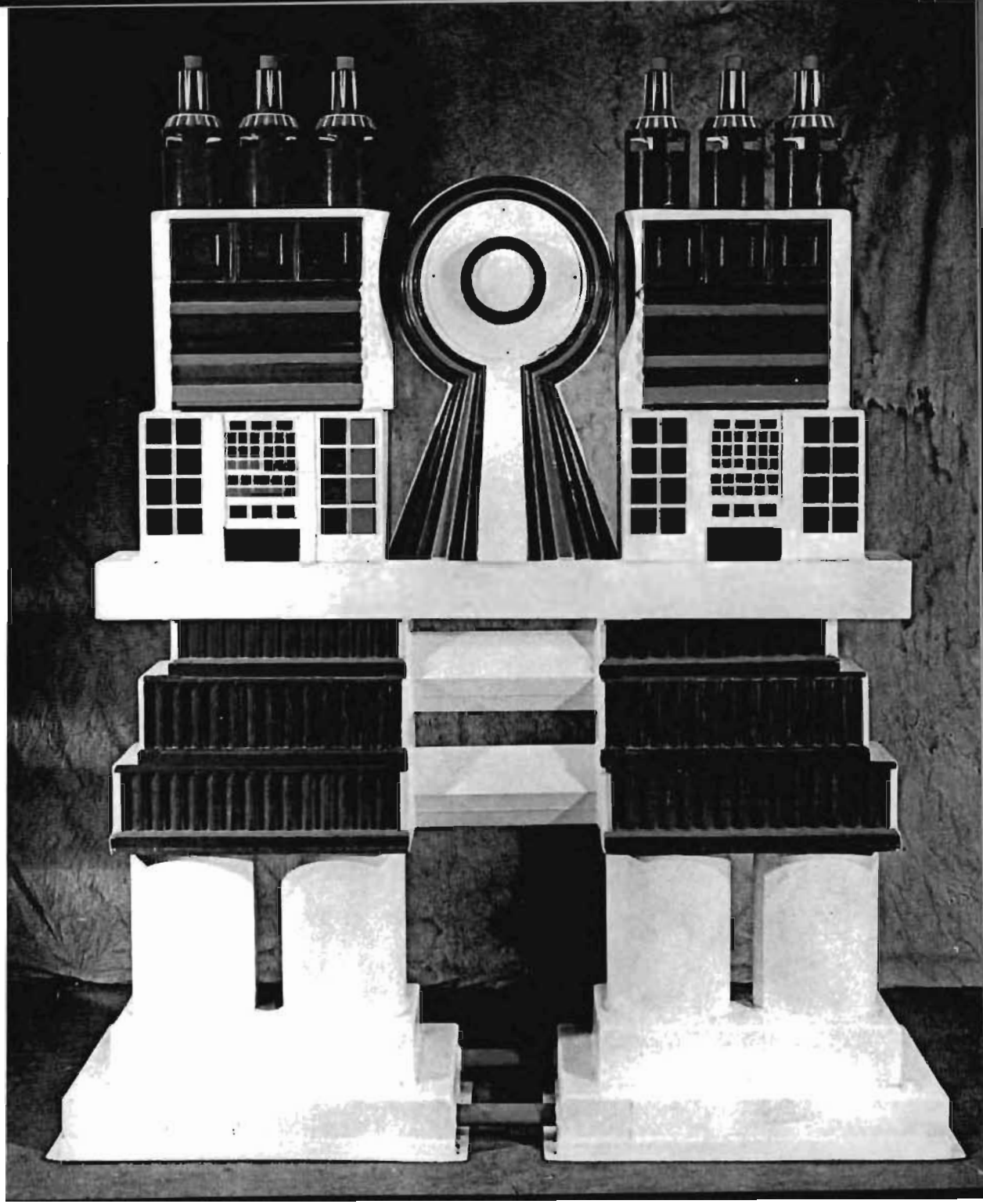
With respect to other aspects of popular culture, which are relevant to the discussion, the unassuming pleasurable nature of objects such as toys, games and fairground props, my affinity



Illus. 6

Eduardo Paolozzi

Towers for Mondrian 1936/66



lies with the work of an English sculptor, who is not aligned with any art movement, Sam Smith (b. 1908).

In the catalogue of his retrospective exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery, London, in 1981, Smith describes his inspiration and source material as follows:

"I was enthralled by the vitality and gilt of the music-hall and I also loved the fair which came to the common twice a year and had large steam organs that made bronchial music accompanied by mechanical figures that rattled drums and seemed to play instruments". (4)

I particularly value Sam Smith's love of detail on the painted surfaces of objects, as in Lord Swaything, 1973 (illus. 7, p. 12). and the general evocative quality of his work:

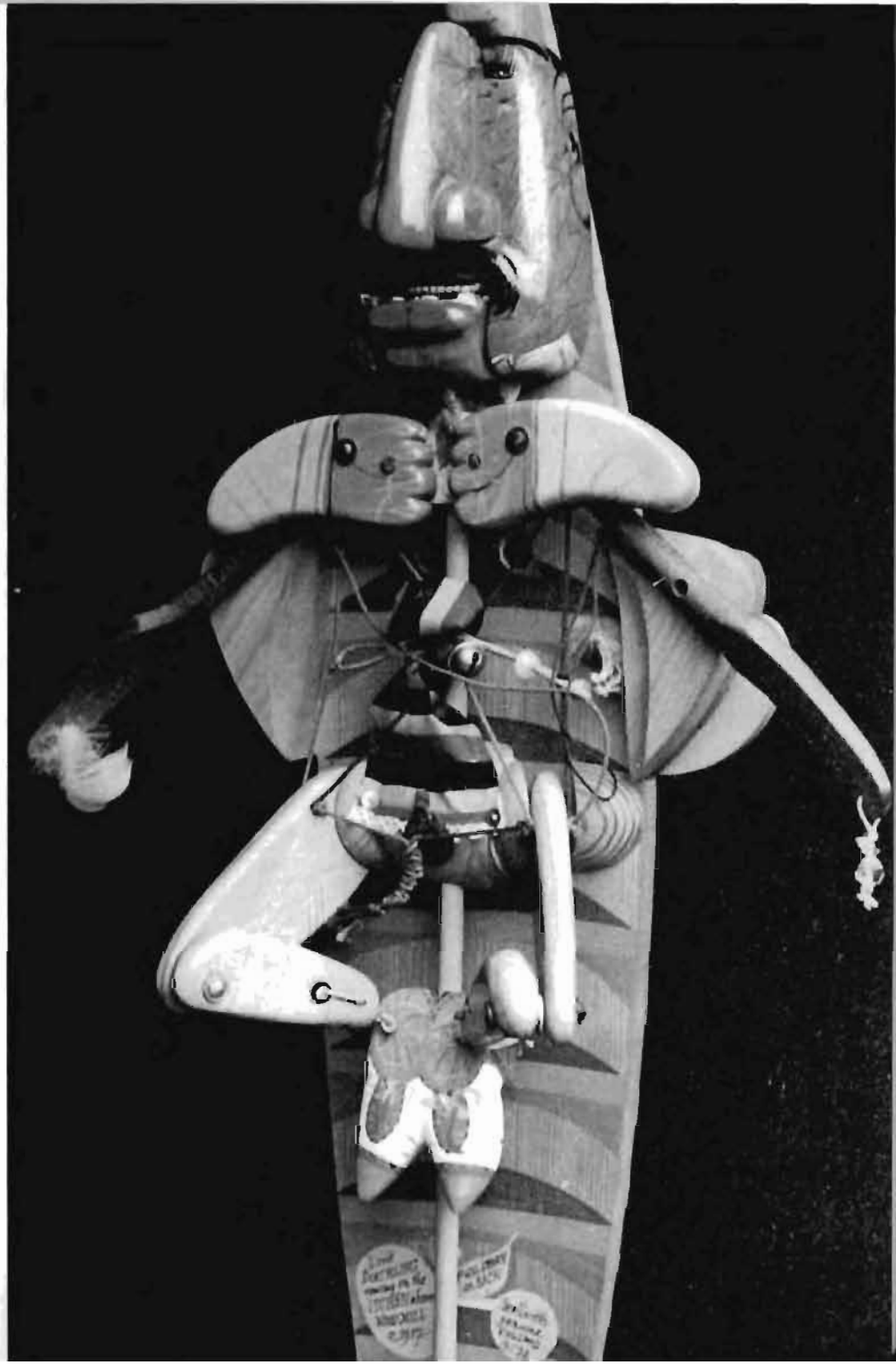
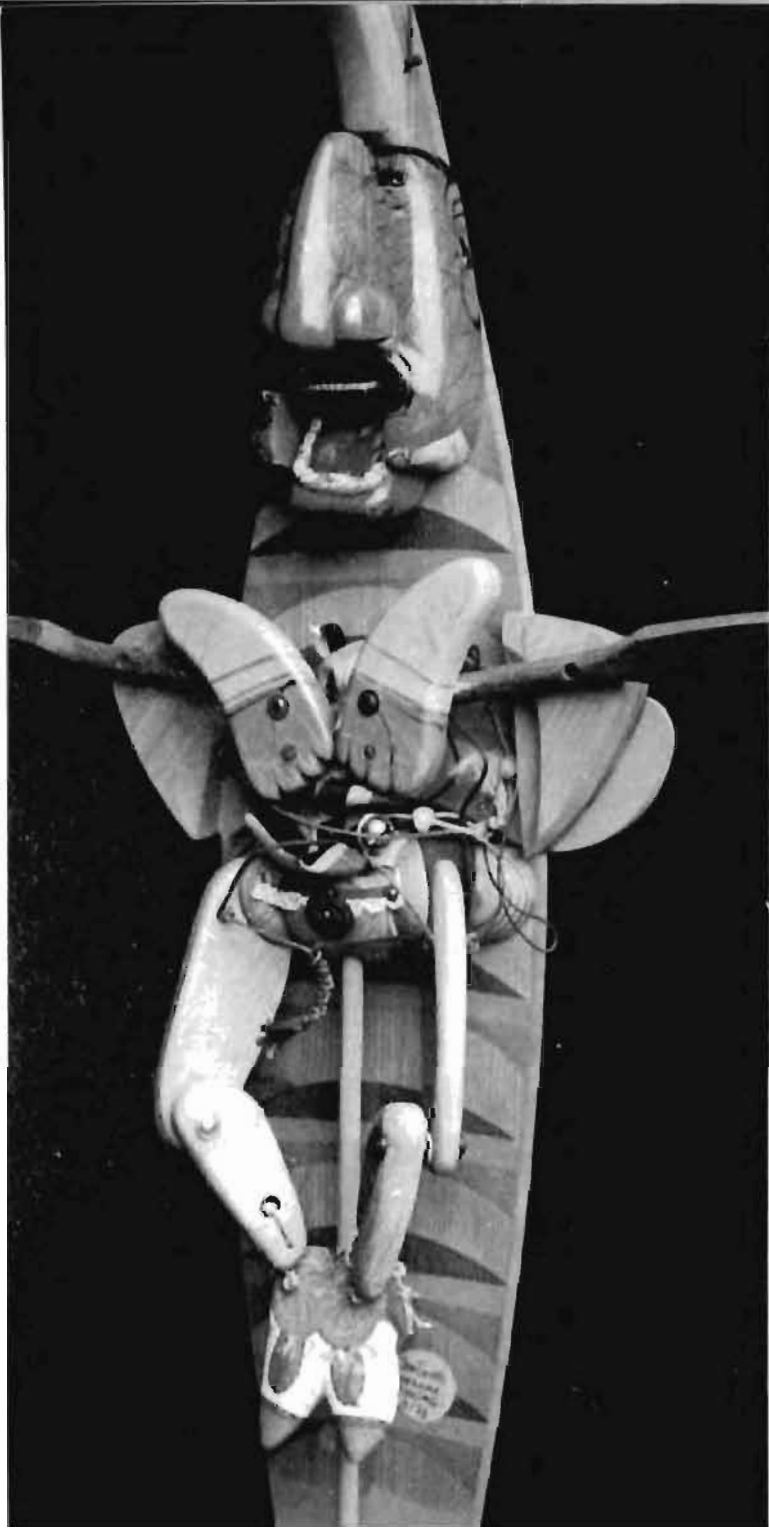
"I get less interested in the way a thing looks and more interested in the spirit that hides within it". (5)

The importance of decorative surface detail and free use of colour

Illus. 7

Sam Smith

Lord Swaything, 1973



manifests itself in my work in a twofold manner:

- (1) the intuitive way in which colour is used to decorate surfaces and forms;
- (2) the use of explicit painted images referring directly to the subject of the work.

Finally one other form of popular expression has had direct influence in my work and this is architecture. Throughout the creative process architectonic forms have been used in order to contextualise ideas.

3.3 ANALYSIS.

3.3.1 The introduction of illusion.

In the first four works I became progressively more interested in the painting of details on surfaces (e.g. imitating cloth in Radiogram I) (illus. 11 & 12, p. 37). During the making of Video game I (illus. 14, p. 41) I realised that these illusion-

istic details enhanced the 'game factor' in the object (see 5.5.3), and intensified meaning by extending viewer participation in the visual pun.

Illusion introduces a visual paradox. The viewer cannot resolve such a paradox rationally and therefore refutes it or accepts it by entering a state of mind which is characterised by make-believe, the use of imagination and fantasy. The switch from belief to disbelief (accepting or refuting) involves the viewer in a visual and conceptual game with the object. My concern with this visual and conceptual play led to a further study of notions of 'play' and 'game'.

3.3.2 'Play' and 'game'.

Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) in his Homo Ludens makes a searching analysis of the borderline between belief and make-believe and takes as his starting point the idea of play. According to Huizinga what welds play and illusion to art is the way in which external consistency is traded against internal coherence. He

defines play as

"... a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious', but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner." (6)

and he draws analogies with an illusionary world of play by the example of the

"spoil-sport who shatters the play world itself. By withdrawing from the game he reveals the relativity and fragility of the play-world.... He robs play of its illusion." (7)

Huizinga sees a similarity between play and human behaviour in mythological and ritual practices:

"Let us take ritual. Primitive society performs its sacred rites, its sacrifices, consecrations and mysteries, all of

which serve to guarantee the well being of the world, in a spirit of pure play truly understood."

and finally he connects myth with the origins of art:

"the grotesque wildness of the dancing masks among savage peoples, the monstrous intertwining of figures on totem-poles, the magical mazes of ornamental motifs, the caricature like distortions of human and animal forms - all these are bound to suggest play as the growing point of art."

Huizinga thus directs attention to objects which are symbols of play and game.

My investigation of toys followed directly from this. In Chu-chu boat (illus. 18, p. 53) I attempted to use illusion (by devising illusions of three-dimensional form) to trip the viewer's imagination into the world of fantasy and make-believe. Works 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, & 5.12 are loaded with this implication of 'game' yet their formal references lie within the parameters of life. This concept has been referred to by philosophers such as

Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466 - 1536) who states in his satire Praise of Folly:

"to destroy illusion is to ruin the whole of play ... and what else is the whole of life but a sort of play?" (10)

Throughout the history of western thought play has been considered as a primary function of life, whether seen as a neutral stabilizer of the human mind by producing pleasure, as suggested by Plato:

"That which has neither utility nor truth nor likeness, nor yet, in its effects is harmful, can best be judged by the criterion of the charm that is in it and by the pleasure it affords us. Such pleasure, entailing as it does no appreciable good nor ill, is play." (11);

or by virtue of its power to stimulate creation as suggested by the German philosopher, poet and playwright Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) who maintains that human nature is an interplay between the rational self and experience, and that this interplay

manifests itself as an autonomous power or force which he calls the 'play-drive'.

"It is precisely play and play alone which of all man's states and conditions is the one which makes him whole and unfolds both sides of his nature at once." (12)

From this he deduces that the fundamental activity of the play drive is reflected in the process of artistic creation and that consequently art is imbued with profound human significance.

In Letters On the Aesthetic Education of Man Schiller states that;

"Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being and he is only a human being when he plays." (13)

More recently Herbert Read (1893-1968) in Education through Art presented play as a paradoxical rehearsal or enacting of real life and simultaneously as a form of art.

"All forms of play (bodily activity, repetition of experience,

fantasy, realization of environment, preparation for life, group games, etc.) are kinaesthetic attempts at integration, and from this point of view are akin to the ritual dances of primitive races and like them are to be regarded as rudimentary forms of the visual and plastic arts." (14)

The link between play and real-life ritual led me to consider the fairground as an arena for real-life play, an environment for inducing physical and mental games.

3.3.3 Participation and environment.

My 'analysis' of environments suggested the creative potential of sculpture (tempered by lightheartedness and decoration) representing a parody of life. By employing a defined mode of work (employing illusions of three-dimensionality on a flat surface) I proposed to produce works which might embody such a parody.

Fairgrounds (or funfairs) interested me particularly on account of the unusual aesthetic they reveal, a nonsensical mixture of references to the past, future, high and popular art; an ironic popular

aesthetic that can sanction the coexistence of eastern and western medieval architectural design in a fanciful and bizarre juxtapositioning which denies any pretence of reality. This pretence is not an intended deception, but leads directly to an enjoyable world of make-believe.

Finally, my analysis of 'participation' was extended by a consideration of sports. These were seen as important because they represent an absurd but compelling inner world - the circumscribed world of the game, the players and the audience. In Table soccer (illus. 26, p. 74) the observer is invited to confront the paradox by accepting the 'rules' of the game which is represented.

3.3.4 Movement.

Another formal element was developed concurrently with these ideas, the contradiction that implied movement presents in a medium which is fundamentally static.

3.4 SYNTHESIS.

The examination of environments marked the end of the analytical phase. There remained a need to consolidate derived principles in works more complex in form and content which would move towards a synthesis of elements.

Train and bridge (illus. 27, p. 77), Radio for tennis fans (illus. 28 & 29, p. 80) and Blast-off (illus. 30, 31 & 32, p. 83) no longer refer to specific objects of popular culture. Each of these works is a combination of two or more categories. For example Radio for tennis fans is a combination of music-making machines and sports. The works were assembled within the established framework, the painted images make direct reference to the subject of the work, for example the graphic, tonal indication of the path of the tennis ball. Since the painted image describes volumetric form and movement, it takes on the function of integrating form and content.

Meaning in these later works refers to paradoxes which emerged during the initial stages - playfulness, magic and visual puns with a reference to real life.

The concept of 'games' has always had a darker side to it, mostly because of the unknown revelatory aspects which are the result of 'playing'. This, however, does not diminish the fascination of 'games'. The simultaneous evocation of opposed reactions creates tension in a work. This is comparable to tension created by the switch from belief to make-believe, and gives the work a vital quality. Sculptures which are inherently and intentionally delightful may also be disturbingly ominous.

This quality of ambiguity is derived from the objects of popular culture which I have studied, and links my personal sculptural statements to a broad Western tradition - from primitive ritualistic art through folk art to the irrational qualities of contemporary works which have emerged out of Dada and Surrealism. Since play is a primary function of life and my work derives expressive qualities from popular forms of play, it may be concluded that Art like play is a fundamental human activity.

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1. Fletcher, R. in The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, London, Fontana Collins, 1980. p. 150.

2. Fletcher, R. ibid., p. 150.
3. Bell, D. ibid., p. 373.
4. Smith, S. (exhibition catalogue) London, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980. p.2.
5. Smith, S. ibid., p. 6.
6. Huizinga, J. Homo Ludens, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949. p. 13.
7. Huizinga, J. ibid., p. 11.
8. Huizinga, J. ibid., p. 5.
9. Huizinga, J. ibid., p. 169.
10. Erasmus, D. Praise of Folly, as quoted by Penrose, R. Illusion in Nature and Art, London, Duckworth, 1973. chap. 6. p. 245.

11. Plato, Laws Book II 667 E as quoted by Huizinga in Homo Ludens, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949. p. 160.
12. Wilkinson, E. & Willoughby, L. in Friedrich Schiller on the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967. p. 105. Letter XV, paragraph 7.
13. Wilkinson, E. & Willoughby, L. ibid., p. 107. Letter XV, paragraph 9.
14. Read, H. Education Through Art, London, Faber and Faber, 1958. p. 110.

This section describes the development of the work and changes in method which occurred during the working process.

4.1 Individual method.

Each work was initiated by a series of pastel and charcoal drawings made from both observation and imagination. After deciding upon a specific idea, a wax maquette was sometimes made in order to resolve basic three-dimensional problems. (These maquettes were subsequently translated into bronze using the lost wax process.) This was followed by a search for appropriate materials, fabrication and assembling. Structural problems were generally of a simple nature during the analytical phase and these were solved as they emerged in the process of work. For the later pieces, detailed working drawings were made to scale in order to aid the planning, fabrication and assembling of the different elements.

4.2 General method.

As stated in the introduction there were two phases in the working

process, an 'analysis' and a 'synthesis'. These two stages involved different approaches to scale, materials, surface treatment and method of construction.

During the 'analytical' phase (5.1 - 5.15) emphasis was placed on working in a manner which facilitated my intention, which was to work through as many ideas as possible by being able to translate them immediately and efficiently into three-dimensions. The scale of the works is therefore small (between 500 and 1000 mm high), and the materials unpretentious, readily available and easily assembled - board, wood, sections of PVC pipe and acrylic sheet. In extending the investigative nature of these works to include the use of colour, PVA paint was chosen on account of easy mixing and fast drying qualities. A protective glaze was applied to finished surfaces.

The 'synthetic' phase (5.16 - 5.19) involved a shift in method. In these works I attempted to consolidate principles established during the 'analysis' by combining and integrating those ideas in more definitive works. It was therefore felt necessary to make larger structures of a more permanent nature. This led to

the introduction of mild steel and aluminium elements. The different parts of a work were now made separately in the workshop, painted and finally assembled. The painted surfaces were adapted to complement new materials and methods. Baked enamel paint was introduced as more appropriate to the metal surface, giving a glossier, harder and more permanent finish.

4.3 Formal elements.

The fact that the material for this study was drawn from cultural sources affected the basic nature of the structures, which are man-made rather than natural (organic). This was emphasized by my subjective response to forms with a strong geometric influence, and is apparent in my handling of line, planes and volumes, for example the rockets in Merry-go-round (illus. 23, p. 68), the balloon in Zeppelin (illus. 20, p. 59) or the speakers in Radiogram I (illus. 11 & 12, p. 37). Further use of geometry was made in balancing many of the works symmetrically.

Colour was a vital element in resolving surfaces. Surface treatment was kept simple, but the hand-painted quality was retained as appropriate to the idiom and the technology. 'Painterly'

textures were avoided but simulated texture occurs as an illusionistic element, as in the painted cloth surface in Radiogram I.

My choice of colours was generally influenced by observed objects of popular material culture and reinforces the decorative and playful nature of those objects i.e. it is idiomatic. Colour combinations were specified at the drawing stage and then modified as colour values changed in the translation from two-dimensional to three-dimensional form - a process which could be described as resolving three-dimensional painting. Fine balancing of tone and hue was crucial to achieving illusionistic space and form.

5.1 MUSIC-MACHINE (March 1982)

610 x 350 x 230 mm (1)

Wood, PVC pipe, aluminium, acrylic sheet, PVA paint, acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze.

Illus. 8, p. 31.

Fig. 1.

5.1.1 This sculpture is based on music-making machines - barrel-organs, juke boxes, gramophones, radios and hi-fidelity equipment.

The chosen structures were analysed from a formal point of view, including observation of detail:

(a) mechanical detail (how the objects really work, as in the case of a barrel-organ);

(b) specific parts (the speaker as a separate object).

(1) Dimensions are given in the following order: height x length x width.

- 5.1.2 The intention was to use elements drawn from more than one of the studied objects and to integrate these elements and their meanings in a new category of object. It was further intended that the sculpture should exploit the formal and mechanical qualities of the visual sources, but also evoke an inherent musicality.
- 5.1.3 A certain degree of abstraction of specific elements was used in the first part of the process. The boxed structure, divided into compartments, is a direct reference to a speaker and to acoustic qualities. The aluminium rods which penetrate the discs refer to the stacking of records in juke boxes, and the cylinders are derived from the rotating drum of a barrel-organ.

The second part of the process was the composition of these different elements into a single structure. The form of the new object and its implied musicality constitute the content of the work.

Illus. 8

5.1 MUSIC-MACHINE



5.2 RECORD-PLAYER (March 1982)

590 x 400 x 165 mm

Wood, PVC pipe, aluminium pipe, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze, polyurethane, enamel paint.

Illus. 9 & 10, p. 34

Fig. 2.

5.2.1 Sculptures 5.1 - 5.4 comprise the first category of the analytical phase, music-making machines.

This piece is a direct consequence of Music-machine (illus. 8, p. 31), that is to say, a formal study of the source material under the headings mentioned in 5.1.1.

5.2.2 The intention was to develop formal relationships in order to refine them as well as to clarify the contents by means of simplification.

5.2.3 A further degree of abstraction was applied to each of the elements used. These were simplified in themselves, as well as

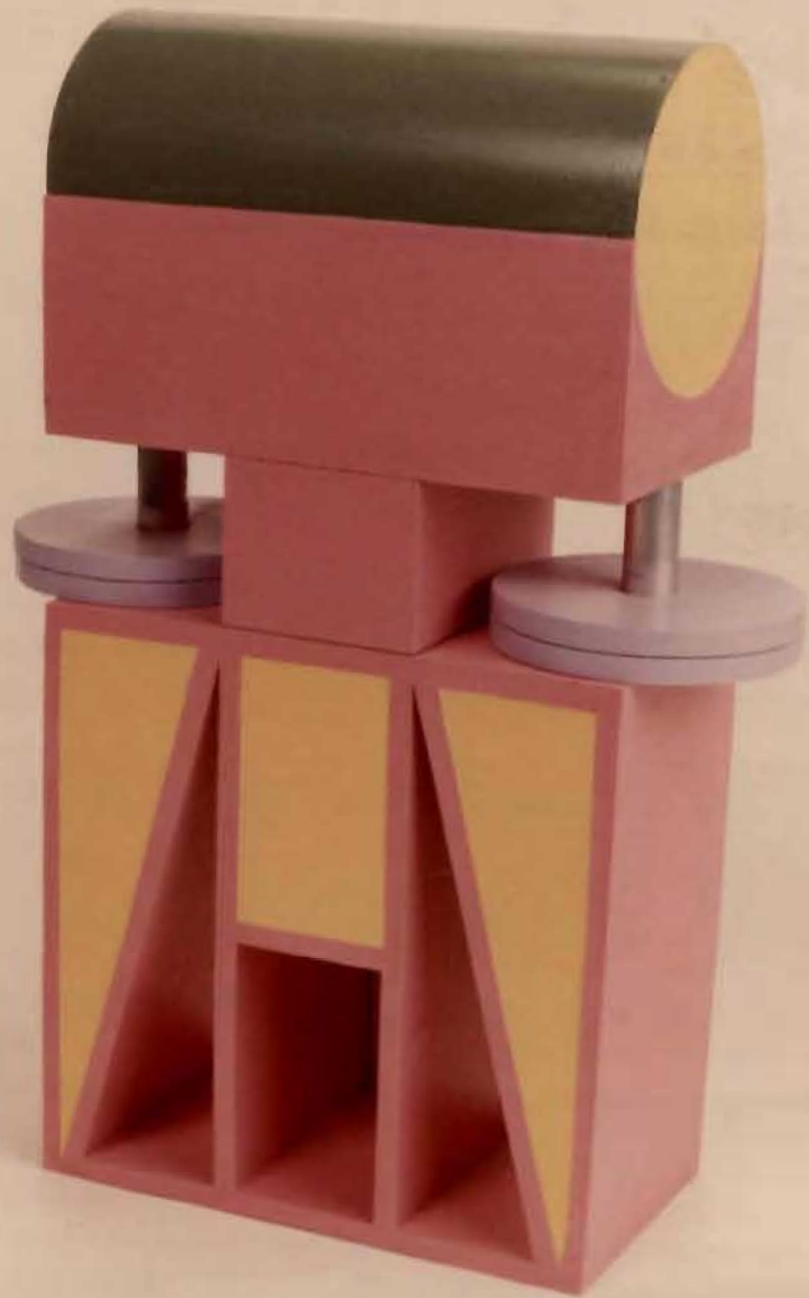
integrated into a single structure. The speaker, the records and the barrel therefore became a composite image.

The speaker element serves as support for the discs which in turn support the barrel which is in fact only suggested by surface painting. The quality of paint relates to observed detail, such as images painted on the outsides of juke boxes.

Illus. 9 & 10

5.2 RECORD-PLAYER





5.3 RADIOGRAM I (April 1982)

500 x 360 x 300 mm

Wood, PVC pipe, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze.

Illus. 11 & 12, p. 37.

Fig. 3.

5.4 RADIOGRAM II (April 1982)

600 x 350 x 140 mm

Wood, PVC pipe, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze.

Illus. 13, p. 37.

Fig. 4.

5.3/4.1 These two pieces complete the study of music-making machines. The method applied in 5.1 & 5.2 was continued but in these works radios, gramophones and record players were specifically considered.

5.3/4.2 Here the method was to study the forms of chosen objects referred to above and to organize them in a meaningful way, to attempt to

create a new dimension of musicality, as well as to introduce painted imagery and detail in order to enhance the meaning and function of each form.

5.3/4.3 In these pieces both construction and assemblage were used. Board was used to construct the planar forms and the material was then painted. For rounded forms PVC piping of different diameters was used. These were cut into the required sections and closed off with board.

The painted surfaces make direct reference to the original objects. To represent cloth I painted different colours in a woven pattern, and concentric lines refer to record grooves.

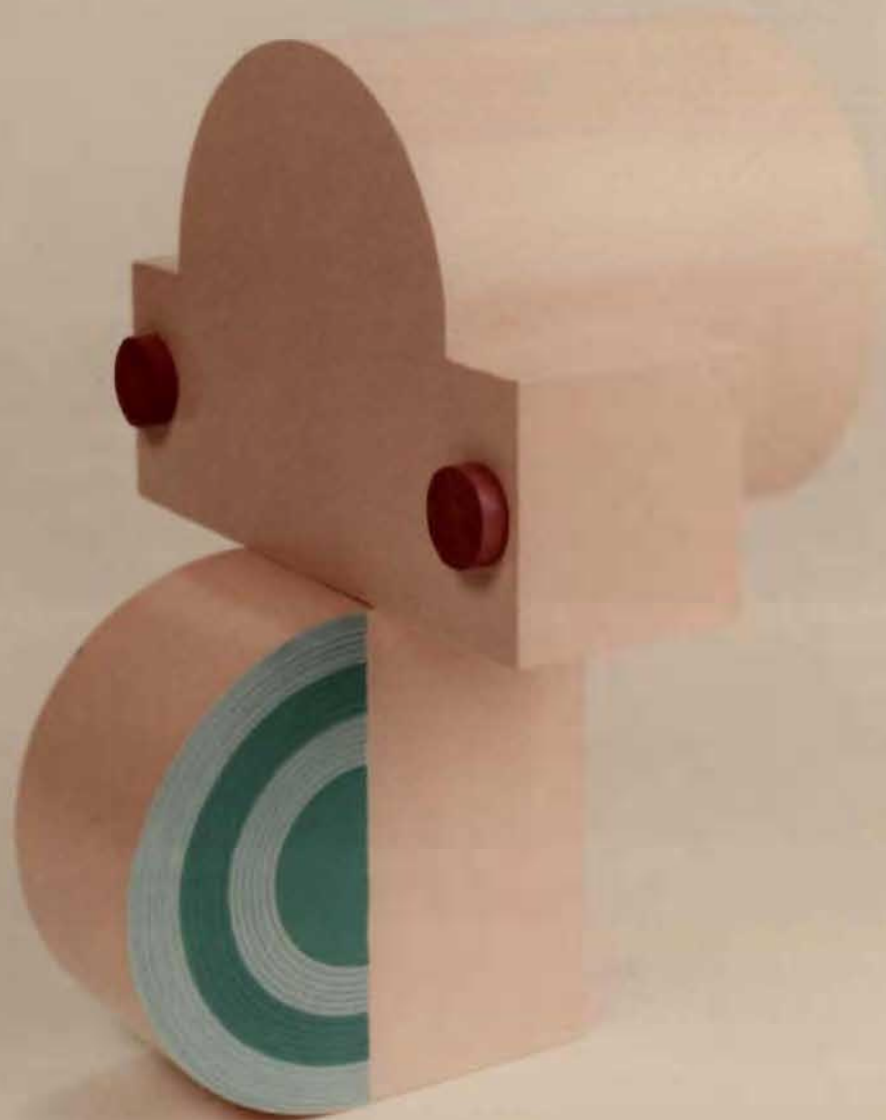
Illus. 11 & 12

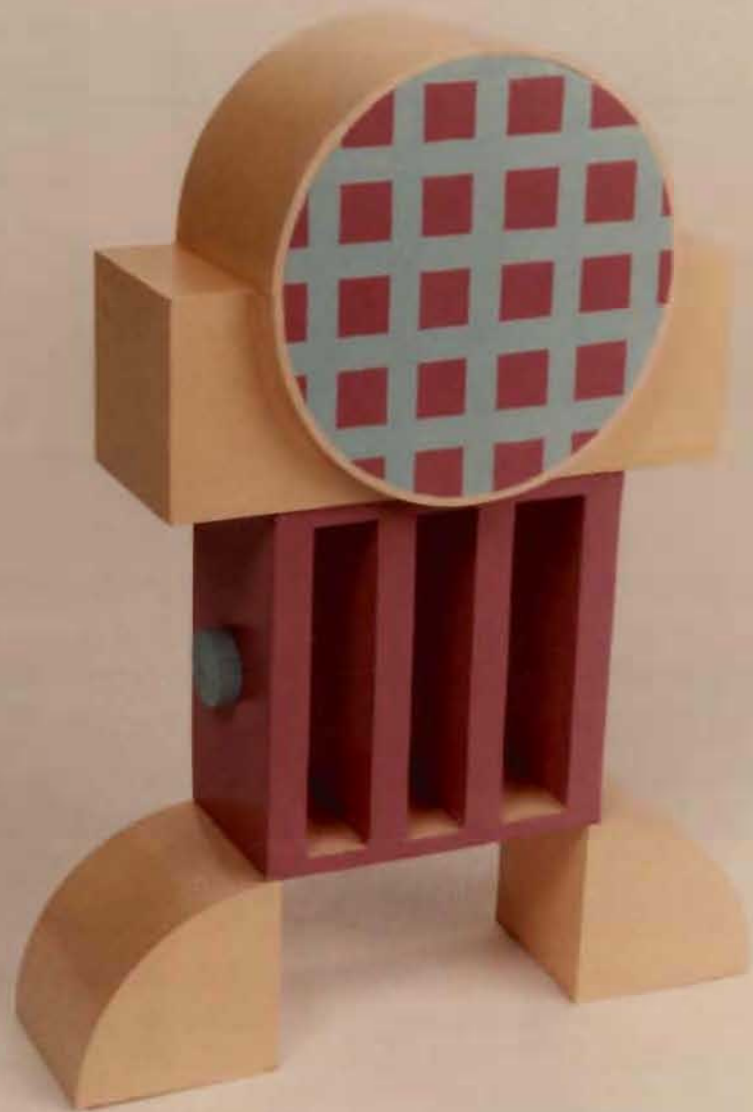
5.3 RADIOGRAM I

Illus. 13

5.4 RADIOGRAM II







5.5 VIDEO GAME I (May 1982)

750 x 450 x 220 mm

Wood, PVC pipe, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze, letraset.

Illus. 14, p. 41.

Fig. 5.

- 5.5.1 This piece marks the beginning of an investigation of electronic 'toys', including 'asteroid machines', television sets, computer drawings and electronic sign systems.

In all these objects it was possible to identify three separate elements:

- (a) the basic structure;
- (b) the images painted on the structure;
- (c) the image contained within the structure.

- 5.5.2 In this category of object the structure refers to the 'game' by means of the superficial images painted on it - the game is

the real content of the piece. An attempt was made to integrate structure and image in a single painted, three-dimensional form.

- 5.5.3 The materials for this sculpture, and the methods applied, are similar to those used in 5.3 & 5.4. Overall form is directly derived from a combination of the objects referred to above, with the exception of the three-dimensional 'sign' on top of the piece. This comparatively unrelated shape is the abstract symbol of the 'game'.

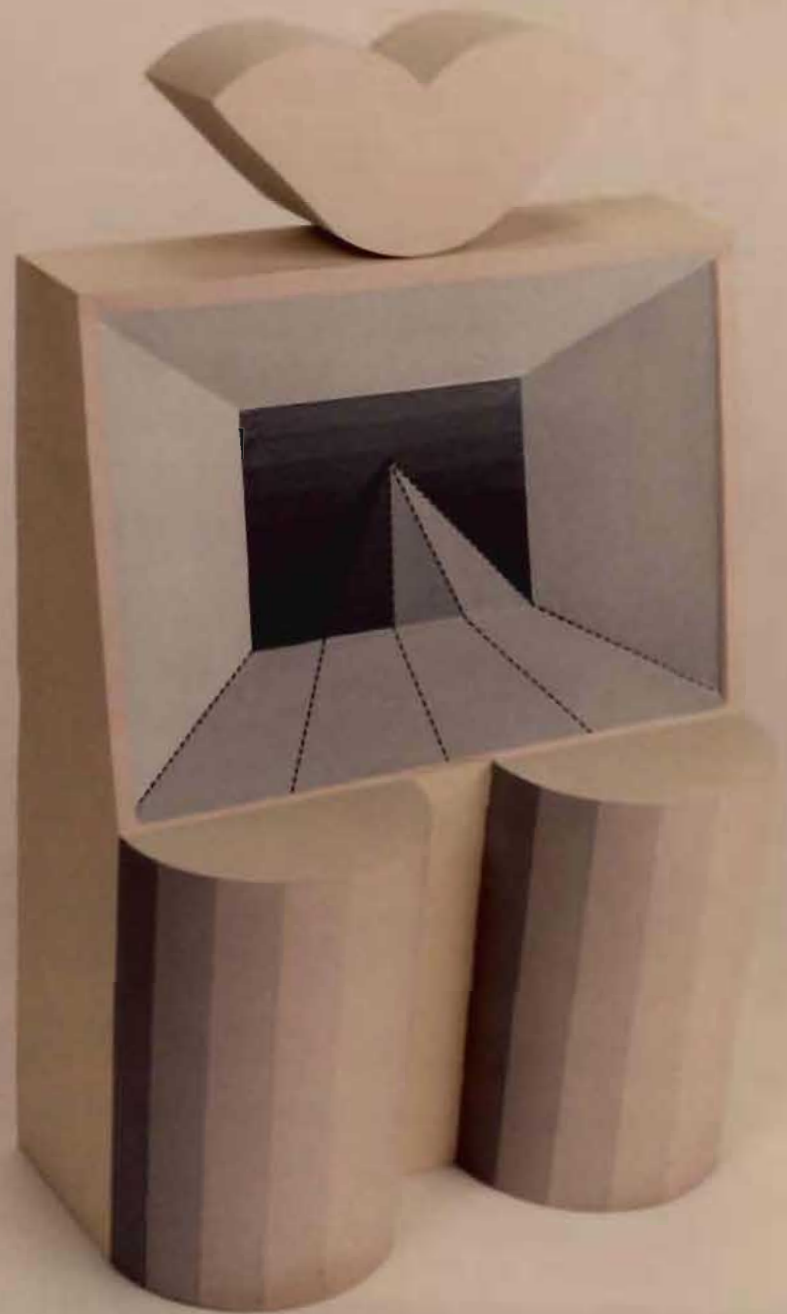
The 'image' on the screen has a recognisable function in the structure but its content is merged with the form by means of visual (painted) illusion. Perspective lines allude to a space 'behind' the screen, a planar continuation of its sloping sides. In addition the cone which is created by the lines of perspective becomes an illusionistic, faceted 'three-dimensional' form. Visual illusion was extended by the painting of graded tonal facets on the two half-cylindrical elements.

- 5.5.4 The illusionistic space created on the screen is a visual game,

while the play between the cylindrical forms and the painted facets establishes a conceptual game. The content of this work lies in the use of illusion as a double metaphor for negative and positive space and form.

Illus. 14

5.5 VIDEO GAME I



5.6 ASTEROID (May 1982)

750 x 500 x 240 mm

Wood, PVC pipe, moulded plastic sheeting, aluminium, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze and leterset.

Illus. 15, p. 44.

Fig. 6.

- 5.6.1 When analysing electronic toys I realised that the formal qualities of the structures were vastly different to the images on the screens of these toys (electronic computer drawings). Most of these images refer to war-like games and often employ a 'science fiction' aesthetic. The visual sources for this piece were rockets and spaceships.

The intention of this work was to develop electronic 'screen images' and to use illusion by applying the principles of painting as in Video game I (illus. 14, p. 41).

- 5.6.3 The base or 'landing gear' is constructed of aluminium angle and strip riveted together. Aluminium rod is also used to represent

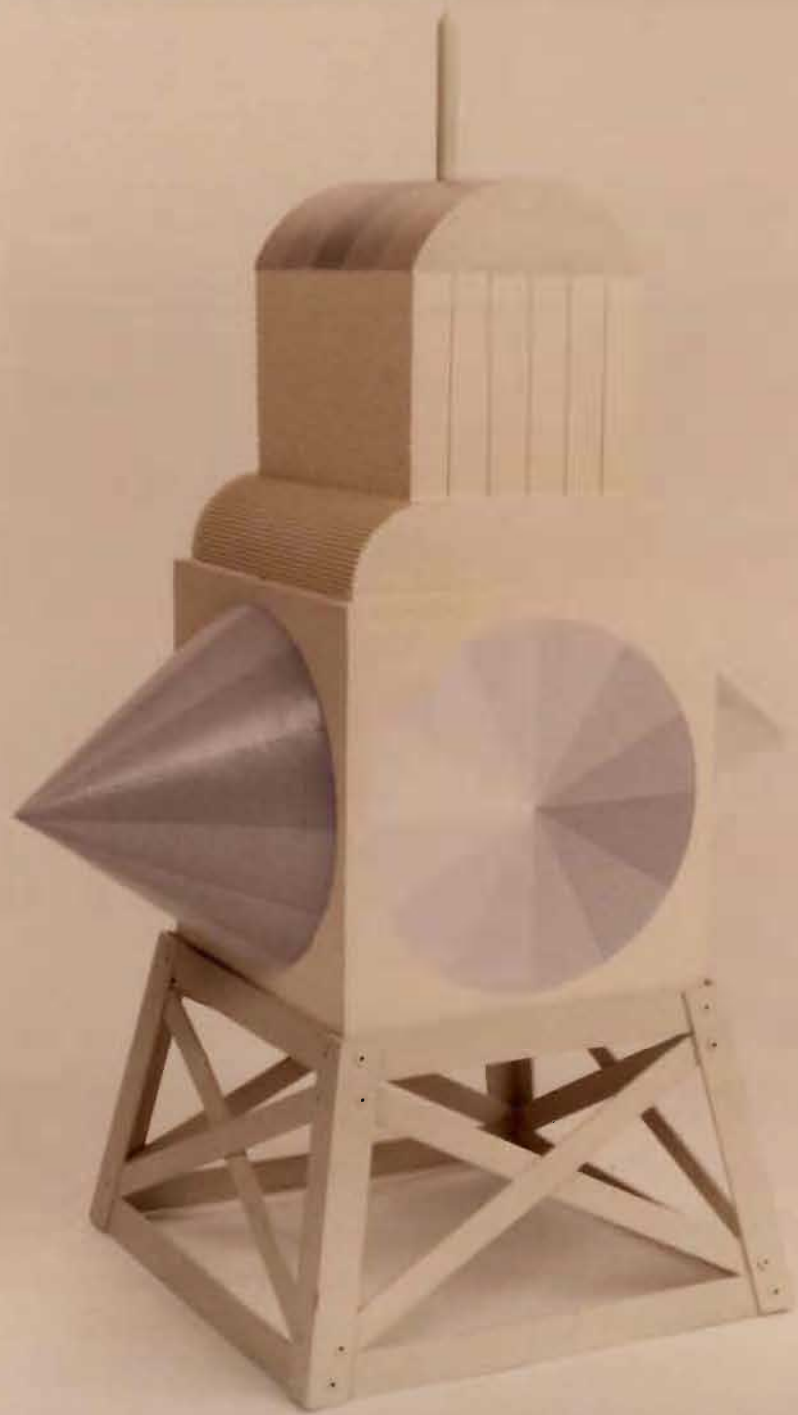
an antenna. The cabin is made of board covered with PVC pipe and plastic sheeting, and the conical wings are made of plaster of Paris. These are joined mechanically, and the forms are defined by means of paint.

The use of illusion remains formal and decorative. The cones are tonally graded to simulate circular movement and the flat sides are also tonally graded painted surfaces.

- 5.6.4 The element of illusion in the cones and their implied movement establish a 'game' which demands imaginative rather than physical participation.

Illus. 15

5.6 ASTEROID



5.7 ASTEROBOT (May 1982)

900 x 520 x 280 mm

Wood, plastic sheeting, aluminium rod, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze, lettraset.

Illus. 16, p. 47.

Fig. 7.

5.7.1 References for this piece were:

(a) electronic images which appear on the screen of an electronic toy;

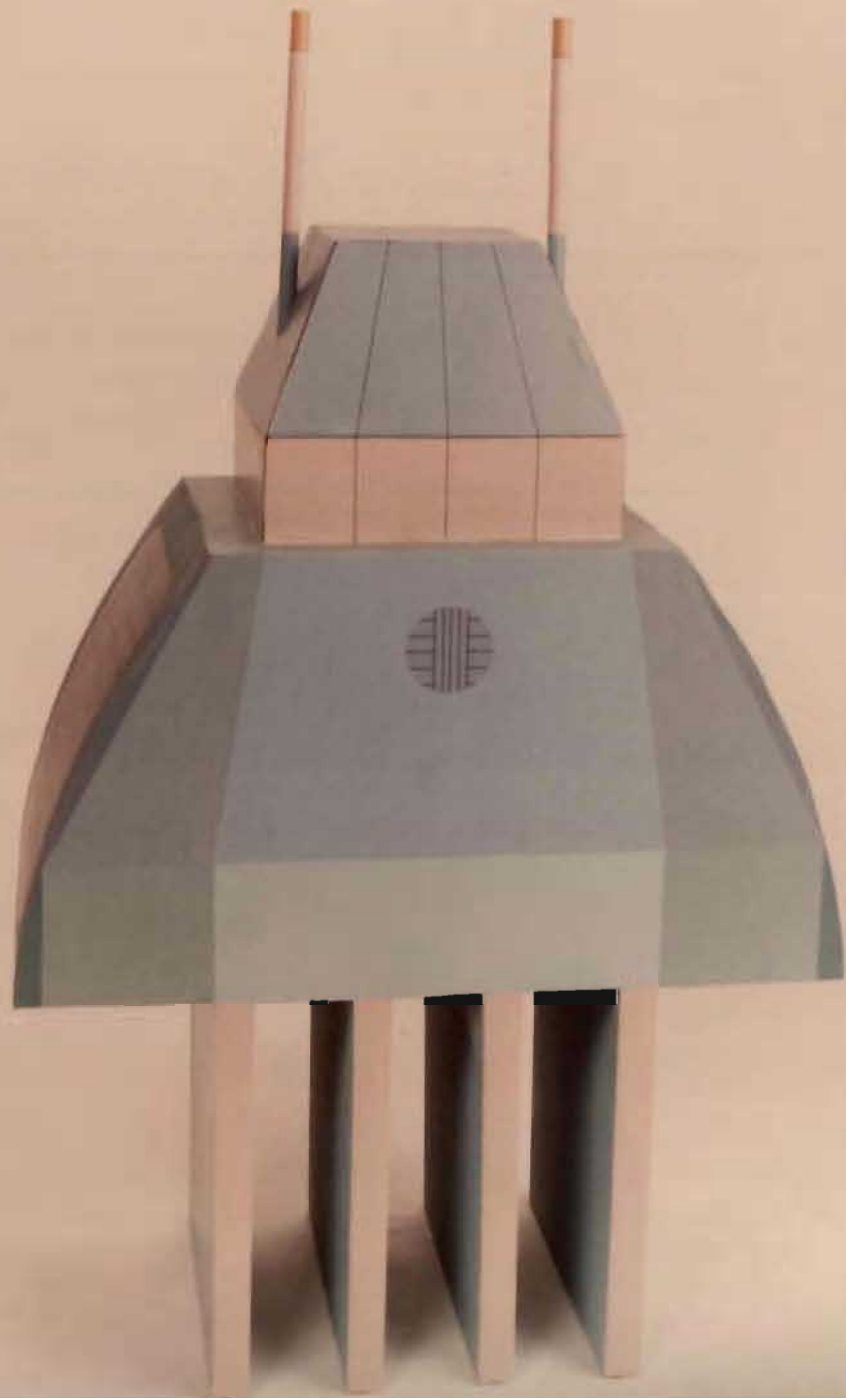
(b) the screen as an important part of the toy (representing the game).

5.7.2 The intention was to make a sculpture which was formally based on electronic images, but with the structure assuming characteristics of the whole electronic toy, including screens, instrumentation and implied participation (illus. 4, p. 8).

-
- 5.7.3 Paint was used to emphasize formal values'. The graphic sign was incorporated for the first time. Electronic imagery of an abstract kind was used in order to establish an overall aesthetic.
- 5.7.4 The robot-like qualities of this piece do not invite physical manipulation, as in other electronic toys, but imply remote control.

Illus. 16

5.7 ASTEROBOT



5.8 VIDEO GAME II (June 1982)

950 x 550 x 350 mm

Wood, plastic sheeting, perspex, lettraset, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze.

Illus. 17, p. 50.

Fig. 8.

5.8.1 There were two specific sources for this piece:

(a) formally it relates to video games and electronic toys with particular emphasis on the table games which can be found in public bars and cafés;

(b) the content derives from the principles of formal play and illusion established in 5.5.

5.8.2 The intention was again to attempt an integration of 'image' and structure by applying the principles of 5.8.1.(b). The idea was that the overall form should complement the image on the screen

5.8.3 Looking into the screen an inverted 'V'-shape, which forms the lower front of the sculpture, is apparently revealed but this is in fact only a painted image. This creates illusionary space, and direct play between illusion and reality within the sculpture.

Illus. 17

5.8 VIDEO GAME II



5.9 CHU-CHU BOAT (July/August 1982)

420 x 620 x 36 mm

Wood, PVA paint with acrylic pigment and acrylic glaze.

Illus. 18, p. 53.

Fig. 9.

- 5.9.1 This is the first sculpture which resulted from the study of 19th and 20th century mechanical toys. These were generally made of painted wood or tin and often incorporated a mechanical device to propel the toy or move part of it, as in trains, boats, cars and mechanical tops (illus. 5, p. 8).

My observations concentrated on two areas:

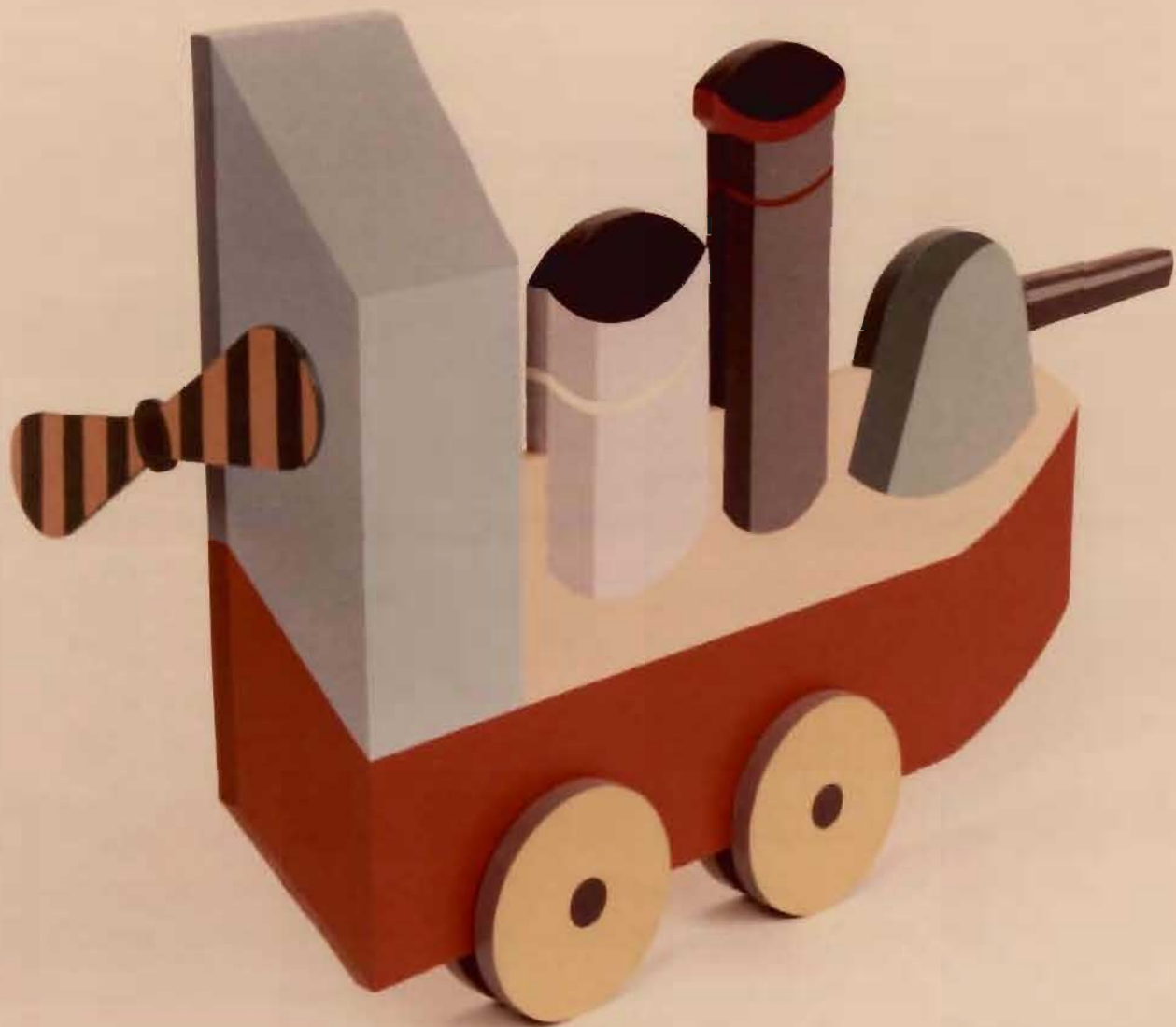
- (a) formal qualities and contents (simulation of real life through play);
- (b) the images: the whole image as well as the details which are painted illusionistically on the surface e.g. portholes, buttons, watch chains.

- 5.9.2 My intention was to integrate the idea of the image (a two dimensional illusionistic device) and the formal qualities observed. The solution was to develop a free standing, two-dimensional object simulating three-dimensions through the use of paint.
- 5.9.3 The method of construction was a consequence of the above. On a flat piece of wood a three-dimensional object (boat) was drawn, then cut out and painted. Wheels were attached, one on each side, making the base wider than the boat, and the three-dimensional illusion is extended by the propeller.

The new flat sculptural form used in this piece, and the focus on an illusionary play object, introduced a 'magical' potential.

Illus. 18

5.9 CHU-CHU BOAT



5.10 JUMPING JACK FLASH (July/August 1982)

700 x 630 x 360 mm

Board, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze.

Illus. 19, p. 55.

Fig. 10.

- 5.10.1 This sculpture is based on a mechanical toy known as a spring-heeled jack which is activated by the momentum of a heavy fly-wheel.
- 5.10.2 The intention was to develop the new mode established in 5.9 in order to refine it.
- 5.10.3 The body of the figure was made of painted board, with legs and arms as separate pieces. The key serves the same formal function as the propeller in 5.9, defining actual space in contrast to the illusionistic three-dimensionality of the legs and arms.

The mechanical components of the piece are painted on the surface having the same formal weight, and are intended to imply movement.

Illus. 19

5.10 JUMPING JACK FLASH



5.11 ZEPPELIN (August 1982)

550 x 470 x 90 mm

Wood, aluminium plate, aluminium rod, ping-pong ball, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze.

Illus. 20, p. 59.

Fig. 11.

5.11.1 Having established a formal mode of work, through the use of illusion in structure and content, I reached the conclusion that visual 'play' was linked with the potential for playing implicit in toys. I then started looking at the human factor in toys:

- (a) toys which were often made to celebrate real events, for example miniature armies were commissioned by the Dauphin of France in 1660, from Gottfried Hautsch who died in 1703 and was famous for the tin soldiers he made (1);
- (b) toys which range from topical to fantastic and are usually intended as evocations of real-life counterparts rather than as highly accurate representations;

(c) the link between ritual and play which is intimate where a toy is symbolic of something known rather than something observed, and therefore fulfils needs and desires by means of the imagination.

- 5.11.2 My intention was to make a sculpture using the established mode of work, interplay between illusion and three-dimensional form, and to introduce a human figure in order to extend the meaning of 'play' in the content of the work, between representation of the game and abstraction of human activity.
- 5.11.3 The flat painted surface implies the full form of the balloon (aluminium plate) in contrast to the three-dimensional expression of the man and the 'carriage'. The figure is a formal abstraction but is also representative of human activity. The aluminium rods link the three-dimensional and two-dimensional, metaphorically linking reality and illusion and establishing a constant play between the two.
- 5.11.4 There are two levels of meaning in this piece:

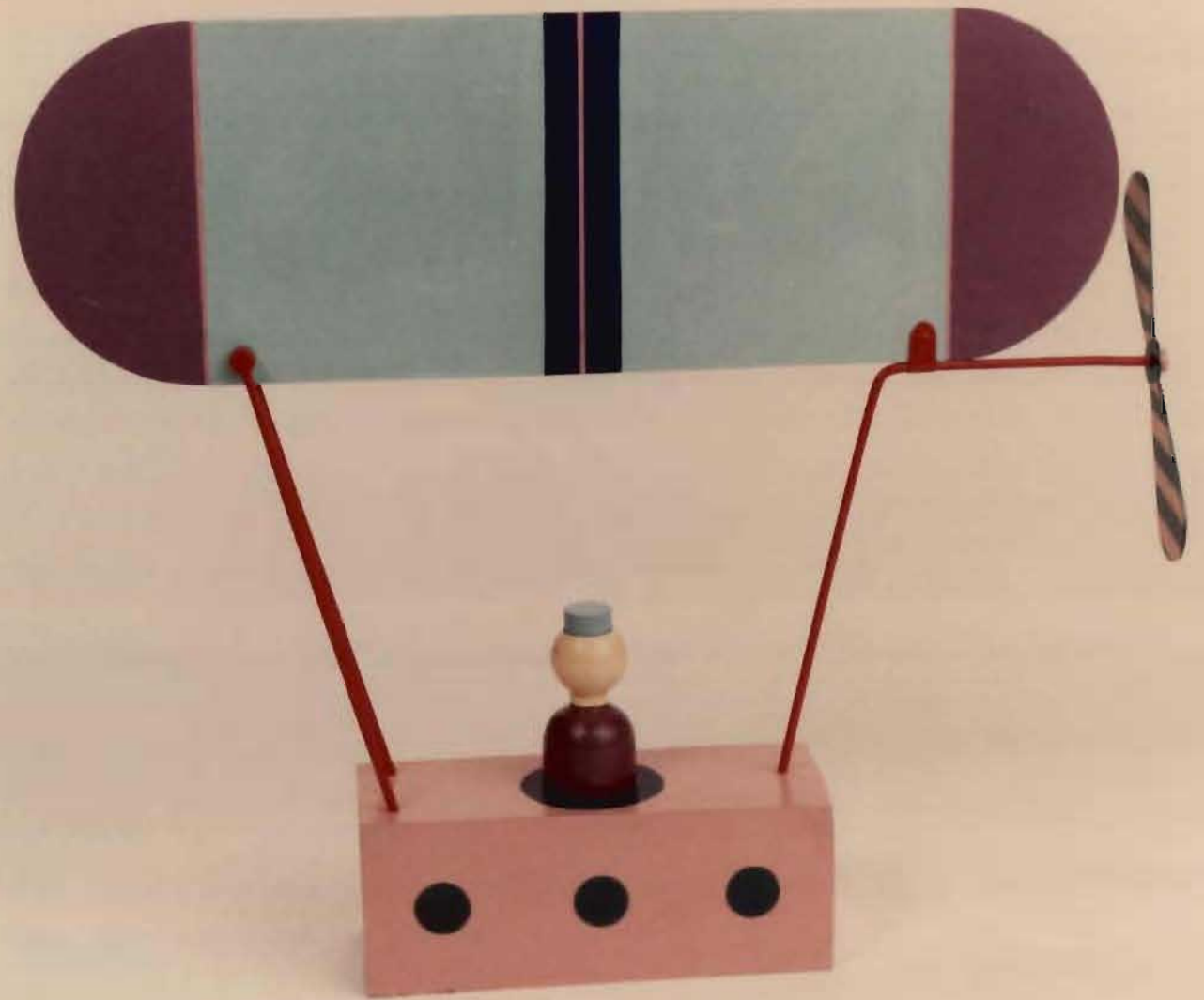
-
- (a) the zeppelin itself is the subject matter of the game in this work;
- (b) the man in the zeppelin suggests a real-life situation - and here the implications are infinite.

Reference:

- (1) Weltens, A. Mechanical Tin Toys in Colour. Dorset, Blandford Press, 1977, p.9.

Illus. 20

5.11 ZEPPELIN



5.12 MOUNTAIN BRIDGE (August/September 1982)

790 x 400 x 240 mm

Wood, aluminium plate, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze, letaset.

Illus. 21, p. 62.

Fig. 12.

5.12.1 The main visual sources for this sculpture were:

(a) mechanical and electrical trains or toy racing car sets;

(b) fairground stalls with objects moving on tracks to be shied at for a prize (skill and luck).

5.12.2 The intention was to make a small environment, treating buildings and objects illusionistically.

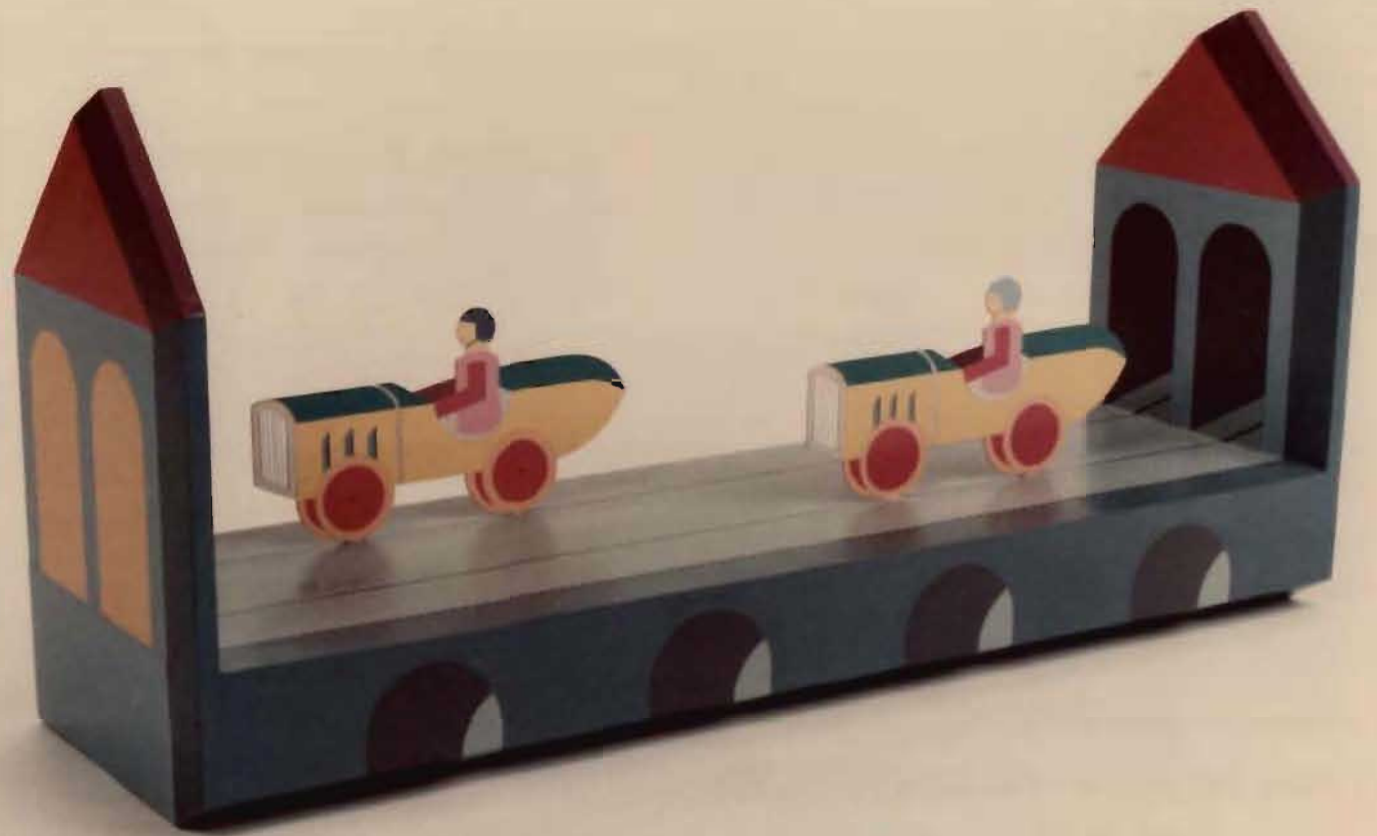
5.12.3 The bridge and houses, made of painted board, are a combination of of real and illusionistic form. The houses represent points of entrance and exit implying unknown space beyond each. They mark the boundary between real and 'play' time. The racing cars

(made of aluminium plate) rely on illusion for the definition of their form. Again this implies the use of imagination to achieve a state of 'play'.

- 5.12.4 This sculpture represents objects fixed in a moment of time, symbolizing a subconscious moment of play achieved by entering an imaginary visual world. As in 5.11 the introduction of the human figure creates abstract representation of real-life events.

Illus. 21

5.12 MOUNTAIN BRIDGE



5.13 DIVE-BOMBER (September 1982)

450 x 400 x 30 mm

Wood, aluminium plate and rod, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze.

Illus. 22, p. 65.

Fig. 13.

5.13.1 This piece marks the beginning of a new group of sculptures based on fairground props and paraphernalia, the analysis of which included the following:

- (a) the mechanical and engineering sophistication of some of the structures;
- (b) the fact that some fairground structures are often small environments in themselves and yet each is a part of a greater environment or fantasy world;
- (c) the ironic popular aesthetic, the nonsensical mixture of references to the past, the future, high and popular art, and

the bizarre juxtaposition of these varying images which deny any reference to reality;

(d) the fact that fairgrounds concentrate power of suggestion in order to evoke intense imaginative and emotional responses.

5.13.2 For the first piece in this group I decided to concentrate on mechanical structures. I also wished to make a connection between the suggestive quality inherent in any play-object and the specific emotive qualities of fairground phenomena.

5.13.4 The mechanical parts of Dive-bomber are made of aluminium and the base of wood. Parts of the rocket are not painted, in order to reveal the quality of the metal as appropriate to the source.

Illus. 22

5.13 DIVE-BOMBER



5.14 MERRY-GO-ROUND (October 1982)

550 x 550 (diameter)

Wood, PVC pipe, plaster of Paris, aluminium plate, board, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze.

Illus. 23, p. 68.

Fig. 14.

5.14.1 My interests in fairground phenomena remain the same for all the sculptures in this group.

5.14.2 This piece is a progression from 5.13 to a more complex environment. The aim was to attempt to develop a symbol combining the micro- and macro-environments described in 5.13.1(b).

5.14.3 Illusion is introduced only where the function of an object may be related to an experience of the imagination: the rockets and the aeroplanes. These are made of aluminium which is not totally covered by paint. The cone which forms the 'roof' is made of plaster of Paris, and the base and column are made of board and PVC pipe.

This piece is an abstraction of a real-life situation by means of a reduction in scale and use of illusion. It belongs to the realm of toys, which accentuates its function as a 'play' object and links this group of sculptures to the previous group.

Illus. 23

5.14 MERRY-GO-ROUND



5.15 HAUNTED CASTLE (November 1982)

390 x 380 x 620 mm

Wood, aluminium plate, Letrafilm, PVA paint with acrylic pigment, acrylic glaze.

Illus. 24 & 25, p. 71.

Fig. 15.

5.15.1 For this piece I considered two specific aspects of the funfair:

(a) the entrance to the fairground i.e. the transition from the real world to the world of fantasy;

(b) forms and images which make up complex structures like the ghost-train.

5.15.2 It was my intention to make an environment, as a composite of the funfair,

(a) representing the transition from an everyday world to a playful world,

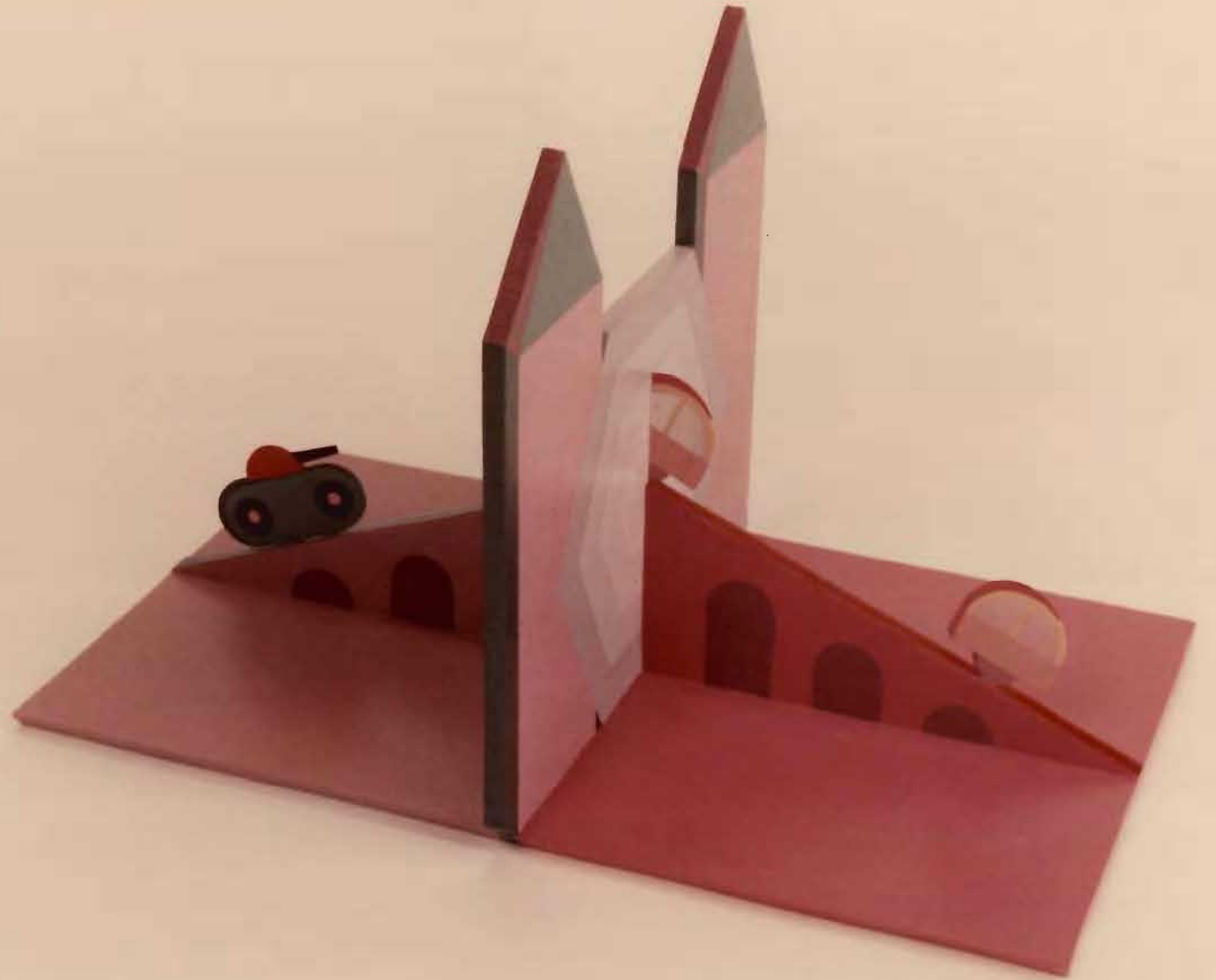
(b) implying change of consciousness by means of imagination.

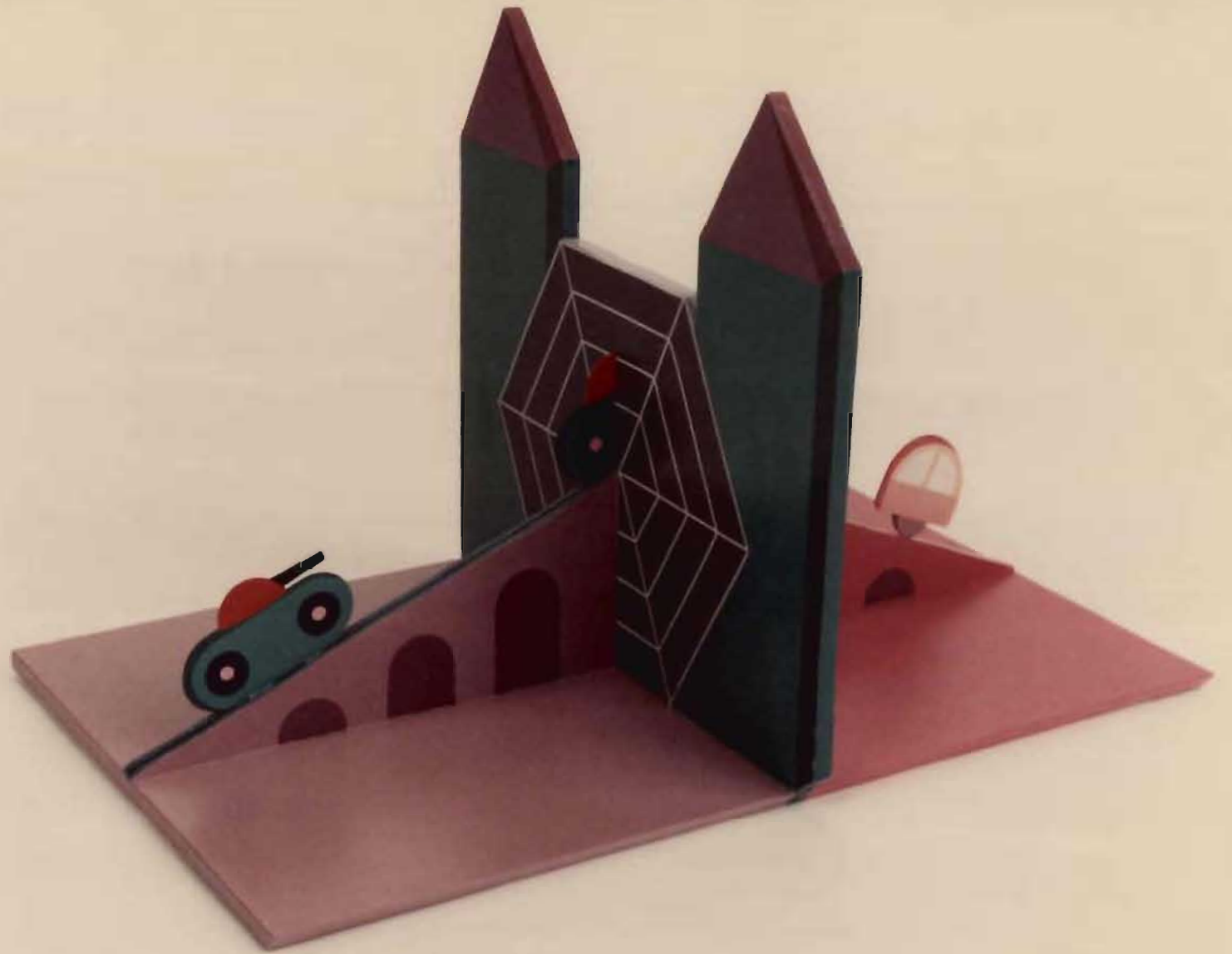
(c) referring to elements that evoke specific reactions and emotions.

5.15.3 The main structure is made of board and the vehicles of aluminium. The human factor is implied by the vehicles (cars and tanks), and an altered state of consciousness is suggested by means of the physical metamorphosis of the vehicles. The building represents both the entrance to a funfair and the transition into a fantasy world within the funfair.

Illus. 24 & 25

5.15 HAUNTED CASTLE





5.16 TABLE SOCCER (March 1983)

350 x 900 x 350 mm

Aluminium sheet, rod and pipe, Deka colour enamel, varnish,
baking enamels.

Illus. 26, p. 74.

Fig. 16.

5.16.1 Sport is an area of popular culture which is expressed as an activity or process rather than through material objects. The game of table soccer, however, embodies both aspects and was the point of departure for this piece.

5.16.2 It was my intention:

(a) to study a new cultural area in order to extend the process of analysis applied in the previous work;

(b) to introduce more durable materials in order to achieve a more sophisticated finish.

- 5.16.3 Aluminium was used on account of its durability and the ease with which it can be worked. The base, plane and goal are made of bent and welded 2mm plate, all other joints are mechanical. The piece was painted with baking enamels and heated to 120°C in order to harden the paint and bind it to the primer coat.
- 5.16.4 This piece represents a transitional stage in the quality of construction and surface treatment between the 'analytical' works and the more 'synthetic' works which follow.

Illus. 26

5.16 TABLE SOCCER



5.17 TRAIN AND BRIDGE (May 1983)

700 x 250 mm

Jelutong wood, aluminium plate, baking enamel paints.

Illus. 27, p. 77.

Fig. 17.

5.17.1 This work does not refer to a particular object or idea, nor is it concerned with a specific category or area of popular culture. It is a composition of toy, game, abstract human activity and real-life event.

5.17.2 As in 5.16 this work was intended as a progression towards more complex pieces. Where content is concerned, the intention was to start integrating several of the principles established in the 'analytical' study.

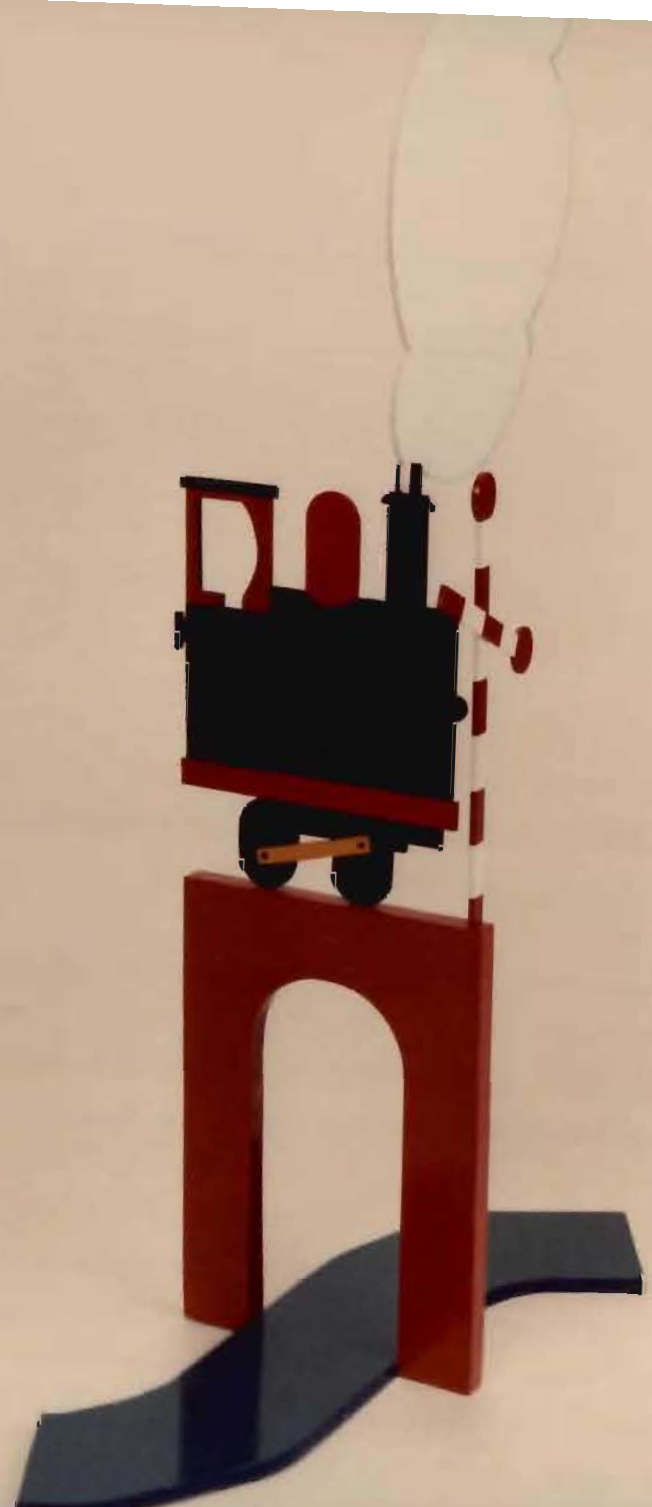
5.17.3 The sculpture presents distinctly different aspects depending on how it is approached by the viewer. This is caused by the combination of interlocking planes which make up three-dimensions. Illusionistic methods previously applied are emphasized by

variations in material thickness and the distortion (elongation) of forms.

5.17.4 Contextually this piece stands on its own.

Illus. 27

5.17 TRAIN AND BRIDGE



5.18 RADIO FOR TENNIS FANS (June 1983)

850 x 1000 x 400 mm

Mild steel plate, aluminium plate, aluminium angle.

Illus. 28 & 29, p. 80.

Fig. 18.

- 5.18.1 Radio for tennis fans is the first work of the 'synthetic' phase. As such, the visual sources combine ideas evident in the previous works: music-making machines, mechanical toys and games.
- 5.18.2 The intention was to integrate form and content as developed in the previous works - the idea of 'play' and 'game' expressed by visual illusion and the connection between play and real life. Formally, the aim was to arrive at a structure consistent with the complexification of the content.
- 5.18.3 The choice of materials for this piece was influenced by the need to build a bigger, stronger and more permanent structure. Thus the use of mild steel, aluminium, wood and baking enamel which gives a strong, sharp and glossy finish. The method of construc-

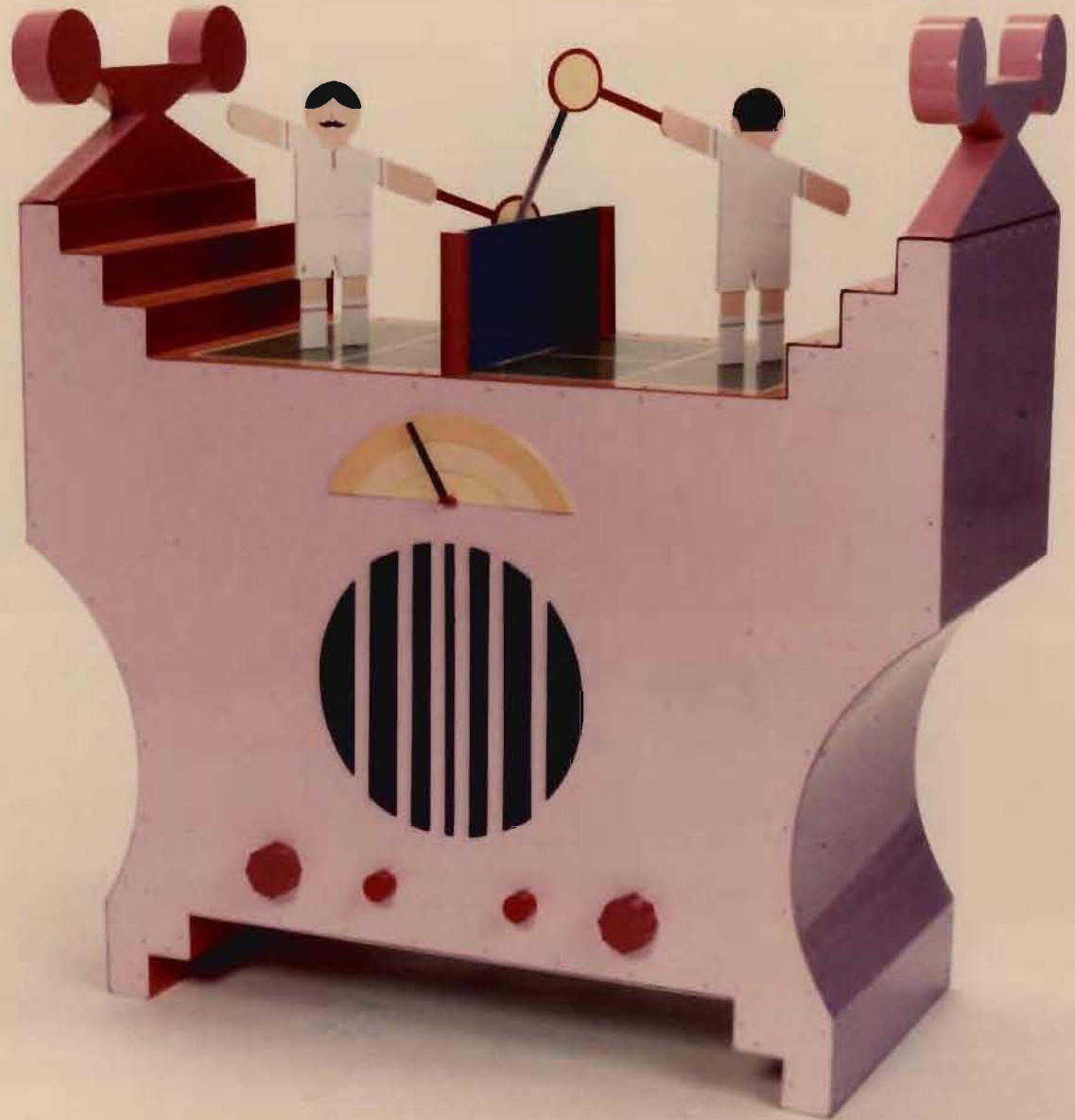
tion was mechanical, utilizing rivets and screws. The choice of colours was more emotional and importance was given to balancing and integrating both colour and structure.

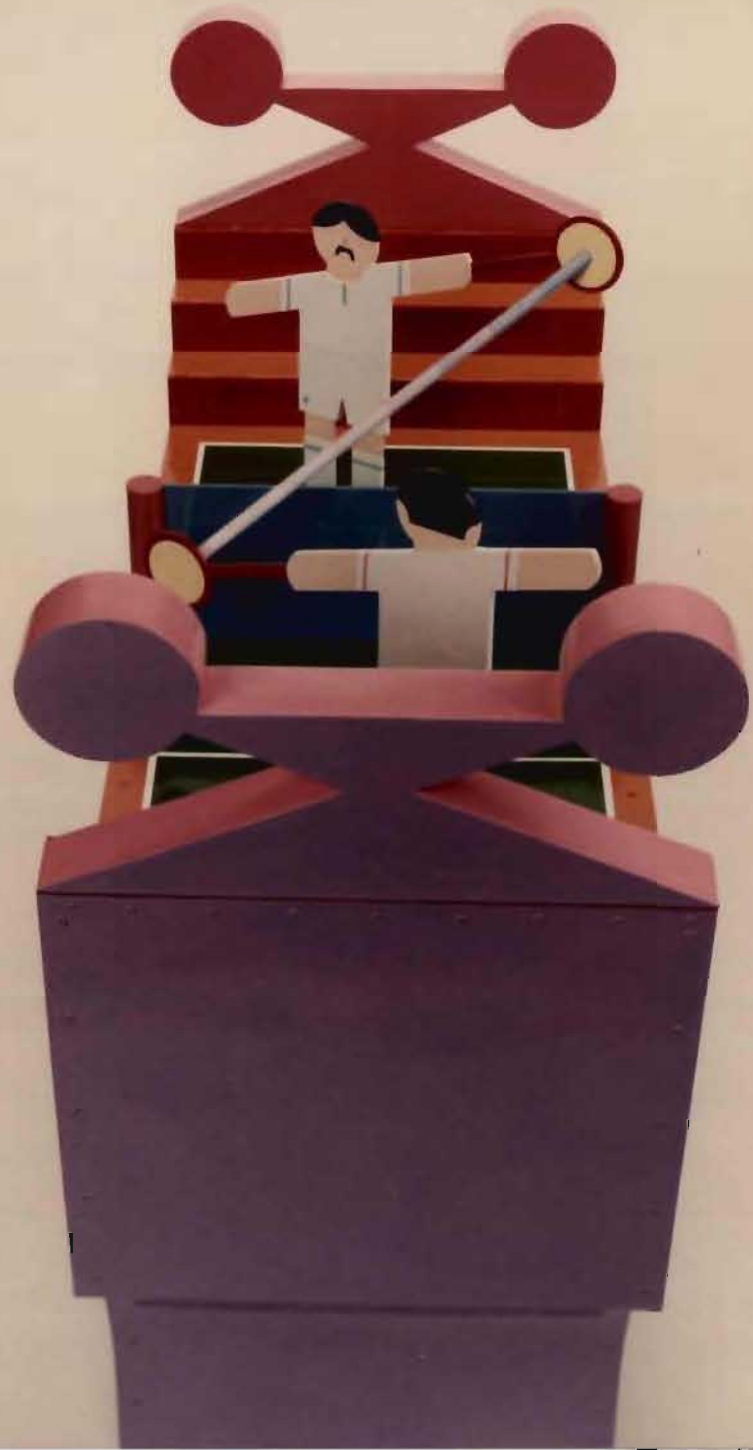
5.18.4 This work represents the first of the 'major' pieces. It unifies ideas which were explored separately in individual pieces during the analysis. Illusionism is used as an established mode. Certain illusionistic techniques are taken for granted, such as illusions of volume which bring about the flatness of the tennis players. The whole body of work has contributed towards this result.

The main structure includes a 1930's 'Art Deco' influence. The abstract symbols of the crossed tennis rackets have the same formal function as the graphic symbols which were used in previous works (illus. 14 & 17, p. 41 & 50). An innovation in this piece is the representation of the movement of the tennis ball by means of graded tones.

Illus. 28 & 29

5.18 RADIO FOR TENNIS FANS





5.19 BLAST-OFF (September 1983)

1400 x 1000 x 600 mm

Mild steel, aluminium, PVC pipe, polyester resin and fibre-glass
baking enamel paint.

Illus. 30-32, p. 83.

Fig. 19.

- 5.19.1 This sculpture was based on electronic toys and games and acknowledges the ironic popular aesthetic of the funfair referred to in 5.13.1.
- 5.19.2 It was my intention to use these general elements of popular culture, as well as specifically observed imagery, to achieve a new language of form, colour and explicit imagery combined in a personal aesthetic. The piece was intended as a freer, more sophisticated complement to Radio for tennis fans.
- 5.19.3 The choice of materials, colours and method of construction followed the same procedure as in 5.18.3. However, the handling of materials was more efficient as a result of previous experience.

Heavy metal sections were designed, cut, bent or rolled industrially to my specifications. Assembly was pre-planned and therefore facilitated.

- 5.19.4 The combination of different images is a synthesis of learnt principles - an aesthetic eclecticism which results in a new category of object and leads to fantasy and freedom of the imagination.

This piece not only attempts to evoke a state of 'play' by means of images and illusions, but the concept behind this work is also imbued with a playfulness which manifested itself in the integrating of apparently nonsensical elements with the aim of achieving an 'alternative personal coherence'.

Illus. 30-32

5.19 BLAST-OFF



40 10/11/11





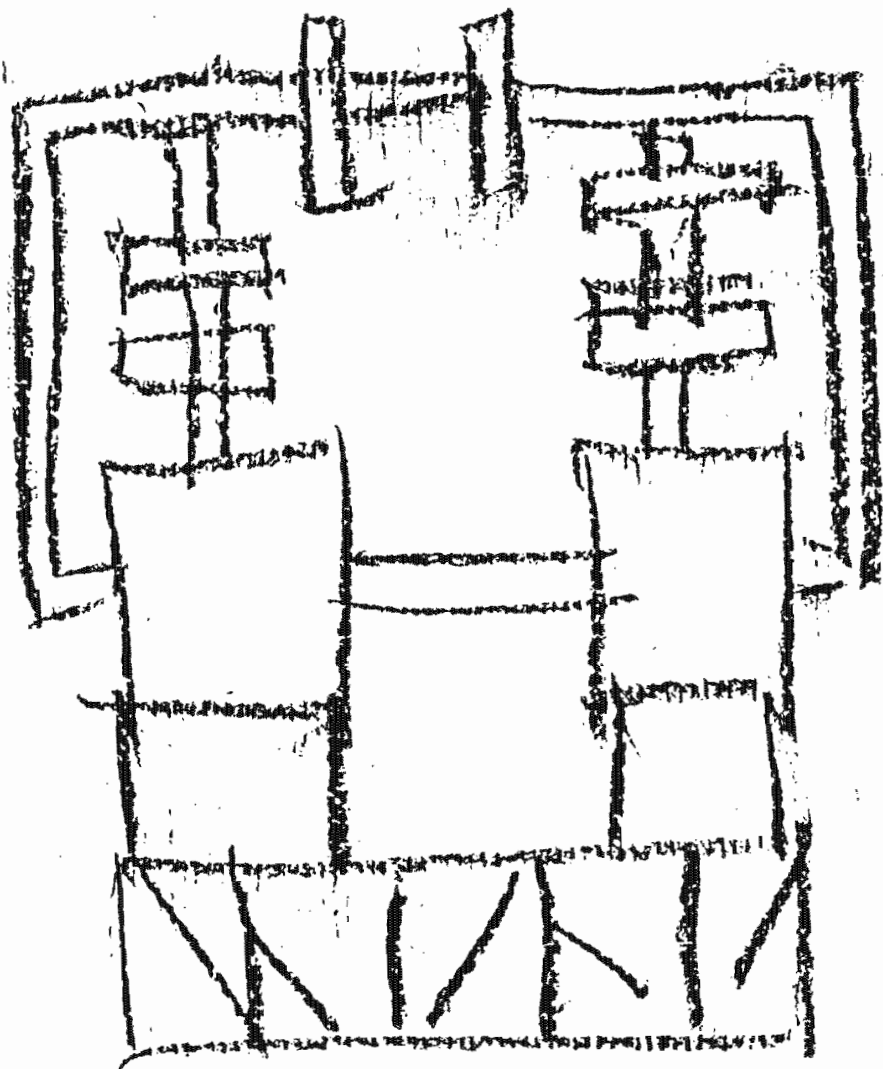


Fig. 1

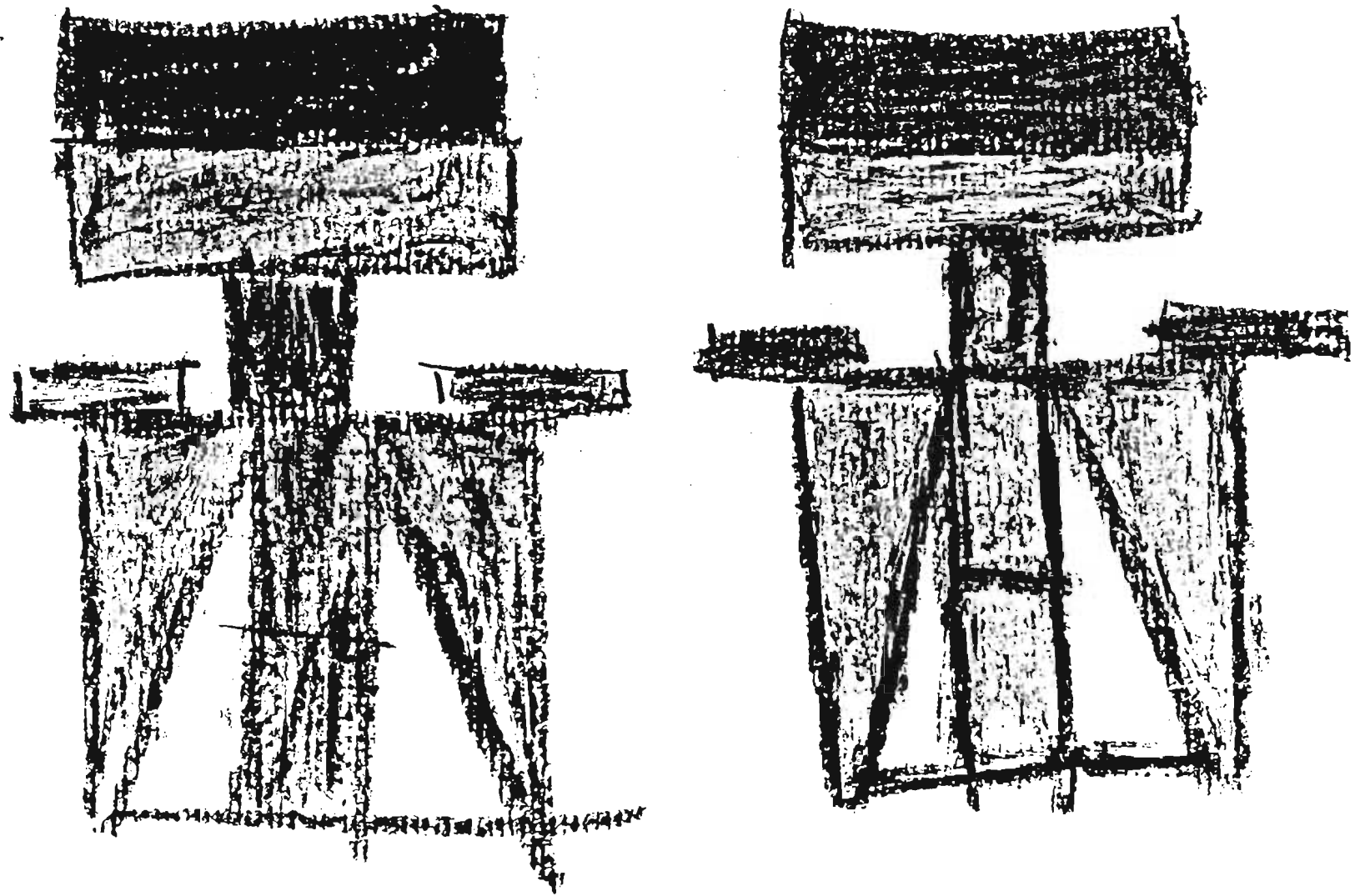


Fig. 2

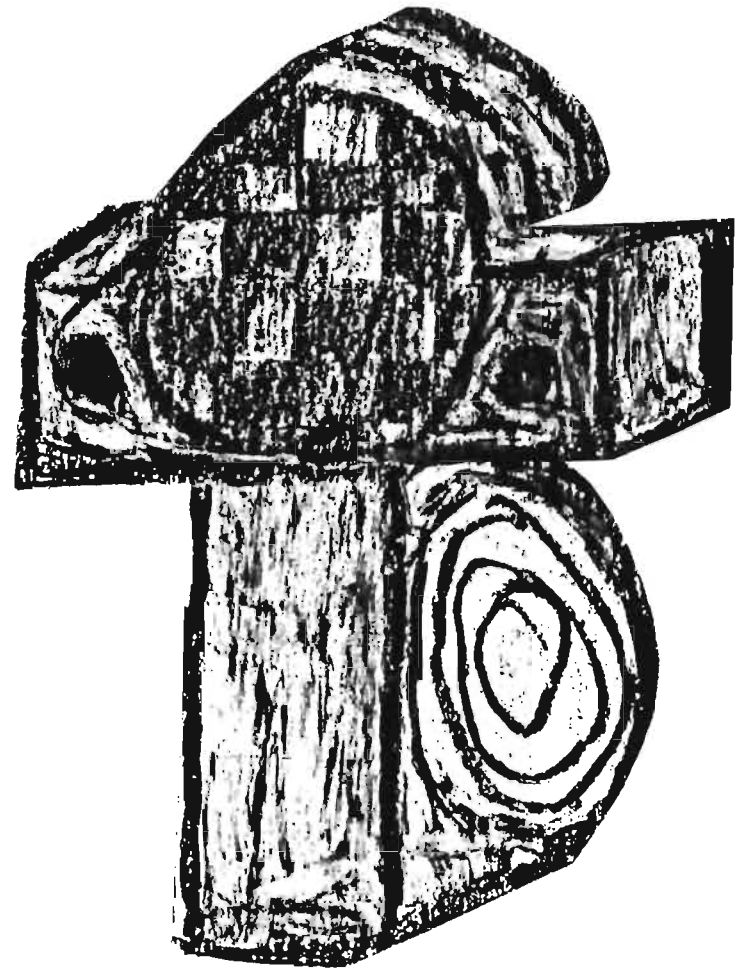


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

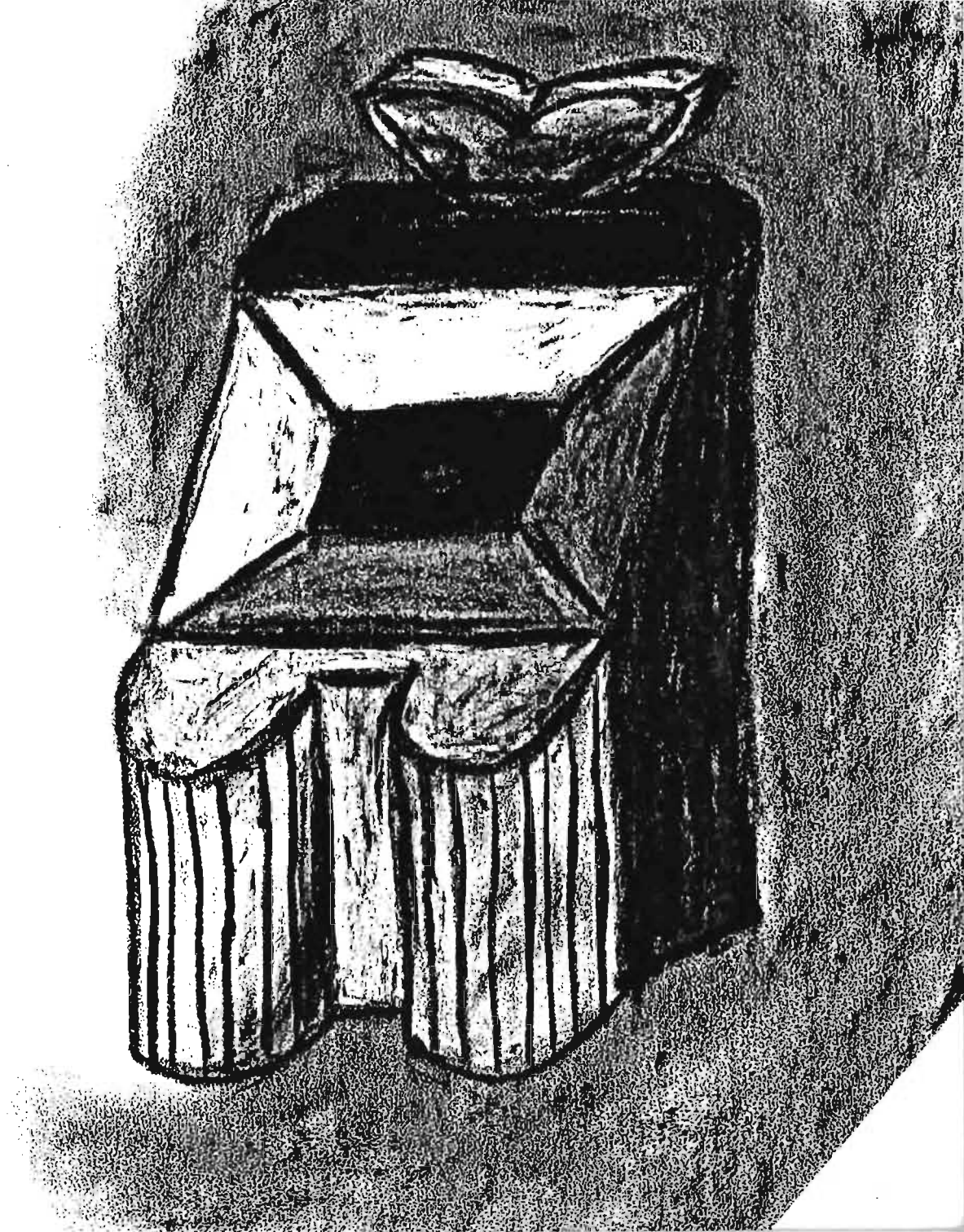


Fig. 5

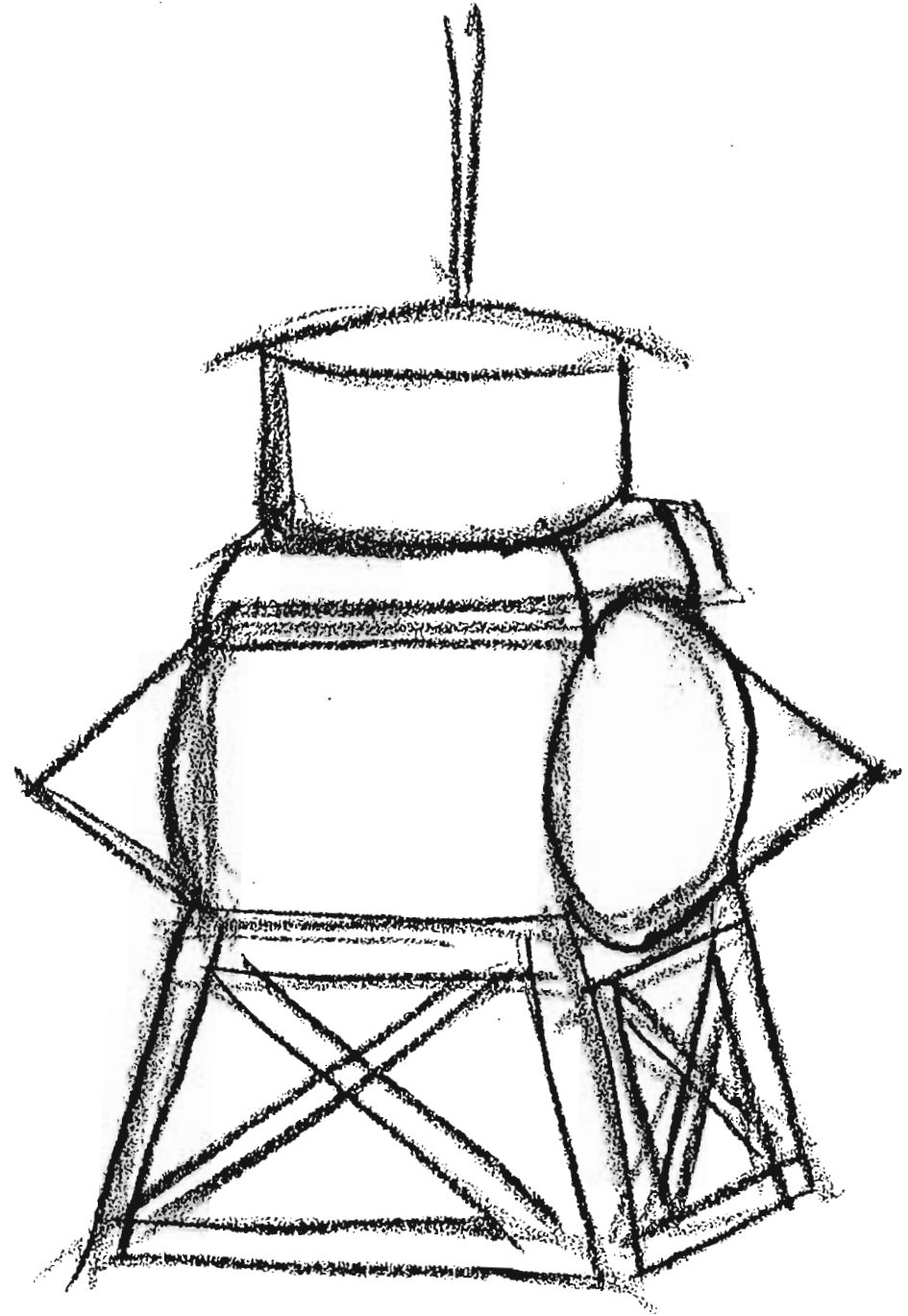


Fig. 6

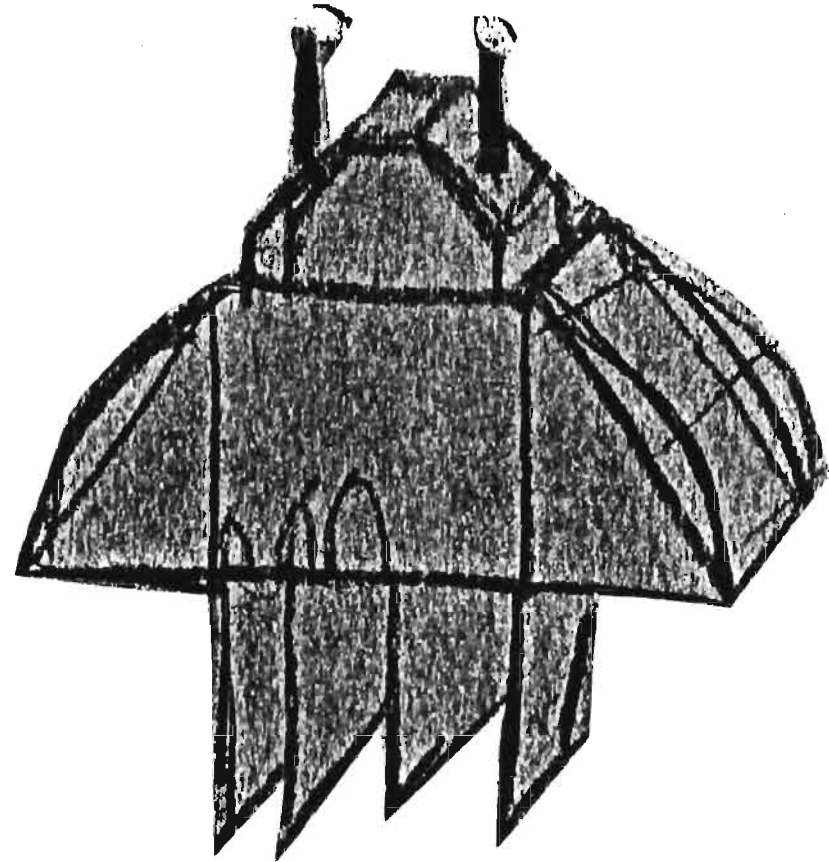


Fig. 7

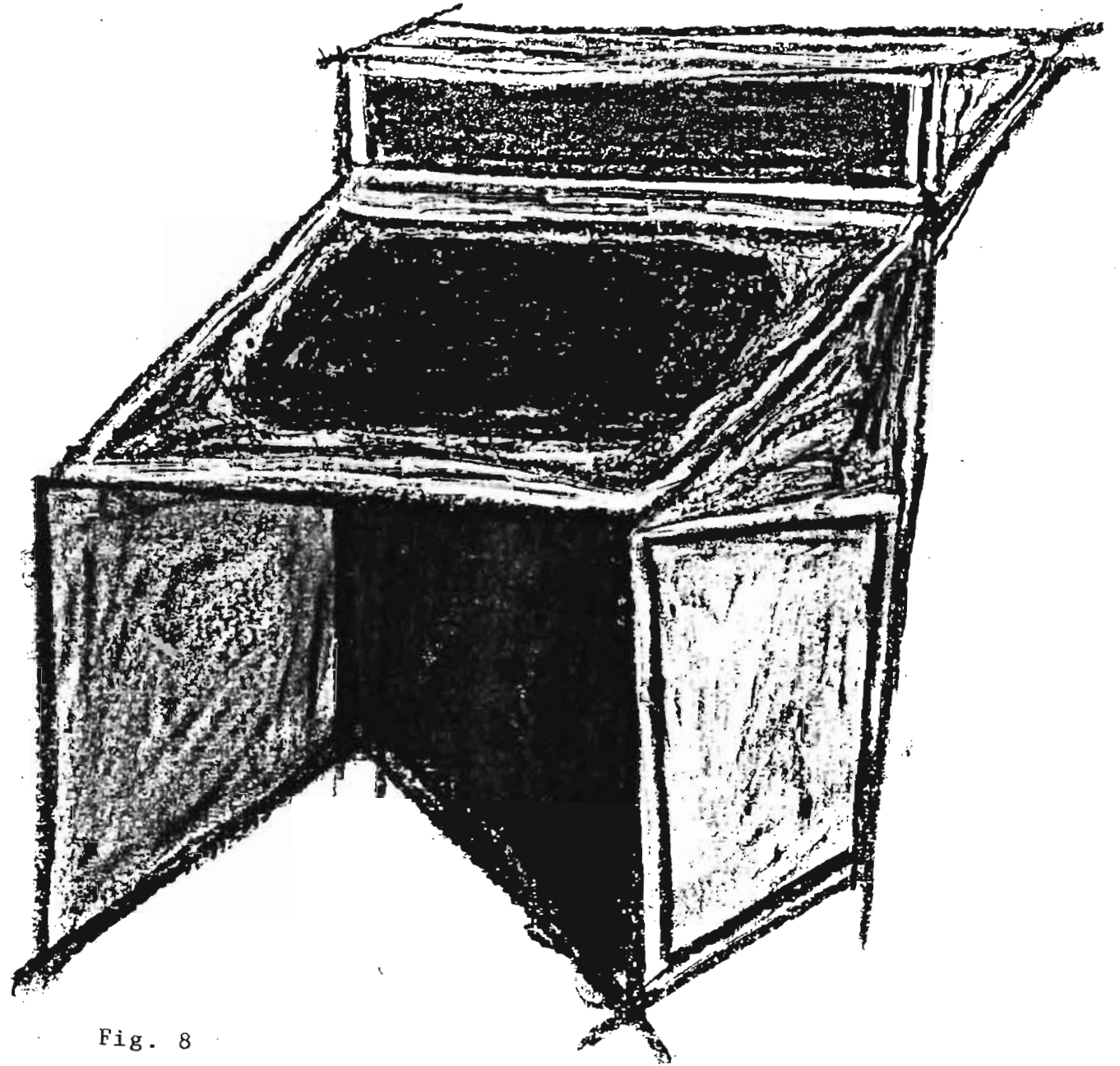


Fig. 8

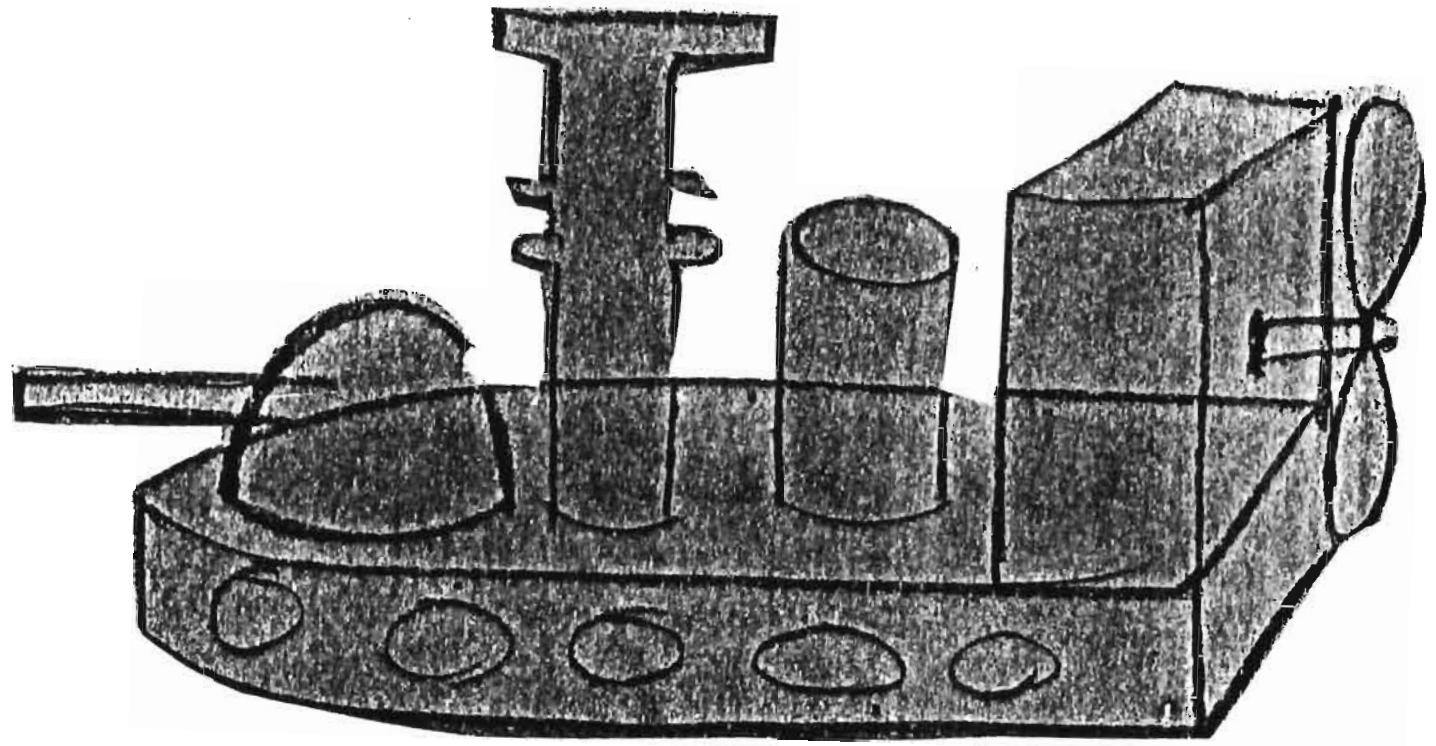


Fig. 9

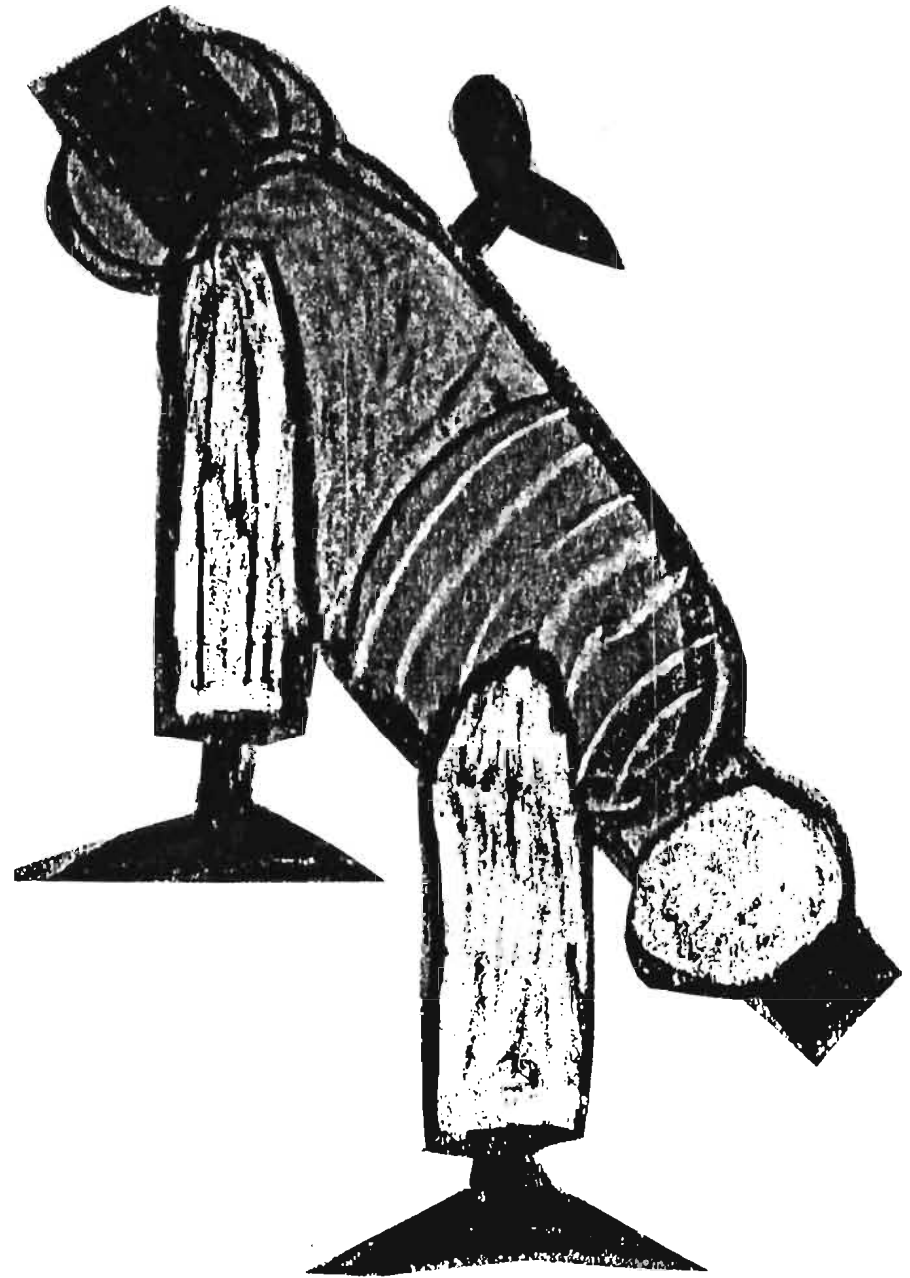


Fig. 10

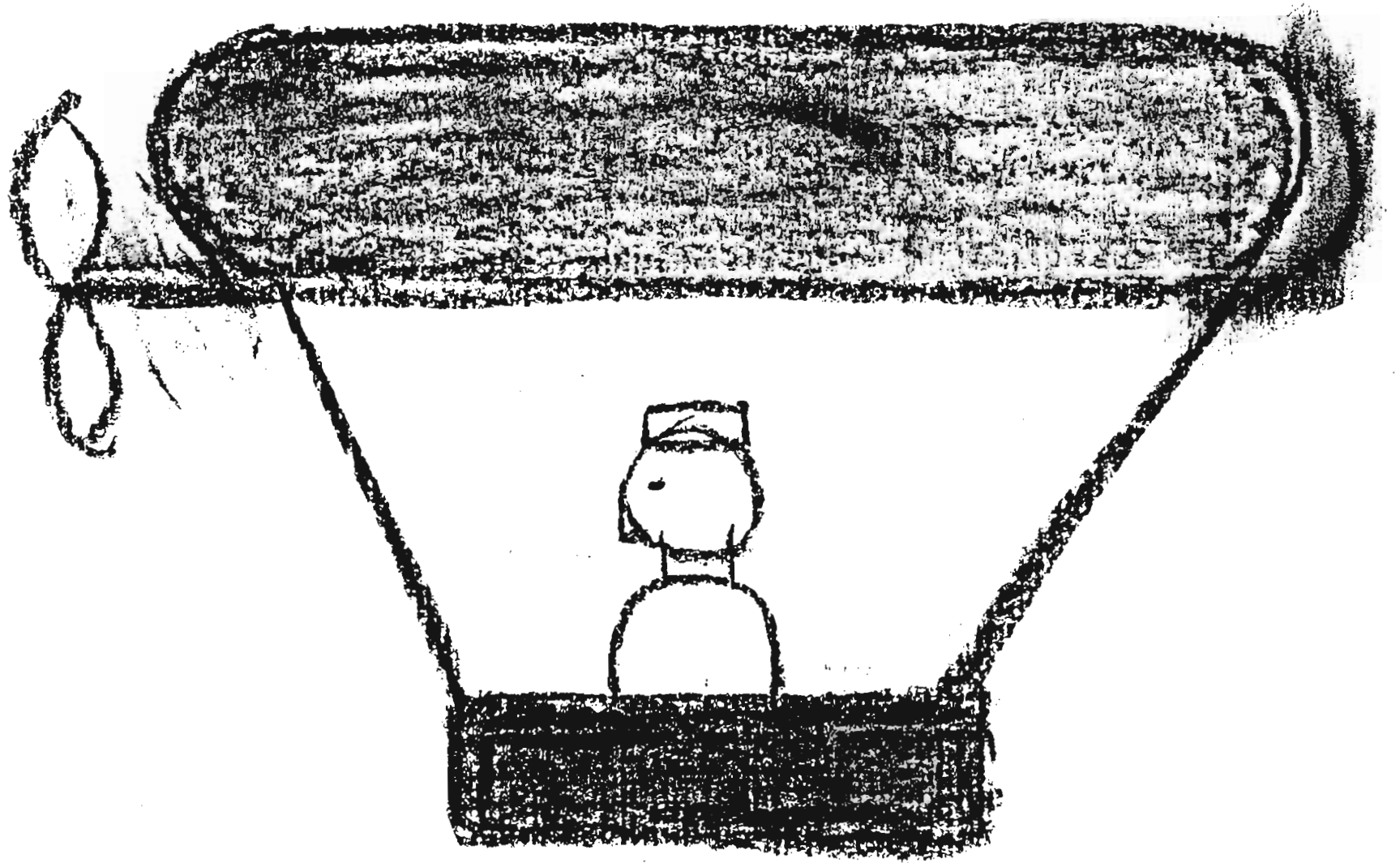


Fig. 11

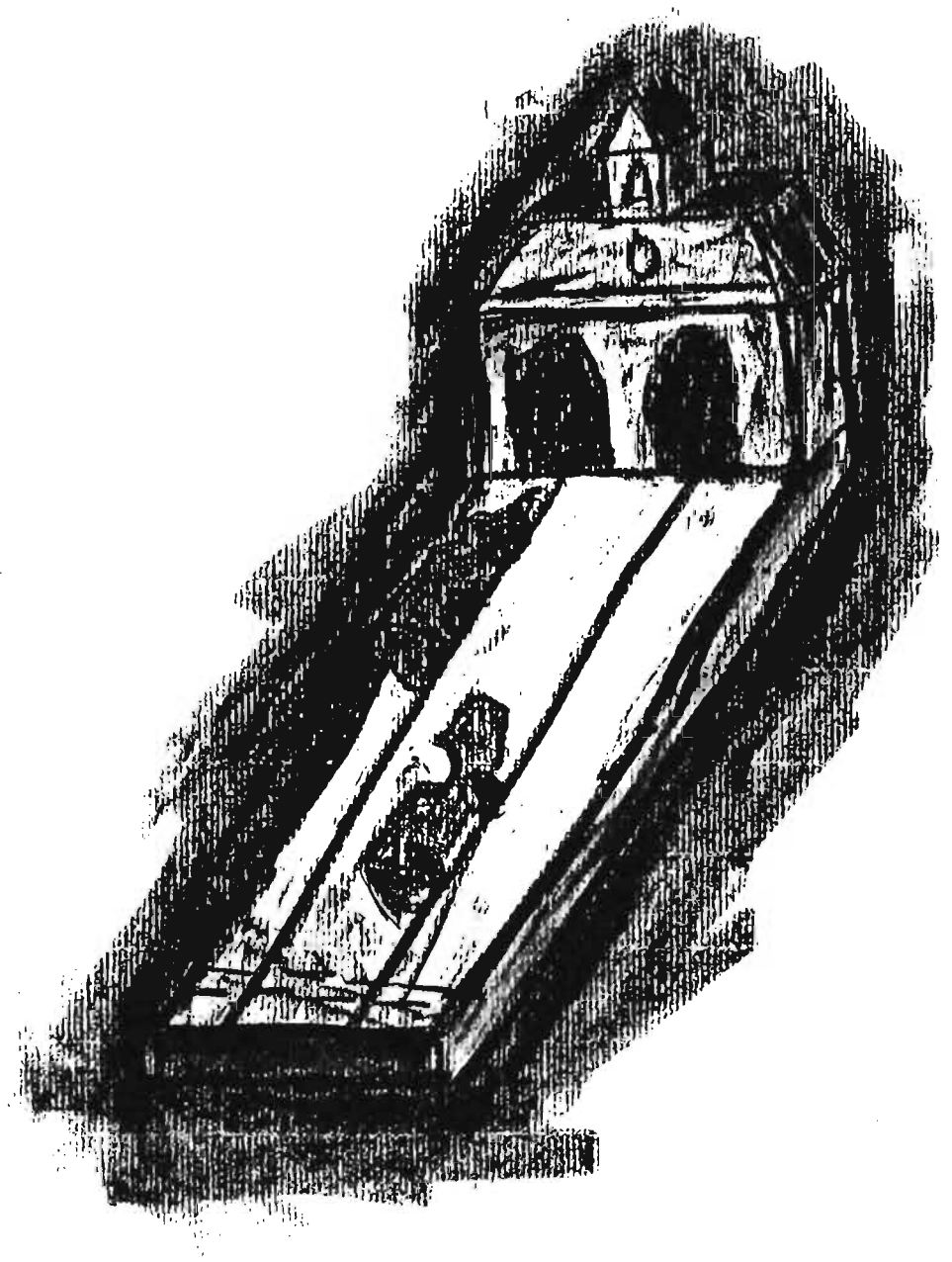


Fig. 12

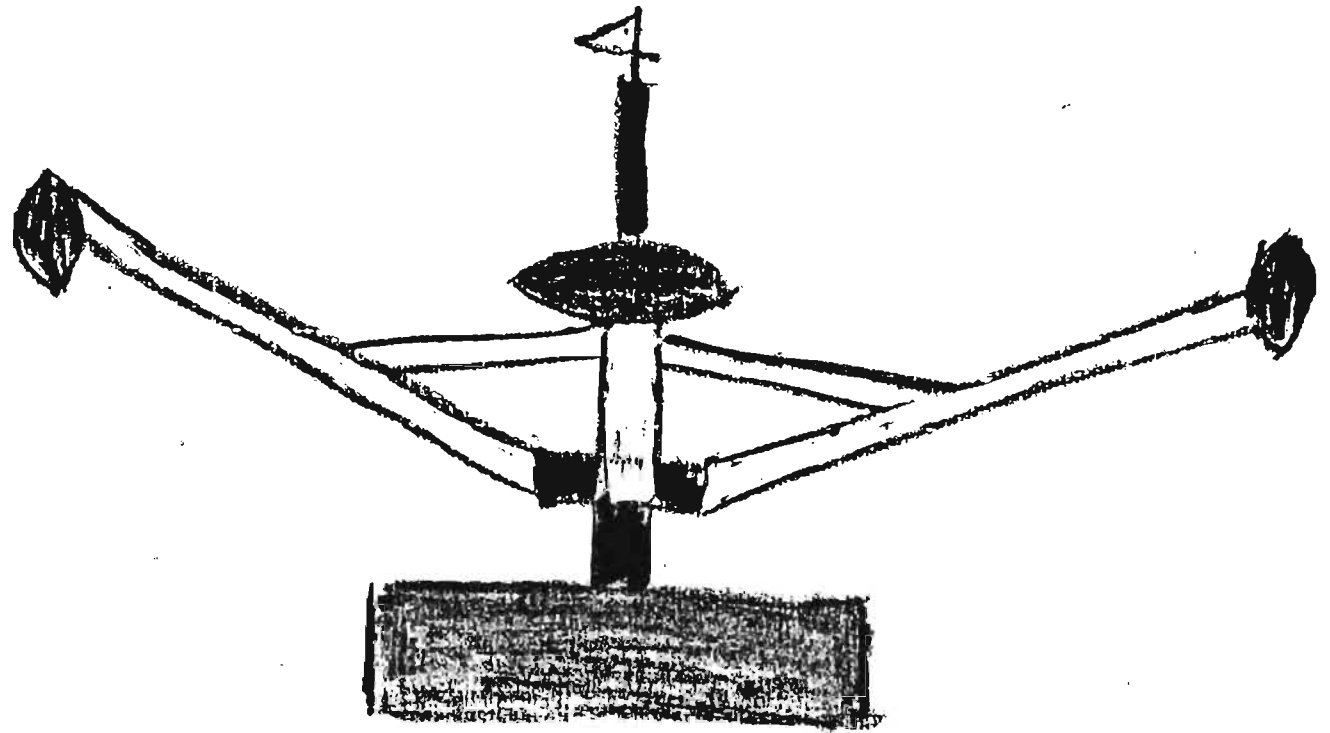


Fig. 13



Fig. 14

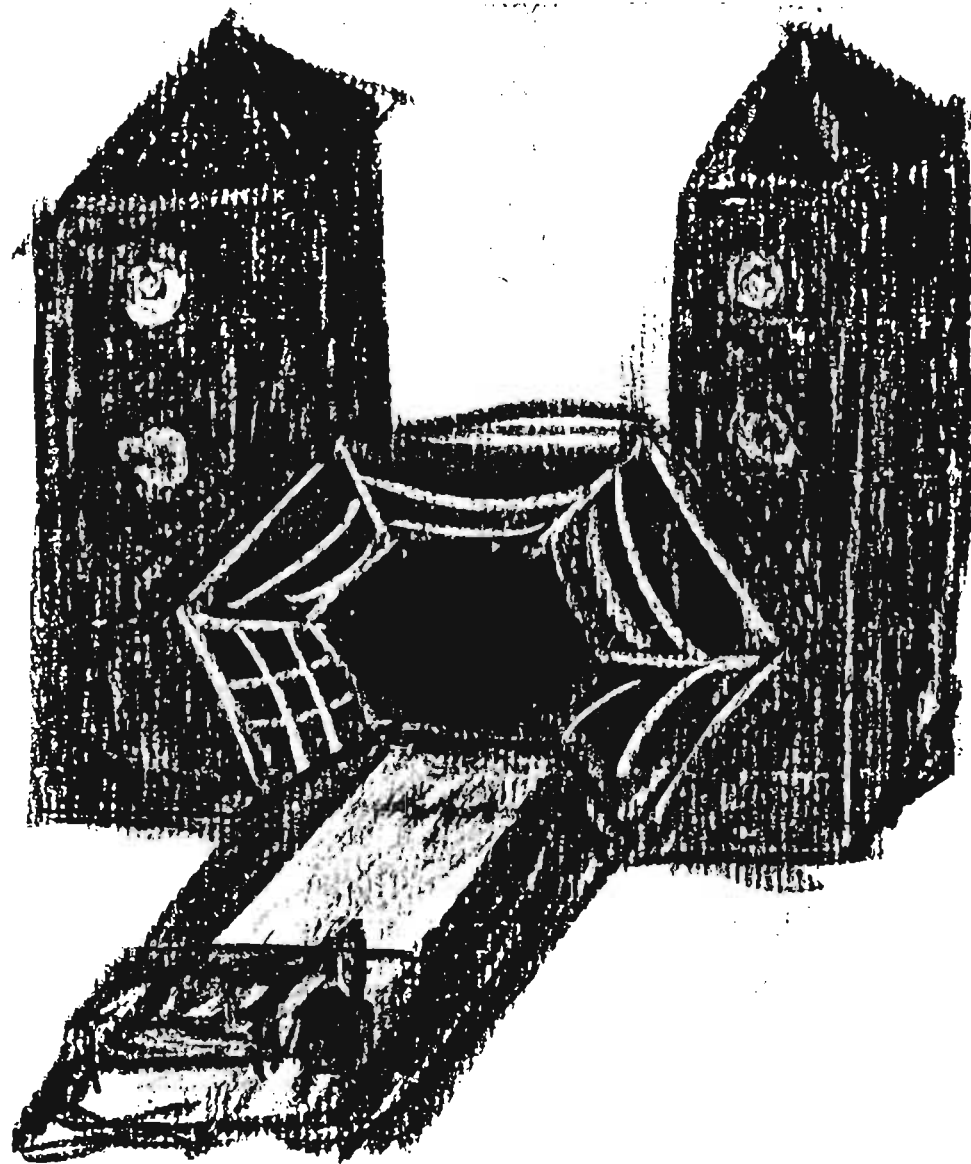


Fig. 15

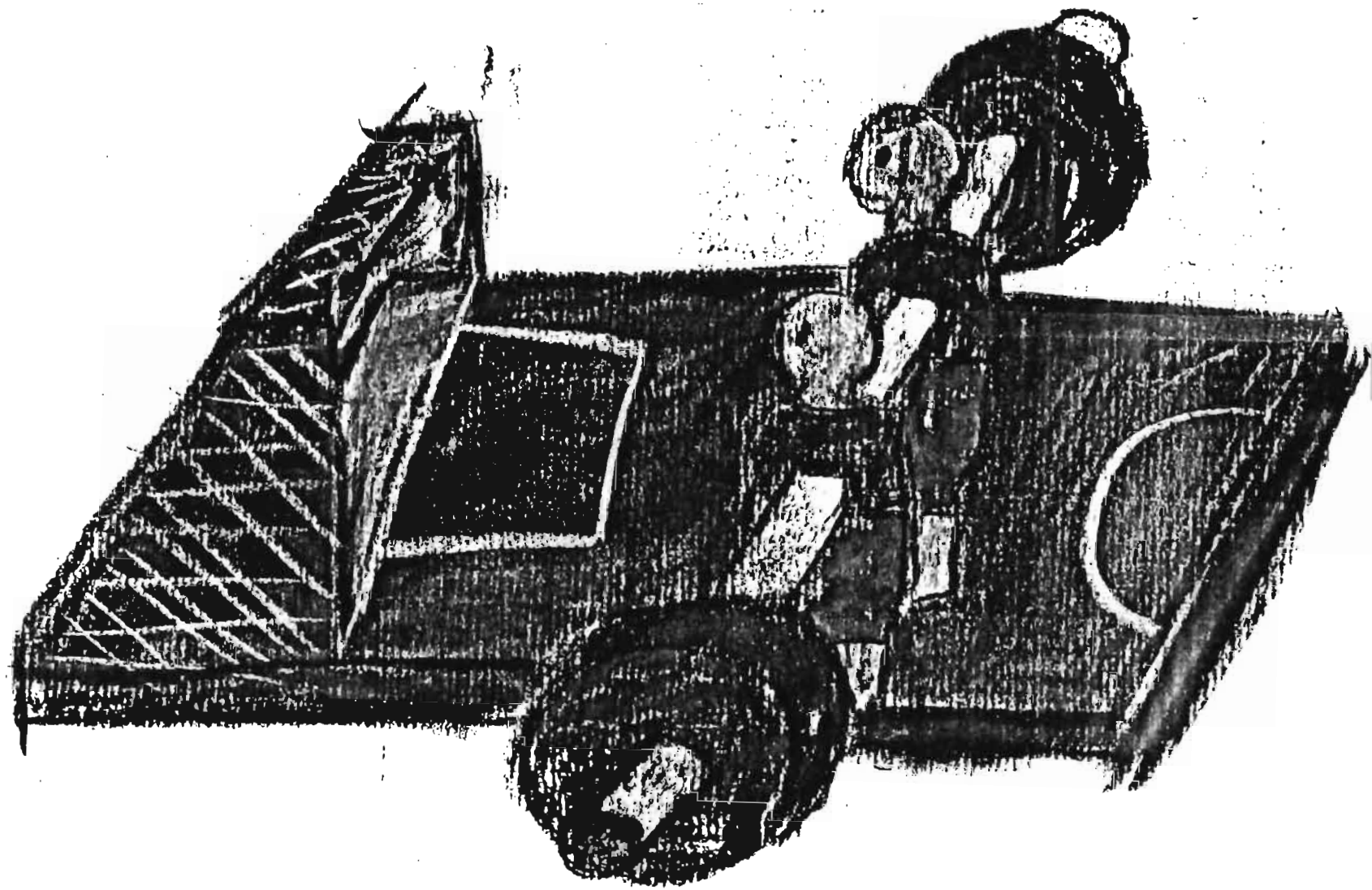


Fig. 16

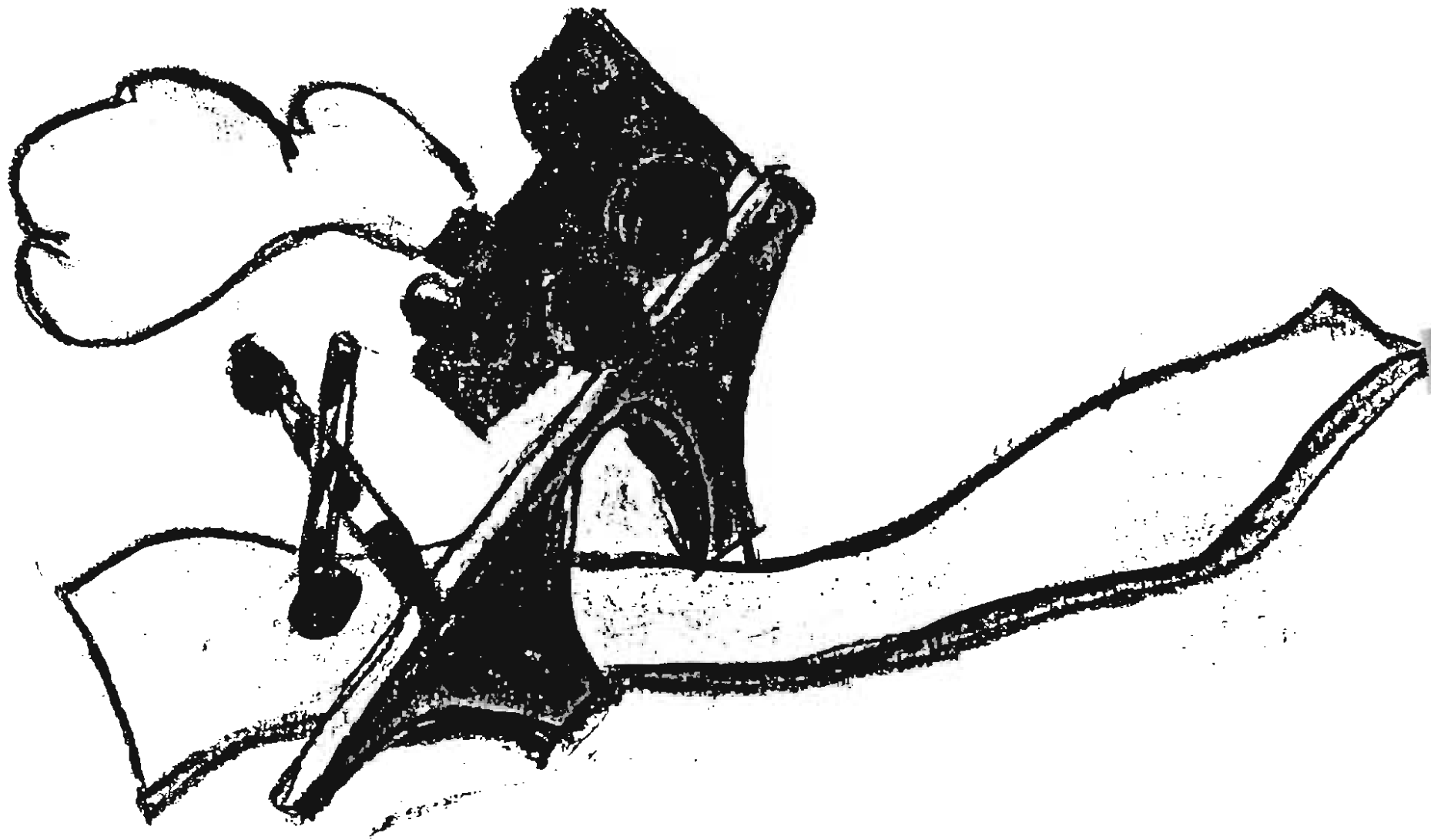


Fig. 17

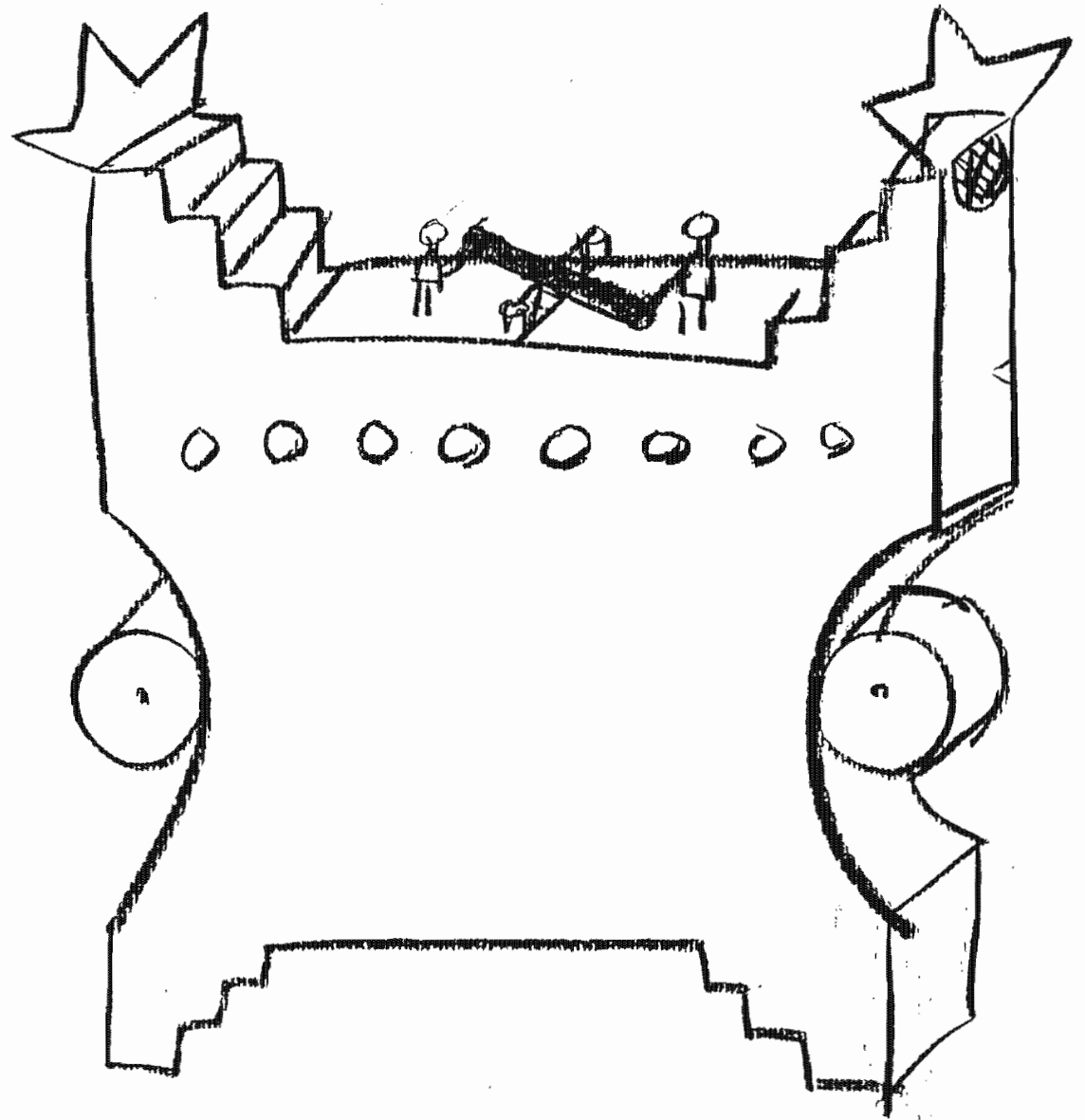


Fig. 18

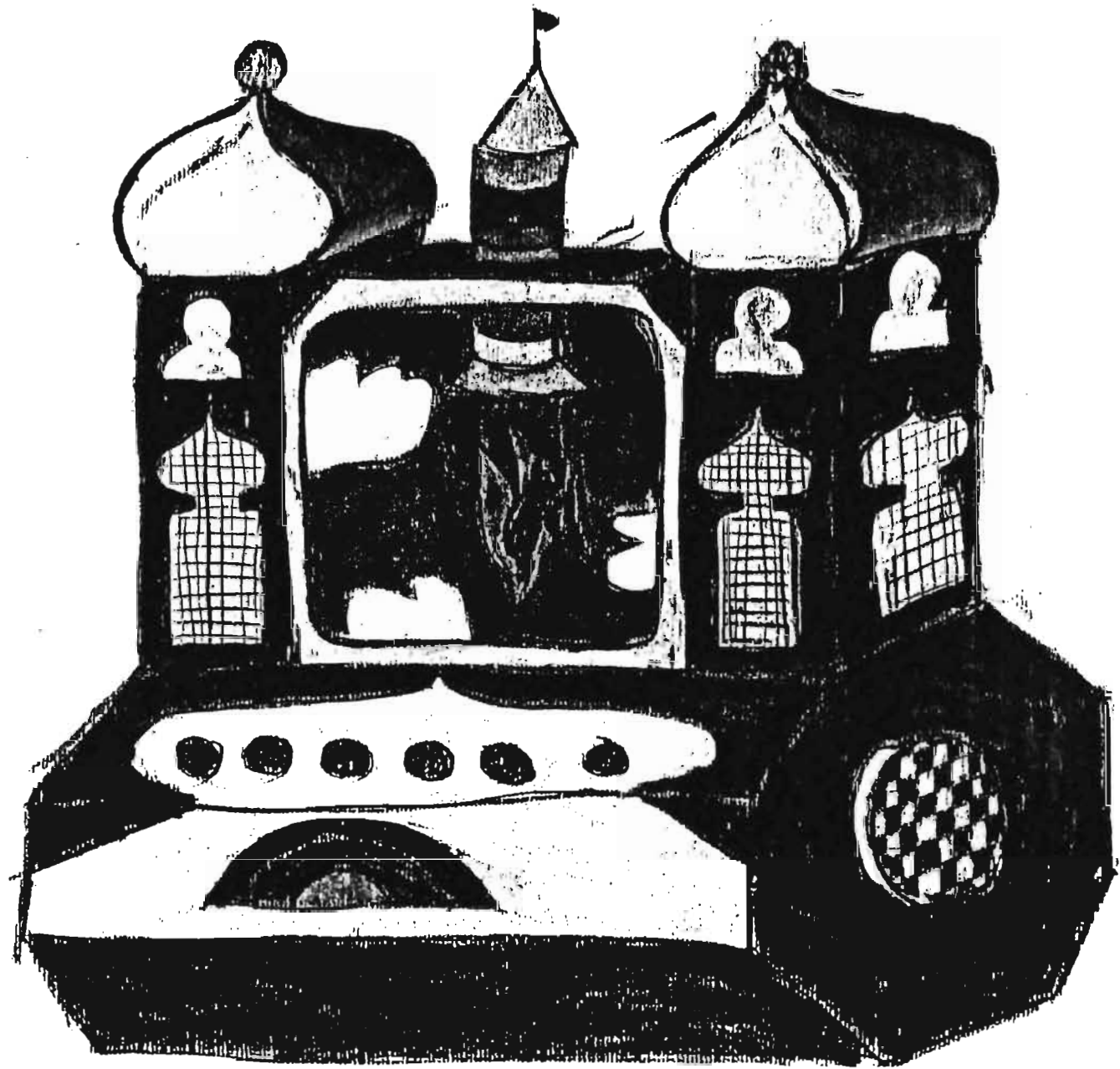


Fig. 19

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9.1 Aluminium extrusions.

Aluminium Extrusions Co. Sales (Pty) Ltd.
Moorsom Avenue
Bofors Circle
Epping Industria

Jackson Metals (Pty) Ltd.
Carlisle Street
Paarden Eiland

9.2 Aluminium Sheet.

Cape Steel Construction Co. (Pty) Ltd.
Aluminium Division
Losack Avenue
Bofors Circle
Epping Industria

Consani's Engineering
Consani Road

Non-Ferrous Metal Works (Cape) (Pty) Ltd.
114 Voortrekker Road
Salt River

S.A. Metal Machinery Co. (Pty) Ltd.
45 Voortrekker Road
Salt River

9.3 Anodising.

Anso Products (Cape) (Pty) Ltd.
Plantation Road
Wetton

Cape Anodising (Pty) Ltd.
Klipfontein Road
Phillipi

General Anodising Co. (Pty) Ltd.
Van Der Stel Street
Beaconvale Estate
Parow

9.4 Paint.

City Paint & Lacquer Co. (Cape)
Drukkery Road
Elsies River

Colorwall (Pty) Ltd.
79 Long Street
Cape Town

Michaelis Art Store
1 Orange Street
Cape Town

9.5 Acrylic sheet.

Romano Signs (Pty) Ltd.
Marine Drive
Paarden Eiland

Geoff Vye for Signs
29 Chiappini Street
Cape Town

9.6 Plastics.

Jay Eff Plastics (Pty) Ltd.
9 Consani Road
Elsies River

NCS Plastics (Pty) Ltd.
Moody Avenue
Epping Industria

Durapenta (Pty) Ltd.
17 Connaught Road
Beaconvale

9.7 Polyester resin.

Fowkes Brothers (Pty) Ltd.
7 Somerset Road
Cape Town

9.8 Sheet metal works.

Cape Steel Construction Co. (Pty) Ltd.
Losack Avenue
Bofors Circle
Epping Industria

Cutler, W.J. & Co. (Pty) Ltd.
138 Buitengracht Street
Cape Town

9.9 Wood.

Baltic Timber Co. (Pty) Ltd.
111 Albert Road
Woodstock

Timber City
423 Main Road
Observatory