

Will Insley, ceremonial space

Author

Insley, Will, 1929-2011

Date

1971

Publisher

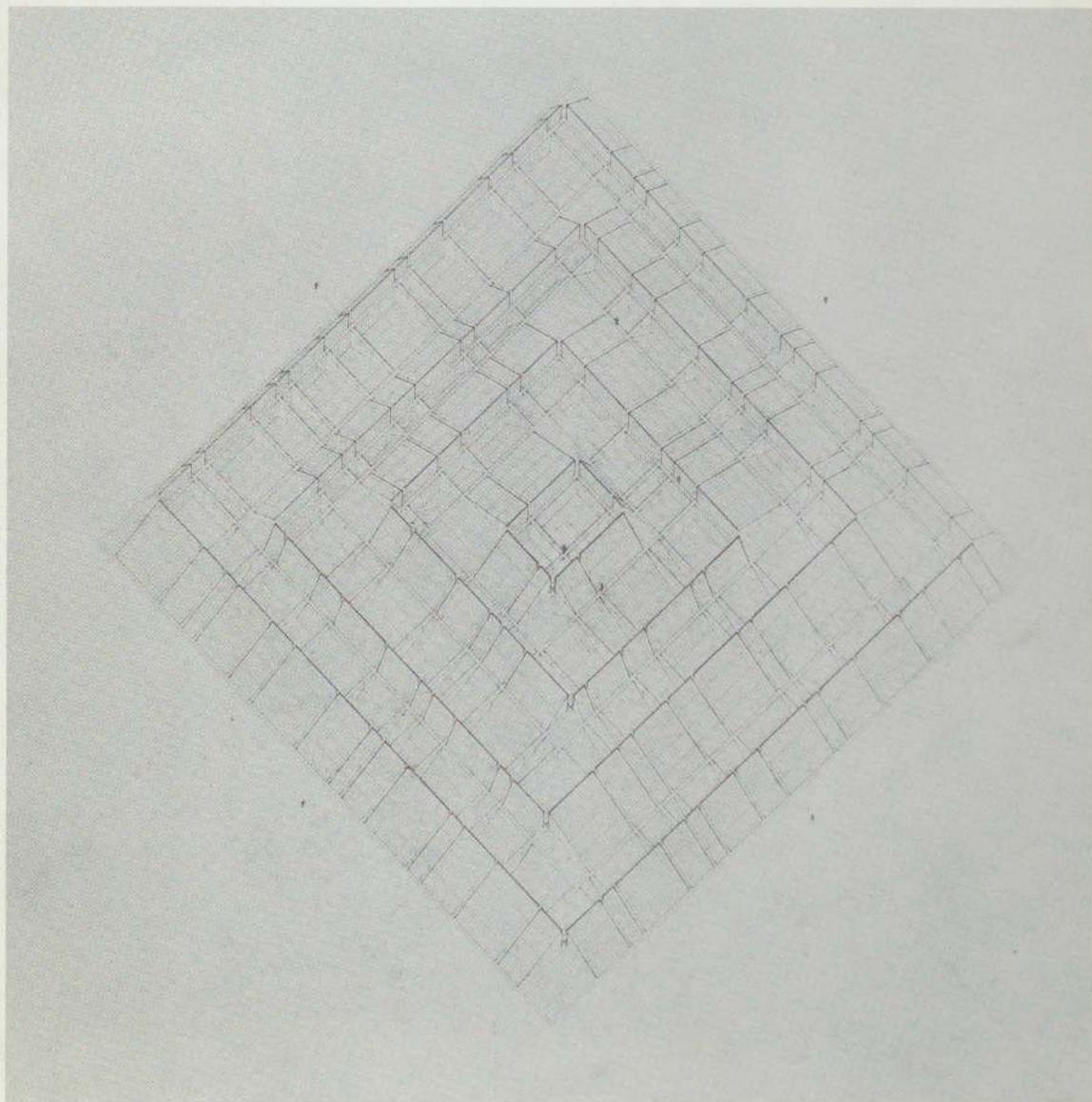
The Museum of Modern Art

Exhibition URL

www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2669

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primary documents, installation views, and an
index of participating artists.

WILL INSLEY: CEREMONIAL SPACE



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In the central plains
of United States
lies buried
the myth of ONECITY
horizontal dwelling of future
the great plateau
of future civilization
Inhabitants
descend from skytop grid space
through its layers
to magnetic roots of ONECITY
from there travel underground
in jetube arteries
to distant open country lands
seeking the /buildings/
of Extended Space

Extended Space is the center
classic point of art
the philosophy of art
as the sum
and only enduring product
of civilization

Extended Space is civilization
future civilization
poetry of myth
ritual of ceremony /buildings/
function of ONECITY
mystery of logical insanity

Extended Space employs
travel through mind channels
to witness the future
to return and report
the /building/ here presented
is one report

Slip between horizons
of earth and sky
through line
the thread into Extended Space

this /building/
of wandering ceremony
an outlying structure
of the central complex
the Interior Building
devoted to myth of passage
between present and future

this /building/
grows from center point out
according to
a square slip spiral ratio
of numbers .1.2.3.4.
obeying always and only
laws inherent to the ratio

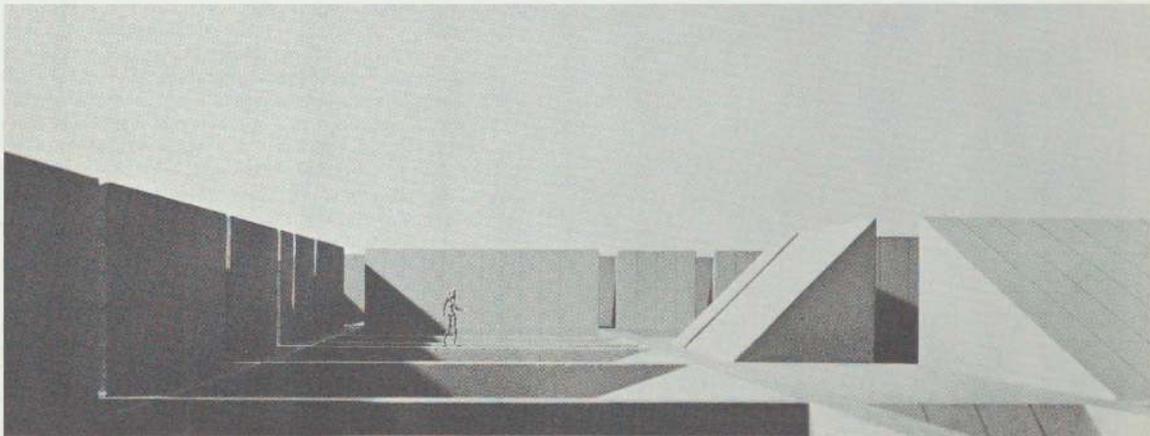
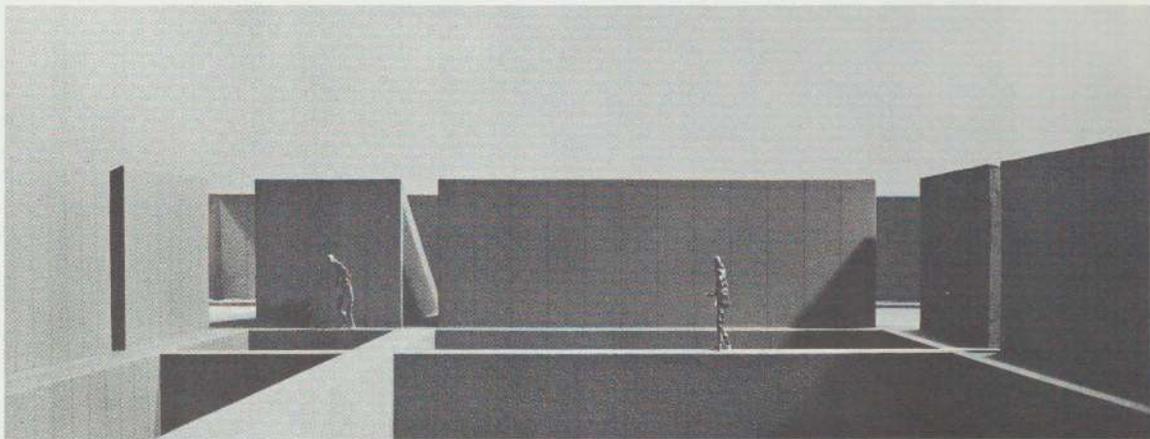
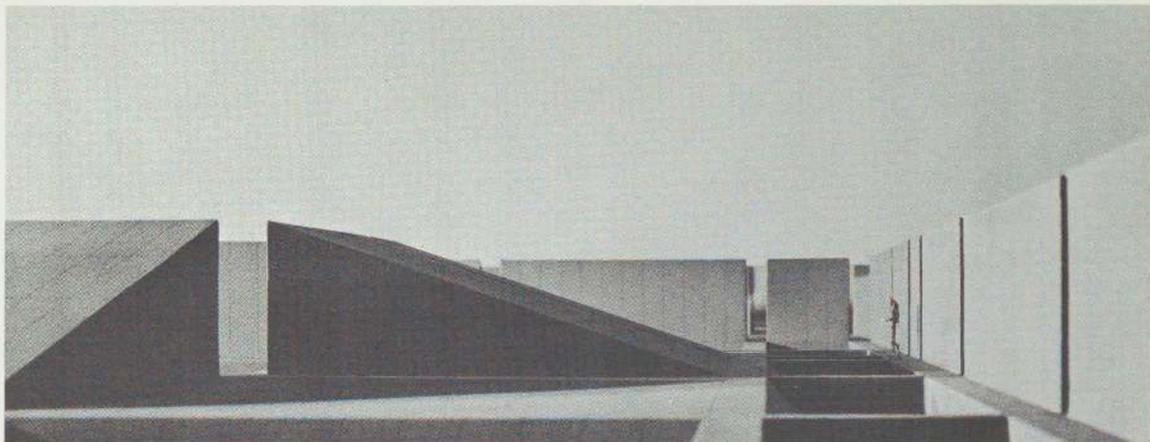
By passing through the horizon
man enters
into space removed
beyond the horizon
continuum of ever
removed horizons

Grey the Passage Space
changing are its shadows
variable the experience
walled corridors
stage spaces of rest
the bridges of danger
leased to man through logic
and mystery
of complex oneness

—Will Insley

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Most architects are too busy coping with clients, inflation, ecology and the Crisis of the Cities to have any time for purely theoretical studies. If they do, they are more likely to concern themselves with the housing problem than with architecture as an instrument of metaphysical speculation.

Will Insley is an exception. A painter and sculptor trained as an architect, he has designed projects whose function eludes definition. Briefly and prosaically described, Insley's architectural compositions are the settings for an imaginary civilization whose preoccupations correspond to his own. It is a civilization not indifferent to material well-being, but its highly developed sense of time and place evidently require an environment organized horizontally, like landscape, rather than vertically, like skyscrapers or other artifacts. Two zones of space under the ground—in Insley's vision—would accommodate services and information; two levels on and

above ground would accommodate the public and private renewal, in contact with the earth, which can be called "living."

Through underground tubes one would journey to places set aside for contemplation, or perhaps a kind of religious observance, more intensely private than might be possible within the community. These places are imagined as vast, roofless enclosures isolated on prairies or deserts. The structure shown in this exhibition belongs to this category. Although it is an independent element, it is related to an imagined larger complex, much as a village church might be related to Chartres Cathedral. Its straight and narrow paths lead between, through and along the tops of high walls, past sunk rooms to which there is no access, taking the philosophical visitor into expanding or diminishing volumes of space open to the sky. No experience is possible other than that determined by the architect. The only indeter-

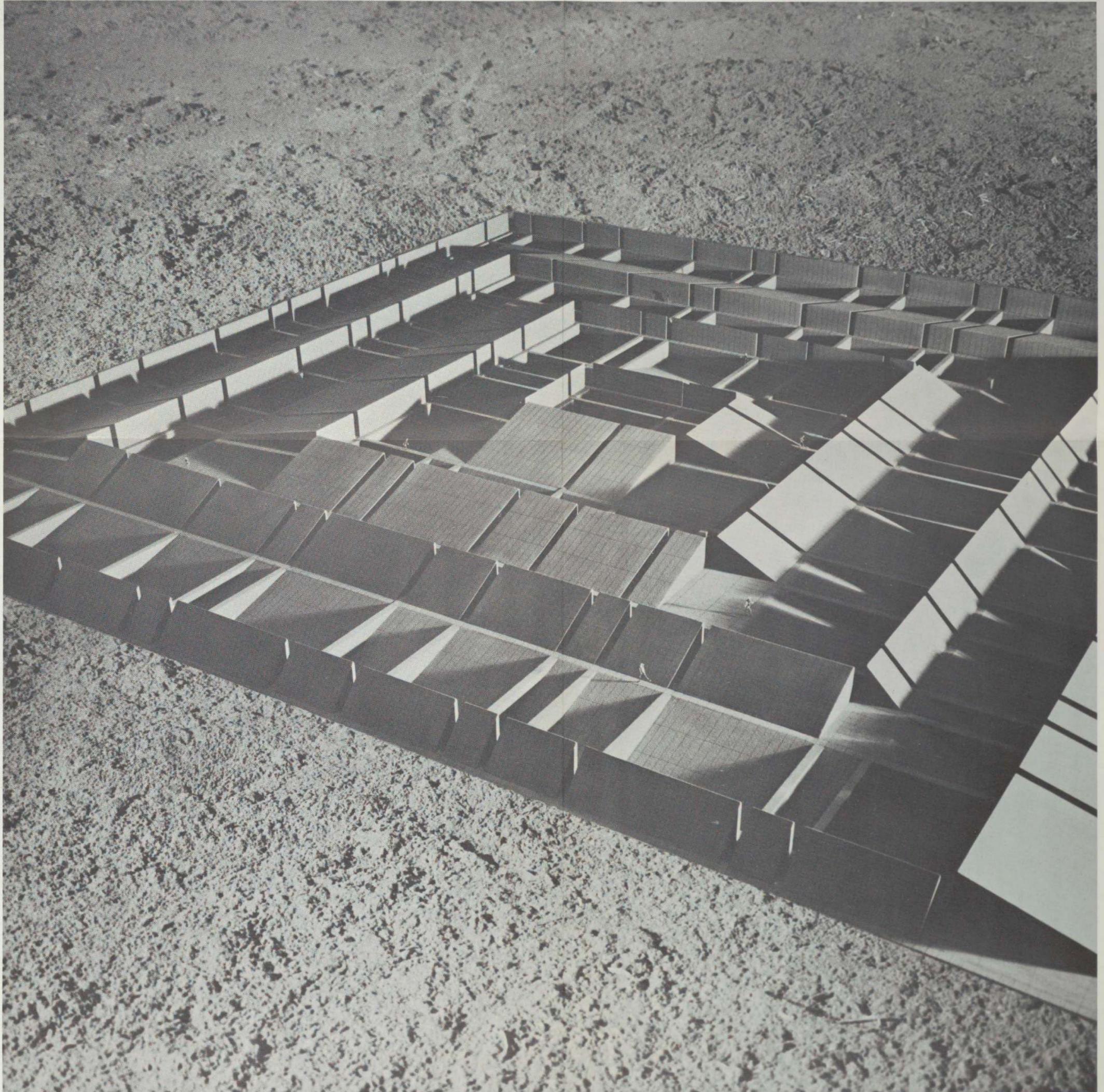
minate would be an encounter with another living being.

Insley's central preoccupation is with time. His notes for the larger, more elaborate ceremonial space, as yet undesigned, describe the present as a corridor flanked by a "wall of information," or knowledge, which is accessible but impenetrable, and by a wall beyond which is "the other side of the present"—death. One reaches the other side of the present by passing through a library, indicating a position in the mind from which one sets forth on a journey into the future. If the path leading into time is unbroken, it eventually returns the traveler to the present through an arc Insley calls the shadow of death.

Removed from many of the concerns of theology, Insley's use of space and architectural form is nevertheless rooted in "the last things": for him architecture is eschatology, and its function is to help us act out what creation has ordained.—Arthur Drexler

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