SYMMETRY/ASYMMETRY:TWO KINDS OF TIME: AN ARTIST'S VIEW

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This is a proposal for a lecture with slides to demonstrate -- through my own personal work -- how as visual artist -- I gradually, intuitively and, often haltingly, accepted a vanguard position of viewing 20th century art as a search for understanding and visualizing the "Shape of Time".(1) In the process I will demonstrate how the concepts of balance/imbalance: symmetry/asymmetry are fundamental to my understanding of time. I will show how remaining in balance while in motion, requires moving back and forth from symmetrical to asymmetrical modes of feeling and thought. This back and forth motion reveals two aspects of Time -- stopped time and moving time. (2)

Science/art/technology permit us to to record this motion in time, or to stop time. This process of stopping/moving in time can be manually, mechanically, electronically and photronically recorded. Pens, brushes, cameras, copiers, video, computers -- all -- can be tools for recording our perceptions of time/space. With each new tool we alter our perceptions of space/time and in the process we alter our relationships to objects, to people and to our environment.(3)

In the United States, although there has been a shift from the visualization of objects in space to the visualization of objects in time, there has been little, if any, systematic study. I founded the program Generative Systems(4), at the Art Institute of Chicago (1969-1980), precisely to create such studies. In establishing this program I interwove my personal art work with that of the program. In this way I integrated into the teaching process personal/subjective/ unconscious studies with general/ objective/ conscious studies. The last course I created for Generative Systems was called Homography, a foundation course in the visualization of time. Manual, mechanical, electronic and photronic tools were use to record relative ways of visualizing time.

HOMOGRAPHY (man's meaning) was intended primarily as a course in which all tools could be used for art exploration. As it turned out it became a course in THE VISUALIZATION OF TIME. I developed 9 relative ways of visualizing time based on my objective and subjective findings. All 9 ways were described symmetrically,i.e. Pressure/Flow was based on my dreams and my observations of the patterns of pressure and flow in my own hand and machine experiments. Stretching/ Compressing also came from dreams and from observing in my experiments that I could stretch or compress an image by light or heat or even by sound with a telecopier, merely by holding the recording needle down in time as I transmitted an image.

For each symmetrical way of visualizing time, the student was asked to use either manual, mechanical, electronic or photronic tools. Precise problems were set up, which gradually allowed for greater and greater problem setting by the student.

These are 9 relative ways of visualizing time:
(See attached figures 1-8)

1. Pressure/Flow
2. Scanning/Closure
3. Interference/Filtering
4. Internal/External
5. Opaque/Transparent Layering
6. Close Packing/Stacking
7. Stretching/Compressing
8. Metamorphosis/Morphogenisis
9. Synchronicity/Simultaneity

To these one can add other, innumerable ways of visualizing time.

In a sense, with only a gradually dawning awareness, I moved in a direction that (I very late realized) would have been a logical direction for the Bauhaus thinkers. Of these Laszlo Moholy - Nagy, came the closest to understanding the nature of visualizing time. I am now convinced that this was partially a result of his exploration with the technological tools of his time, which was directly related to his holistic philosophy.

Moholy's work with media technology permitted him to move into multi-dimensional landscapes, beyond any other of his contemporaries, more so than the Italian Futurists or the Cubists. Even Paul Klee, whose Pedagogical Sketchbooks became a model for integrating natural structural process into the creation of art, moved primarily from 2-dimensional to 4-dimensional space. It was Moholy who moved from 3-dimensional space to the 4th and multi-dimensional space/time, ie. his light modulator. Only late in my artistic career, during the course of working with new communication tools in the development of Generative Systems, did I come to understand Moholy's work.

My great respect for Moholy's life and work was partially responsible for my enthusiastic response to your Hungarian invitation to submit proposals for an article and lecture. It is in the spirit of Moholy's quest for knowledge that I plan to develop this lecture with extensive use of slides of my own work to balance my words.

References:

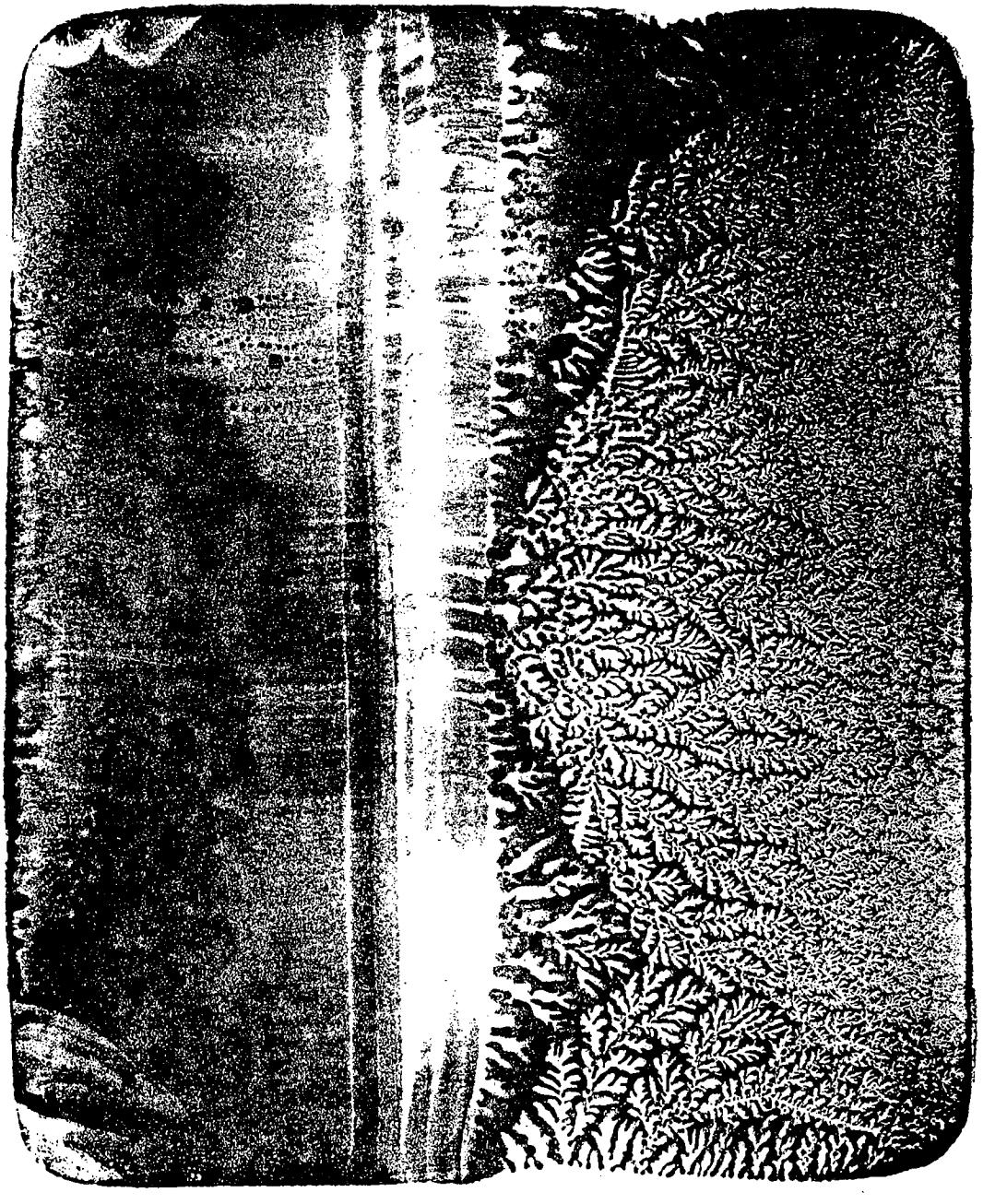
1. Kubler, George, (1962) The Shape of Time, New Haven: Yale University Press.

2. Sheridan, Sonia Landy, (April, 1972) "Generative Systems", Afterimage, Vol. 1, No.2, 2-4, Rochester, N.Y., Visual Studies Workshop.

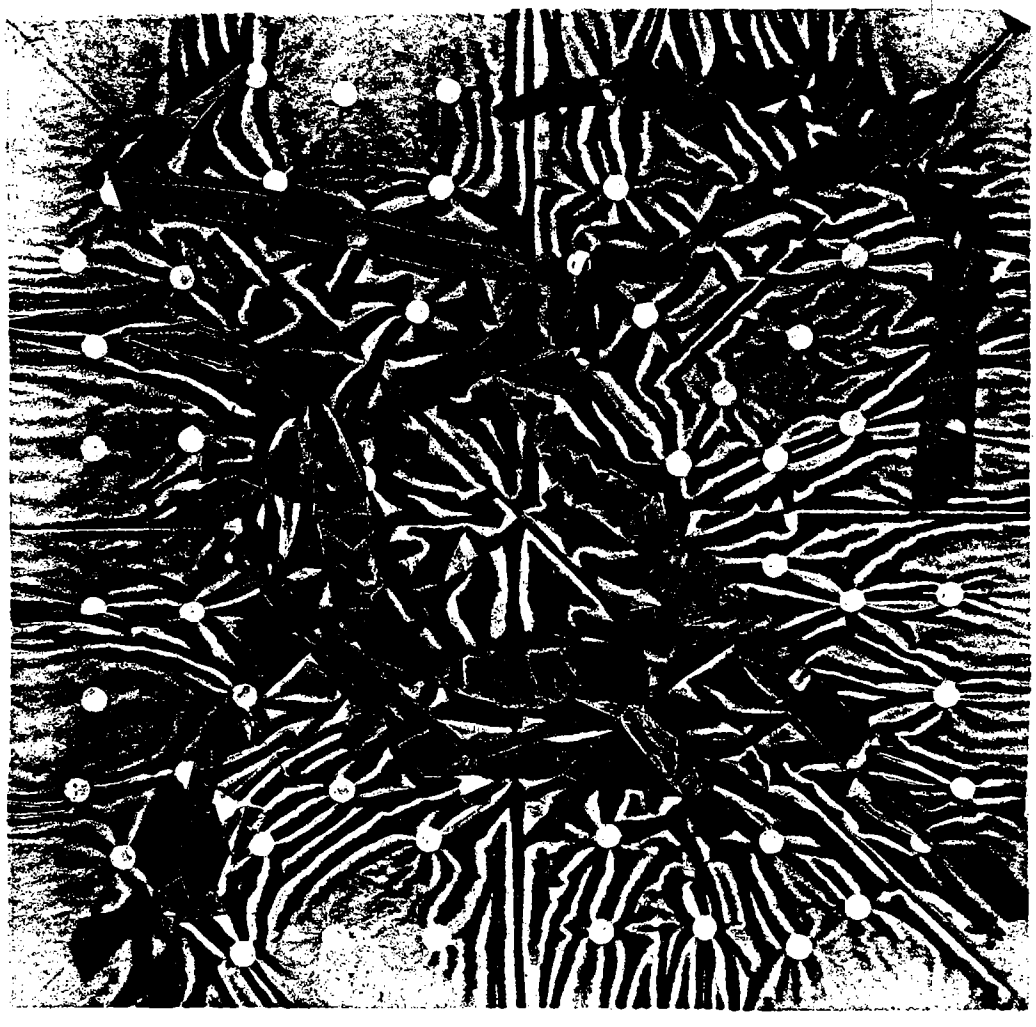
3. Sheridan, Sonia Landy, (1988), "Four Kinds of Time: Using Brush, Camera, Copier and Computer",Leonardo", Vol. 21, No.2, pp. 111-113, Great Britain: Pergamon Press.

4. Sheridan, Sonia Landy, (1975), "Generative Systems: 6 years Later",Afterimage, Vol. 2, No.9, pp.6-9, Rochester, N.Y.: Visual Studies Workshop.

PRESSURE/FLOW FIG. 1



PRESSURE/FLOW FIG. 2



OPAQUE/TRANSPARENT LAYERING 10.25.79

FIG. 3

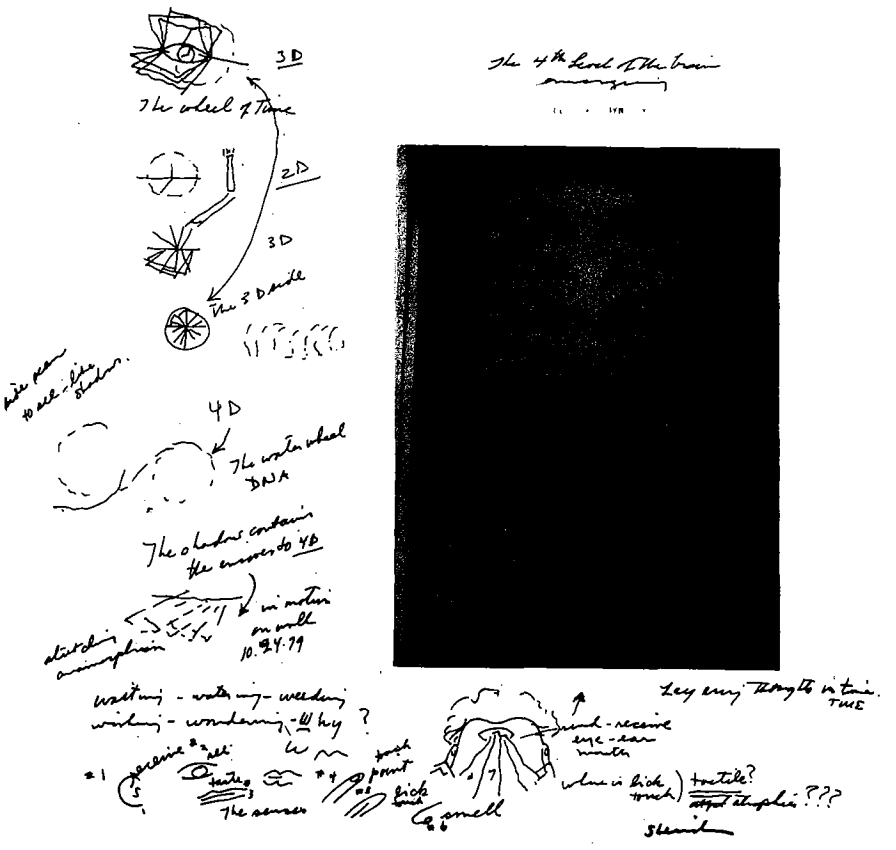


FIG. 4
OPAQUE/TRANSPARENT LAYERING

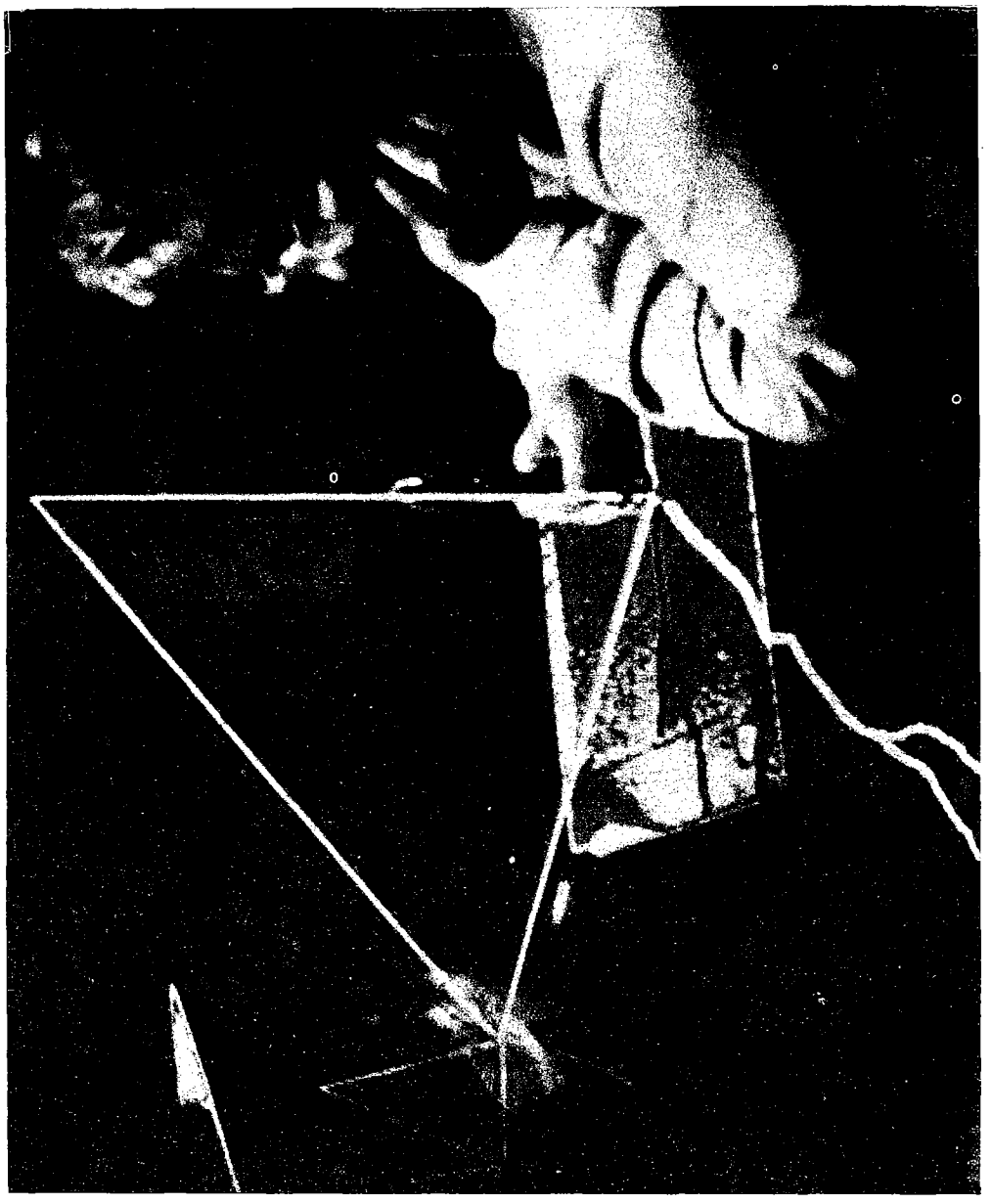


FIG. 5
STRETCHING/COMPRESSING

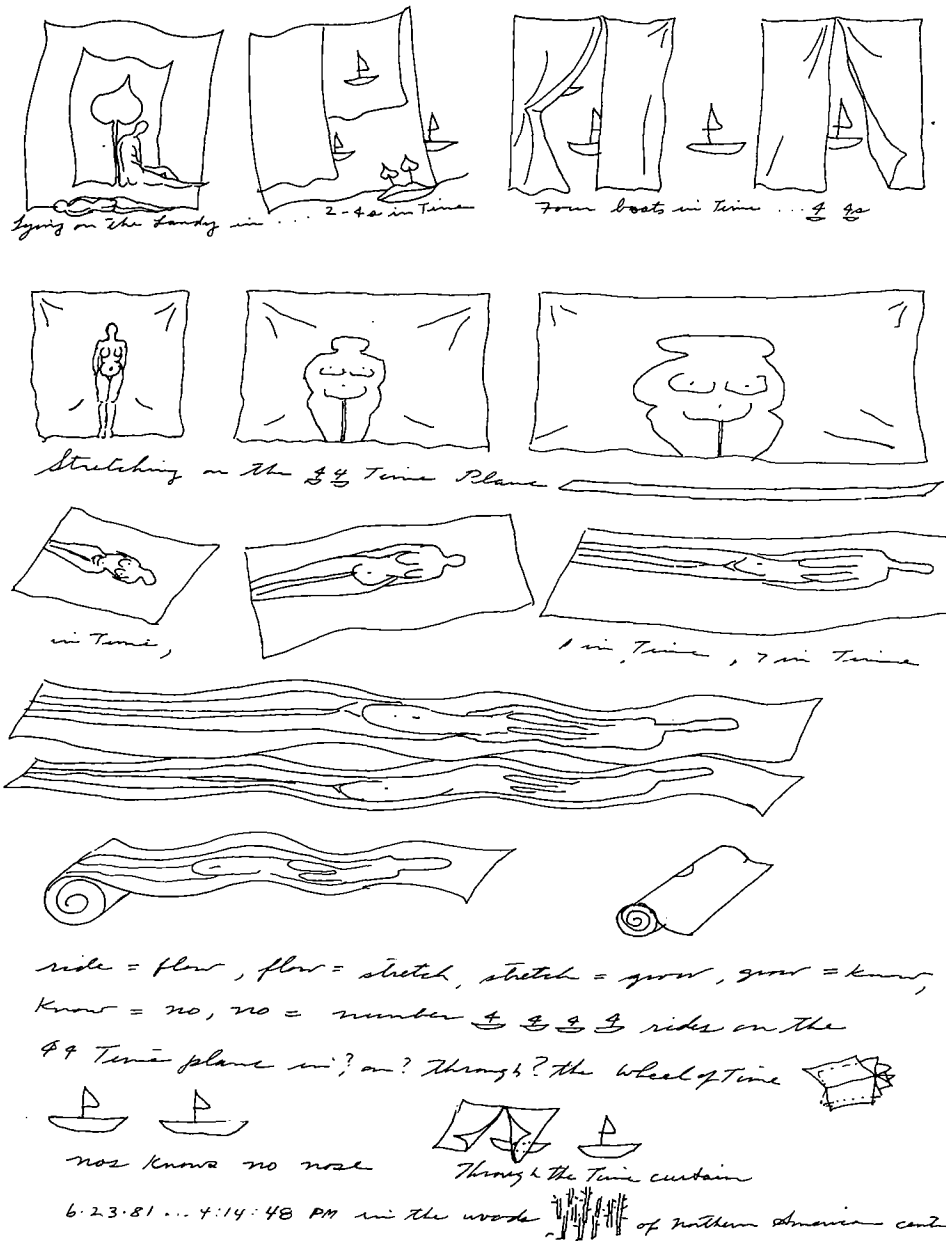


FIG. 6
STRETCHING/COMPRESSING

"Stretching Jenn in Time" was made by pulling the computer graphic system video out of synchronization. The resulting stretched parts were then reassembled much like an out-of-sync image on your home T.V. In this case I used a Cromemco 2-20 computer + CAT 400 graphics and EASEL, Time bits software . . . . . .

These bands took about 1 minute to compress and 10 to stretch. . . A hand image 6 stories tall took the same

"Stretching and Compressing in Time" 311 VRC remote copies . . . Controlling the time it takes to transmit an image . .

FIG. 7
METAMORPHOSIS/MORPHOGENISIS

10.25.78

The order of Things

Structure for 21st Century Art
morphogenisis - the mathematics of natural growth
and for natural systems.
Soft systems
Soft ware
soft

10.29.78

mouth
became
bow arrow
genetic growth
the clock comes up thirst the land

sofa
mouth
M
Macdonald's
M
beach
bedding

bedding in motion
The outside sheet must be the human imposed structure
it's technology which is not yet a natural system - but bits and pieces — analogous — metaphors for life-living structures -
we are still close to the Crystal structuring era — except in cloning — areas to study.

coming up through the ground
coming as a shadow wherein lies the record of the motion
foreclosure

vault
move this way
see (1965 notes)
butterfly in motion
4D.
side
front

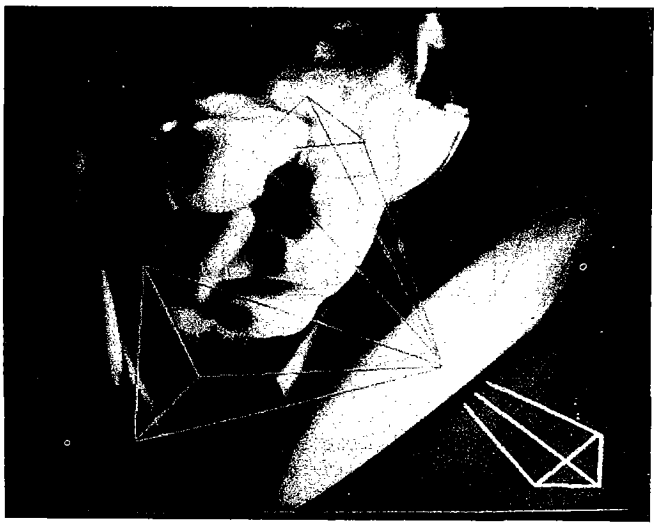
slit-scan is only 2D version of time layering
Make 3D

Tripping Through Time

going through the time plane by weaving through the layers. one time layered - map the territory for the voyage through time.

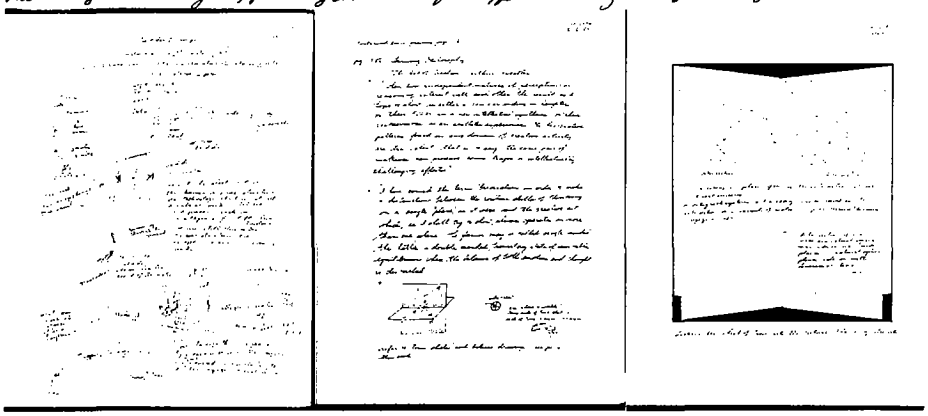
carp

FIG. 8
SYNCRONICITY/SIMULTANEITY



"Light Plane": ...1985 computer graphic ... Cromemco Z-2D/CAT 400 hardware, EASEL/Time Arts software ... Looking for the other side of Time on a light plane of the Wheel of Time. The night side, the right side, the dayside-the outside ... with the fluxside, inside/outside ...

Piercing the layers, flowing with the path, penetrating the nightlike light, the unknown



"Wall Note No. 10" with 3 pages from notebooks of Oct. 1979 and April, August, 1983.