



**ENVIRONMENTAL
ART PROJECTS:
1981**

Morris Museum
of Arts and Sciences
Morristown, N.J.

The Morris Museum of Arts and Sciences Board of Trustees and Staff have thoroughly enjoyed working with the artists in the fascinating environmental art project series this year. Each project was an original endeavor that elicited great interest from visitors to the Museum, and challenged the viewer to redefine his concept of "art."

We are very grateful for the generous fundings of these projects from the Interpace Corporation, Parsippany, New Jersey, and the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION

In March, 1980, the Morris Museum launched a series of Environmental Art Projects. The 1981 projects, documented in this catalog, were created by Hank DeRicco, Nene Humphrey, Carolee Thea and Penny Kaplan. These artists were given an opportunity to transform eight acres, or part thereof, from a raw state into an art space. The projects were uniquely designed for the Morris Museum environment. One project occurred at a time, each artist selected a location and time of year. The space available to them included a low sloping hill, meadow and wooded area. The meadow is generally overgrown with wildflowers, small shrubs and inter-dispersed with mixed grasses and thyme; the hill has a mowed lawn; the wooded area consists of a picnic grove with various species of tall pine trees, red maple and mulberry trees, elderberry and spice bushes. Although secluded from the road, the acreage is framed by two modern buildings.

During their construction and completion, the projects were visible from the buildings, the rear balcony of the Museum, and the visitor was, of course, able and encouraged to walk in and around the project itself.

gail gelburd

PENNY KAPLAN CAROLEE THEA

Ceremonial Conjecture September 21—March 1, 1982

The last project, **Ceremonial Conjecture**, is a collaborative project by Carolee Thea and Penny Kaplan which is evocative of Indian earth mounds, Peruvian terrace plantings, mastabas, "mother earth," and ancient rituals. Using spirals, serpents and mounds, the symbols in the work are timeless.

The project is simultaneously a land drawing and a fully three-dimensional environment. It can be viewed from the balcony that looks down on it yet, also invites the viewer to walk through and experience the trenches of the maze and the height of the mounds.

Entering the maze, the viewer is confronted by the smell of the hay and the treachery of the rocks within the dug-out maze. Halfway hidden below ground level, you prepare for the journey over the acreage. The viewer is forced to become a participant and at every juncture is confronted by decisions as to directions to take within the maze. The participants come across remnants from other projects that the artists have left. As you come to the end of the maze, you have the sensation of the trench becoming narrower (A deception

caused during your descent down the hill). Looking back up the hill, the caverns, valleys, hills and womb-like trenches explicate the female sexual references. As Simone de Beauvoir noted, the woman is like the earth from which life grows—planted with rye grass, the maze and mounds will also yield a lush bed of growth.

Penny Kaplan's ritual mounds, built from the dirt inside the trench maze, further embodies the spiritual. This spiritual essence can be that of the revered ancestor, life, death or fertility. They relate to the spirit basic to ancient ceremonial structures. Although their specific identifiable source is the double mastaba and animal mounds of the Ohio River Valley, their contents are as unknown and mysterious as those found in the religious structures of most primitive cultures.

Contrasted against the modern buildings, the maze and mounds in **Ceremonial Conjecture** return the participant to basic elements of life. Transcending time, one is brought to what Jung called a "collective unconscious."







