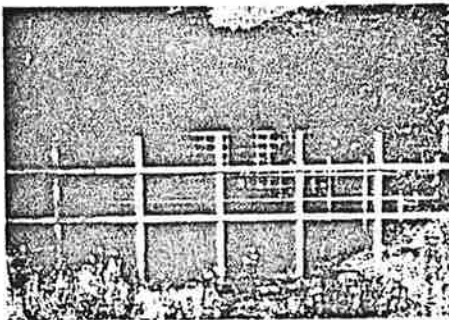


landscape. *n.* 1. A portion of land which the eye can comprehend in a single view, esp. in its pictorial aspect. 2. A picture representing inland natural scenery.

The vista before us is a landscape, specifically, *Veiled Landscape* by Mary Miss. From the viewing platform mounted at the top of the hill, we can survey the mountain range on the horizon or direct our gaze downward, into the valley below, where it encounters the rest of the work: first, a screen of posts whose irregular lengths chart the mountains' profile, then several layers of rudimentary wooden fencing, and finally a pair of lattice-work structures which describe a schematic gate. Because we look both *at* these constructions and *through* them to the landscape beyond, all refer back to the black wire-mesh veil interposed between viewer and view from which the work derives its title. The entire landscape is viewed through this screen which, like a camera's viewfinder, effectively frames it and, like the Claude-glass used by *plein air* painters in previous centuries, "veils" it, imparts an all-over tonal uniformity. The veil also collapses proximate and distant on a single flat surface, renders the coordinates of three-dimensional space as a positional network on a two-dimensional grid. In other words, it converts the landscape into a *picture*.

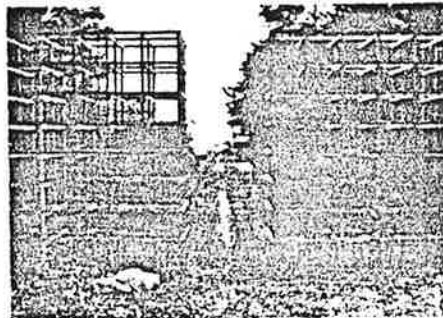
Perceived through wire mesh, the landscape is dissolved into discontinuous fragments reminiscent of the planes of color with which Cézanne constructed his landscapes. And the juxtaposition of the inexorably flat shapes of the mountains in the distance with the appearance of the valley viewed from above recalls the conclusions which Picasso drew from Cézanne in the series of landscapes painted at Horta da Ebro during the summer of 1909. That *Veiled Landscape* should recapitulate early twentieth-century painting suggests that its concerns are purely pictorial, and that it is therefore continuous with a modernist tradition of painting and sculpture, which offers the prospect of a space which can be penetrated only by the eye.



Painting—any painting—can be inhabited only imaginatively. "Tactile values," depth cues such as shading and spatial overlap, as well as compositional devices which direct attention away from the frame and deeper into imaginary space—these are pictorial conventions which prolong the fantasy of inhabitation. It was, of course, this illusion of physically accessible, three-dimensional space that Cézanne and Picasso sought to counteract in their tightly woven canvases, and the history of painting that proceeds from them is in fact a chronicle of the progressive elimination of everything that might suggest the physical penetration, occupation, inhabitation of space. This "reduction," as it was called, was not limited to painting; modernist sculpture followed suit with pictorial works which, through lines and planes that divided or enclosed space but did not appear to occupy it, aspired to "pure visibility."

What differentiates *Veiled Landscape* from its modernist predecessors, however, is the fact that here the viewer is invited to enter the picture, to explore the space internal to it, to climb over and under fences until he stands at the threshold marked by its gate. This is thus a landscape in both senses of the term: it manifests a portion of nature as palpably, tangibly *present* and thus open to physical inspection; it also withdraws that landscape from us by appearing to represent it as a picture. Hence the function of the veil. We say that someone's meaning is "veiled" when it is obscure, indirect, *impenetrable*. A veil is a screen interposed between the viewer and the viewed whose function is both to reveal and to conceal, to expose and to protect. Like the drapery on classical statues, which both discloses the body underneath and covers its nudity, the veil exists, as Mallarmé wrote, "between desire and its fulfillment, penetration and its recollection, at once anticipating, then recalling, the future, the past, under a false appearance of presentness."

If I have dwelt on *Veiled Landscape*, it is because this work seems to exemplify the concerns of most of the large-scale "environmental" works installed in Lake Placid on the occasion of the XIII Winter



Introduction

Environmental
VII

Locations of the works:

Siah Armajani, *Reading House*, Hillcrest Avenue Park.

Richard Fleischner, *Fence and Covered Fence*, Ausable River, near the Olympic ski jumps.

Lloyd Hamrol. Packed snow structure, Lake Placid Resort Hotel.

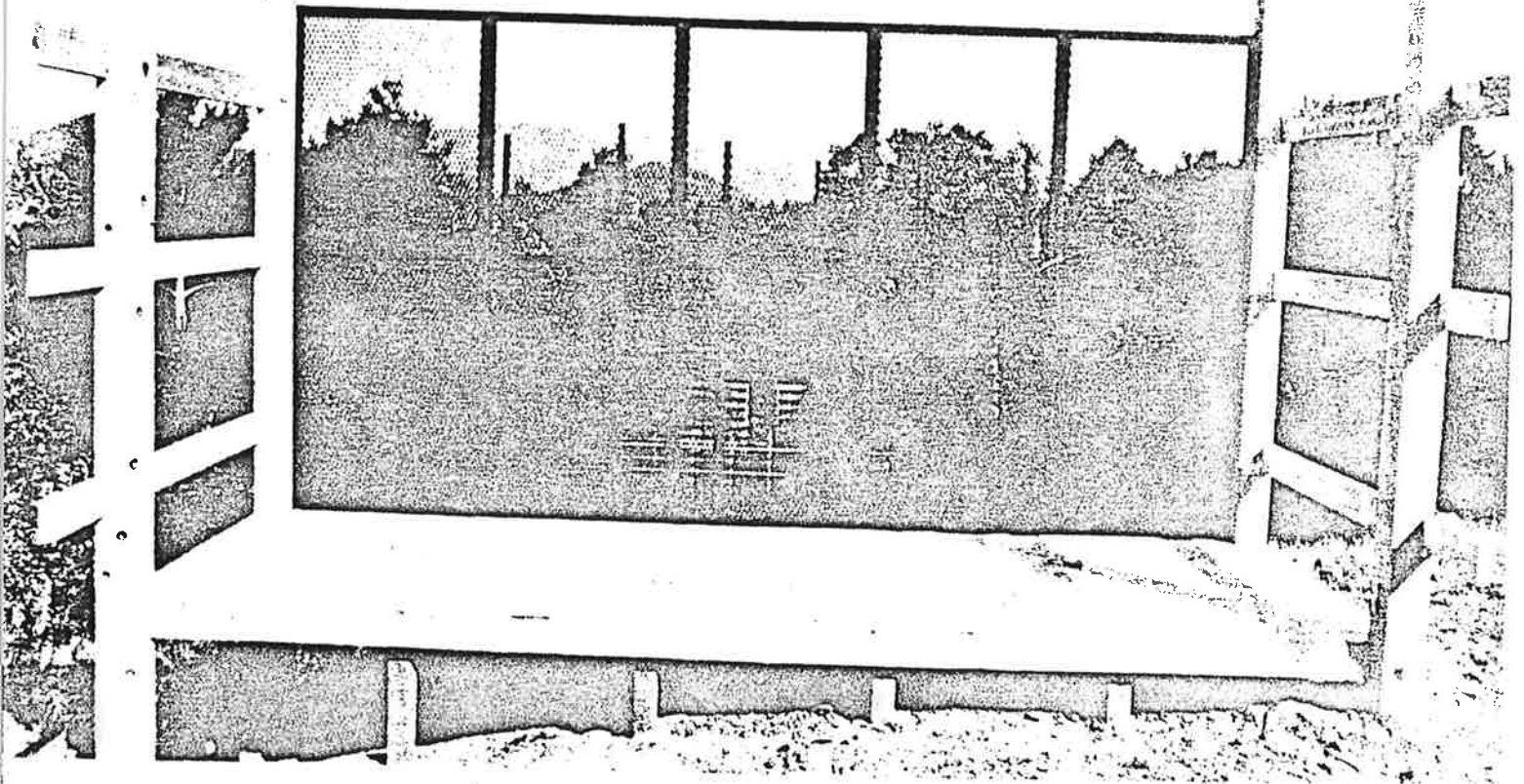
Doug Hollis, *Field of Vision*, Lake Placid Resort Hotel golf course.

Nancy Holt, *30 Below*, Old Military Road near the Olympic ski jumps.

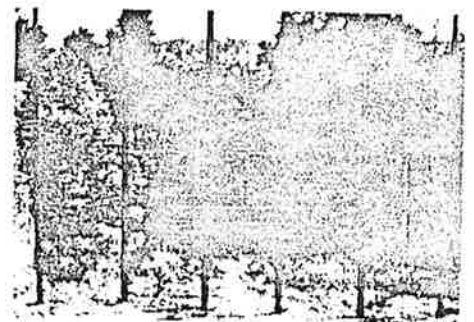
Robert Irwin, untitled, Olympic Arena Hill.

Mary Miss, *Veiled Landscape*, W. Alton Jones Cell Science Center.

Elyn Zimmerman, untitled, Lake Placid Center for Music, Drama and Art.



Mary Miss. *Veiled Landscape*, 1979.
Photographs courtesy of Max Protetch Gallery.



Olympics. These works all occupy the limit between the landscape as a natural fact and as a picture, as penetrable and inaccessible. This, their thematic consistency, also accounts for their material and technical similarities. Richard Fleischner's *Fence and Covered Fence*, for example, located near the foot of the Olympic ski jumps, is built entirely of wooden fencing reminiscent of *Veiled Landscape*. Fleischner's fence completes the rectangle suggested by an L-shaped stand of evergreens which border two sides of an otherwise unbounded field. Work and site thus stand in a dialectical relationship: while the artist may be said to have completed a natural "fact," the work itself requires that same fact for its own completion. Those trees are both part of nature and of an image.

Veiled Landscape extracts the pictorial potential of the landscape by a series of superimpositions; so too these fences function to transform the field into a picture. Again because we look both *at* and *through* them, they do not so much appear to *take place*, to occupy space, as to mark the mutual limit between two areas, which the fence stands *between*. The fence does not belong to the field it delimits; neither can it be distinguished from it. Rather it is that which makes the distinction between the field and its context possible. The field itself, and not the fences which limit it, constitutes the image.

However indebted it may appear to the specifics of its site, *Fence and Covered Fence* ultimately derives from a (remembered) pictorial source: a painting of soccer players in a field by the French *naif*, the "Douanier," Rousseau. Fleischner has not, however, populated his field for, true to the space from which it derives, it can be inhabited only imaginatively. Presenting us with an empty image, the artist solicits the memories and associations of the viewer, through which the image will again be filled.

In an open field on the grounds of the Lake Placid Center for Music, Drama, and Art, Elyn Zimmerman has installed yet a third fence-work. Here nineteen cyclone-fence panels function as screens which frame two massive, sculptural boulders, which are withdrawn into inaccessible pictorial space. When viewed from certain angles, the work also frames *itself*, each panel seen in turn as a reduced, internal image of the last, thus creating an effect of infinite regress which, like parallel mirrors, compresses real space out of the image.

At the same time, Zimmerman's fences describe the approach to a path cleared through the woods to a large frozen pond. Consequently actual physical passage governs our experience of the work; as the artist notes, "One passes through conditions of openness and lightness (the field), to darkness and closure (the woods), to openness and brightness again (the pond)." The theme of passage, as well as the abstract conditions of openness and closure are primary axiomatic features of architecture. Polar opposites, landscape and architecture are collapsed in this work, not through the generation of a third term from their antithesis, but by a revelation of properties of one as inherent in the other. In Zimmerman's work we experience architectural features directly from the landscape itself.

A number of artists address similar issues in works that are unmistakably architectural in impulse: Siah Armajani in his *Reading House*, Nancy Holt in her *30 Below*, Lloyd Hamrol in his packed snow structure. All of these artists attempt to overcome the antithesis between landscape and architecture by making work which physically merges into its setting. Hamrol, for example, builds a rudimentary architectural structure of snow, that is, directly *out of* the landscape. His work is in this way continuous with its site at the Lake Placid Resort Hotel; come the spring thaw, it will literally melt back into it.

