



JONATHAN BERGER

VEDA

JONATHAN BERGER
901 WASHINGTON BLVD.
WITH MICHAEL STIPE

VEDA, Florence, Italy, 2018



Arguably one of the most significant creative collaborations of the 20th Century, Charles and Ray Eames operated out of an office in Venice, California from 1943 until Ray Eames’s death in 1988. Within their office walls at 901 Washington Boulevard, the iconic American designers produced a remarkable body of work, as prolific as it was eclectic. The physical structure of the office, located in the former Bay Cities Garage, was essential to their design practice. Not only did it practically support the many different types of creative production in which they were engaged—ranging from furniture, textile, and exhibition design, to filmmaking, architecture, collecting, advertising, painting, photography, and ways of making that defy definition— but it also galvanized these seemingly disparate activities as a coherent singular vision for the world at large, by housing them under one roof. As a space, the Eames Office also came to embody Charles and Ray’s relationship—a marriage rooted in deep and true love for one another’s minds and an investment in the endless, alchemical possibilities that a union defined by working together could offer. Berger’s exhibition at VEDA explores the strength of this bond, its magic, and the way in which it took on the form of a freestanding building whose exports—ideas and objects—redefined material culture.

In the front gallery, Berger presents a large globe that occupies the whole space. The sphere is comprised of numerous delicate, interlocking rings constructed from a lustrous, wrought silver tin material, which the artist has used to create all of the objects in the exhibition. Sporadically populating the sphere’s surface are the lyrics of a love song about Charles and Ray Eames’s relationship that Berger has spelled out using hundreds of small hand-cut tin letters. The song was written and recorded by artist and musician Michael Stipe for the occasion of Berger’s exhibition.

Berger’s globe evokes the wonderment and spectacle that permeated the Eames’s work and notably, in this case, their design of the IBM Pavilion for the 1964 World’s Fair, which was considered emblematic of the Eames’s imaginative “outsider” approach to a given field or format. Berger’s sculpture also calls to mind the Eames’s “Solar Do-Nothing Machine”—a kinetic aluminum sculpture powered by the sun that was commissioned by the Aluminum Company of America in 1957. While this object, whose movements were activated by sunlight, gave the impression of industrial function, the Eameses declared that the machine’s job was “to be and not to do.” Subsequently, the object’s identity was defined by the anthropomorphic manner in which its movements, material, and aesthetic sensibility imbued it with the qualities of a living thing, making it uniquely relatable in unexpected ways.

In the back gallery at VEDA, Michael Stipe’s song fills the space, playing through a homemade speaker—a simple tin box with a hand-cut stylized perforated surface, at once an instrument and a sculpture. The music that this speaker emits—both its melody and lyrics—offers an emotional space that becomes a parallel narrative or framework through which to experience the objects in the exhibition.

Adjacent to the speaker and hanging on the wall is a small-scale model of the Eames Office at 901 Washington Blvd. This sculpture, which is also constructed from tin, presents an aerial view, allowing the object to exist simultaneously as a two-dimensional blueprint and a three-dimensional diorama. The model depicts the Eames Office as it was configured in 1979, soon after Charles Eames’s death; it was created utilizing a floor plan from the Library of Congress’s exhaustive Eames archive, which Berger continues to draw on as a resource. Berger considers the building as an embodied portrait of the Eames’s particularly idiosyncratic relationship, the intimacy of which is underscored by the

specific moment of the blueprint. Berger's title for the piece, August 21, 1978 / August 21, 1988, references the dates of Charles's and Ray's deaths respectively, which took place exactly ten years apart to the day. Berger views these seemingly incidental, yet highly unusual, facts as evidence of the power of Charles and Ray Eames's connection. So too do they amplify the manner in which the Eames's creative collaboration was fueled by a type of love, which ultimately remains as unclassifiable as it was profound.

The artist wishes to thank Andy LeMaster and Meg McAleer, without whom this exhibition would not have been possible.

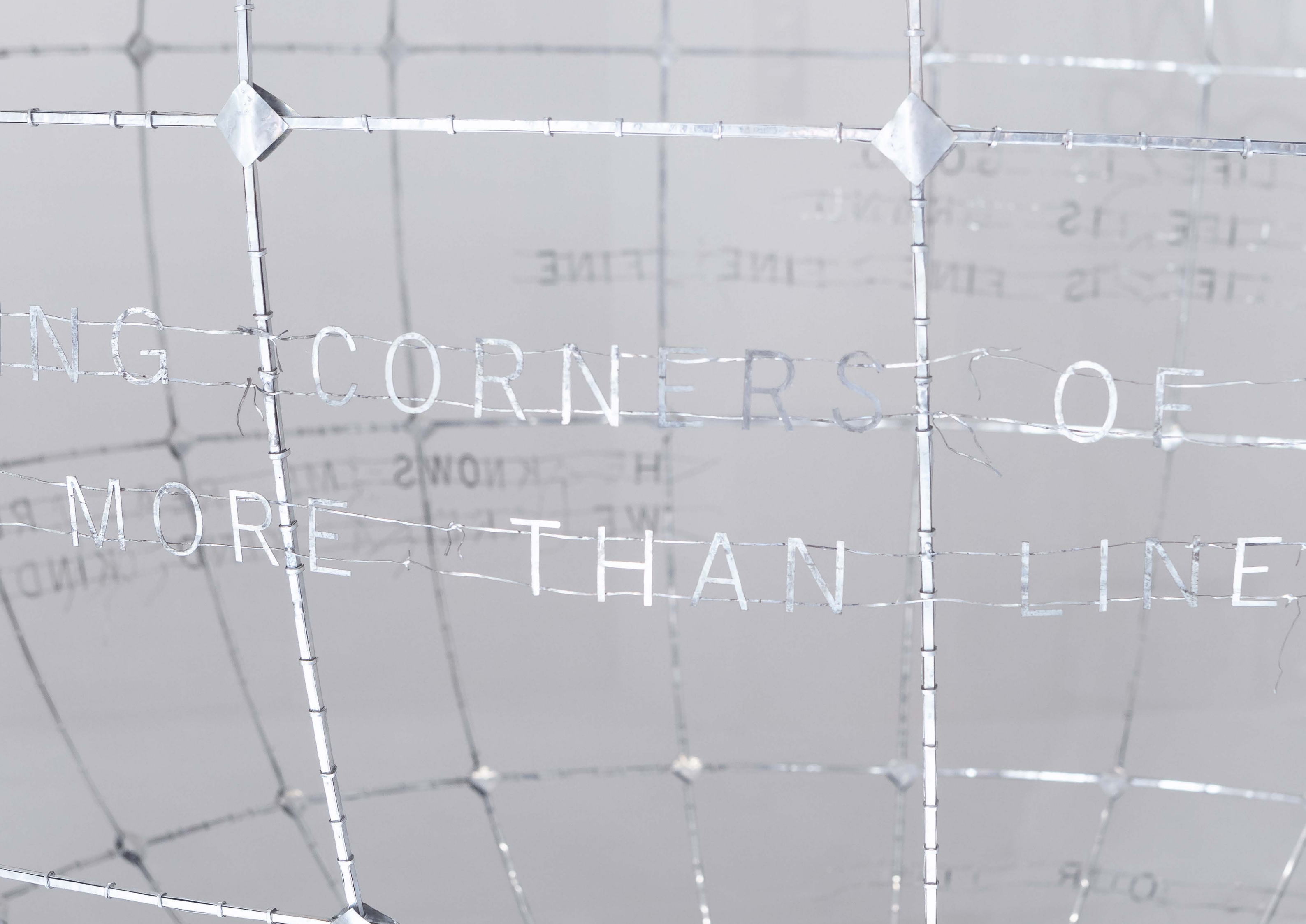
901 Washington Blvd is the first in a series of eleven investigative portraits, each of which demonstrates a unique relationship built on an extraordinary bond that lies outside the bounds of conventional romance. The project will be presented in its entirety in the form of a two-part exhibition, which is co-commissioned and co-presented by Participant Inc. Gallery (New York City) and The Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University (Cambridge), and scheduled for 2019/2020 respectively.

The two-part exhibition explores the profound intensity, depth of meaning, and transformative experience of each of these relationships as a manifestation of “true love.” In doing so, the project calls into question the manner in which contemporary society defines “true love,” as well as its exclusion of the wide range of non-conventionally romantic relationships impacted by true love’s many life-changing implications.

Berger's project is informed by a two-year correspondence about this phenomenon with the writer Mady Schutzman, who is concurrently producing a book exploring the same topic. Schutzman's publication will be released in conjunction with part one of the exhibition in 2019.

overleaf, page 5-9: *Untitled*, 2018, tin, Ø: 213 cm
 page 10-11: Installation view
 page 12-13: *August 21, 1978 / August 21, 1988*, 2018, tin, 70 x 23 x 10 cm
 page 14-15: *Untitled*, 2018, tin, 26 x 13 x 15 cm





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MORE THAN LINE



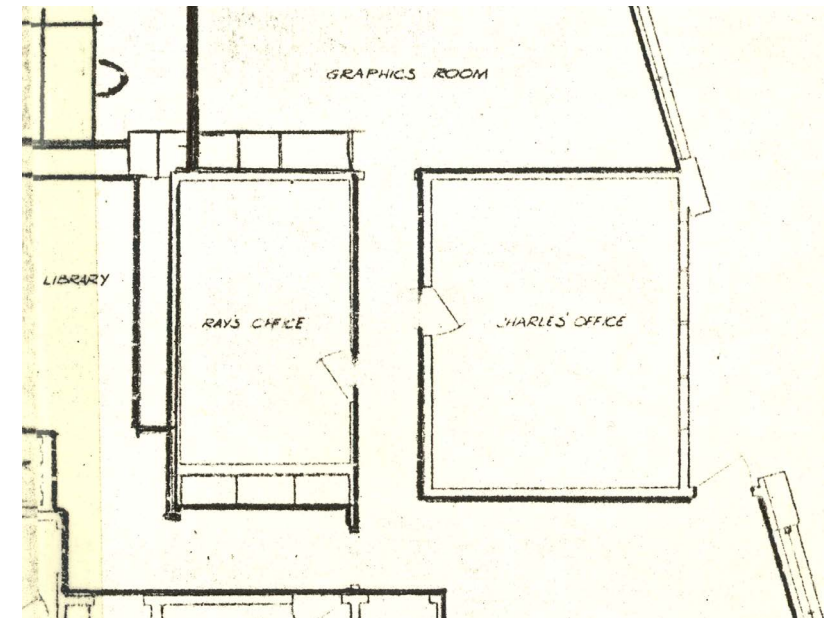
THIS IS OUR TIME

CORNERS OF THE ROOM
THAN LINE LINE

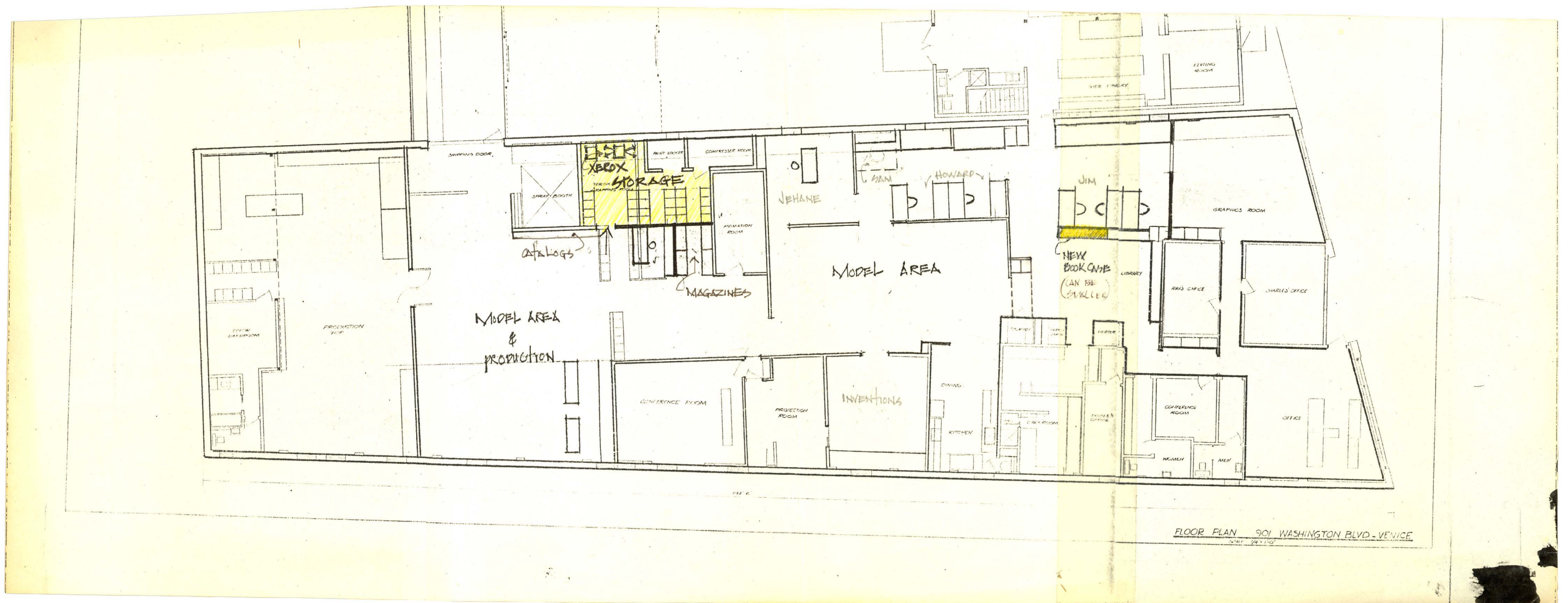




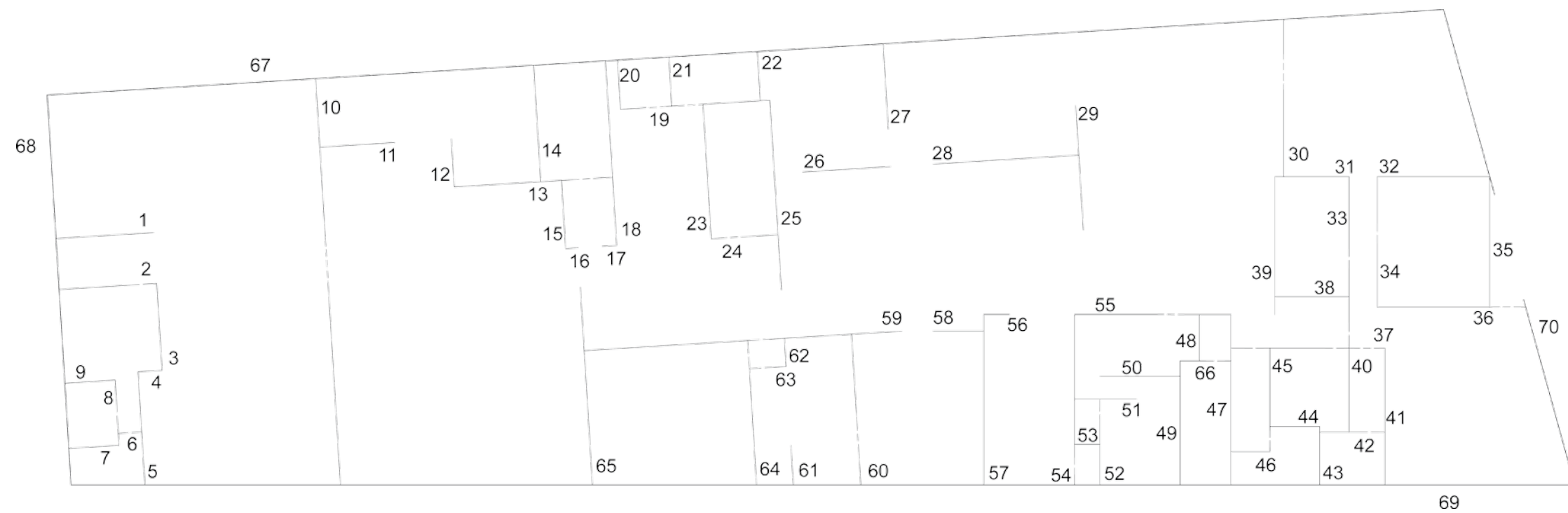




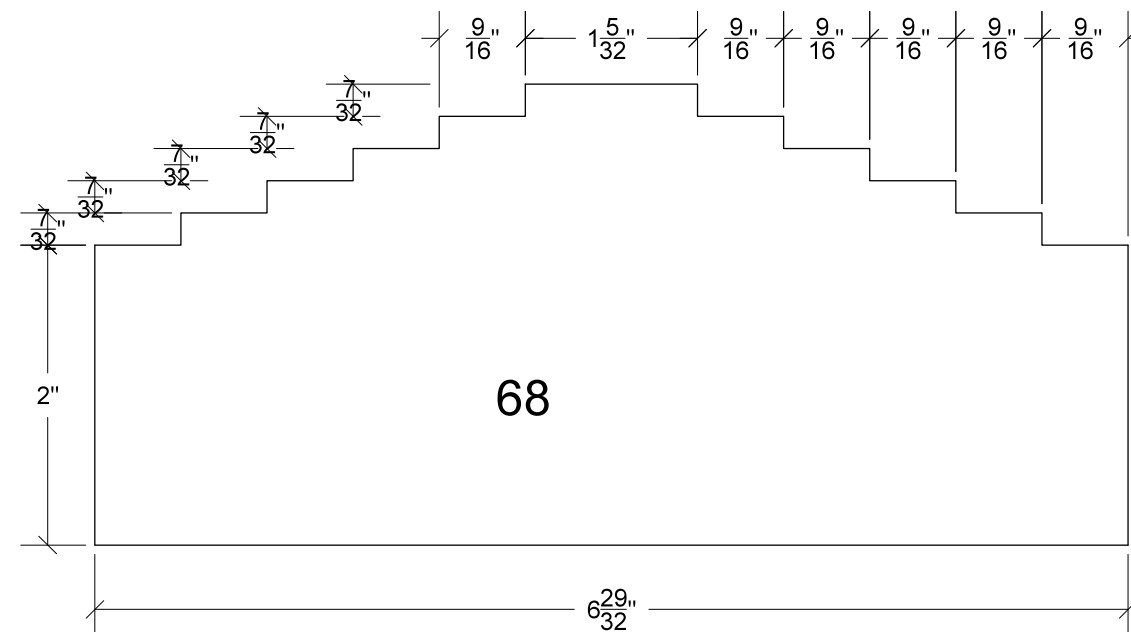
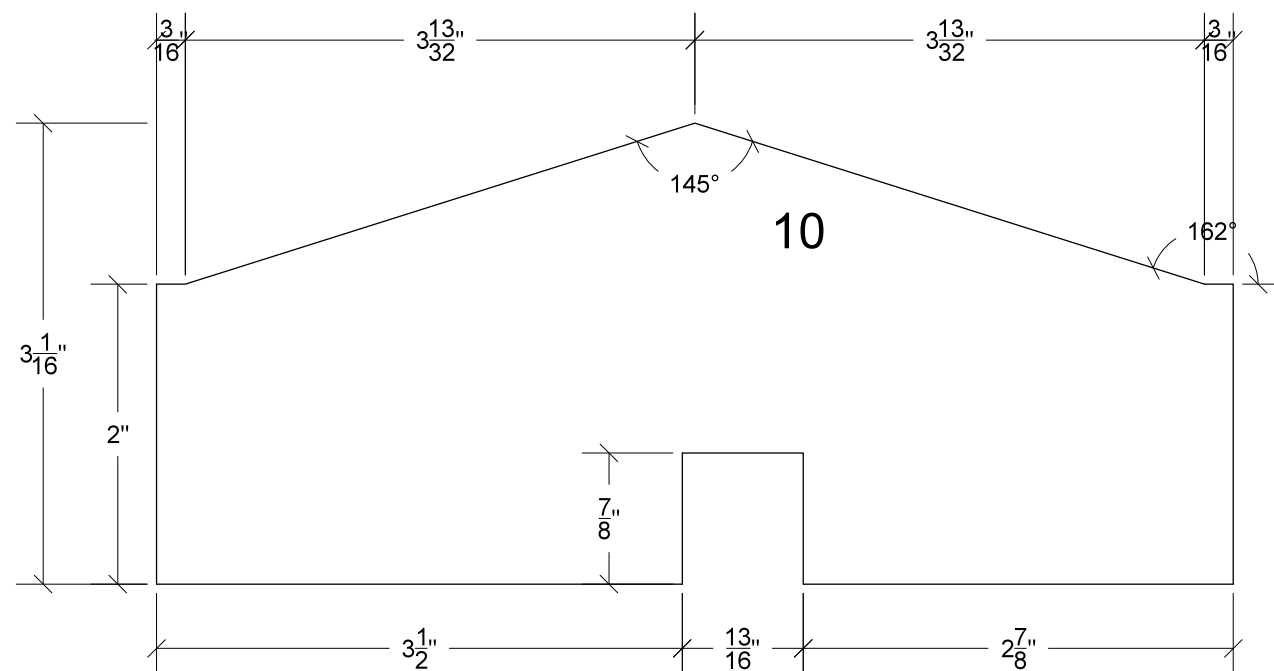
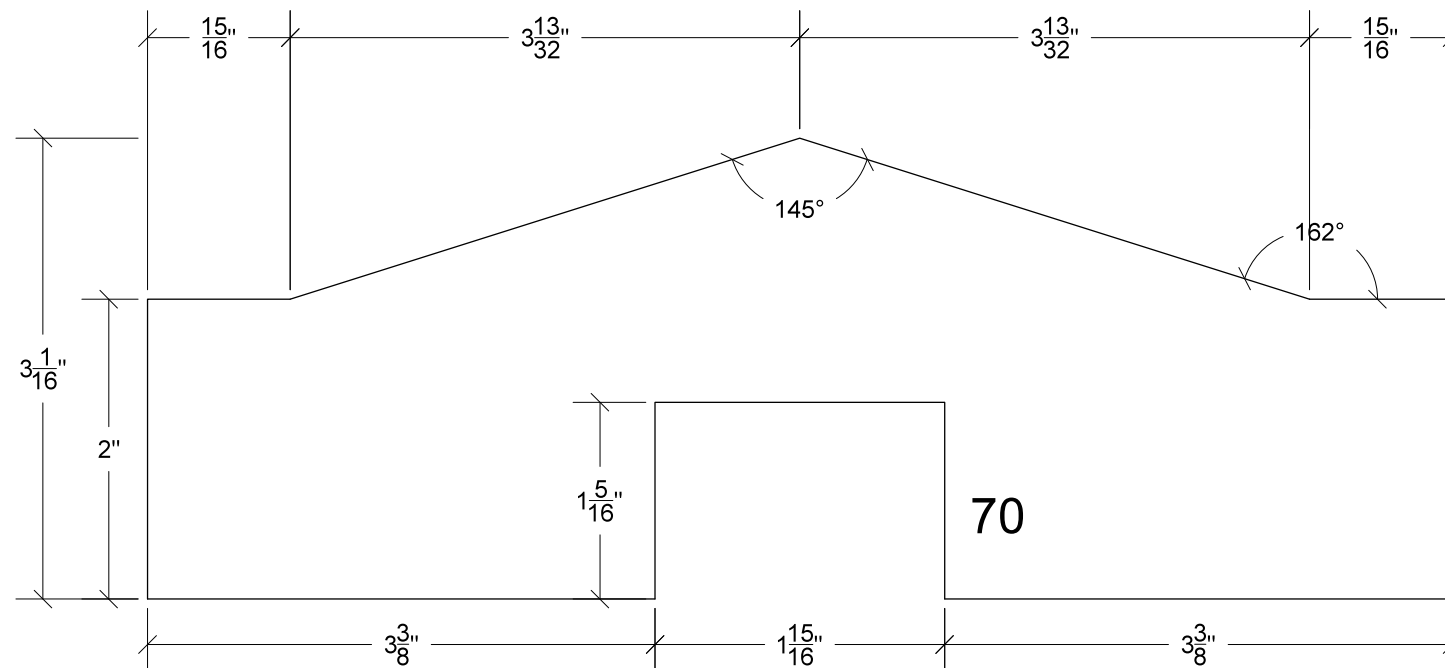
Ray Eames' office, circa 1979 (left)
Charles Eames' office, circa 1979 (right)
Image: Courtesy © Eames Office LLC (eamesoffice.com)

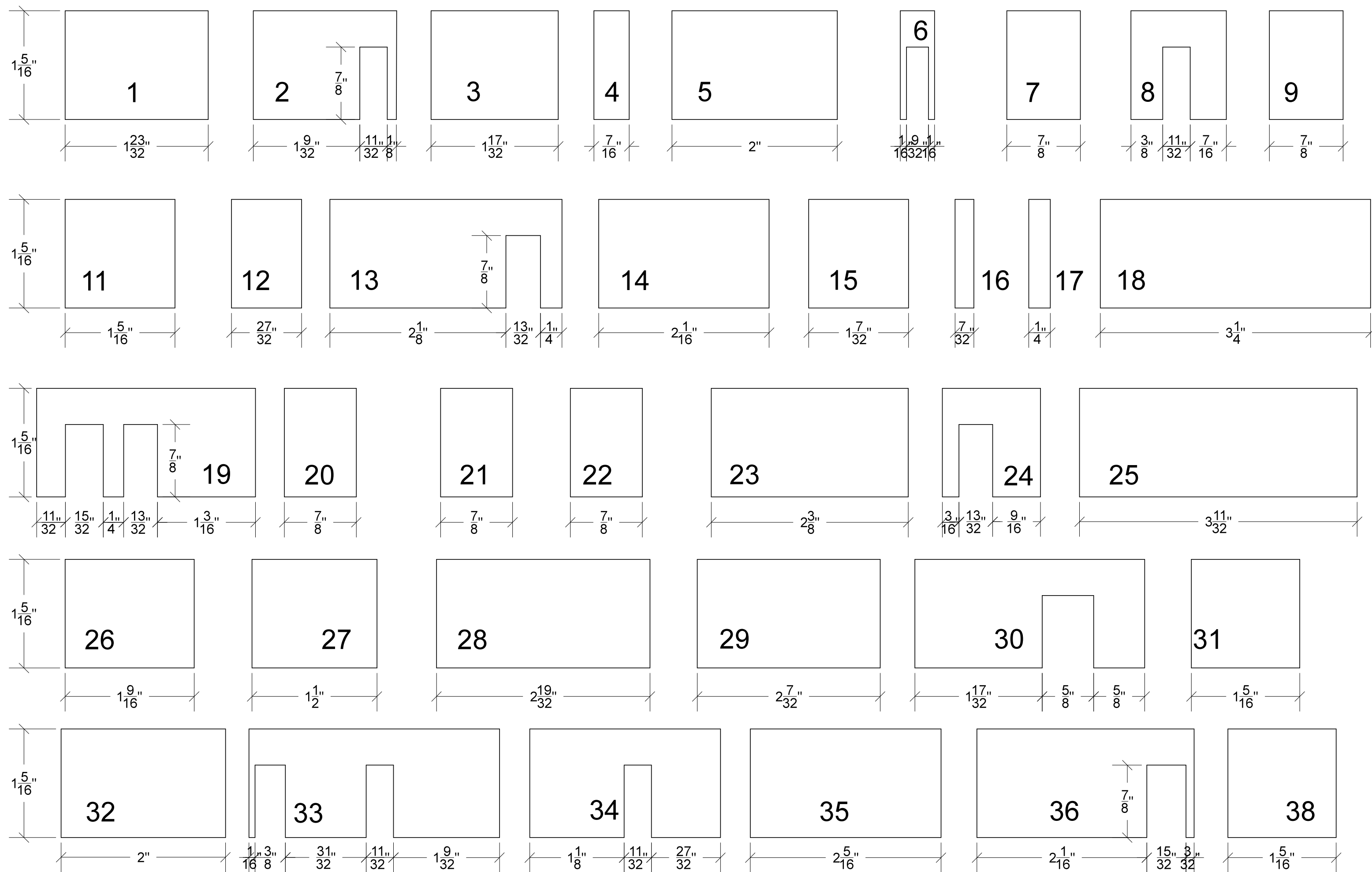


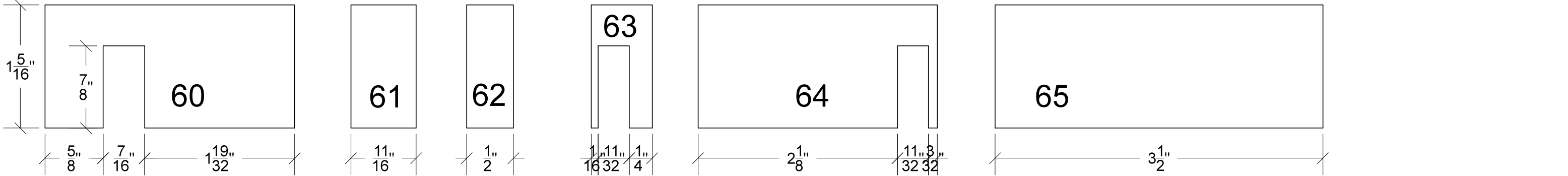
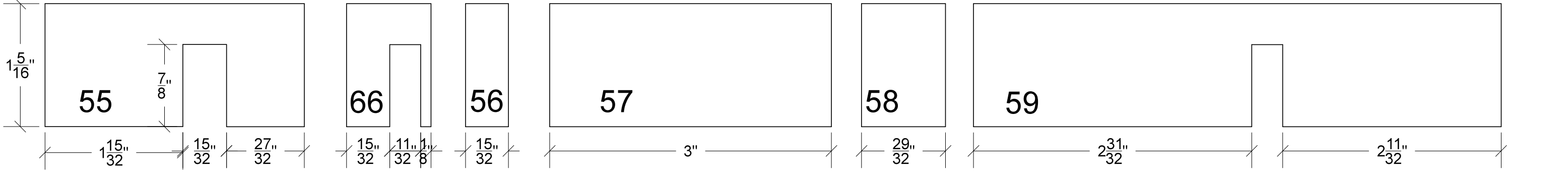
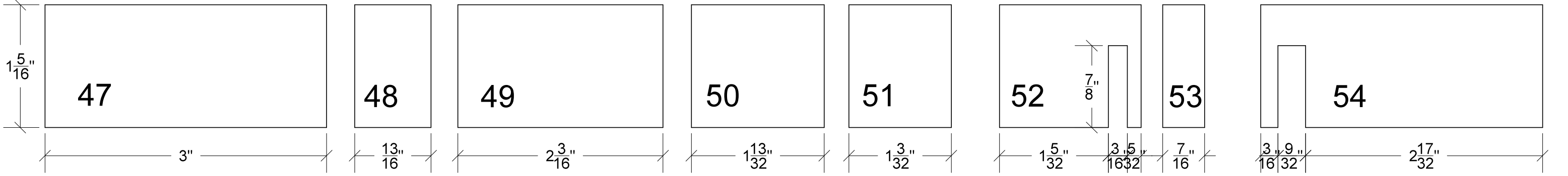
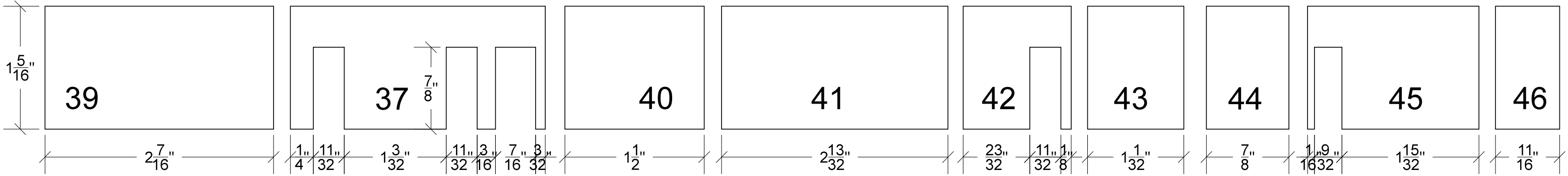
Eames office, circa 1979
Image: Courtesy © Eames Office LLC (eamesoffice.com)

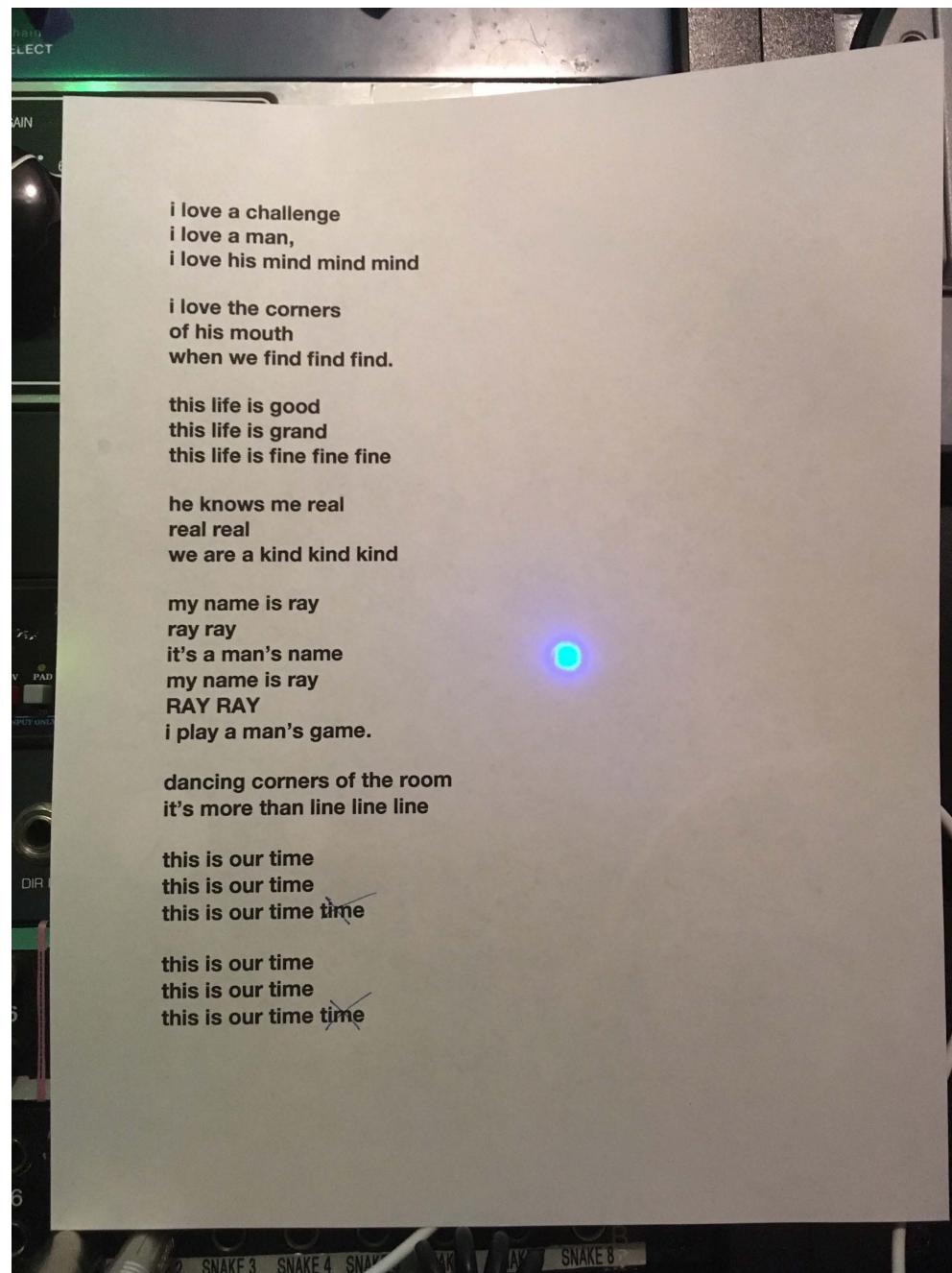


Eames office, circa 1979 (model diagram)
overleaf, page 22-29: Eames office, circa 1979 (model walls)









My Name Is Ray
lyrics and music by Michael Stipe



Ray and Charles Eames
Image: Courtesy © Eames Office LLC (eamesoffice.com)

ON CREATING REALITY BY ANDY KAUFMAN

Maccarone gallery, New York, NY, 2013



Maccarone is pleased to present "On Creating Reality, by Andy Kaufman," a project presented by artist Jonathan Berger, in collaboration with the Estate of Andy Kaufman, Lynne Margulies, Bob Zmuda, and Tony Clifton, on view from January 12- February 23rd, 2013.

The show presents an extensive collection of ephemera and artifacts from Andy Kaufman's personal and professional life: photographs, correspondence, performance notation, scripts, props and costumes including the original Tony Clifton jacket, record collections, transcendental meditation materials, hand written drafts of his novel "The Huey Williams Story," hundreds of pieces of hate mail he received from women challenging him to wrestle, in addition to numerous personal effects. The exhibition will act as a portrait of an unclassifiable figure in American cultural history whose work has been seminal in the evolution of performance art, new media and relational aesthetics.

In lieu of explanatory text labels accompanying these materials, a rotating series of Kaufman's friends, family, and collaborators will be physically present in the exhibition at all times, for all 25 days that the exhibition is on view, representing the diverse range of relationships, which span Kaufman's life, work, and interests. A central table and chairs within the gallery space will allow these guests to interact and talk with visitors, offering the opportunity for intimate and unscripted conversations about Kaufman with those that knew him, a rare opportunity to engage with primary sources of this particular history.

Guests for the exhibition include Gina Acre, Bill Boggs, Tony Clifton, Prudence Farrow Bruns, Joe Franklin, Dennis Hof, Carol Kane, Michael Kaufman, Carol Kaufman-Kerman, Johnny Legend, Lynne Margulies, Carolyn Marks Blackwood, Bob Pagani, Al Parinello, Laurie Simmons, Gregg Sutton, Joe Troiani, Little Wendy, and Bob Zmuda amongst others.

Berger's treatment of the exhibition is largely inspired by the variety show format in which much of Kaufman's work was presented. Moreover, the accumulation of the special guest testimonies serves to both activate the material on display and reflect upon the often elusive and even contradictory way that Kaufman lived. Similarly, Berger's relationship to the exhibition exists in a gray area that both incorporates and rejects the standard conventions attached to the role of artist, curator, producer, journalist, director, archivist, biographer, historian, and documentarian. He has chosen to present evidence of Kaufman's life and work, and not the work itself. The positioning of these materials, coupled with the interactive and unpredictable nature of the circumstances, further underscores how the fluid nature information shapes our understanding of reality and truth, an exploration at the core of Kaufman's artistic practice, a practice which continues to defy definition.

Accompanying "On Creating Reality, by Andy Kaufman" will be a selection of both classic and obscure audio and video performance documentation from the Comic Relief archive, presented at Maccarone's new adjacent gallery space on the corner of Morton and Washington Streets.

Michael Kaufman, Andy's brother and Chairman of the Andy Kaufman Award, an annual event that works to preserve the legacy of Andy's art, states: "The Andy Kaufman Award assures the world that Andy's legacy will continue through those who imbibe his spirit, his aliveness and his amazing capacity to seemingly do the impossible. The Kaufman family is happy to know that Andy's body of work continues to impact the art world as is recognized with the Maccarone project, one I know Andy would strongly embrace."

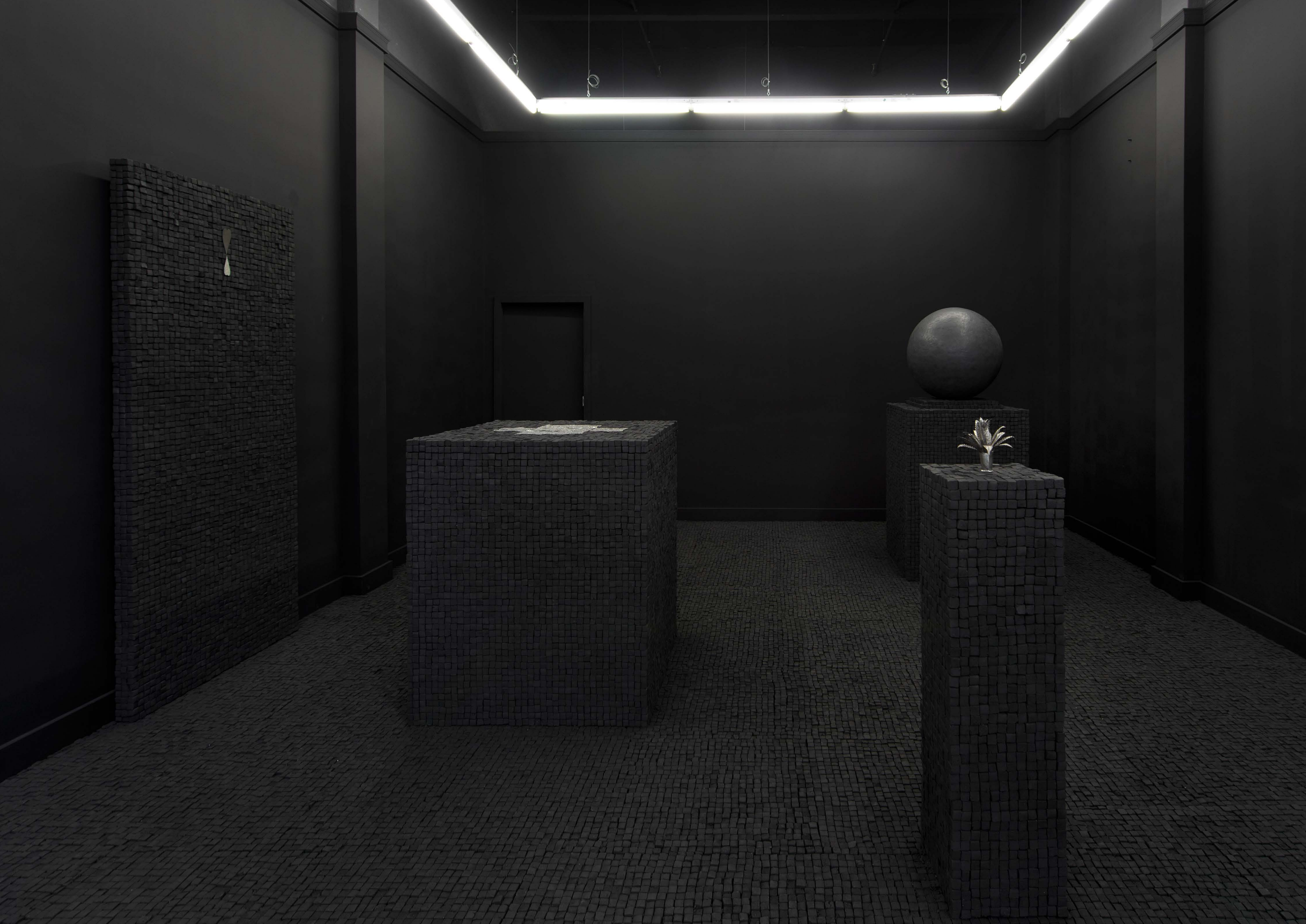
In conjunction with Maccarone's presentation, "Andy Kaufman's 99cent Tour," a series of screenings and events at Participant Inc., will take place from February 12th-24th (www.participantinc.org).





A FUTURE LIFE

Adams and Ollman, Portland, OR, 2016



Adams and Ollman is pleased to present *A Future Life*, a solo exhibition by New Yorkbased artist Jonathan Berger. The exhibition will open on February 12 and be on view through March 12. This is the artist's first exhibition in Portland, Oregon.

For *A Future Life*, Berger has created an installation comprised of a handmade floor and stagelike plinths, all of which have been constructed from thousands of small charcoal blocks. This imperfect gridded surface holds both the viewer and a series of elaborately crafted smallscale sculptural objects made from a restricted palette of what the artist refers to as elementary materials, which he identifies as tin, putty, charcoal, and chalk.

Central to the exhibition is a small model depicting a century plant, a flowering agave with roughly the same lifespan as a person, which dies after its first and only bloom. Berger's rendition is made from a no longer produced tin material that he salvages whose silver surface appears, in turns, mirrored, dull, and corroded. In another untitled work, also made from the same material, the sharp points of two hearts orbit each other so closely that they nearly touch. In a third work, Berger has constructed a large globe from putty that appears impossibly round for its size and the apparent imperfect nature of the material from which it is made. Its dark grey surface, both polished and scratched, obscures any understanding of the object's true weight, material, or content.

The objects in Berger's setlike, nearly monochromatic exhibition appear simultaneously common and mysterious and the materials from which they are made are both recognizable, yet inaccessible or out of timealmost a caricature of themselves. Each isolated on its own plinth, the sculptures in the exhibition can be understood in terms of portraiture. The relationships that they form to one another and the viewer yield an implied narrative structure, which hints at something fundamental to human experience.

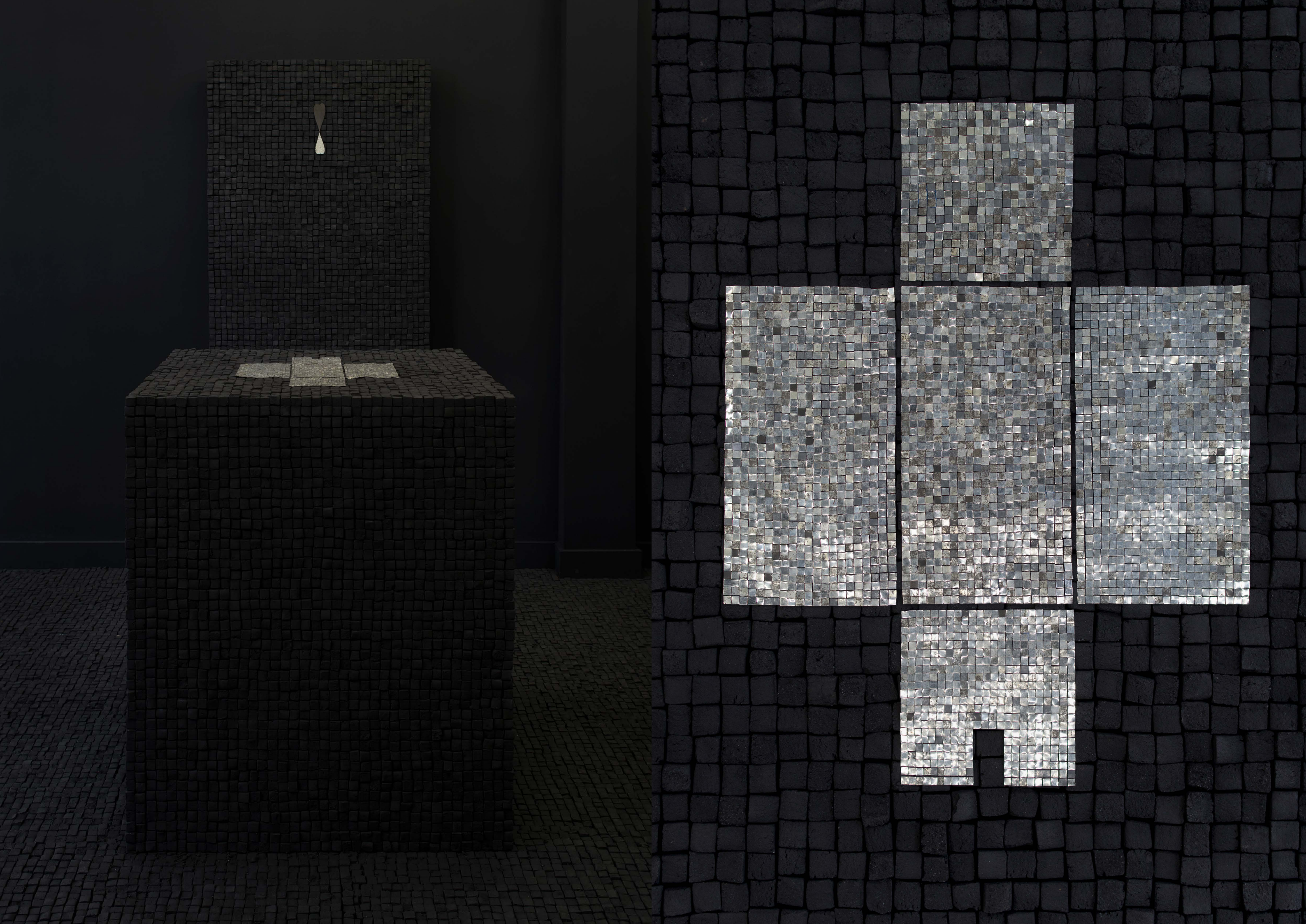
While Berger's connection to the individual works in the show remains personal and specific, their emotional weight and the evocative nature of the materials, as well as the accessibility afforded by his use of archetypal forms, gives the total work the feeling of a pop songstylized, lyrical and open. The exhibition then becomes a structure into which one can project his/her own experience.

This exhibition marks Berger's return to the construction of objects after a nearly eightyyear hiatus, during which time he pursued projects which approached portraiture through making exhibitions that functioned as experimental biographies of various historical figures. Berger is best known for his sixyear investigative portrait of entertainer Andy Kaufman, which resulted in three exhibitions that used abstract configurations of primary information, in the form of ephemera and testimony, to create a portrayal of Kaufman which was simultaneously accurate and inconclusive.

overleaf, page 45: *Untitled (Century Tree)*, 2016, tin, charcoal, 51 x 12 x 12 inches
page 46-47: *Untitled (Globe)*, 2016, putty, charcoal, 72 x 32 x 32 inches
page 48-49: *Untitled*, 2016, tin, charcoal, 45 x 38 x 38 inches







VEDA

JONATHAN BERGER BIO

Jonathan Berger's work centers around the practice of exhibition making, encompassing a spectrum of activity, including sculpture, installation, performance, curatorial practices, archival work, creative research, design, relational aesthetics, writing, education, and the production of large-scale collaborative projects. The content of his exhibitions range from work that he physically produces or asks others to produce for him, to materials that he collects, seeks out, and re-contextualizes, or that are the product of conversations and exchanges with others. His projects often combine new and old, traditional and nontraditional, popular and obscure, static display and events, that which is widely acknowledged as art and that which is not. Berger's relationship to these exhibitions exists in a gray area that both incorporates and rejects the standard conventions attached to the role of artist, curator, producer, journalist, director, archivist, biographer, historian, and documentarian. His role and creative practice is ever shifting, based on the conceptual framework and practical needs of a given project. For the past 13 years, Berger's practice has been concerned with a rigorous investigation of the many ways in which the exhibition site can be repurposed and the subsequent potential for that site to allow for an expansion and reconsideration of what art can be and how it can be made. While his projects vary significantly, the exhibitions themselves are always the "work," with the discrete parts contributing to a greater whole.

From 2013-2016 Jonathan Berger served as Artist Director of 80WSE Gallery at New York University, where he produced numerous projects, which explored the potential of intersections between contemporary exhibition making and education, including include Ellen Cantor: Are You Ready For Love?; The Magic Flute: An Opera in Six Steps, in collaboration with Vaginal Davis, Susanne Sachsse, Xiu Xiu, Jesse Bransford, Jackie Shemesh, Michel Auder and Michael Stickrod; James Son Ford Thomas: The Devil and His Blues in collaboration with Mary Beth Brown and Jessica Iannuzzi Garcia; New Sights, New Noise, in collaboration with Michael Stipe; Devotion: Excavating Bob Mizer, in collaboration with Billy Miller; and Learn to Read Art: A Surviving History of Printed Matter, in collaboration with Max Schumann.

In 2013, he presented the exhibition On Creating Reality, by Andy Kaufman at Maccarone Gallery (NY), in addition to organizing Andy Kaufman's 99cent Tour, the first comprehensive screening series surveying Kaufman's performance work, presented at Participant Inc. (NY). Berger's six-year investigation of Kaufman concluded in 2014 when he was commissioned by Frieze Projects to present An Overture to Andy Kaufman as part of Frieze London.

Berger has presented solo installation projects at Adams and Ollman Gallery (Portland, OR); the Busan Biennial (South Korea); Vox Populi (Philadelphia); Andreas Grimm Gallery and Karma Gallery (New York). His collaborative and curatorial projects have been presented at numerous venues including MOCA (Los Angeles); The Hebbel Theater and Silent Green (Berlin); Participant Inc., The PERFORMA Biennial, Performance Space 122, and The Queens Museum of Art (New York); and Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, (Philadelphia).

VEDA

page 20-27: rendering by Arta Perezic
page 32-39: photographs by Jeffrey Sturges



A hand-drawn floor plan of a room, likely a library or study, with the word "VEDA" centered in the main area. The room is rectangular with a thick black border. To the left of the main room is a narrow vertical strip, possibly a hallway or another room. Above the main room is a horizontal strip divided into three equal rectangular sections. Below the main room is another horizontal strip divided into three equal rectangular sections. The drawing is done in black ink on a light-colored background.

VEDA