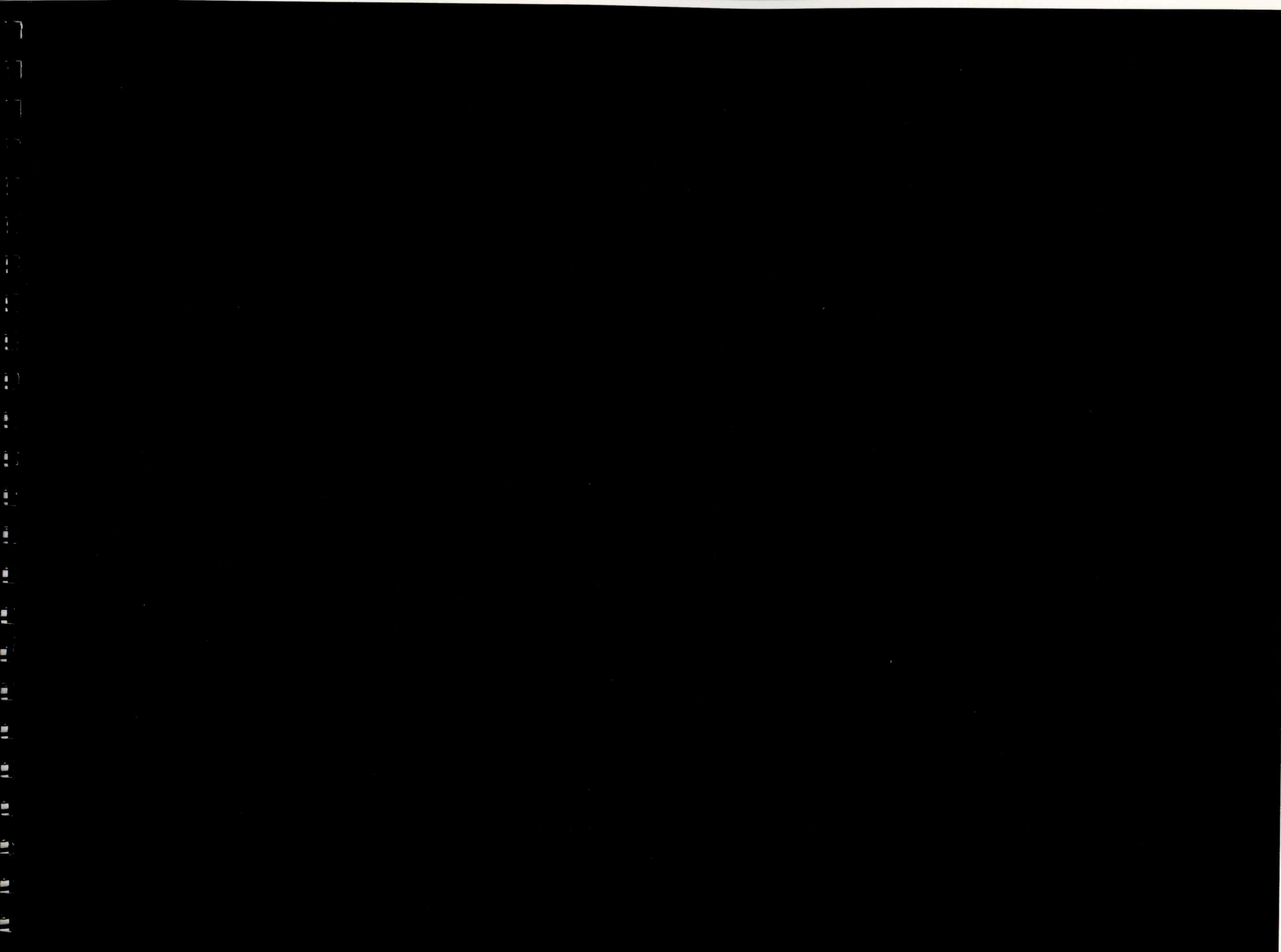


ROBERT MORRIS: MIRROR WORKS 1961-78



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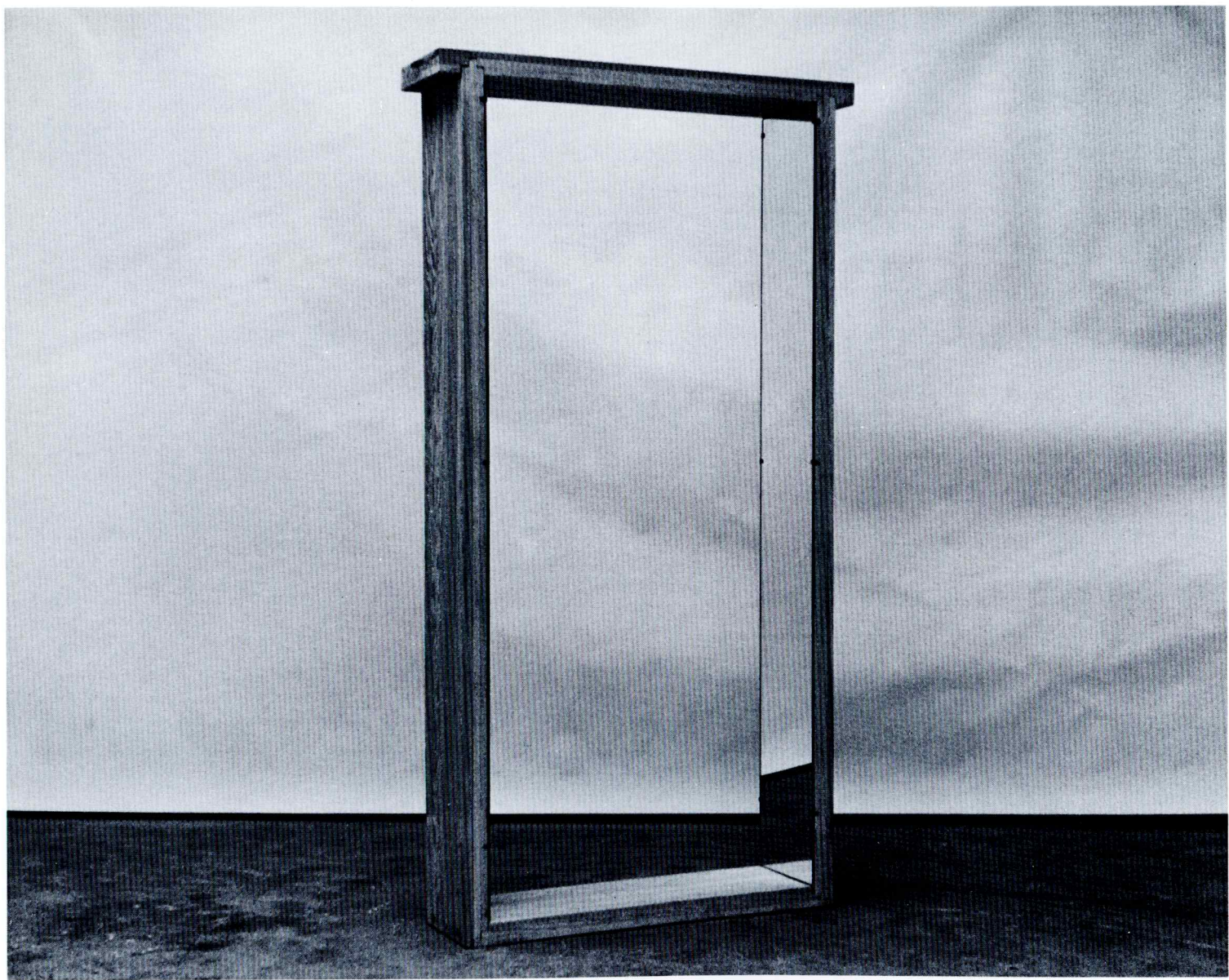
The mirror, that most insubstantial of surfaces, has appeared periodically in my work for some 17 years. At first I begrudged its appearance, attempted to suppress it, then ended by accepting it. In the beginning I was ambivalent about its fraudulent space, its blatant illusionism. Later its very suspiciousness seemed a virtue. I came to like its hovering connotation of abject narcissism, its reek of the cheaply decorative, its status as a kind of disco-degenerate category. Mirrors have had a curious history. The Egyptians, a culture no less vain than it was early, slavishly polished stones until they reflected their maker's image. The ingenious Greeks, as practical as they were sublime, found in the mirror a weapon of startling power. It is said that a battalion of soldiers, each equipped with a 5-foot polished bronze mirror, was once assembled in the hills surrounding the threatened harbor of Syracuse. By simultaneously concentrating the sun's reflected rays on one ship after another they burned the entire invading fleet at anchor in the harbor. Archimedes is

credited with having had the idea, as well as having presided at the event — an early instance of genius in the service of the military. Perhaps the event also gave rise to the concept of death rays as the ultimate weapon. Michel Foucault has waxed long and tortuously on the role of the mirror in Velazquez's "Las Meninas," claiming it provides a "metathesis of visibility" in the hands of the Spanish Master. The great Ernst Mach once gazed into a mirror and recognized the class to which he belonged but not himself. I often have wondered what happened to those delicate half-silvered mirrors with which Michelson, with a blink of light, evaporated forever the notion of an earth's ether. Recently the French psychoanalyst Lacan has, in his opaque way, pointed to the infant's experience with the mirror as essential to the construction of its selfhood. I once observed a raven attack its reflected image incessantly. It was seeing itself in one of my "Mirror Cubes" on the lawn of the Tate Gallery in London. The chimpanzee, on the other hand, after reaching behind the

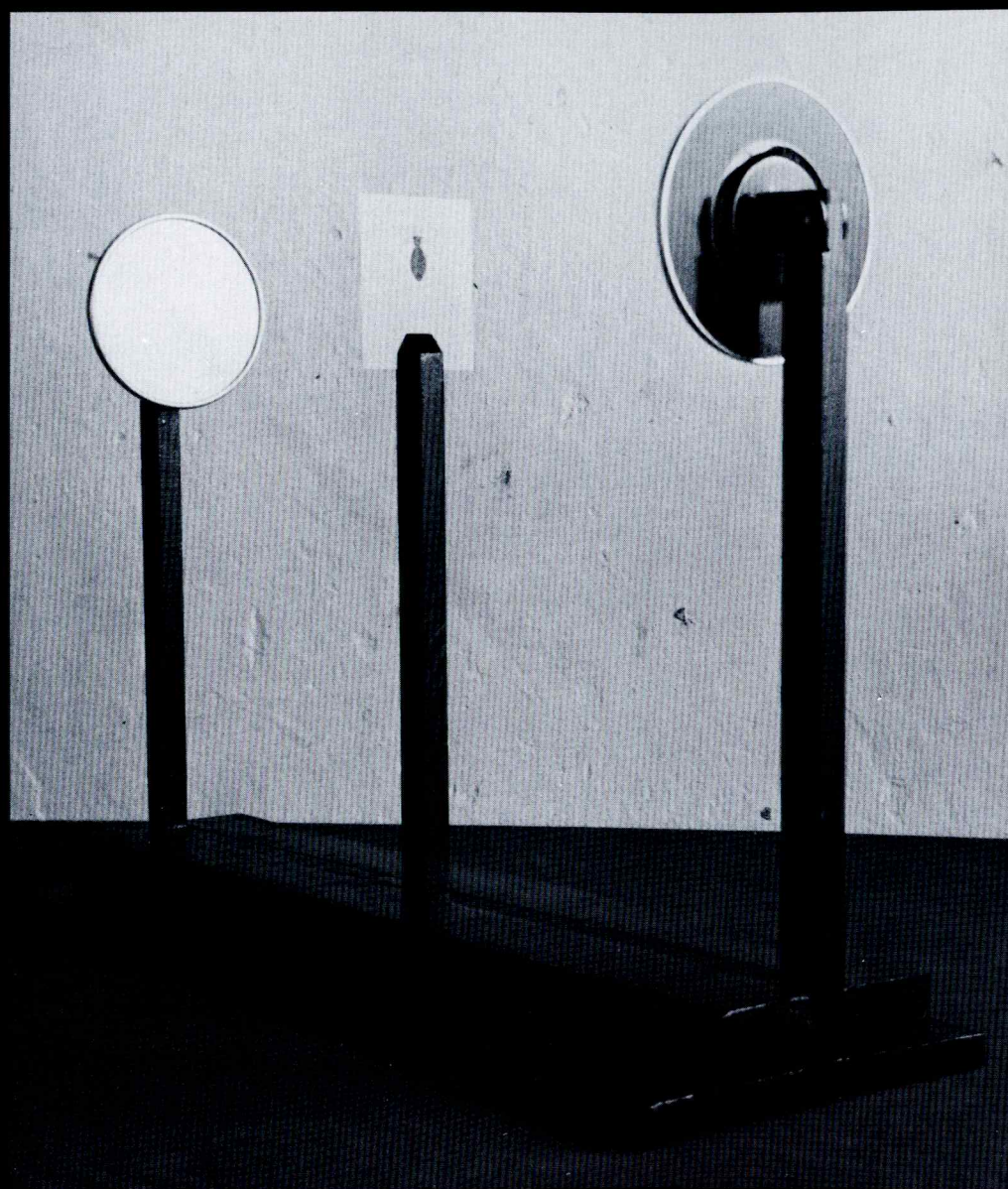
mirror to confirm the illusion of the image, loses all interest in its reflections. Both Cocteau and the Marx Brothers got a certain mileage—each in their own ways—out of mirrors. And who could forget the shoot-out in Orson Welles' "The Lady from Shanghai" in which acres of glass were destroyed for the sake of Welles' art and misogyny. It has been recently suggested that mylar mirrors strategically placed in deep space could produce constant light at any desired place on the earth's surface—a proposal which seems to coincide with the appearance of the theory that sleep may be unnecessary for the human being. I once attempted to describe one of my mirror works to a blind friend and caught myself up short. "But what can a mirror mean to you?" I asked. "Well, I know what mirrors are supposed to be," she replied.

R. MORRIS

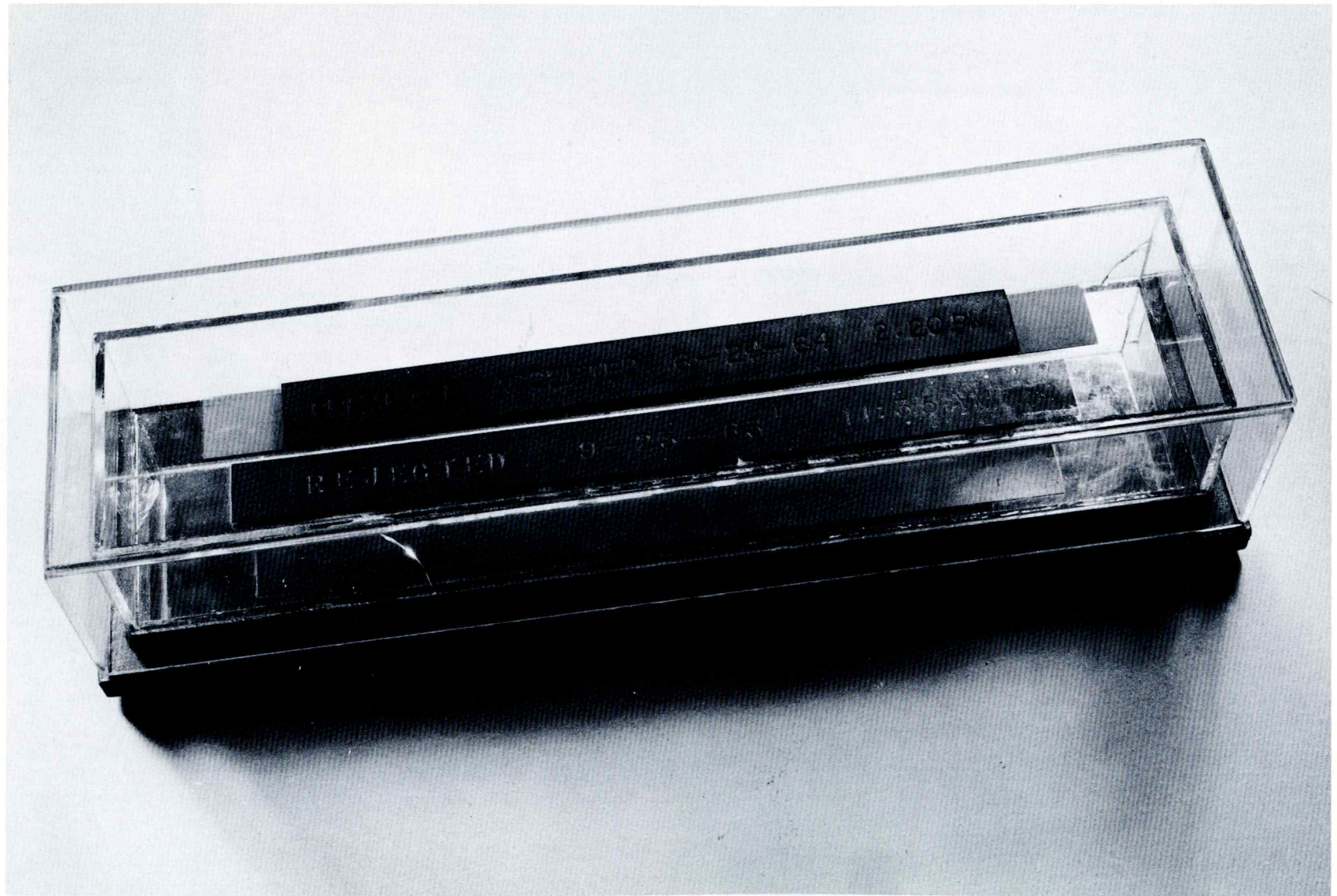
Untitled, 1961. (Rebuilt in 1978). Laminated pine and mirrors, 7 feet high. Courtesy: Sonnabend Gallery, New York.



Pharmacy, 1962. Mirrors and painted wood, 18 inches high. Collection: the artist.



Rejected-Accepted, 1963-64. Mirror, metal, sculptural metal and glass, $16 \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Collection: Philip Johnson.



Untitled, 1965. Plexiglass mirrors on wood, 21x21x21 inches (each cube). Collection: Ileana Sonnabend.



Mirror, 1969. 16mm black and white film (silent), c. 9 minutes. Courtesy: Castelli-Sonnabend Tapes & Films, New York.

Morris walks in a complete circle across a landscape, holding up to the camera a large mirror which reflects the surrounding trees, snow and sky. There is a close-up of the cameraman which can soon be identified as a reflected image. Eventually the camera is no longer seen in reflection; instead the mirror creates a 180° shift of view as the camera directly records Morris walking further and further into the background. At this point the mirror is not acting as a reflector and functions merely to bounce light and not images.

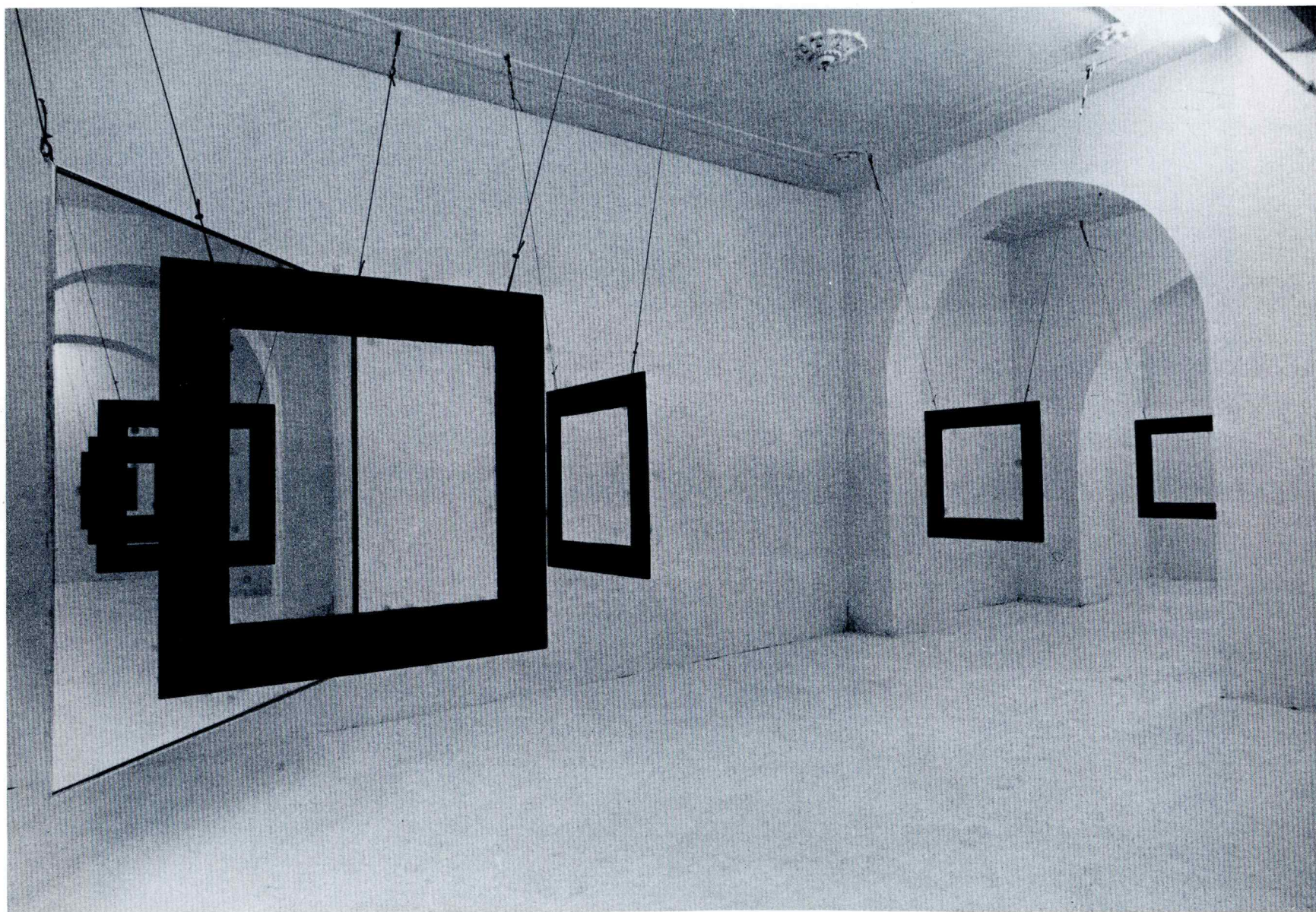
The film is in two distinct but related parts. In the first, the surroundings are dislocated by means of reflected images, and the mirror constitutes an additional frame within the film frame. In the second, initially the camera is shooting into the mirror and then on Morris in the same snow-covered landscape which was initially seen in reflection.



Untitled, 1968. Thread, mirrors, asphalt, aluminum, lead, felt, copper, and steel, 30x30 feet (approx.). Collection: Philip Johnson.



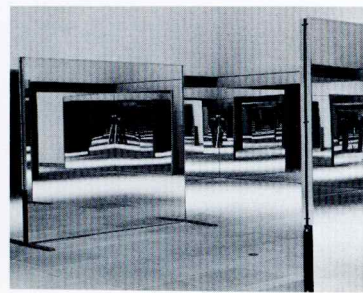
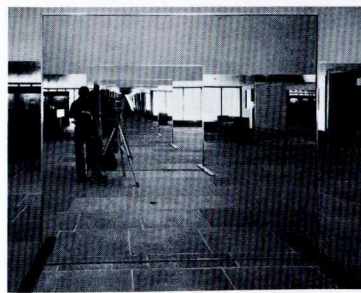
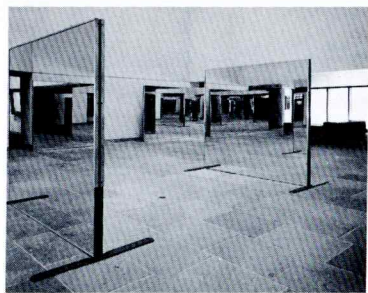
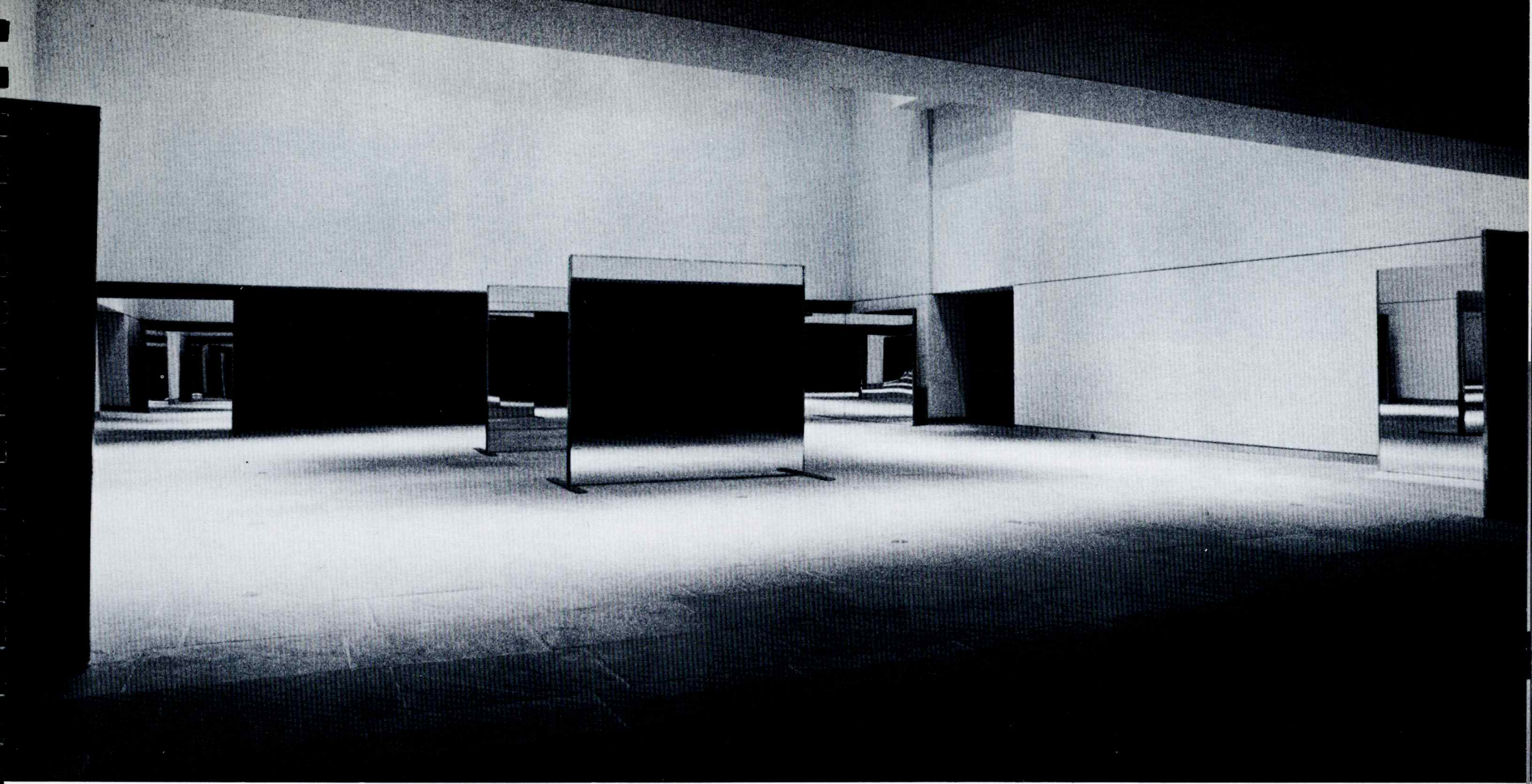
Untitled, 1973. Mirrors and steel, 50x50 feet. Installation: Allesandro-Ferranti Gallery, Rome.



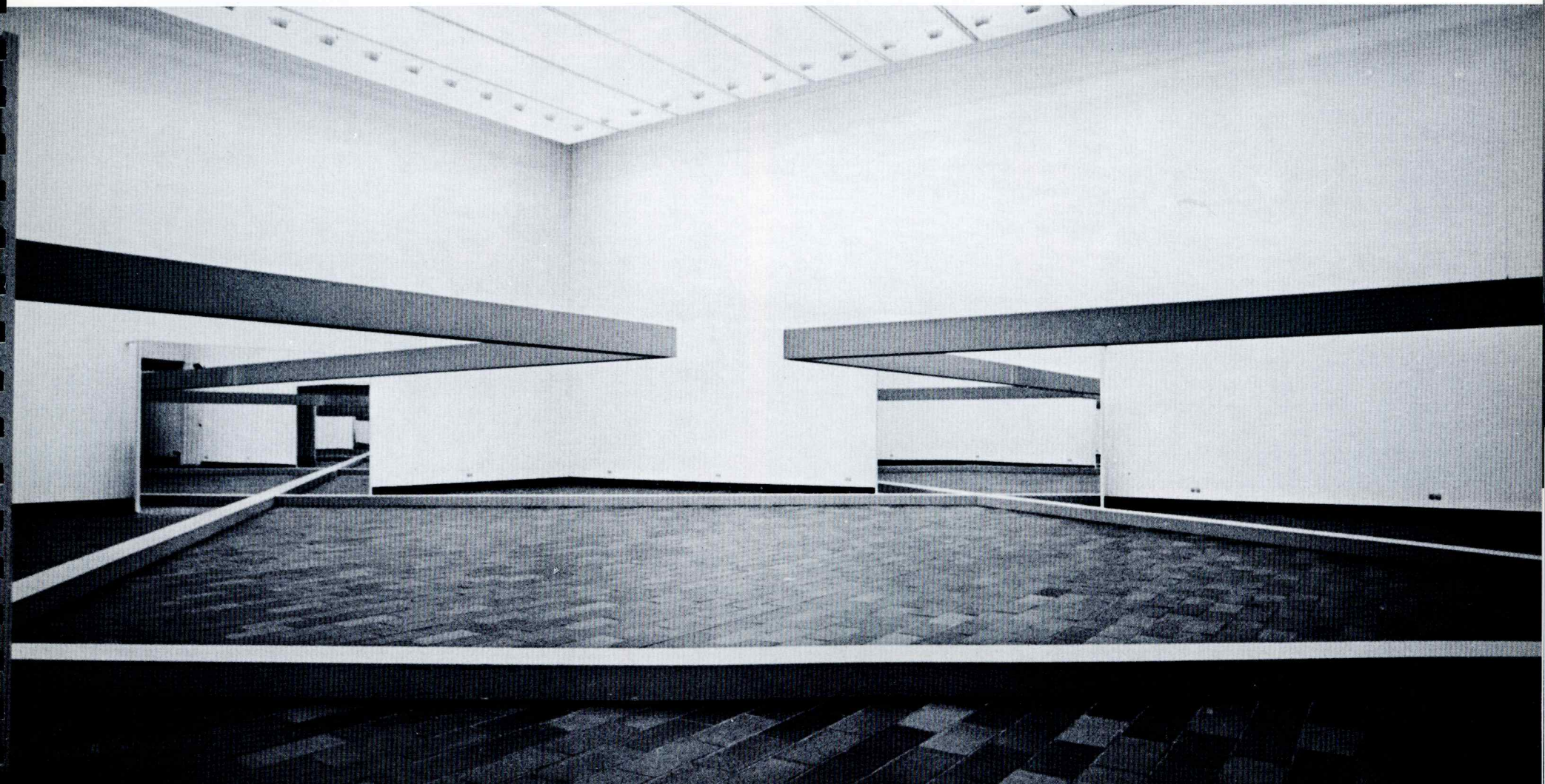
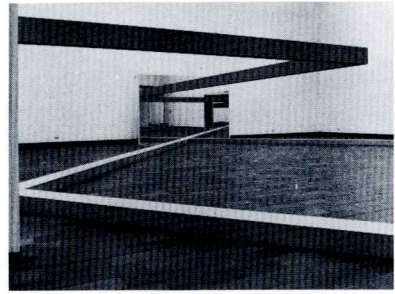
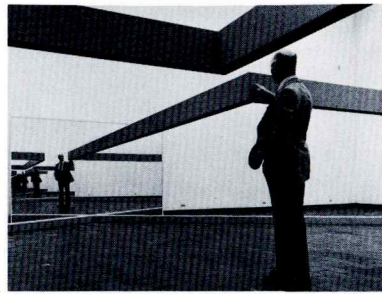
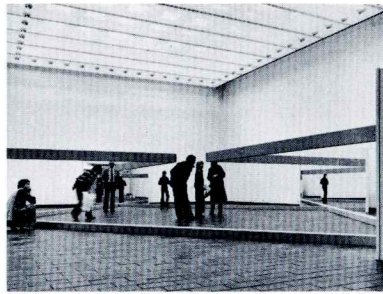
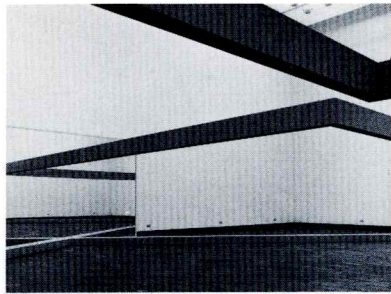
Untitled, 1975-76. Four mirrors, each 5 feet square, and eight steel units, each 36 inches square, 6 inch frame, and $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick. Installation: Sonnabend Gallery, New York. Collection: the artist.



Twelve Mirrors, 1976-77. Mirrors, 7x8 feet each. Installation: Williams College, Massachusetts.



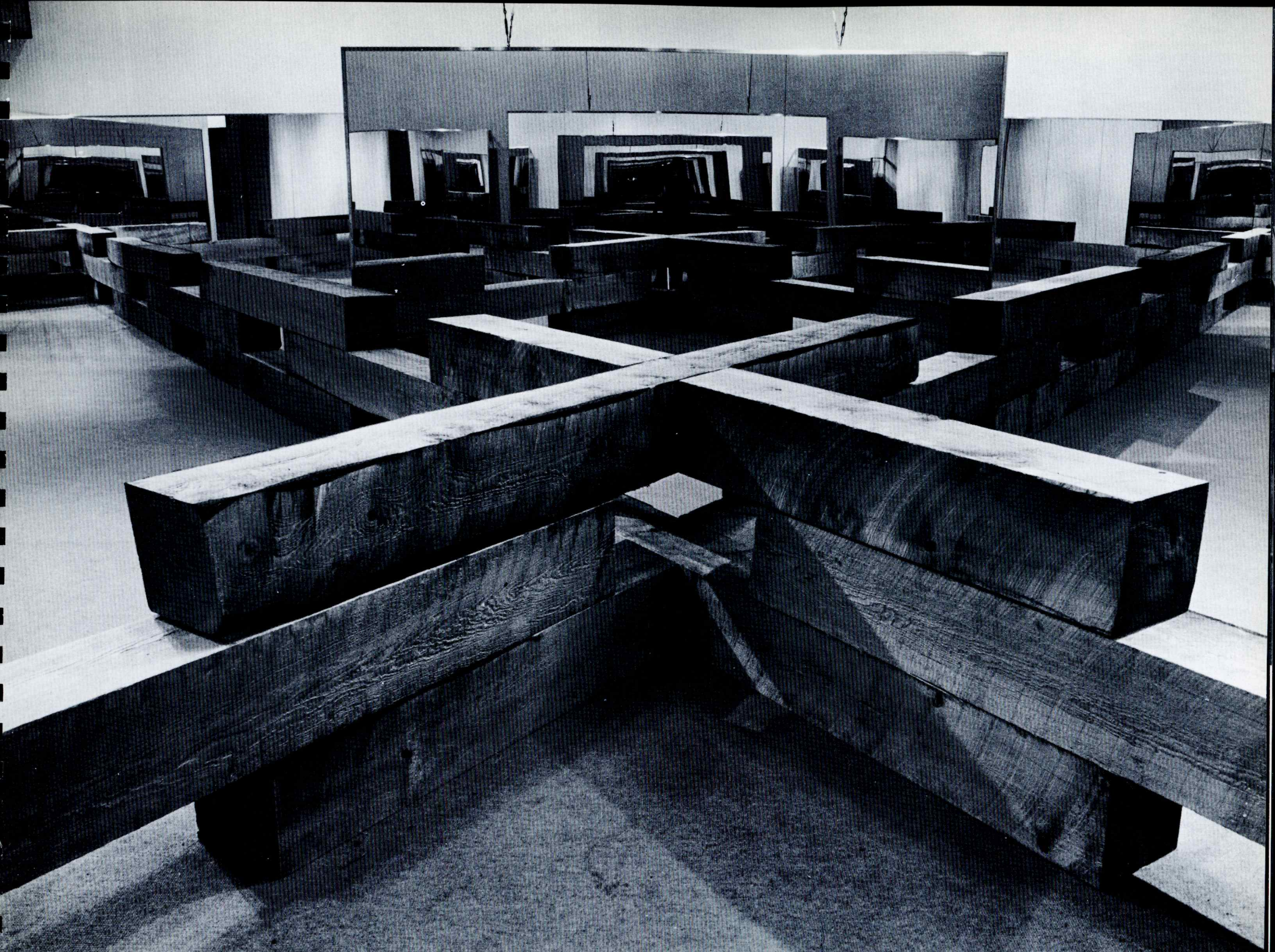
Untitled, 1977. Four mirrors, each 6x12 feet, and painted plywood. Installation: Louisiana Museum, Denmark.



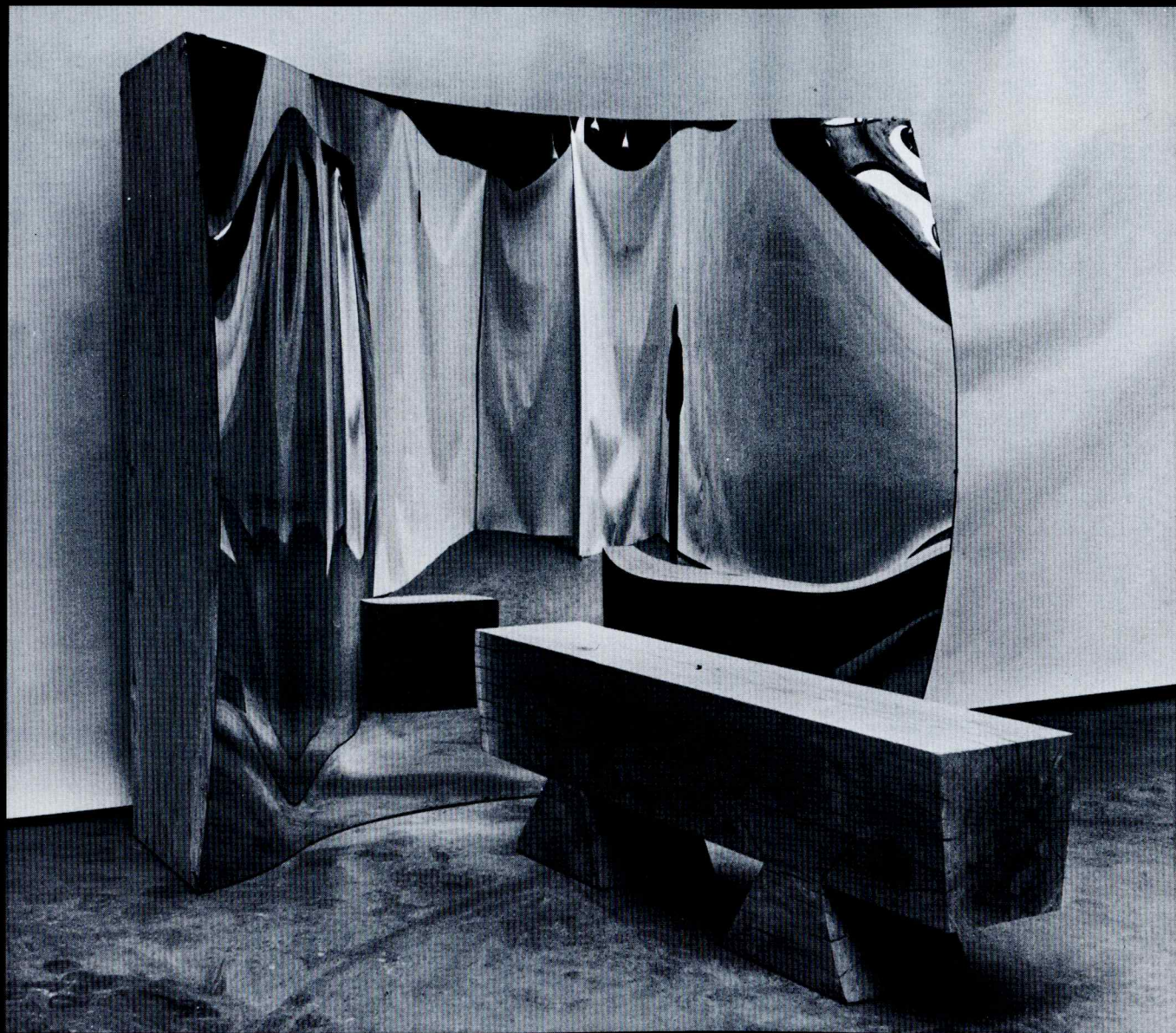
Untitled, 1977. Four mirrors and 12x12 inch timbers. Installation: Portland Center for the Visual Arts, Oregon. (March 1977).



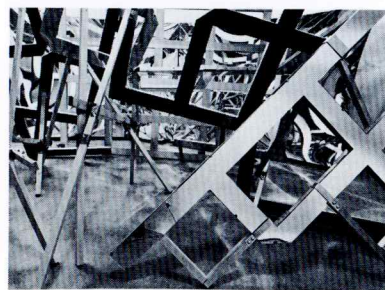
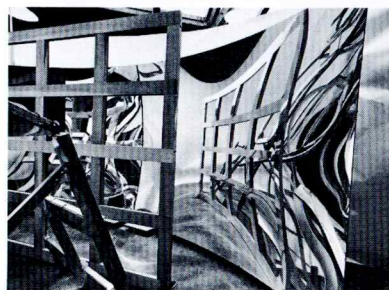
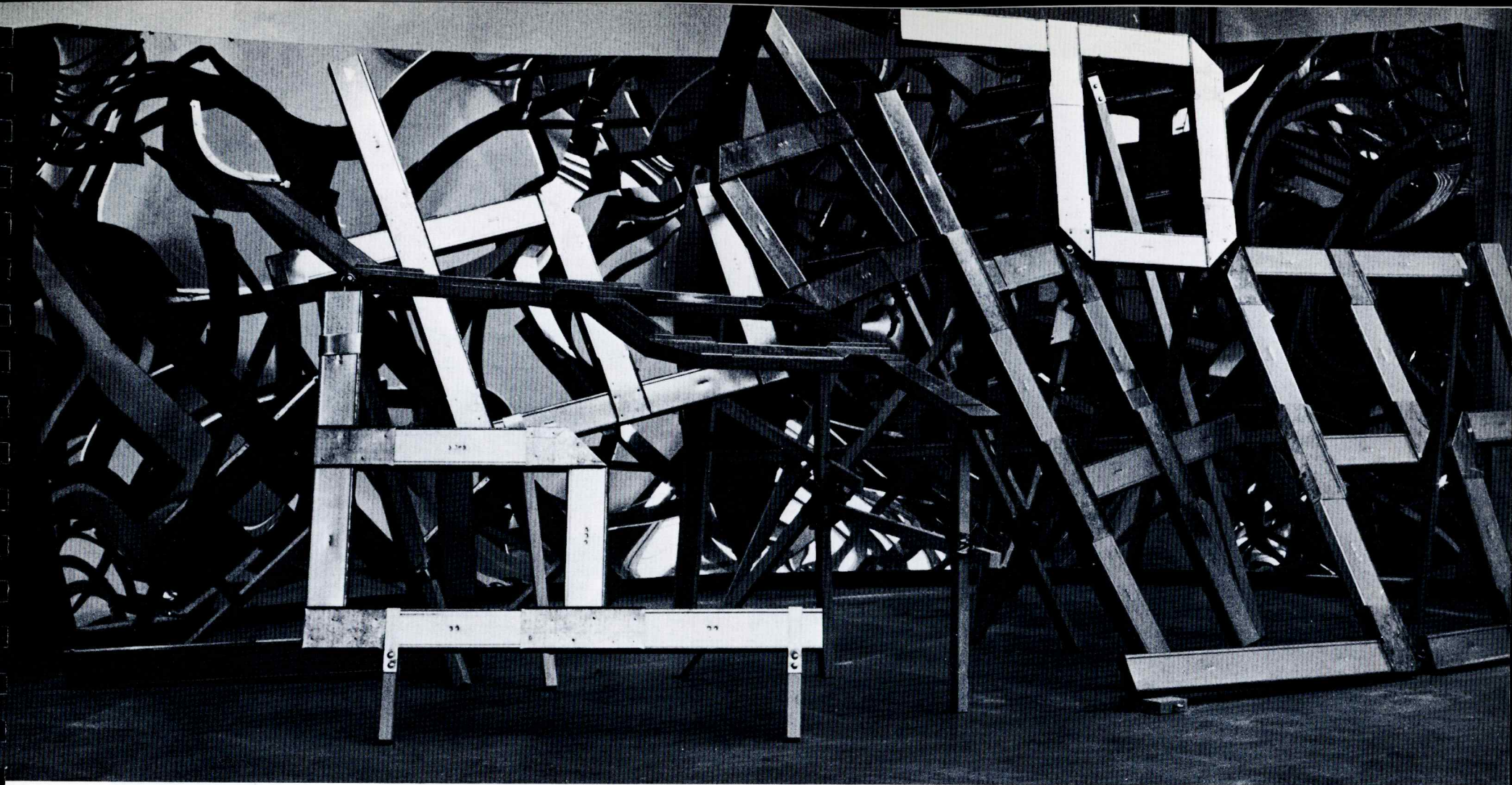
Untitled, 1978. 36 Mirrors, 5x8 feet each, and 36 timbers, 12x12 inches x12 feet each in a room 60x90 feet. Installation: "Structures for Behaviour," Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada. (13 May-9 July 1978).



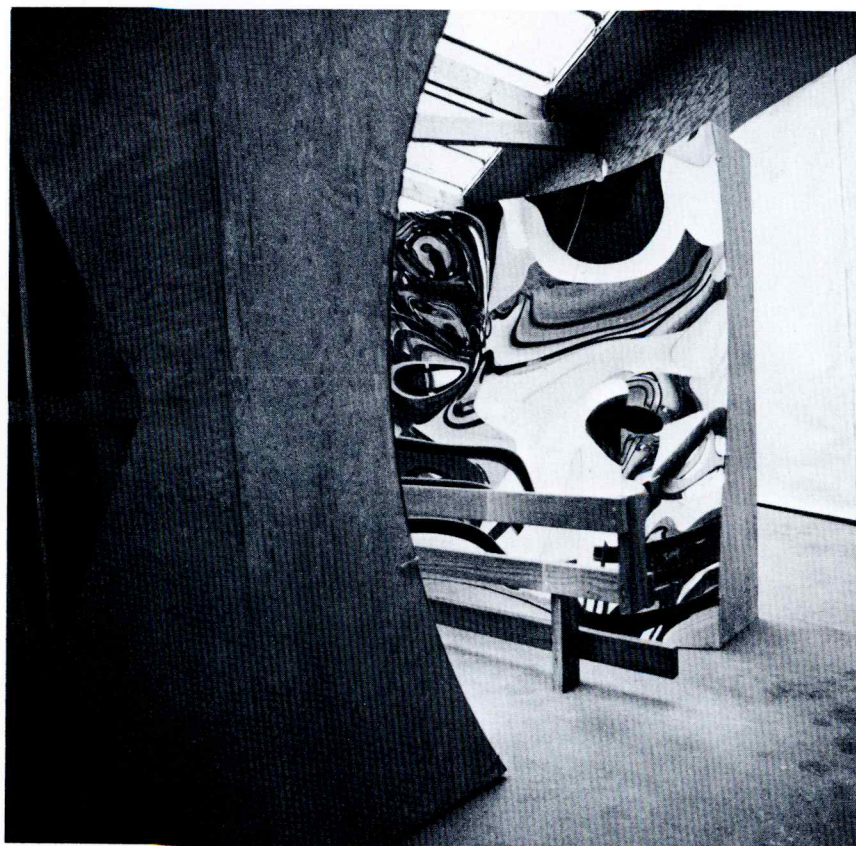
Untitled, 1978. Carved oak and mirror, 71 inches high. Exhibition: Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.



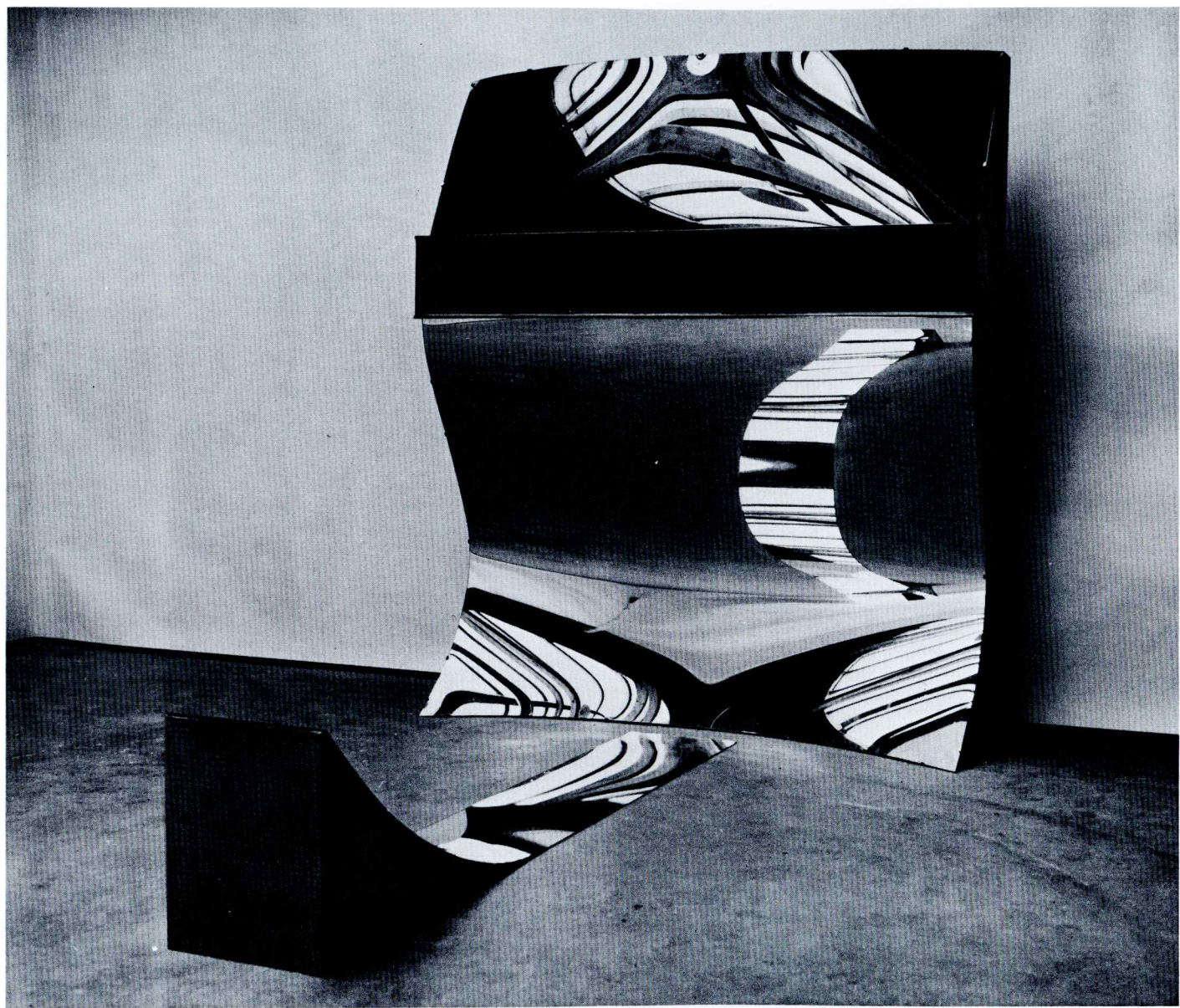
Untitled, 1978. Mirrors and mixed media, 8 feet high. Exhibition: Leo Castelli Gallery, New York. (March 1979).



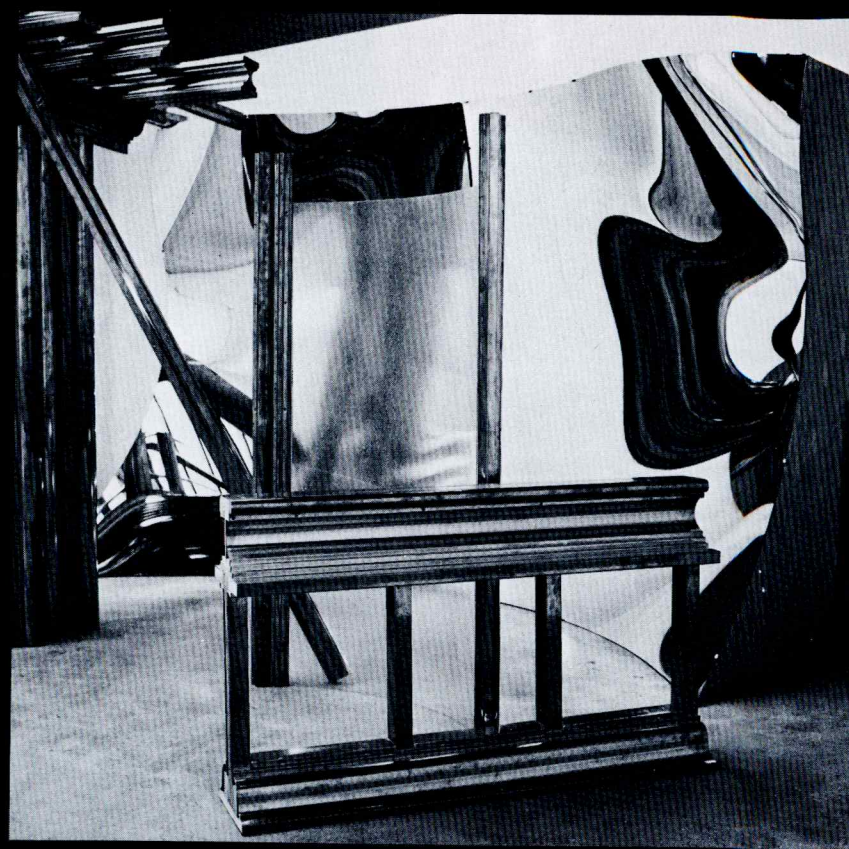
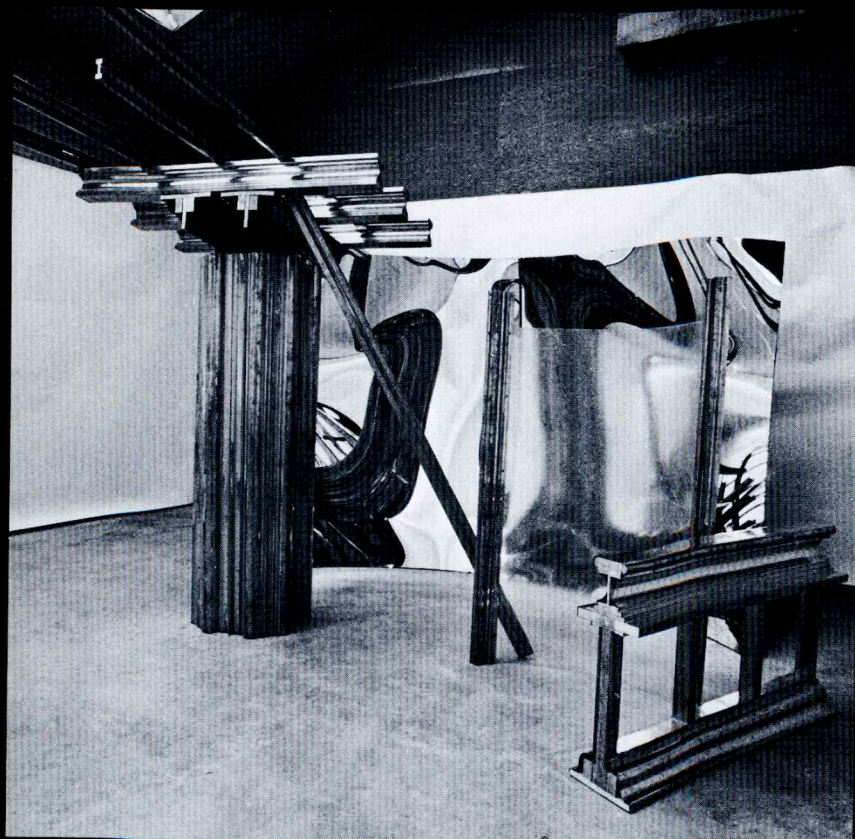
Untitled, Mirrors and mixed media, 71 inches high. Exhibition: Leo Castelli Gallery, New York (March 1979).



Untitled, 1978. Mirrors and mixed media, 83 inches high. Exhibition: Leo Castelli Gallery, New York (March 1979).



Untitled, 1978. Mirror, plastic and copper, 99 inches high. Exhibition: Leo Castelli Gallery, New York (March 1979).



Untitled, 1978 (for R.K.). Three mirrors, lead and concrete, 69 inches high. Exhibition: Leo Castelli Gallery, New York (March 1979).

