

CAREER NARRATIVE OF PAUL LAFFOLEY

Beginning with secondary school studies of the Classics in Belmont, Massachusetts, I began to realize that my interests would lie in art, and in particular diagrammatic structures. The ancient Greeks invented the word *diagramma* meaning 'to mark out the lines.' Later I realized it was the Romans who perfected the diagram as it is used today, making information more comprehensible by means of the outline, developing systems, and asserting control. Combining Classics and Art History at Brown University, I furthered my concern with diagrams and assured myself of the long cultural history of the diagrammatic format. In an attempt to complete my education, I enrolled in the Department of Architecture of the Harvard Graduate School of Design rather than attend an art school. My reasoning was influenced not only by the educational reputation of H.G.S.D., but also because of the fact that architecture as a practice is traditionally based on the perfection of diagrammatic thinking and representation.

Although I thoroughly enjoyed my time in architectural school, and was quite successful at my studies, I was eventually *grand juried* out of school for being *over-involved* in my work. I did manage, however, to apprentice with Mirko Baseldella [sculptor in residence] at the Carpenter Center for the Arts of Harvard University for one year. I learned from Mr. Baseldella that the pictorial arts can also be based on diagrammatic structures, only it is not the constructive diagrams as expressed by architecture, but rather the visual analysis of the creative principles of nature. It was this naturalist orientation that could aid the production of figuration. Believing my formal education was at an end, I moved to New York City to work for the visionary architect Frederick J. Kiesler. I spent a little over a year in his studio just off Union Square. Kiesler's studio was a nexus of the international artistic community at the time. As a result, I became familiar with many of the prominent cultural forces of the mid 1960s including: Alfred H. Barr, Isamu Noguchi, John Chamberlin, Salvatore Scarpitta, Marcel Breuer, Kenneth Snelson, and Karlheinz Stockhausen [composer]. In order to support myself I began to look for work and a place to stay. It was then that I met the Pop artist Andy Warhol, who said I could stay with him for a while. In exchange for work, Warhol let me live in his Lexington Avenue "firehouse" studio. What I actually did for him there was to watch his television which was kept on day and night. Since I was the new guy, I had the very late night shift to report on the test patterns along with news events. This led me to look at religious mandalas, the Hindu and Buddhist cosmic diagrams. During this time I obtained work also with the architectural firm of Emery Roth and Sons. Placed in the design group, I worked on the interior configurations of floors 15 to 45 of the North Tower of the now ill-fated World Trade Center, originally designed by Minoru Yamasaki.

Returning to Boston, I tried to finish my Architectural Degree at M.I.T.'s Department of Architecture and The Boston Architectural Center while working for various architectural firms in the area. During this time, I worked for a number of interesting designers including most notably, Hermann Field. I obtained my Architectural License in October, 1990. In the meantime, beginning in 1965, I began to work in a series of painting studios and in 1968, moved to my current studio in downtown Boston. At the Bromfield Studio, I founded the Boston Visionary Cell [incorporated 1971] as a non-profit art association

encouraging art and architecture of the visionary genre. Since 1966 to the present, I have exhibited on a regular basis which now totals over two hundred shows both here and abroad. I exhibited regularly with the Ward-Nasse Gallery until 1984, then the Stux Gallery [Boston/New York] in 1985, and since 1988 at the Kent Gallery, New York. In 1989, Kent gallery assembled and published the first monograph on my operating systems, paintings and papers entitled The Phenomenology of Revelation. Since 1990, I have had three major one-man shows in New York.

Over the past 15 years, I have been the grateful recipient of the following awards including The Englehard Award, sponsored by the I.C.A. Boston [1985-1986], a Massachusetts Artist Fellowship in Painting [1989-1990], a studio grant in the Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation Space Program in New York [1991-1992], the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation Inc. Individual Support Grant [1997-1998], and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant [2002]. Presently, I have been writing and speaking on three topics including *Dimensionality*, *Utopic Space*, and research and mapping of the possibility of an idea I have developed over the past twenty years concerning *physically alive architecture* by means of grafted vegetation.