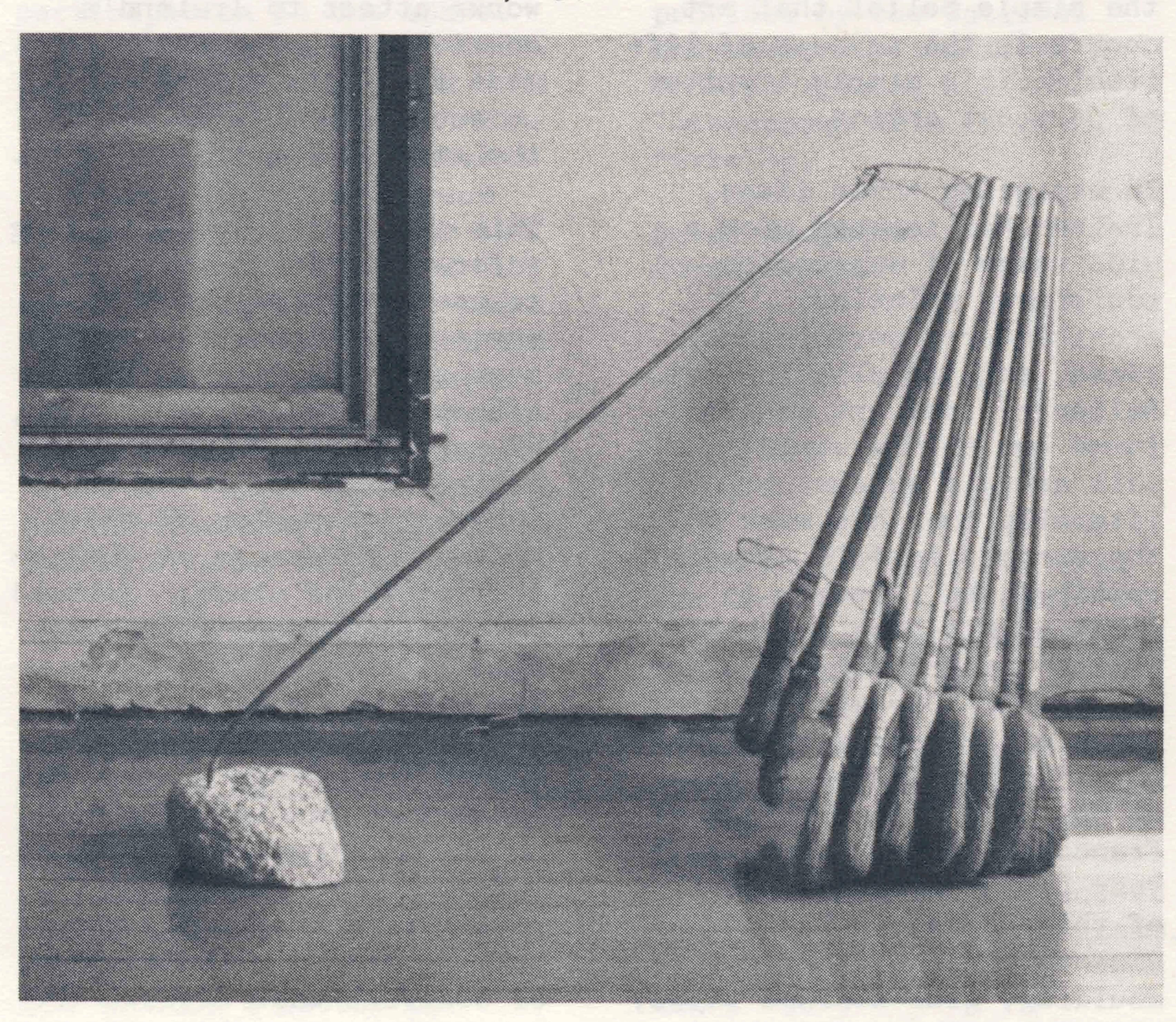
MATRIX/BERKELEY 120 David Ireland

University Art Museum early October - early December 1988

Broom collection with boom, 1978-88



David Ireland is an artist constantly tampering with the vocabulary and value system of art. Working in multiple disciplines and in a variety of media--from lumps of dirt to light-filled environments--he freely challenges accepted hierarchies. Ireland questions the very nature of art by presenting alternative propositions -among them the notion that aesthetics are irrelevant to art. His ideas are based on the simple belief that art occurs in the process of life itself; it's simply a matter of personal choice.

In exploring these ideas, Ireland has touched upon a wide range of expression -sculpture, painting, architecture, performance, video, and installation art. Believing that art can be found out in the world as well as in a museum, he literally took his work to the streets in 1976, when he repaired the sidewalk in front of his home and had artist Tom Marioni videotape the event. Perhaps the best known of Ireland's art/life works is his Victorian home at 500 Capp Street in San Francisco. During his threeyear (1975-78) transformation of this house, Ireland discovered in the exposed moulding, glue-stained walls, and smoky windows the kind of lively presence he had sought in his earlier abstract paintings, and decided to preserve this information with transparent glazes of polyurethane or hand-applied wax. He perceived his actions as a performance and approached his everyday tasks--polishing floors, sanding trim--with a respect and finesse that for him fixed his actions firmly in the realm of art.

Ireland also created numerous sculptures and tableaux from the debris that surrounded him. His broom collection with boom, 1978-88, a sculpture made from old brooms left by the previous owner of the house, is a visual metaphor for the passage of time. Sweepings from the doorstep, preserved in glass jars, are displayed on shelves in his living room. Raw and inelegant, and sometimes humorous, these works attest to Ireland's conviction that art can be made from life's most unremarkable materials and the simplest, untrained acts.

This interest in regenerating information finds particular resonance in Ireland's environmental works. By appropriating life-scale situations--rooms, buildings, or parks -- into the realm of art, Ireland validates the inherent character of these spaces. He speaks of this as the spirit of place. Instead of imposing ideas onto a site, Ireland allows the situation to determine his response, as with a recent commission, Newgate, 1986-87, located at Candlestick Point on the San Francisco Bay, in a former dump site being revitalized into a state park. Working with the mass of concrete that litters the area, Ireland constructed two megalithic walls that gradually converge into a narrow passageway leading to an uncompromised vista of the bay. Rising from its desolate surroundings, Newgate possesses the primeval grandeur of its namesake, Newgrange, a stone age burial ground in Ireland made of over four thousand tons of rock.

Uncovering the spirit of a place is crucial to Ireland's

philosophy. But when a situation lacks a singular sense of presence, Ireland is not beyond creating his own, as he has done when working in the uniformly anonymous, white spaces of contemporary galleries and museums. Often he will create his own context by altering the physical quality of the space--by building new walls, recoloring the wall surfaces, manipulating the lighting, or activating the viewer's participation in the space. For example, Ireland's Reading Station, created specially for this exhibition, can be seen as a sculpture in which viewers become part of the piece as they sit in the room and read. Intrigued by the multiple implications a work can evoke, Ireland also prompts us to consider alternative propositions: that reading is an art and/or that books and catalogs have replaced the experience of art itself.

Throughout Ireland's work and thought, there is the denial of the existence of absolute values and the notion that art must be logically clear or reasonable. To his mind, there is no privileged style or medium. What matters more is the artist's will to discover. For Ireland it is not so much a matter of making art as it is the allowance of vision.

Born in Bellingham,
Washington in 1930, Ireland
received his B.A.A. from the
California College of Arts
and Crafts, Oakland, in 1953,
and his M.F.A. from the San
Francisco Art Institute in
1974. He is the recipient of
numerous awards, among them a
National Endowment for the
Arts fellowship, 1983;
Adaline Kent Award, San
Francisco Art Institute,

1987; Louis Comfort Tiffany
Foundation Award, 1987; and
Englehard Award, Institute of
Contemporary Art, Boston,
1988. Ireland lives and
works in San Francisco and is
represented by Damon Brandt
Gallery, New York.

The exhibition and catalog,

David Ireland: A Decade

Documented 1978-1988, have
been organized by the Mary
Porter Sesnon Art Gallery, UC
Santa Cruz. Funding has been
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federal agency, and the
Intercampus Arts Program, UC
Berkeley.

Karen Tsujimoto Guest Curator

Works in MATRIX (all works are lent by the artist, courtesy of Damon Brandt Gallery, New York):

- 1. Pan of Pamphlets,
 1988, wood stool, metal pan,
 and MATRIX brochures, ca. 22
 x 15" diam.
- 2. Reading Station,
 1988, wood, sheetrock, glass,
 lights, and paint, ca. 113 x
 264 x 156".
- Repository, 1988, metal file cabinet, metal table, files, and paper, 42 x 34 x 60".
- 4. School of Chairs,
 1988, ca. 16 chairs made of
 metal, fabric, and wood,
 overall ca. 32 x 96 x 96".
- 5. Table of Periods,
 1988, metal, wood, glass, and
 framed photographs, ca. 32 x
 36 x 36".

Selected one-person exhibitions:

Whatcom Museum of Art and
History, Bellingham, WA, '76
(catalog); Leah Levy Gallery,
S.F., David Ireland: Tableau
'83; The New Museum of
Contemporary Art, NY,
Currents: David Ireland '84
(catalog); Gray Gallery, East
Carolina Univ., Greenville,
NC, '86; S.F. Art Institute,
David Ireland: Gallery as
Place '87 (catalog); Damon
Brandt Gallery, NY, David
Ireland: Multiple
Implications '88.

Public projects:

WPA, Washington, DC, Jade
Garden (a collaboration with
Robert Wilhite) '85; State
Reformatory, Monroe, WA,
Inside Outside, '85-88; Headlands Center for the Arts,
Sausalito, CA '86-87; Candlestick Point State Recreation
Area, S.F., Newgate '86-87.

Selected group exhibitions:

Los Angeles Institute of
Contemporary Art, 18 Bay Area
Artists '76 (traveled;
catalog); Hayden Gallery,
MIT, Cambridge, Visions of
Paradise: Installations by
Vito Acconci, David Ireland,
and James Surls '84
(catalog); S.F. Art
Institute, Inspired by
Leonardo '85; Three Rivers
Arts Festival and The

Carnegie Museum of Art,
Pittsburgh, Sculpture at the
Point '88 (catalog); L.A.
County Museum of Art, Awards
in the Visual Arts 7,
organized by Southeastern
Center for Contemporary Art,
Winston-Salem, NC '88
(traveled; catalog).

Selected bibliography (see also catalogs under exhibitions and complete bibliographical information through 1987 in David Ireland: A Decade Documented 1978-1988, published by the Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery, UC Santa Cruz):

Saeks, Diane Dorrans.

"At Home with Artist David Ireland," San Francisco

Magazine, July '81.

Woodbridge, Sally.

"Light Metal," Progressive

Architecture, August '82.

Ashbery, John. "An

Artist's Daring Dream House,"

House & Garden, May '83.

Weisang, Myriam.

"Selective Surface," San
Francisco Examiner, Image,
March 22, '87.

Baker, Kenneth.
"Ireland's Installation Runs
True to Life," S.F.
Chronicle, May 8, '87.

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