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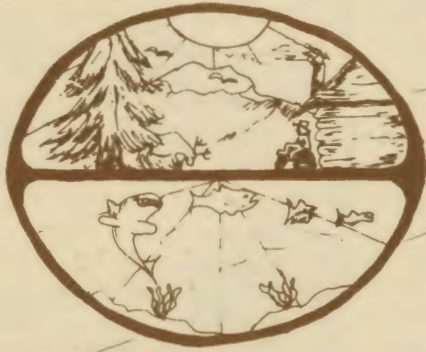


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The MONTHLY PLANET

VOL 9 NO. 3

"by people who have a little to say"

MARCH, 1980

Serra Sculpture

JANET BLAIR

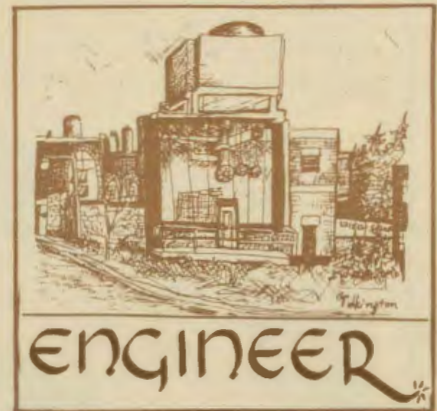
Serra gives us a challenge. It's a complex problem in a simple shape. His untitled sculpture has presence. It is direct and unavoidable due to its site and massive forms. Although I understand some of the criticism about this sculpture, I believe it is successful.

The piece makes me aware of size relationships. Next to heavy, tilted steel walls I feel fragile, weightless. I am surrounded by paradoxes: that these four rectangles

could so powerfully distort the way I perceive volume, distances, size, sound and my own situation.

Before entering, I feel barriers, but once inside I am aware of the air and the sky. All my senses are affected, not just mental and visual, but the physical as well, heightened by the sense of enclosure and gravity. I now look at the sky in a new way, and feel its openness and the contrasting shelter of the walls.

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STAN HOLMES

Richard Svenson is a man of means. He works for Western Washington University as a steam engineer. And during his hours of guiding the heating and cooling system for the entire campus, Svenson thought up a very intelligent, energy efficient program to recycle solid wastes and use that energy to heat the college campus.

Svenson's idea is to utilize all burnable waste collected on campus, throw it into a roaring hot boiler which would generate enough

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LizClary

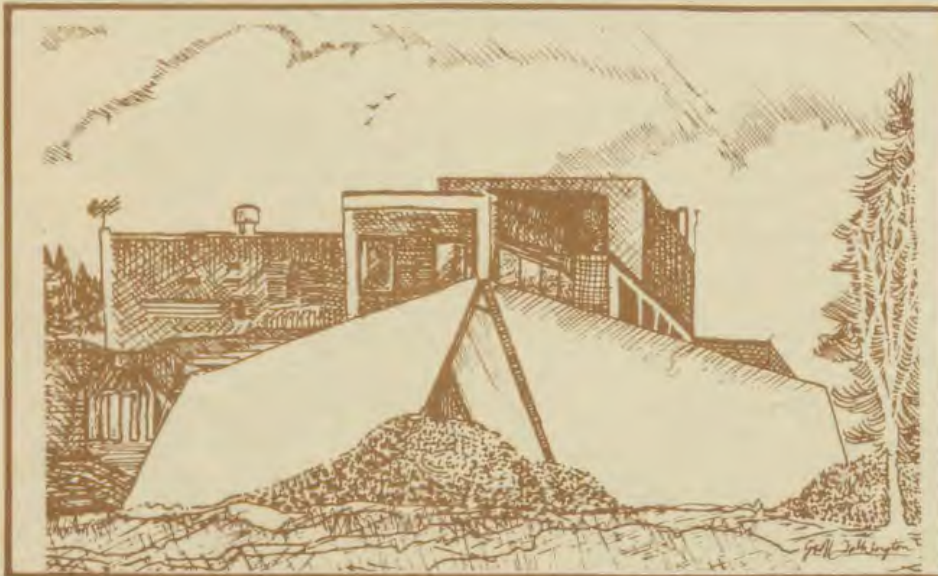
Also: First Photos of the Monthly Planet

Environmental Art editorial

Many of the large sculptures of our "Outdoor Museum" are good and bad examples of "environmental art." They are links between environmentalism and the humanities.

"Rock Rings," "Log Ramps," the untitled steam sculpture and others are climbed upon or entered to be experienced fully. From a distance, an environmental sculpture is one element of the

I've looked at Serra's iron from inside and out, above and below, at night and during the day, in rain and shine and by the light of the moon. So far I have seen little on its blank surfaces, in its mass, or by its shapes. It draws no message from my mind, though an art critic tries to explain: "The space is an unstable mix of position and situation, never at any point



physical environment. Within it or upon it, it is the main transforming influence. It may have a minimum of detail in itself, but gains a wealth of detail from other objects it frames, or draws attention to.

And now, there is Serra's new unnamed sculpture between Carver Gym and Arntzen Hall: four huge steel slabs welded together to form a modified triangle weighing 110 tons. It cost \$130,000. Twenty-three thousand dollars came from a State art fund generated by construction of a backwards bastion (Arntzen Hall) and one antithetical statement of environmental enlightenment (the Environmental Studies Center).

I assume this art fund is for purchasing works of art to compensate for the lack of art in the buildings. Well,

nondescript or indecipherable, but never fully clarified into a decisive stance." Nor does it give me a heightened vision of my surroundings. I still feel uncompensated. It just depresses me.

Then one morning I read "DISCO-SCULPT" on its northwest side from Red Square. Someone had defaced its monolithic facelessness, adding the weight and permanence of 220,000 pounds of rusting steel to three fervent messages of passing historical significance: "From Gary, With Love." "Piss On \$130,000!" "DISCO-SCULPT." Many college campuses have an erratic rock covered with decades of rah-rah trivia: "Class of '72," "Beat the Huskies," "Class of '73" ... but "DISCO-SCULPT" on a 30 ton tabula rasa: is it pos-

sible that graffiti/poetry can be part of a sculpture?

one morning from Red Square I read "disco-sculpt"

Ironically (a pun), I wrote a story for a small Alaskan newspaper last summer, to convince the locals that they should remove some old graffiti (a 20' painted pocketwatch and some advertising along side) on a cliff above town. As I worked on the story and found out more about the history of the graffiti and local sentiments toward it, my view of the graffiti changed: it became "art." I ended up liking it. I wrote that "graffiti to me may be art to another, and vice versa.... A flat rock is a tabula rasa awaiting the word of scribe or scribbler."

Serra's sculpture is related to "Rock Rings," built last year near the Environmental Science Center. Both are roofless enclosures with multiple entrances and a larger and smaller compartment. Rock Rings is beautiful in and of itself, from within, without, and from the heights of the Huxley lounge. It is also many frames for sky, land, people and plants, and it frees sight of these by framing them in the handiwork of a master stonemason. How I wish that I passed the Rings every day rather than Serra's iron!

Serra's triangle ... may need more time to be judged fairly

Realizing the faint possibility that my art theory may be deficient, I asked Janet Blair, curator of the Viking Union Art Gallery, if she would write on the Serra—I mean, about it. She has given us a well-written piece



A student studies Serra.

ENVIRONMENTAL ART...

that demonstrates a substantial appreciation of Serra. She urges patience for understanding. If I change my mind, I will help figure out how the sculpture's uniform rust coating can be restored after the rude inscriptions have been removed. Perhaps be submersion in sea water..?

The tiny number of students who think the purpose of the Outdoor Museum is "education" indicates that the present collection fails to stimulate learning, that we students do not have a broad enough learning attitude, or both.

My views on "environmental art" will evolve in time. Serra's triangle may need more time to be judged fairly. I believe the dominant function of art is to educate. Take the time to learn something about environmental art. If you still dislike Serra's piece, at least you have been educated!

Brian Blif

SERRA SCULPTURE...

Critics of this sculpture say it's "ugly" and "oppressive". Many of these "critics" have not been inside the piece, and still they claim that it "does nothing for them." Isn't this the same as judging a book by its cover?

What do people expect art to do for them? Viewers of the sculpture are misled by the distracting graffiti and unfinished landscaping. Serra's piece requires its audience to seek their own personal solutions to questions such as "what is beauty?" and "what is this piece dealing with if not questions of beauty?".

It raises basic questions of shape, perception, volume, inside/outside spaces, gravity and color: characteristics which concern all physical objects. Serra wants us to notice these qualities in many different contexts.

Larry Hanson, art professor at Western, in discussing with me the public reaction to Richard Serra's work, said: "several of the works of art I admire now I didn't like when I first saw them...they were strange, shocking, and didn't fit my conception of what art was. Some of them are what I now consider the best, strongest."

It's never too late to have additional insights a-

bout Serra by exploring his work more fully or looking him up in the library's many art periodicals and books. The main thing is to keep looking and trying; wait to make a value judgement until it's based on informed investigation. Serra has made his statement. It's up to us to interpret it. Not all revelations come in a flash. Some come gradually. Often a person doesn't know where to begin asking questions, or which ones to ask. Define the issues involved in each new piece of art you encounter, and notice all you can about it.

The commission of Richard Serra by Western's Art Acquisition Council, comprised of faculty, students and administrators, is recognition of an internationally respected artist. His success is not only by consensus of the Council, but by world art circles as well.

To know more about artists is to better appreciate their contributions throughout art's interconnected periods. Like succession in a forest, these periods have evolved over time. Contemporary art may be seen as the present realization of art's development. Serra's statement, and its historical context, must not be overlooked because we do not immediately grasp it.



Rock Rings

Diary of a mad coordinator

JENNY HAHN

"Is it really worth it?" she asks me as I dash out the Environmental Center door for another sunny afternoon meeting in the Viking Union.

"Is it really worth it?" she wonders as I explain on thin-worn patience why the Conference funds cannot be \$500 shy of two grand.

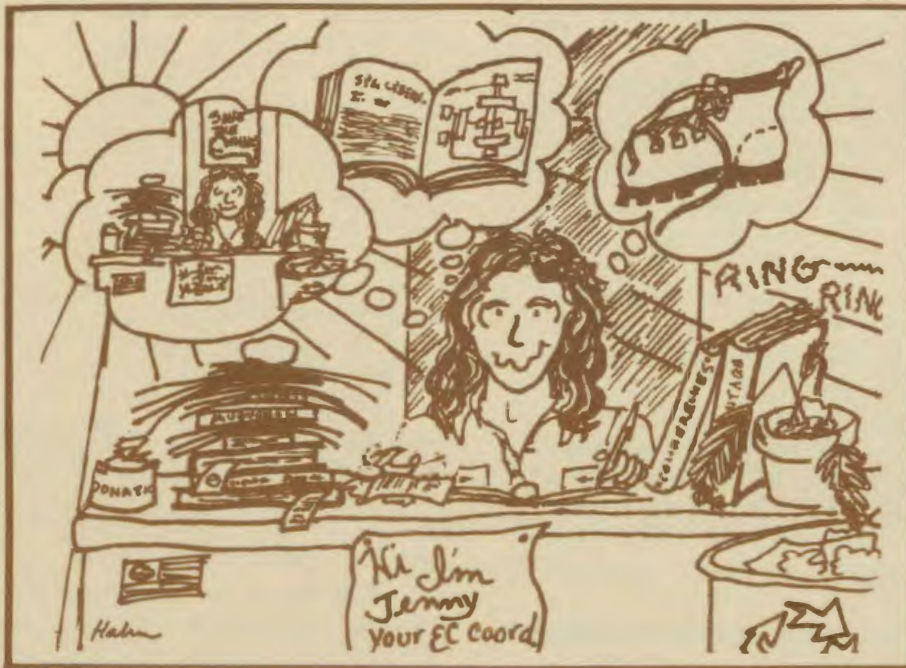
I've heard her questions before. She poses it whenever I've encountered a conflict between qualitative worths and wastes. She is my coordinator conscience and she probes my actions for

became short and fragmented. "Drink some cocoa...take another walk around the room...loosen up...keep plugging... Suddenly the phone rang.

"Environmental Center," I answered.

"Matt what's up?...review the Energy Conference budget on a Saturday night...yeah, time limits...I guess we'd better...see you later. Bye." After I hung up, there you were.

"Is it really worth it?" you asked again. I did not answer. I had to pack up and meet with Matt.



rationale.

"Worth it?" I repeated, "Ask me later, we've got the Energy Conference to plan!"

After two months of verbose meetings and numerous headaches came the two-week count down before the Conference. I sat in the office with a schedule book at my side. 12:00--research, 2:00--layout pamphlet, 4:00--to print shop. It was 7:00, Saturday evening. I was numbly tapping away at a four-page pamphlet on the E.C.

"Brrrr, the room's cold; they must have shut the heat off hours ago!" My thoughts

It is now two weeks until finals. Just a few nights ago, I walked into the Environmental Resource Library to complete an informational letter for the Spring Conference.

"Can we finish it tonight?" I asked a conference co-planner. I already knew his answer: "We've got to!" So we began to type, and erase, and revise, and type, and we finally finished. It took us three hours!

I stood up to stretch. I was stiff and tired, and thinking about finals. "Do I have

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one lone duck...

I created
one lone duck
in a pond
amid the stillness

too familiar with
the crowded and confined
I envy this duck
surrounded only by
a rippling marsh
and a graceful shadow

DEBBIE WEATHERLY

...EXTINCTION AND ETHICS

DAVID BLOMSTROM

The disappearance of wild creatures is of immediate concern because it is an irreversible process.

It is hard to justify the survival of many species from an economic or scientific point of view. Yet, these are yardsticks against most societies judge an organism's right to survival.

Most of us "nature lovers" would like to convince the world that it cannot live without wild creatures living in wild places; unfortunately, it can. Without wildlife the world might be a less exciting place to live in, but over the centuries, man has shown an amazing ability to adapt to the least stimulating environments. The disappearance of a host of creatures over the last century has gone unnoticed by most of the world's masses. Oversimplification of ecosystems is used by some as an argument for species preservation but many of these systems are already so disrupted that the disappearance of an already scarce member would probably have little impact.

The finality of extinction is another argument often enlarged upon by various authors. But many people would just as soon see a stuffed grizzly bear in a museum as look at a picture of one in some far-off Alaskan valley they may never get a chance to visit.

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ENGINEER...

electricity to heat most of the college. Electrical costs would be cut by half, and our dependency upon fossil fuels significantly reduced.

NECESSITY NEVER MADE A GOOD BARGAIN AND THE WESTERN ADMINISTRATORS ARE FOLLOWING SUIT

Svenson's plan coincides with a prevailing mood of the day: energy conservation. Our country is in desperate need to conserve its fuels, but necessity never made a good bargain and the Western administrators are following suit. Instead, Western has pumped in \$800,000 to construct an air conditioning system so that the few students, faculty, and administrators who attend summer quarter can be comfortable and cool.

Svenson's frustration becomes apparent as he talks about his expended effort to try and make the administrators realize the unique opportunity and feasibility that his plea would offer. "It doesn't seem practical to install a complete air conditioning unit on campus when the majority of students do not attend the University in summer quarter. It costs as much to run the chiller unit (the main cooling system that controls the air conditioning on campus) as it does to run all the electricity on campus," Svenson remarked. Svenson contends that the prevailing westerly winds off Bellingham Bay are sufficient to cool the campus in summertime.

Were Svenson's plan implemented, this is how it would work: Utilize the already constructed chiller plant adjacent to the steam

room and construct another boiler to accept solid waste. The solid wastes would be collected from all over campus and continuously fed into the boiler. Hence, a self-sufficient cycle would develop as solid wastes gathered from students and faculty departments would be brought to the steam plant as fuel for the fire. This fire would heat the boiler and in turn, repay the students and administrators in cheap electric bills, and alleviate our dependence on fossil fuels.

IF ADMINISTRATORS DECIDE TO BUILD THE WASTE-BURNING FACILITY AS AN ADDITION TO THE STEAM PLANT, CONSTRUCTION COSTS WOULD BE MINIMAL

If administrators decide to build the waste-burning facility as an addition to the existing steam plant, construction costs would be minimal compared to plans already subjected before them. Adequate room exists next to the steam plant so the steam engineers could control the boiler without having to travel off campus. And the solid wastes boiler would be situated within



Crapon Clampon Grampons

easy access for students and faculty alike.

Huge costs that Western now pays for transporting all solid wastes to Ferndale would be cut drastically. Svenson points out that the administration is wasting thousands of dollars in transportation costs and incinerator fees. "We are burning money into the sky right now," he angrily says.

Ironically, Svenson believes that instead of building a solid wastes boiler on campus and utilizing the chiller room, the adminis-

tration wants to go ahead and pump their \$800,000 into an air conditioning unit for the campus and then pump more funds into a solid wastes boiler off campus. In effect, we are paying an outlandishly high price for something we do not need. The expense of constructing a completely new solid wastes boiler off campus is at least twice the amount of Svenson's plan.

WE ARE BURNING MONEY INTO THE SKY

As energy becomes harder to exploit, alternatives should be scrutinized and comprehensively examined.

The self sufficiency and economic feasibility of his plan outweigh negative aspects. His is only one answer to the increasing pressure of meeting our energy needs at school. It's an enormous problem. Let's hope the administration adapts the most viable solution.

The Monthly Planet is funded by Associated Students as the environmental publication of the Environmental Center.

The Planet is responsible for fostering environmental awareness across campus. It is not responsible for individual views expressed in it.

VITUPERATION

BRIAN BLIX

Haines, Alaska has been my home for the last two years. It and Schnabel Lumber Mill are located 60 miles north of Juneau on one of the longest and most beautiful fjords in the world. Norwegian tourists visit "Lynn Canal" on luxury liners. Thousands travel it on the "marine highway" ferries.

Haines gained national exposure two weeks ago in *Sports Illustrated* (Feb. 25): "Valley of the Eagles" runs for 11 pages. Haines also came to light in "Eagles flock in cottonwoods along alaskan river" in the *Smithsonian* (Dec. 1979).

Eagles and timber are exceedingly difficult topics for Haines residents to discuss objectively. Many consider themselves to be more endangered specimens than the eagles 20 miles upriver.

My following letter appeared in the *Lynn Canal News* last September 13, after the mill's obsolete waste burner came back to life. The names and organizations parallel ones that you are familiar with: Georgia Pacific, the Bellingham Chamber of Commerce, Dixy Lee Ray, SCANP:

"The timber sale is noticeably affecting Haines already. Strange loggers are in town, and smoke from Schnabel's illegal incinerator is hanging low in Lynn Canal.

I thought the new wood-burning generator plant was going to replace that trashy metal teepee that is sending its smoke signals and stink past Haines again. My naivete sometimes dismays me.

The layer of smoke over the canal is a symbol for the layer of fear and propaganda John Schnabel, the Alaska Miners Association, and the Haines Coalition have laid over Haines. To take the smoke analogy a bit farther, as Israel was led through the desert by a pillar of smoke, so shall Schnabel lead Haines through the economic desert.

There are too many followers, and not enough individuals in town with the simple courage to stray from the party line. Frequent intimidation of Lynn Canal Conservation individuals, by bombastic letters of personal attack printed in this paper, and even death threats over the phone,

have not fostered freedom of speech in our friendly little town.

The fabled fire-eaters Meshack, Shadrack and Abednago had it cool in King Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, compared to "greenies" in this town who don't accept "refined" Schnabel operations or the Alaska Miners Assn. "multiple use" propaganda. The heat will really be on when Merrill Palmer, Carl Heinmiller, John Schnabel, and other opinion leaders stoke the furnace of public opinion again, after SEACC files an injunction that shuts Schnabel down as I hope they have the courage to do.

I'm taking environmental studies down south for the next few months. Good luck, greenies, and to anybody of any color who doesn't wilt under the sight and smell of King Schnabel's incinerator."

The letter violated some taboos of who says what, and when and how things are said. It was a needle puncturing a social blister filled with smalltown frustrations. Many direct replies followed, some from locals who had never written a public letter before. The "teepee burner" shut down the following week. I will claim some credit. At least I made some enemies:

"Mr. Blix is right—John Schnabel is a "king." He certainly stands head and shoulders over most people in this valley. A smaller person would have given up fighting the Idiots a long time ago. I grew up in this valley and I don't remember a time when Schnabel Lumber Co. wasn't fighting to provide jobs for our people. (First Nature, a fire, lack of money—now Idiots.) I admire John Schnabel, his wife Erma and his children. Erma's kitchen has always been warm and open to the innely, the kids and just anybody."

And ... "You can rest assured he has figured out some angle for the taxpayers, including those from Haines, to subsidize his education so that he can return to this valley in the spring to use this newly acquired education against us." And ...



The Editor

"THE EAGLES FURTHER FOUND THEY WERE UNINTERESTED IN THE LUMBERING BUSINESS SO KNOWING QUITE WELL I WOULD RECEIVE CONFLICTING REPORTS FROM ENVIRONMENTALISTS AUDUBON SOCIETY'S ORNITHOLOGISTS SIERRA CLUBS UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ETC AND THAT ALL WOULD PROBABLY STATE THAT THE BALD EAGLE IS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES AND NEEDS PROTECTING I DID NOT CONSULT THEM HA HA AND A FEW SHORT YEARS AGO THERE WAS A BOUNTY ON EAGLES AND SO IT GOES HOMO COMMUNIS"

Spend a summer in Haines. It offers fantastic opportunities for wilderness worship, and enlightenment in the difficulties of "environmental education" far afield!



Gary (Indiana) sends greetings to Western.

THE MONTHLY PLANET REVOLVES AROUND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS. BECOME FAMOUS--GIVE YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL WRITING TO THE PLANET: ESC 535.

Monthly Planet Poll : Serra

V. FATE PUTMAN
AND
MIKE COX

"What is your opinion of the Serra sculpture?" Two hundred twenty-six Western students were given a chance to share their ideas on the newest edition to Western's Outdoor Museum. In a poll conducted by the Monthly Planet, 79% of those persons polled said they didn't like the sculpture, 13% voiced approval, while 8% were undecided. Eighty percent of those who liked the sculpture were juniors and seniors.

We asked, "Who was the Art Committee trying to please when they purchased this sculpture?" Only 5% marked "students". One person thought the Committee was pleasing themselves, and wrote, "God knows it wasn't me."

Our next question asked students whether or not they thought the \$130,000 was spent wisely. Very few people thought the expenditure was justified. In fact, over half of those who liked the sculpture did not feel it was worth the money! One such student wrote, "I enjoy watching people voice their opinions on the 'work of art.' It gives me pleasure to laugh at it." Some people felt the money could have been used for other forms of art, such as student art.

Only 16% felt the Serra sculpture serves "the purpose of art" on campus. Very few thought that purpose is "education" (5%) or "to inspire creative thought" (17%). Some people had their own ideas and added, "To enhance the landscape;" "To reflect the students' lifestyles and thoughts;" and "To blend naturally with the environment."

By this time the ball was

really rolling. We wanted to get the students' true feelings of the Serra sculpture, and if they felt it served the purpose that art should on campus. We asked, "Does Serra serve this purpose?" Eighty-four percent said no. Some comments were: "To me it represents our technological society or perhaps the oppressive weight of technology." "At best it's the work of an architect, not an artist." "It opposes environmental quality." "What a waste of natural resources." "I wish it was invisible." Some of the people who liked it wrote--- "It takes time to understand and not enough people are willing to spend the time." "It inspires controversy of which we need

some more around here." Seven indicated that though they don't presently like it, the expense was justified.

In our opinion, students should be the main concern of the Art Committee when selecting a sculpture. Also, \$130,000 could have paid for a large variety of student sculptures, and perhaps should have.

A lot of people have different feelings concerning the 'Triangle'. Perhaps the only solution is for you to decide for yourself. Look closely at the sculpture; walk around it and through it. Judge not from just what other people have said or written; experience it for yourself.

MONTHLY PLANET POLL		SERRA'S "TRIANGLE"	
Fr. 450-110		Total: 226.	
Class Standing: Jr.-Grad-99	Major:	Sex: F(105) M(92) 2(29)	
Other-17			
1. Who was the Art Committee trying to please when they purchased this sculpture?			
12 <input type="checkbox"/> Students	83 <input type="checkbox"/> International Art Critics		
6 <input type="checkbox"/> Local Community	12 <input type="checkbox"/> Parents, Alumni, State Legislators		
113 <input type="checkbox"/> Other Who knows? (50)	Themselves (16) Serra (9)...		
2. The \$130,000 spent on this sculpture was:			
20 <input type="checkbox"/> Justified	<input type="checkbox"/> Not worth it		
<input type="checkbox"/> Better used elsewhere	Example: Student art (16) Tennis courts (9)...		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other			
3. What do think the purpose of art should be on campus?			
9 <input type="checkbox"/> Education	83 <input type="checkbox"/> Beautification		
10 <input type="checkbox"/> Status	38 <input type="checkbox"/> To inspire creative thought		2 Both '75
20 <input type="checkbox"/> Other			
3. Does Serra serve this purpose? 36 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 184 <input type="checkbox"/> No			
4. Do you get more pleasure out of Serra than other sculptures on campus?			
16 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	210 <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments	
5. Do you like the "Triangle"? 30 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 180 <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Comments			

EXTINCTION AND ETHICS...

Unfortunately (maybe fortunately!), some of us cannot be content in a world emptied of wild creatures. For some, nature is the supreme manifestation of our concept of "God." Mountains and forests are our cathedrals; Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic our religious code,

Though these words may be a bit grandiose, I think many of us feel the same way towards nature. So why not stand up for our spiritual beliefs? After all, we respect the religious beliefs of others--let them respect ours!

Trite thoughts from the moon

BILL HALSTEAD

I stood on the moon today
I looked down at The Monthly Planet.
But my nose got in the way.
I suddenly realized I wasn't looking down at all.
I was looking out.

"Look out!" my pen shouted.
I'm looking out.

My pen danced on and I realized I really have no great insights to offer to the readers of The Monthly Planet.
No formula. No truth. No cause do I care to put on the chopping block of public scrutiny today.

Then I went into the forest of my mind to a lookout post and I saw that there was one small cause I would like to promote after all.
The cause is so very simple, it is easy to forget amidst the rush and worry of life in the 1980's, Bellingham, Washington, U.S.A., Planet Earth.
The name of this one small cause is trite: it is the cause which poets and madmen join hands to battle for.
It is not important enough to paint on a billboard (or spray on Serra) perhaps.

Then I went into the forest of my mind...
and I saw there was one small cause

There are some rather bombastic and inflated ways of naming it. Friendship. Compassion. Loving. Caring. The words seem a bit out of place in a world of hustle and ambition. It's not that big of a deal. It is nothing worth organizing for or marching about. But this small cause is important to everyone. It's so simple:

Talk to someone.

Listen to someone.

Anyone.



The cause is there. The need is always so small it seems invisible at first. But if you look closely into the eyes of the person next to you, you will see them crying out for attention. Let's get together. Let's explore life and discover truth. But first, let's talk. Let's listen. Keep the channels open. If there is no attempt to communicate in very simple ways, each of us is alone.

we must go within ourselves and first discover the importance of a single life

We are all part of the planet's problems. To truly get to their roots we must go within ourselves and first discover the importance of a single life. Only then can we hope to offer a solution.

There is always a need to improve communication. I'll keep trying if you do. And I'll keep trying even if you don't. It's just one small cause, but it is always nice to remember it.

DIARY OF A MAD COORDINATOR....

...paper due tomorrow? Reading: An article to write?" I thought. "No, I asked for an extension on my paper... Reading?... Yes, I'm three chapters behind, but I'll read those next week. Article? Yes, I promised it would be in tomorrow!"

Suddenly you spoke out. "Is it really worth it?" You repeated your question, "IS IT REALLY WORTH IT???"

"Oh conscience..." I thought, "...haven't you learned by now? Haven't you seen for yourself? My commitment speaks louder than mere words could ever tell." I grabbed my pack and walked out the library to write the Monthly Planet article.

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"by people who have a little to say"