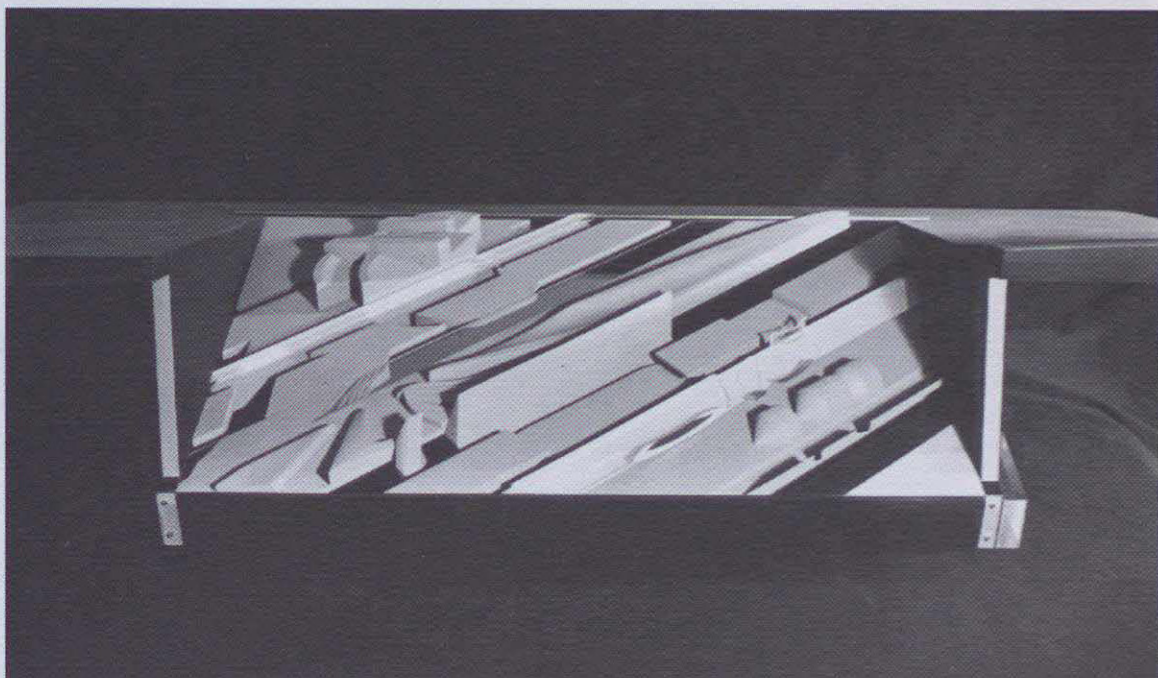


STEPHEN PARCELL

PLACE SETTING



The dining table is an artificial plinth, a small tabula elevated above the ground and surrounded by humans. Each person is allocated a territorial position of the table surface: a place setting.

Around the perimeter of the table are identical sets of utensils, each set occupying one person's grasp. At rest, the utensils are positioned according to specific axial alignments and sequential orders from left to right and near to far. Certain ones are metallic and certain others are ceramic. Some are broad and flat, like auxiliary table surfaces. Others are meant to be held and operate as specialized attachments for the hands: one stabs and shovels, one stirs and scoops, one saws and spreads. Their figurative manoeuvres work in conjunction with the silent resistance provided by the table surface below. Although many of the utensils are used together, only three of them (two metal and one ceramic) ever travel from table to mouth.

Conventional instruments and etiquette enable one to encounter a wide range of edible still lifes (*natures mortes*) with routine self-assurance. Confrontations which present more of a challenge (lobster, for example) require special tools and improvised strategies. The place setting with its attendant architectural equipment and choreography, provides a latent forum for one biological entity to sacrifice and devour others, coincidentally emulating the foundation rites of ancient cities. Elsewhere, the legendary oriental practice of eating live monkey brains requires a special place setting with a skull-sized hole in the table and a set of leather straps below.



GARY: Could you tell us something about the materials you have selected for this project. I do not wish to sound harsh, but you seem to have treated this project as if it were to be built of cardboard! Have you given any thought to the FACTS of the thing? The THINGNESS of the thing? The materiality of the MATERIAL! What is the intent of the intention? (Screams): WHAT IS IT TO BE MADE OF? Of course, you needn't answer this question, or any question.

F.L.L.M.: I have considered the material. Like this marble (hands sample).

GARY: But this is not marble. It's granite! (throws offstage. Crash of glass breaking).

F.L.L.M.: Ah, yes, well I do have marble here (holds up other sample).

GARY: Yes, of course, but you know, it isn't enough to consider alternatives, design is also about making choices! What have you chosen?

F.L.L.M.: I'm happy you asked that question, Gary (picking up can from table, prying at lid). In fact, in keeping with the randomness of the randomness, I've chosen marble. . . marbles! (can suddenly bursts open, spraying marbles into air and all over floor).

TONY (summing up): Well Fielding,

F.L.L.M.: Fielding Lloyd Mellish

TONY: You seem to have covered the issues of face. . . and trace. . . and old lace. . . What about Natural Light. You don't have any windows in your plan.

F.L.L.M. (Squinting and shielding himself from glare of electric lights):

