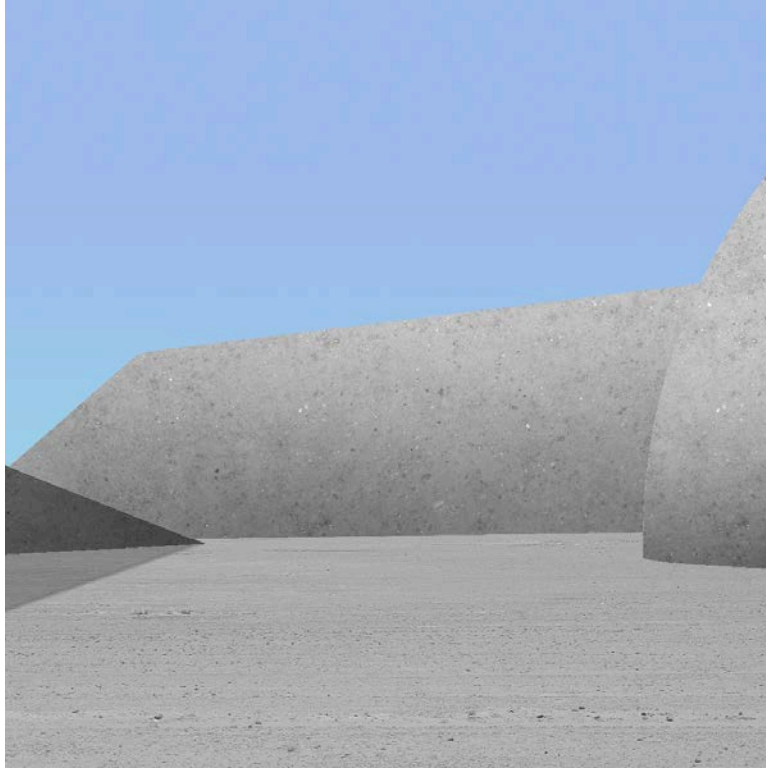


Defining Gravity
Bennet Adamson



Cornell AAP Department of Architecture
CURATING MODEL BEHAVIOR Arch 4509/6509 Spring 2020 Seminar
Instructor: Naomi Frangos, Visiting Associate Professor in Architecture



“Now I wanted the tension of levitation but not weightlessness as such; on the contrary, I wished to stress weight in the elements composing the sculpture, so that their weight would enhance the effect of floating in a gravitational field. It is weight that gives meaning to weightlessness.”

-Isamu Noguchi



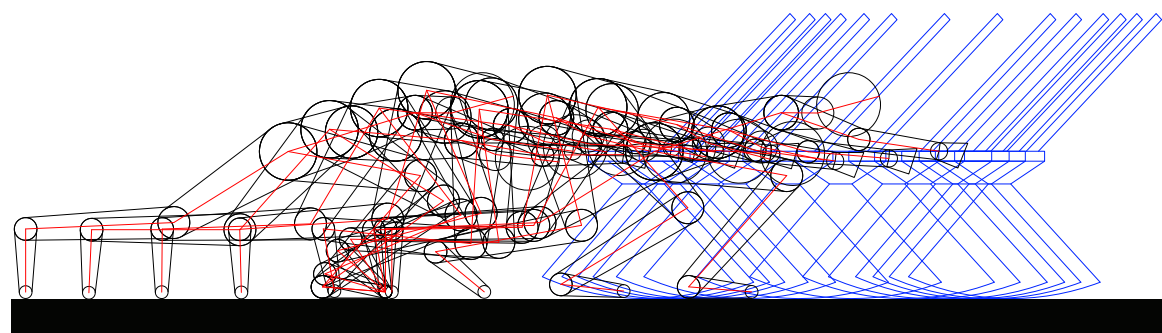
Contract and Release
Brendan Fernandes, 2019

Contract and Release





The performance makes use of the rocking chair as a point of counterbalance and an extension of the body, exaggerating its movements of compression and decompression through space. With the rhythm of the body, the chair gently glides across the ground with each movement.



Contract and Release

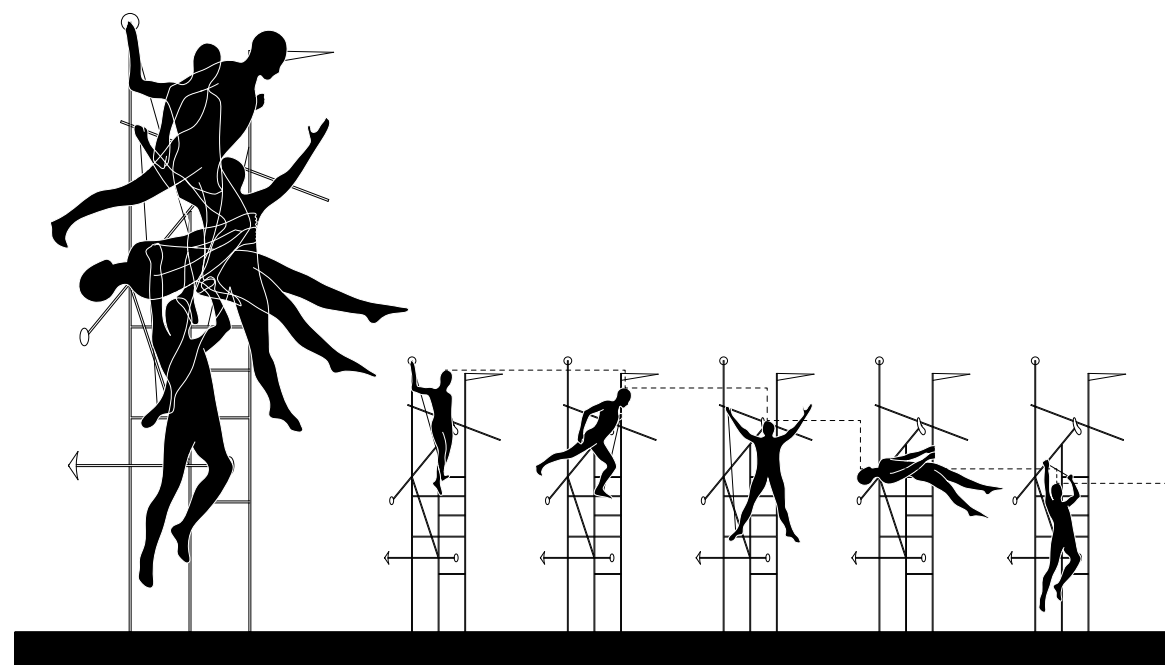


Jungle Gym

Jungle Gym
Set Design
Isamu Noguchi, 1947
For “Stephen Acrobat”



The vertical nature of the stage set allows dancers to use their body as a sculptural form acting against gravity. The delicate frame allows for the dancers to contort their body throughout it, always affording them at least two points of contact to hold themselves off the ground, and giving the sense that the dancers are effortlessly floating in space.



Jungle Gym



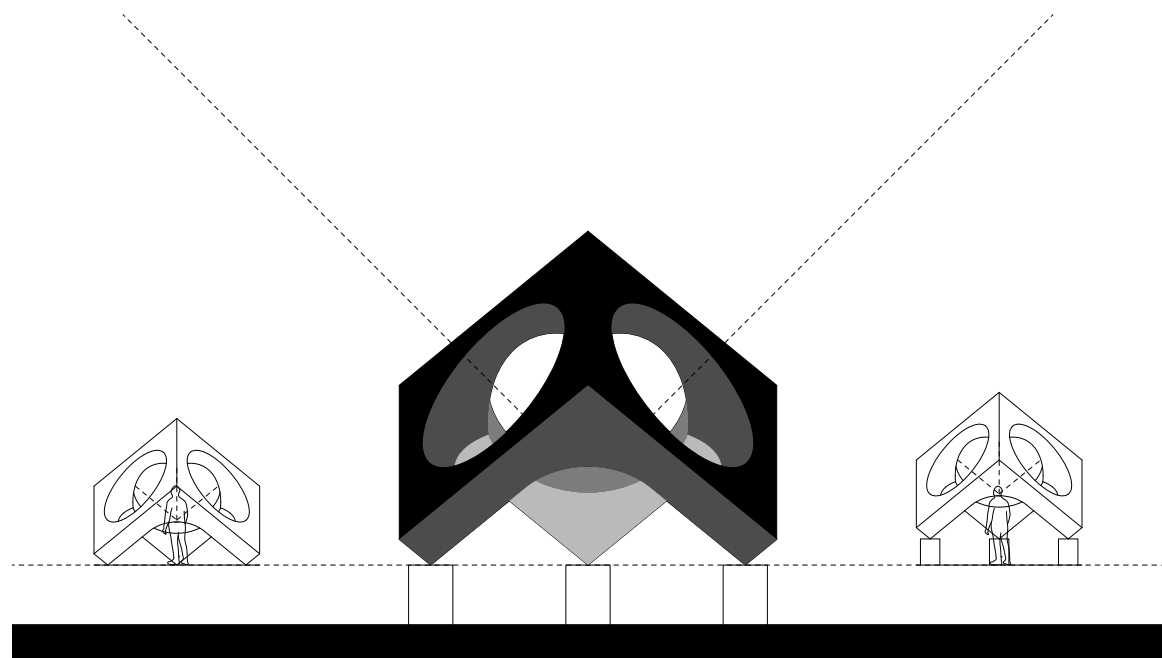
Sky Viewing Sculpture
Isamu Noguchi, 1969
Western Washington University

Sky Viewing Sculpture





An excavated cube sits upon three elevated points hovering above the earth. Standing at the center allows the viewer to stare out into the sky, framed by the sculpted circles in the remaining three faces of the cube. The lifting of the cube not only allows the viewer's eyepoint to rest at the center of the geometry but also allows the viewer to feel the weight of the steel mass and the sky above them.



Sky Viewing Sculpture



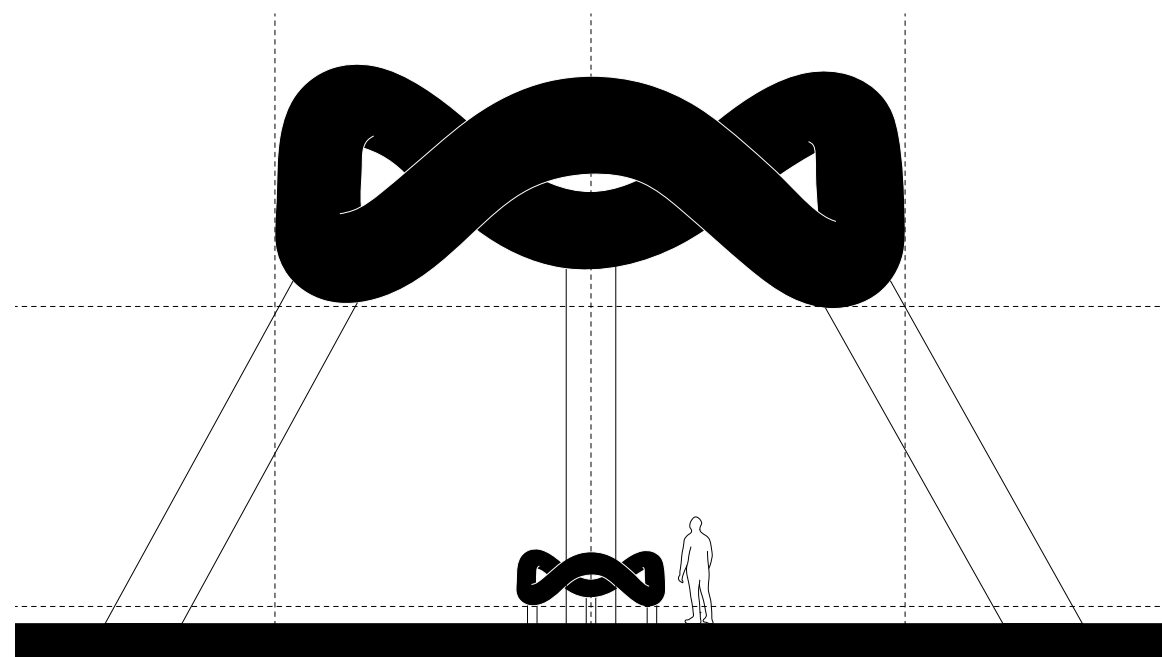
Sky Gate
Isamu Noguchi, 1976-1977
Honolulu, HI

Sky Gate

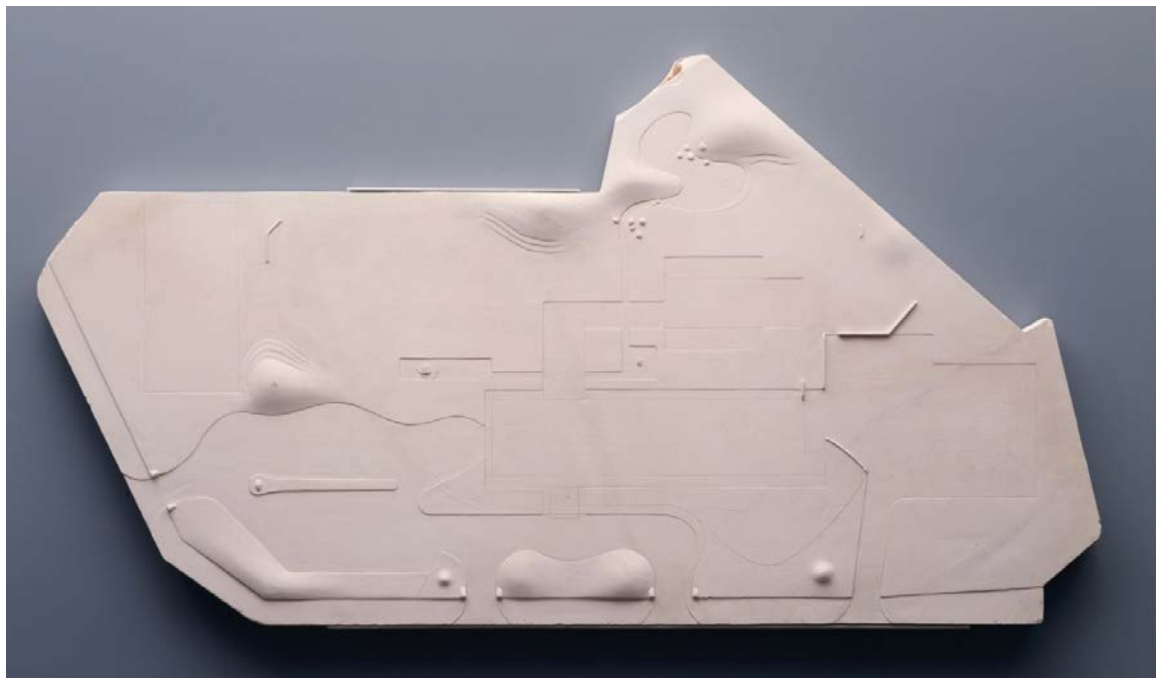




Three angled legs support a geometry that sits somewhere between a circle and a triangle. The scaleless nature of the model allows for the sculpture to be imagined with an infinite array of spatial relationships to the viewer. The resulting public sculpture sees a massive heavy ring far above the viewer, supported by three legs. The supported geometry of the sculpture is a scaled-up replica of Noguchi's previous play sculpture. The suspension of this heavy object above the heads of the viewer creates an entirely new relationship to that of its smaller counterpart as if the work is looking down on them.



Sky Gate

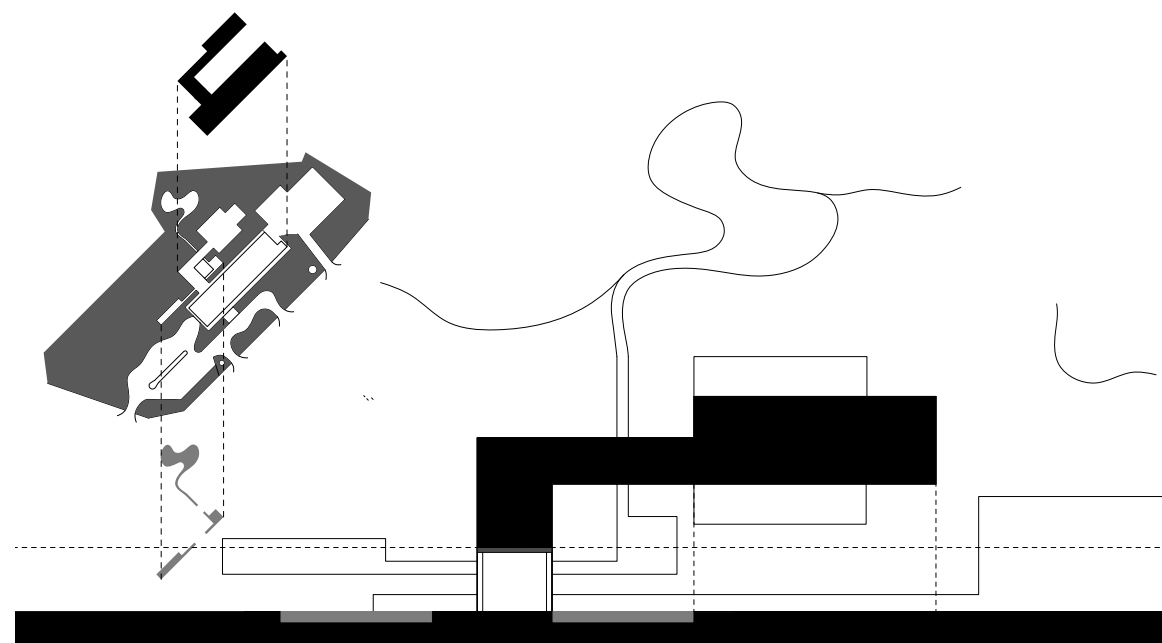


Reader's Digest Garden
Isamu Noguchi, 1951
Tokyo, JP

Reader's Digest Garden



The landscape is carefully molded around the existing structure, slowly flowing out into more organic forms as it radiates out. The project is split into three distinct levels, ascending from least dense to most. At the lowest grade sits a snaking pool of water, above which rests the earth and finally the solid concrete structure. This inverted density creates a strange relationship between our understanding of gravity.



Reader's Digest Garden



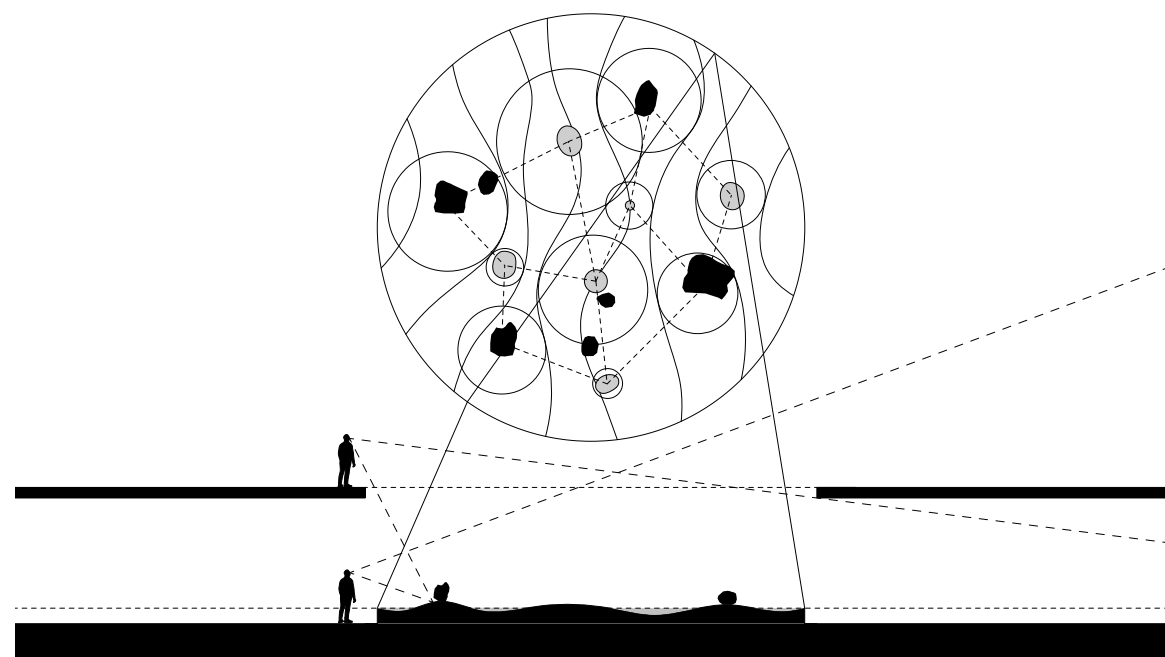
Sunken Garden

Sunken Garden
Isamu Noguchi, 1961-1964
New York City, NY





The garden is to be understood both from above and below facing viewers with a series of ever so carefully placed rocks surrounded by pools of water that collect around them. From above, the large stones feel as if they hold a gravitational force, stretching and pulling the undulating landscape beneath them. Viewers from below see massive boulders that are perched at the peaks rolling hills and float effortlessly in the water.

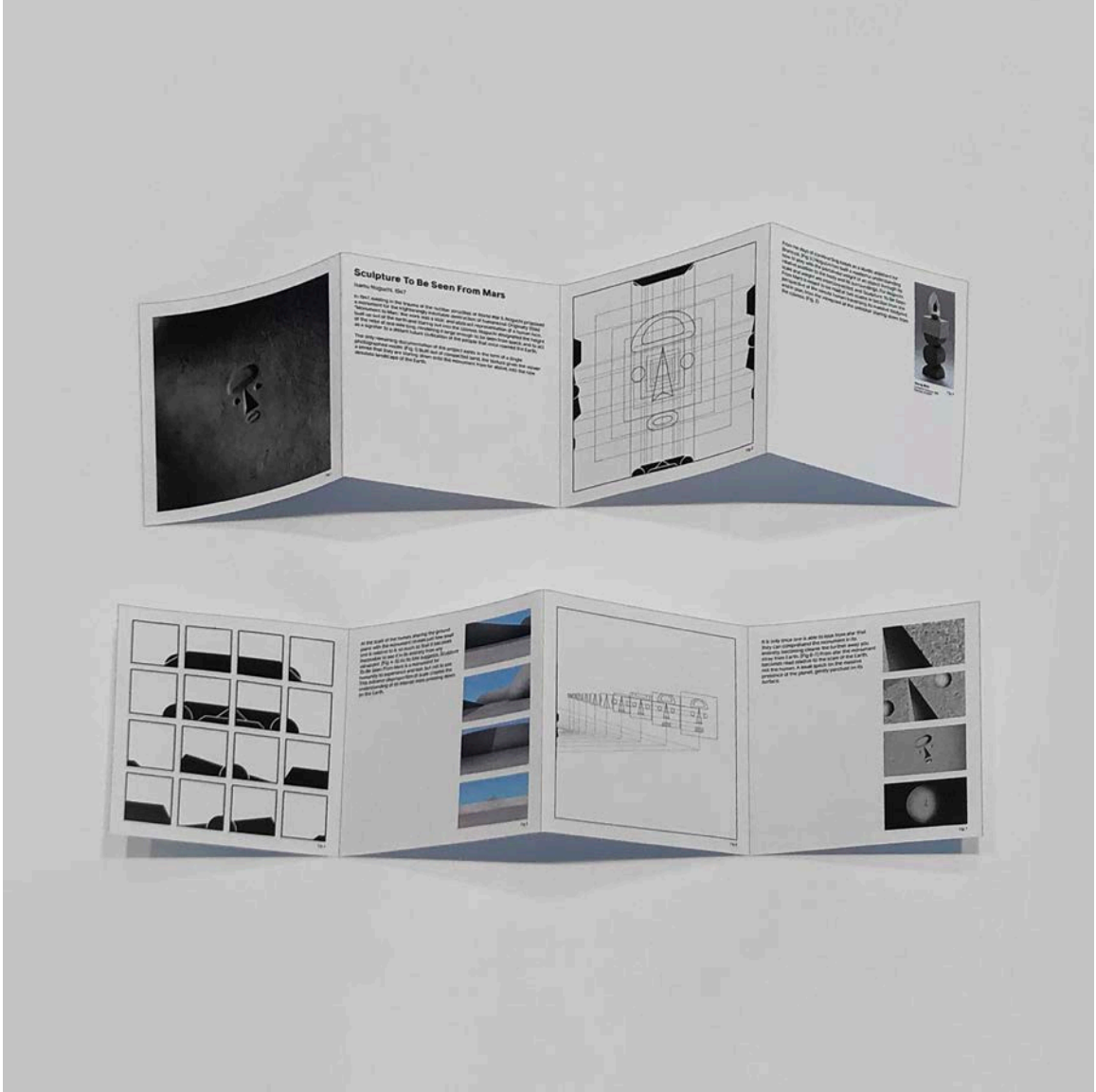


Sunken Garden



Sculpture To Be Seen From Mars
Isamu Noguchi, 1947
Unbuilt





Exhibition Pamphlet





Fig. 1

Sculpture To Be Seen From Mars

Isamu Noguchi, 1947

In 1947, existing in the trauma of the nuclear atrocities of World War II, Noguchi proposed a monument for the frighteningly inevitable destruction of humankind. Originally titled “Monument to Man,” the work was a stoic and abstract representation of a human face, built up out of the earth and staring out into the cosmos. Noguchi designated the length of the nose at one mile long, rendering it large enough to be seen from space, and to act as a signifier to a distant future civilization of the people that once roamed the Earth.

The only remaining documentation of the project exists in the form of a single photographed model. (Fig. 1) Built out of compacted sand, the texture gives the viewer a sense that they are staring down onto the monument from far above, into the now desolate landscape of the Earth.

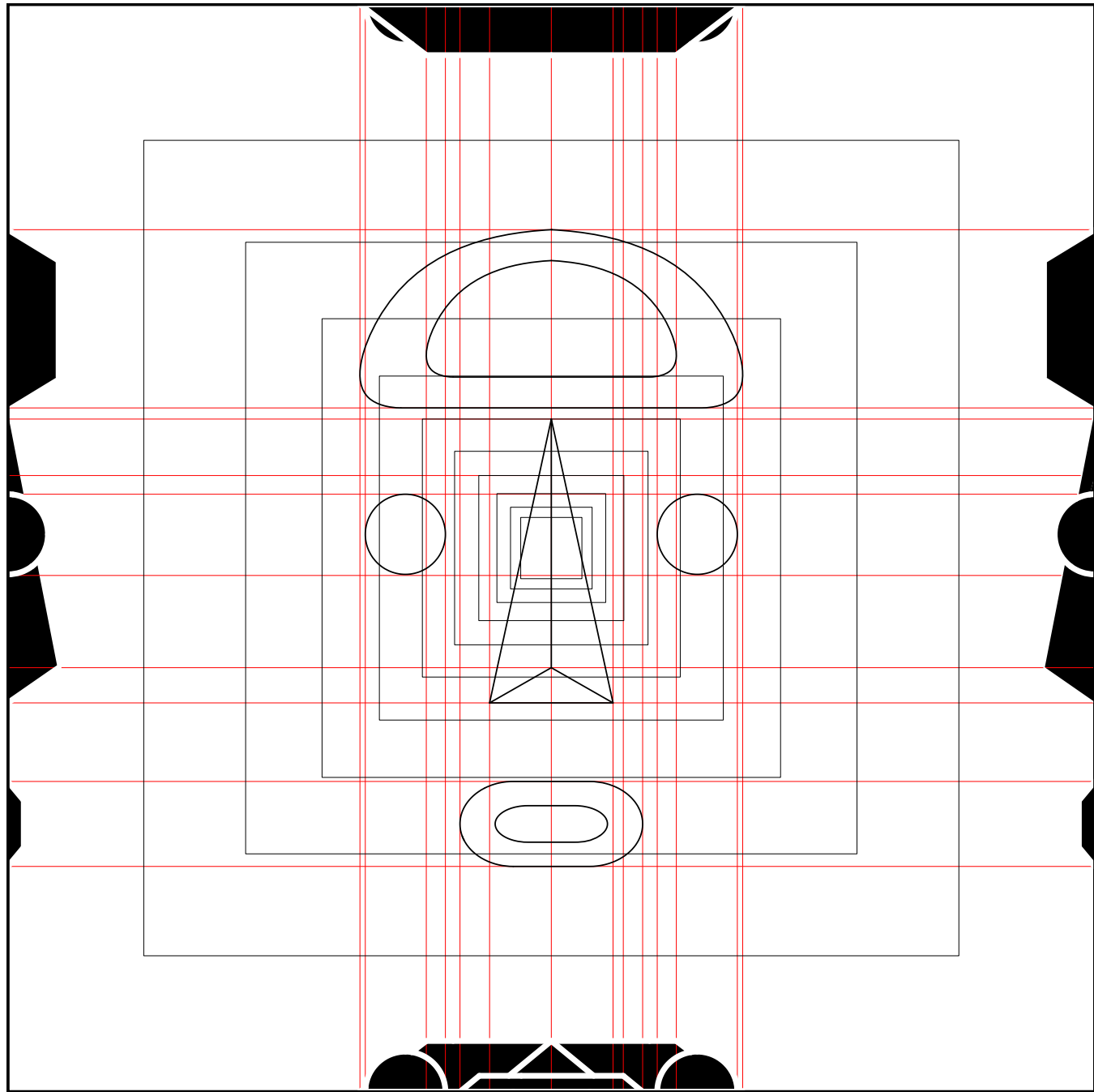


Fig. 2

From his days of constructing bases as a studio assistant for Brancusi, (Fig 3.) Noguchi has built a masterful understanding of how to play with the perceived weight of an object through its relative position to the body and its surroundings. For Noguchi, scale and weight are interconnected, and *Sculpture To Be Seen From Mars* is meant to be read at two scales: in section from the perspective of the minute human traversing its massive footprint, and in plan, from the viewpoint of the onlooker staring down from the cosmos. (Fig. 2)



Young Bird
Constantin Brâncuși, 1928
Courtesy of MoMA

Fig. 3

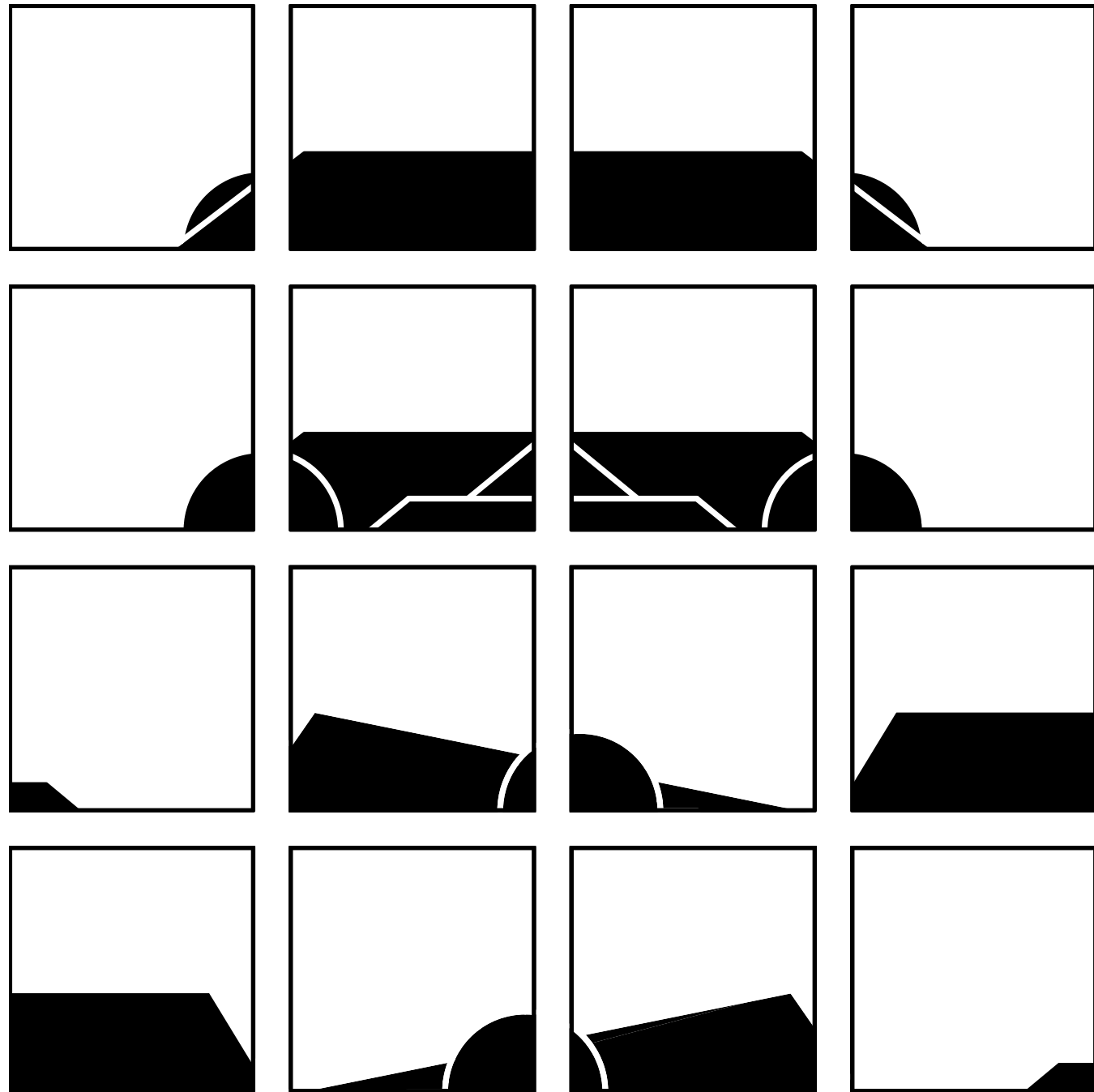


Fig. 4

At the scale of the human, sharing the ground plane with the monument reveals just how small one is relative to it; so much so that it becomes impossible to see it in its entirety from any viewpoint. (Fig. 4-5) As its title suggests, Sculpture To Be Seen From Mars is a monument for humanity to experience and feel, but not to see. This extreme disproportion of scale creates an understanding of its intense mass pressing down on the Earth.

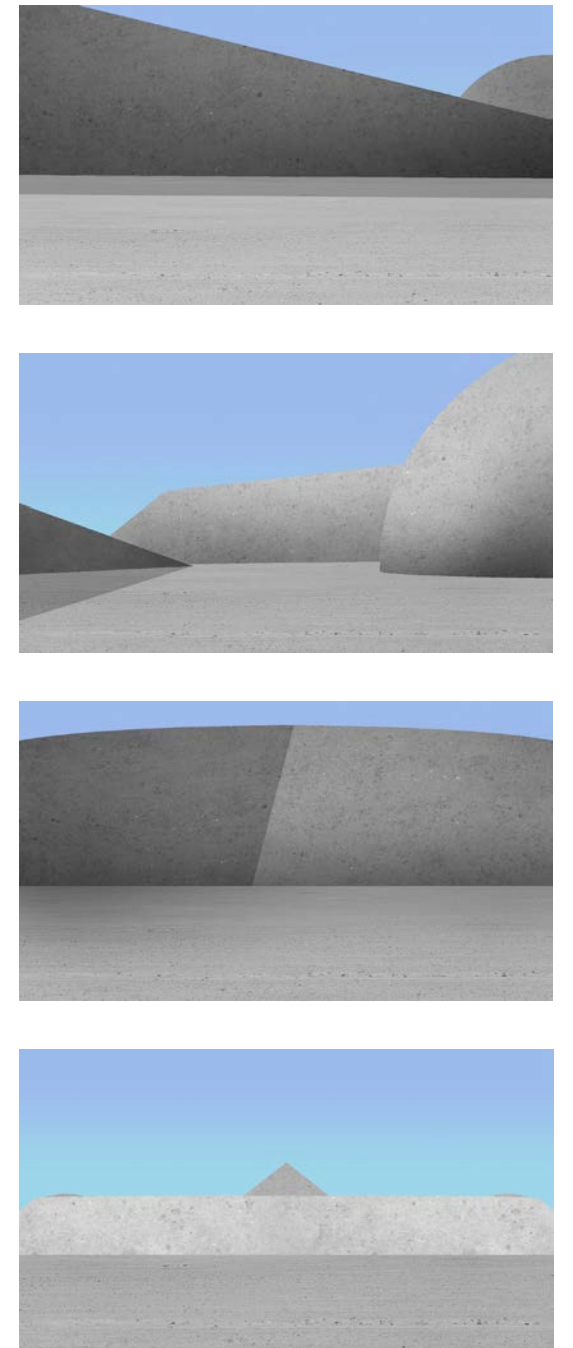


Fig. 5

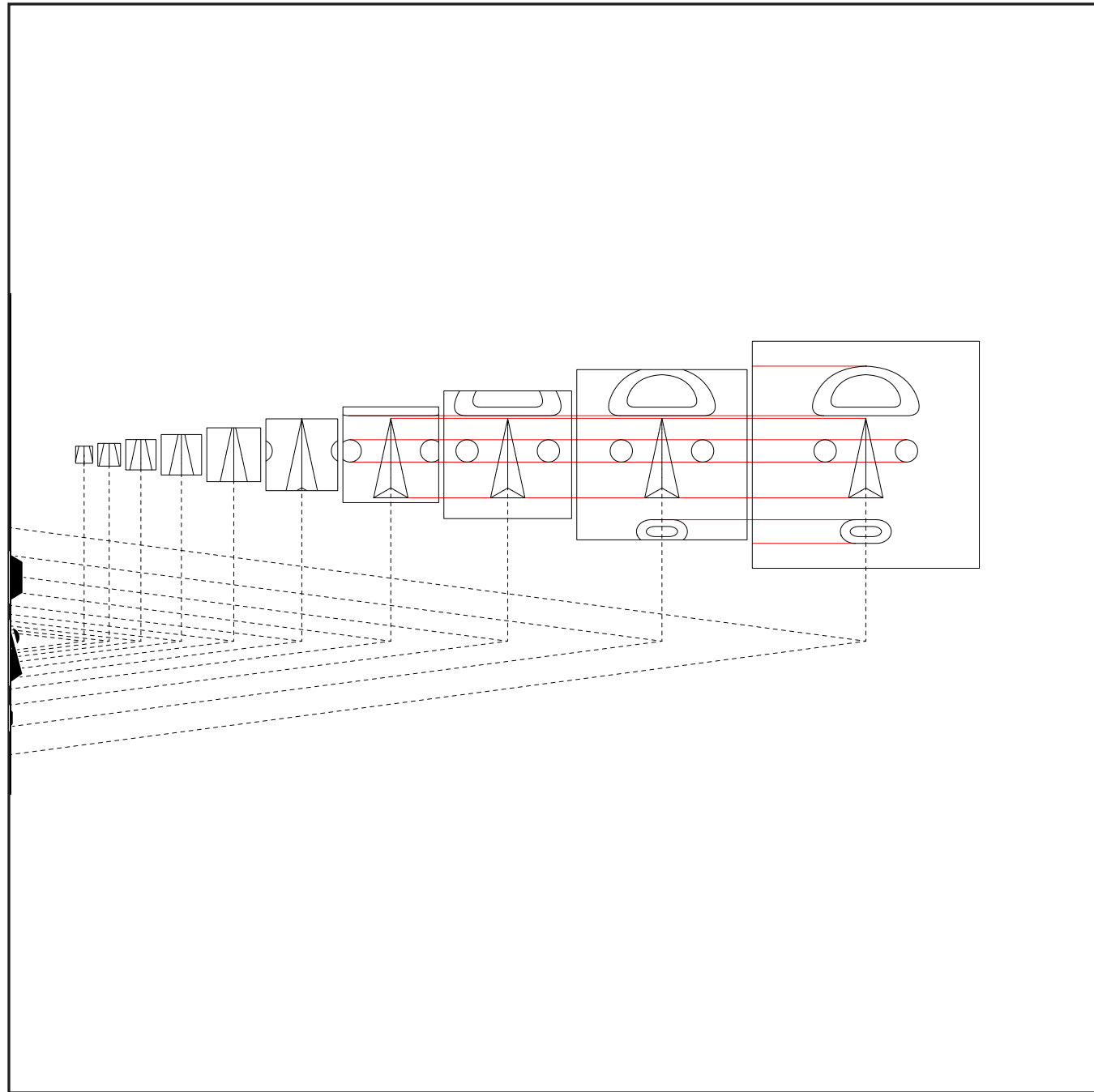


Fig. 6

It is only once one is able to look from afar that they can comprehend the monument in its entirety, becoming clearer the further away you stray from Earth. (Fig.6-7) From afar the monument becomes read relative to the scale of the Earth, not the human. A small speck on the massive presence of the planet, gently perched on its surface.

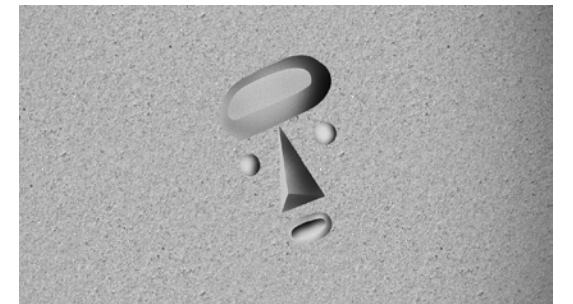
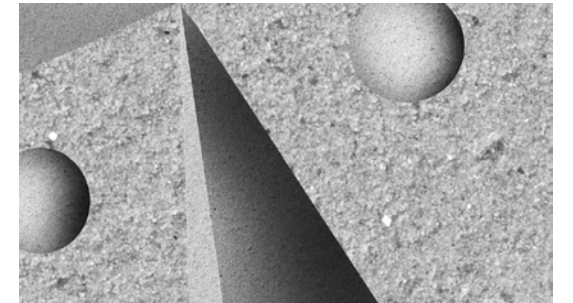
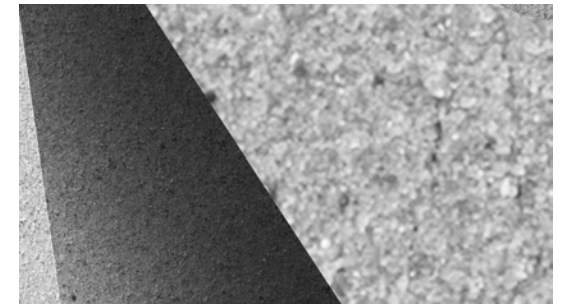


Fig. 7