

In 1967, when A & T was still in the early stages of development, MT proposed to R. B. Kitaj the possibility of working with an industry. Kitaj's immediate reaction was to suggest executing in three dimensions an idea he had been planning for painting. He had wanted to do "some old-fashioned paintings about the kind of grey, haze-like, dull daylight, Bohemian, urban atmosphere you see in photos of places like studios in the old days . . . Medardo Rosso's studio [1] . . . Brancusi's studio . . . that sort of thing." Kitaj had been intrigued with the reconstruction of Brancusi's studio in Paris Musée de l'Art Moderne in 1964, and the experience served as a primary impetus for the idea.

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About a year later, in August, 1968, Kitaj came to Los Angeles during a teaching stint at Berkeley, to visit Lockheed Aircraft Corporation along with Los Angeles artist Robert Irwin. We accompanied the two artists in touring Lockheed's Rye Canyon Aeronautics Research facility and the Burbank Aircraft construction complex. On the way to Rye Canyon, Kitaj elaborated on his initial conception, stating that he wanted to create the physical situation of a fictional "modern sculptor"—to reproduce, in a sense, his studio atmosphere by means of a series of visual "clues." The space, he said, would evoke the artist's "complex, ethical presence" not through memorabilia and personal artifacts but through the objects—works of art in various states of completion—dispersed throughout the "studio." Because of its emphasis on advanced theoretical research, the Rye Canyon Center was obviously not suited to Kitaj in terms of the proposal he already had in mind. (Irwin, on the other hand, was extremely interested in the research being conducted with their anechoic and sound chambers, as well as other aspects of the facility.)

We next visited the Burbank production facility, where Lockheed was then developing the L-1011 commercial super-transport plane. We were introduced to a man who was later to become a key figure in the project, Robert Robillard, leader of the Lockheed team responsible for the interior design of the L-1011 Tri-Star jet, and general supervisor in charge of various mock-up operations, including plastic, sheet metal, fabric and carpentry shops. After an exhaustive tour of these model-shop facilities and a brief look at additional production-line processes, Kitaj was satisfied that the Burbank complex had appropriate materials, equipment and skilled personnel to carry out his scheme. We arranged, in agreement with the Lockheed management, that after several months in London, he would return to Burbank for a prolonged period of residence.