

Born Passaic, New Jersey, 1938
Resident New York City

In April 1969 we invited Robert Smithson to tour Kaiser Steel and American Cement. In May, he came to Los Angeles and went first with Gail Scott to Kaiser. Unlike other artists who were primarily interested in Kaiser's steel mill products and fabrication capability, Smithson directed his attention to the raw materials and processes used in the making of steel. The tour consisted of climbing through giant mounds of limestone, iron ore, coking and power coal and wandering through a vast yard of slag—the impure by-product of the steel making process.

On May 22 Smithson and GS visited American Cement Company in Riverside where, again, the tour was unusual. Previous artists had spent their time in discussions with research engineers of the Advanced Technical Center, but Smithson wanted to see the limestone mining facilities. Consequently, he joined a tour for company personnel into the limestone mine, was driven around the grounds and saw enormous stockpiles of the raw materials that go into making cement and concrete.

Smithson's intention was to execute a work in one of the vast abandoned caverns inside the mine, distributing masses of various earth substances—blue calcite, pure white limestone, etc. The corresponding part of the piece for the exhibition would be fragments of the same material dispersed on a site on the Museum grounds. Another idea was to construct a concrete building at the Riverside location and then demolish it; the Museum piece would consist of the concrete fragments. Smithson presented his ideas to Dr. Kenneth Daugherty, who was to discuss them with his superiors. The next day Smithson presented us with several project drawings, including the "Dearchitected Projects" for American Cement, and a distributional project for Kaiser Steel. [1, 2]

Ken Daugherty called us to say that American Cement had just experienced an upheaval in corporate management and was no longer likely to take any artist in residence, and Kaiser indicated its lack of interest in Smithson's proposals.

