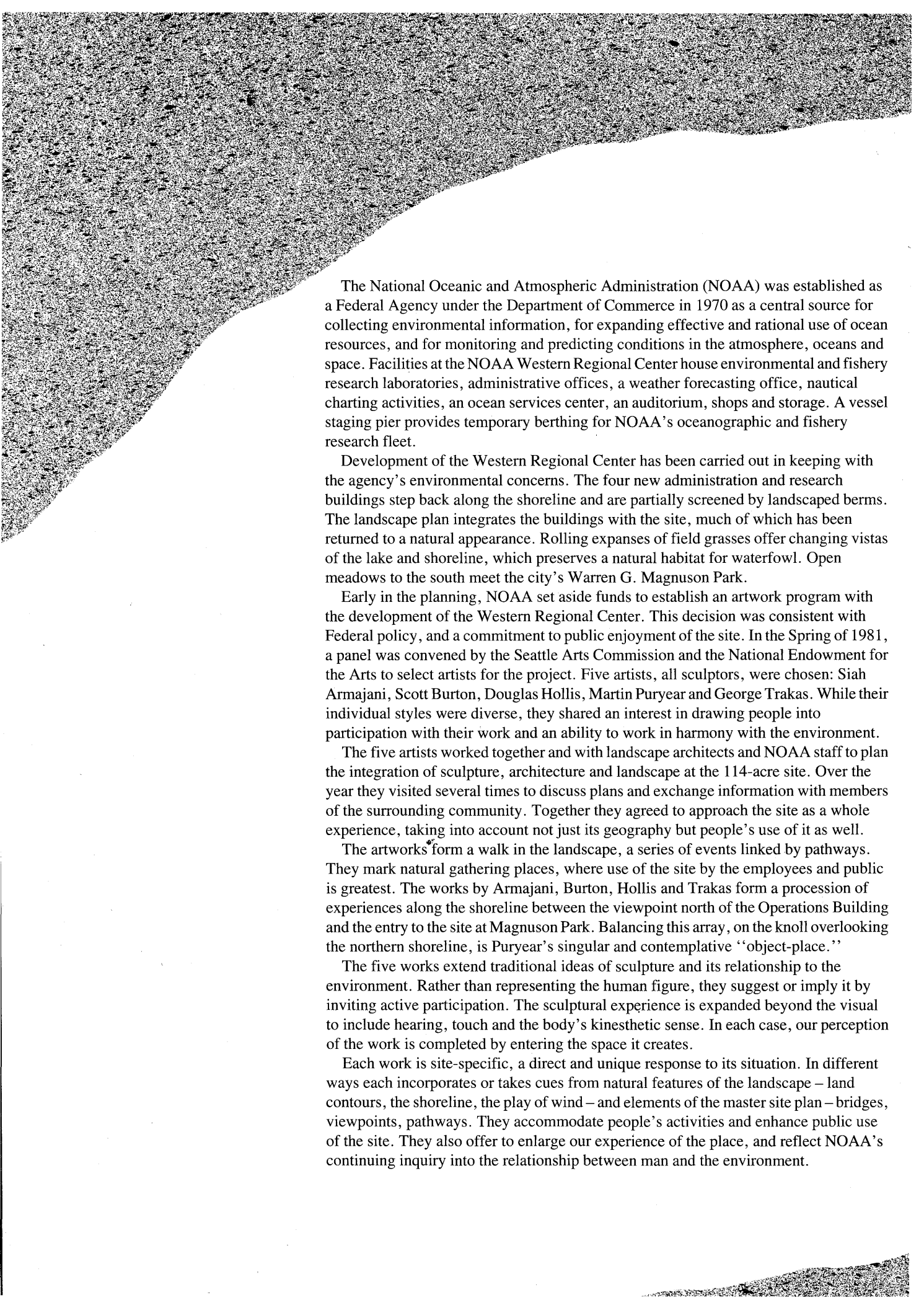


Five Artists at NOAA

A guide to the
shoreline walk





The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) was established as a Federal Agency under the Department of Commerce in 1970 as a central source for collecting environmental information, for expanding effective and rational use of ocean resources, and for monitoring and predicting conditions in the atmosphere, oceans and space. Facilities at the NOAA Western Regional Center house environmental and fishery research laboratories, administrative offices, a weather forecasting office, nautical charting activities, an ocean services center, an auditorium, shops and storage. A vessel staging pier provides temporary berthing for NOAA's oceanographic and fishery research fleet.

Development of the Western Regional Center has been carried out in keeping with the agency's environmental concerns. The four new administration and research buildings step back along the shoreline and are partially screened by landscaped berms. The landscape plan integrates the buildings with the site, much of which has been returned to a natural appearance. Rolling expanses of field grasses offer changing vistas of the lake and shoreline, which preserves a natural habitat for waterfowl. Open meadows to the south meet the city's Warren G. Magnuson Park.

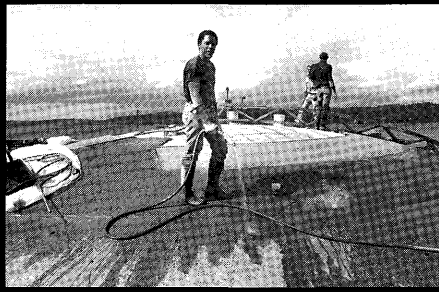
Early in the planning, NOAA set aside funds to establish an artwork program with the development of the Western Regional Center. This decision was consistent with Federal policy, and a commitment to public enjoyment of the site. In the Spring of 1981, a panel was convened by the Seattle Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts to select artists for the project. Five artists, all sculptors, were chosen: Siah Armajani, Scott Burton, Douglas Hollis, Martin Puryear and George Trakas. While their individual styles were diverse, they shared an interest in drawing people into participation with their work and an ability to work in harmony with the environment.

The five artists worked together and with landscape architects and NOAA staff to plan the integration of sculpture, architecture and landscape at the 114-acre site. Over the year they visited several times to discuss plans and exchange information with members of the surrounding community. Together they agreed to approach the site as a whole experience, taking into account not just its geography but people's use of it as well.

The artworks form a walk in the landscape, a series of events linked by pathways. They mark natural gathering places, where use of the site by the employees and public is greatest. The works by Armajani, Burton, Hollis and Trakas form a procession of experiences along the shoreline between the viewpoint north of the Operations Building and the entry to the site at Magnuson Park. Balancing this array, on the knoll overlooking the northern shoreline, is Puryear's singular and contemplative "object-place."

The five works extend traditional ideas of sculpture and its relationship to the environment. Rather than representing the human figure, they suggest or imply it by inviting active participation. The sculptural experience is expanded beyond the visual to include hearing, touch and the body's kinesthetic sense. In each case, our perception of the work is completed by entering the space it creates.

Each work is site-specific, a direct and unique response to its situation. In different ways each incorporates or takes cues from natural features of the landscape – land contours, the shoreline, the play of wind – and elements of the master site plan – bridges, viewpoints, pathways. They accommodate people's activities and enhance public use of the site. They also offer to enlarge our experience of the place, and reflect NOAA's continuing inquiry into the relationship between man and the environment.



Martin Puryear
Knoll for NOAA

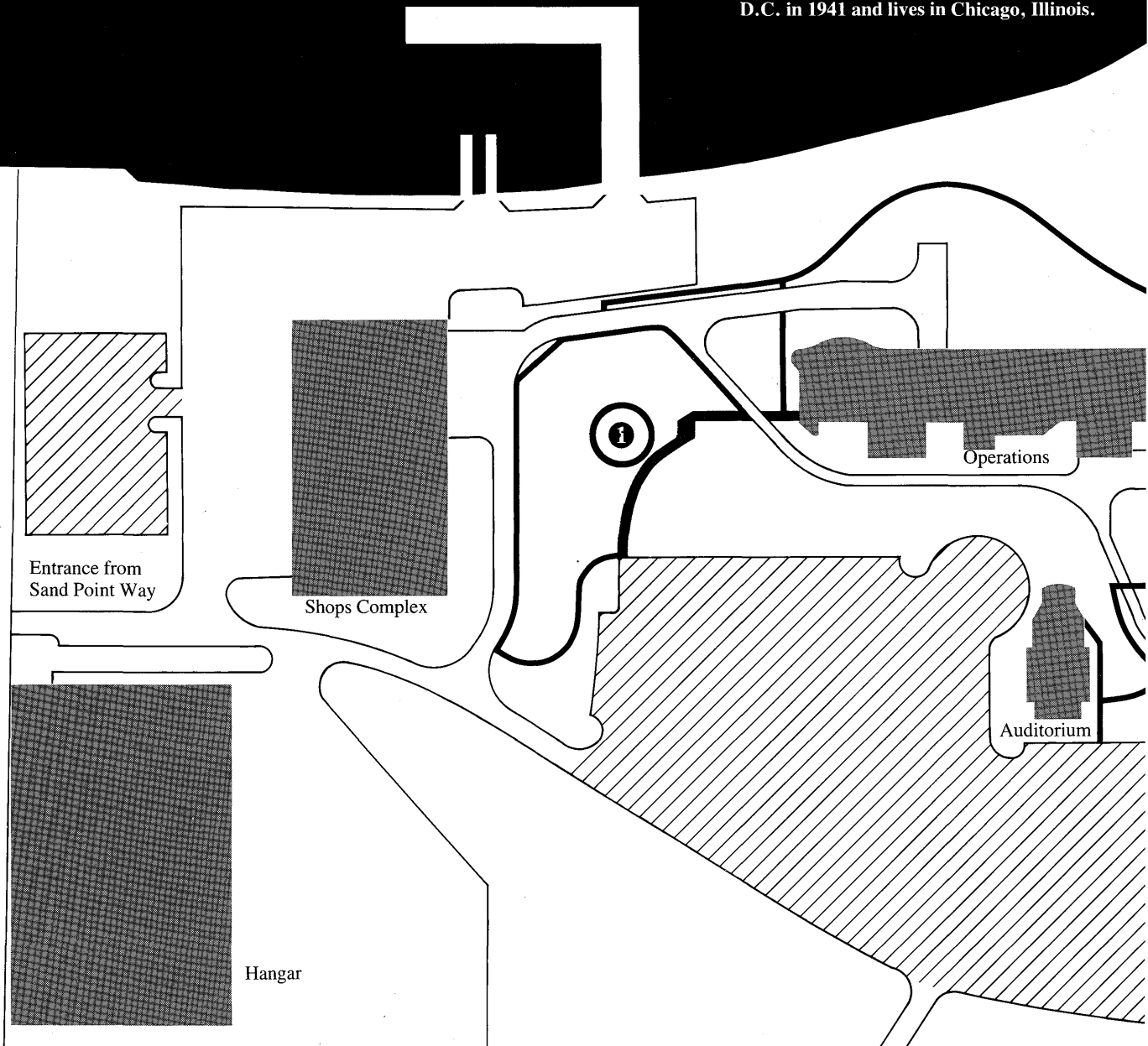
1

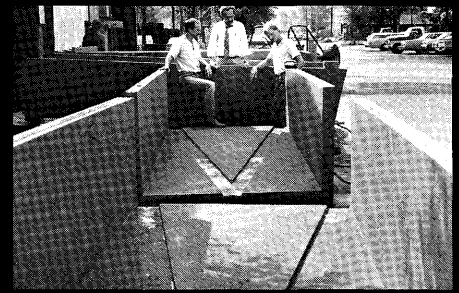
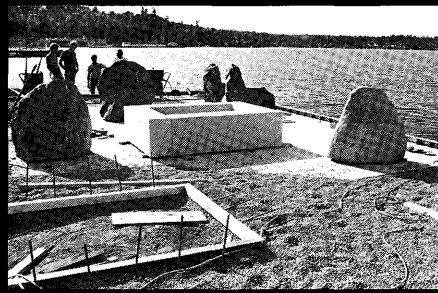
“The mound is a man-made stone outcropping which crowns the top of a grassy hill. Constructed as a section of a sphere, it is 45 feet in diameter and 4½ feet tall in the center, and reads as a dome. The surface of the sphere is covered with concrete and aggregate laid down in sections spiraling into the center. Paths approach the knoll from the South and East, curving to meet. Four slightly curved benches, whose arc corresponds to that of the sphere, are placed at the periphery of the mound.

Trees planted to the South of the mound will eventually reach some height, providing shelter for the site while leaving a clear view to the North facing Lake Washington.”

The knoll, and the benches designed by the artist, invite sitting, standing and climbing for views of the lake and pier. The double helix pattern on the mound’s surface, recalling molecular structures, is only fully revealed when one stands at its center. It is a contemplative space, a place to look at and look from, and a singular balance to the grouping of works along the shoreline to the East.

Martin Puryear was born in Washington, D.C. in 1941 and lives in Chicago, Illinois.





Scott Burton
Viewpoint

②

Entered through a small grove of trees, Scott Burton's piece is an intimate gathering place with panoramic views of the lake. Within the room-like space, his rock furniture provides seating for visitors and NOAA employees.

Taking the grid pattern of the building facade as an organizing principle, the artist has created a flat, formal terrace raised

above the sloping ground. The architectural symmetry is interrupted by plants and rock forms dispersed across the regular pattern. Simple cuts made in rough boulders dredged up from the lake transform them into furniture. Their forms imply the human figure and their placement suggests social groupings. Benches of granite and concrete are completed by plantings, and stepping-stone boulders give access from the terrace to the shoreline.

Working with local materials, the artist has juxtaposed formal and informal, man-made and natural forms, bringing together these aspects of the site.

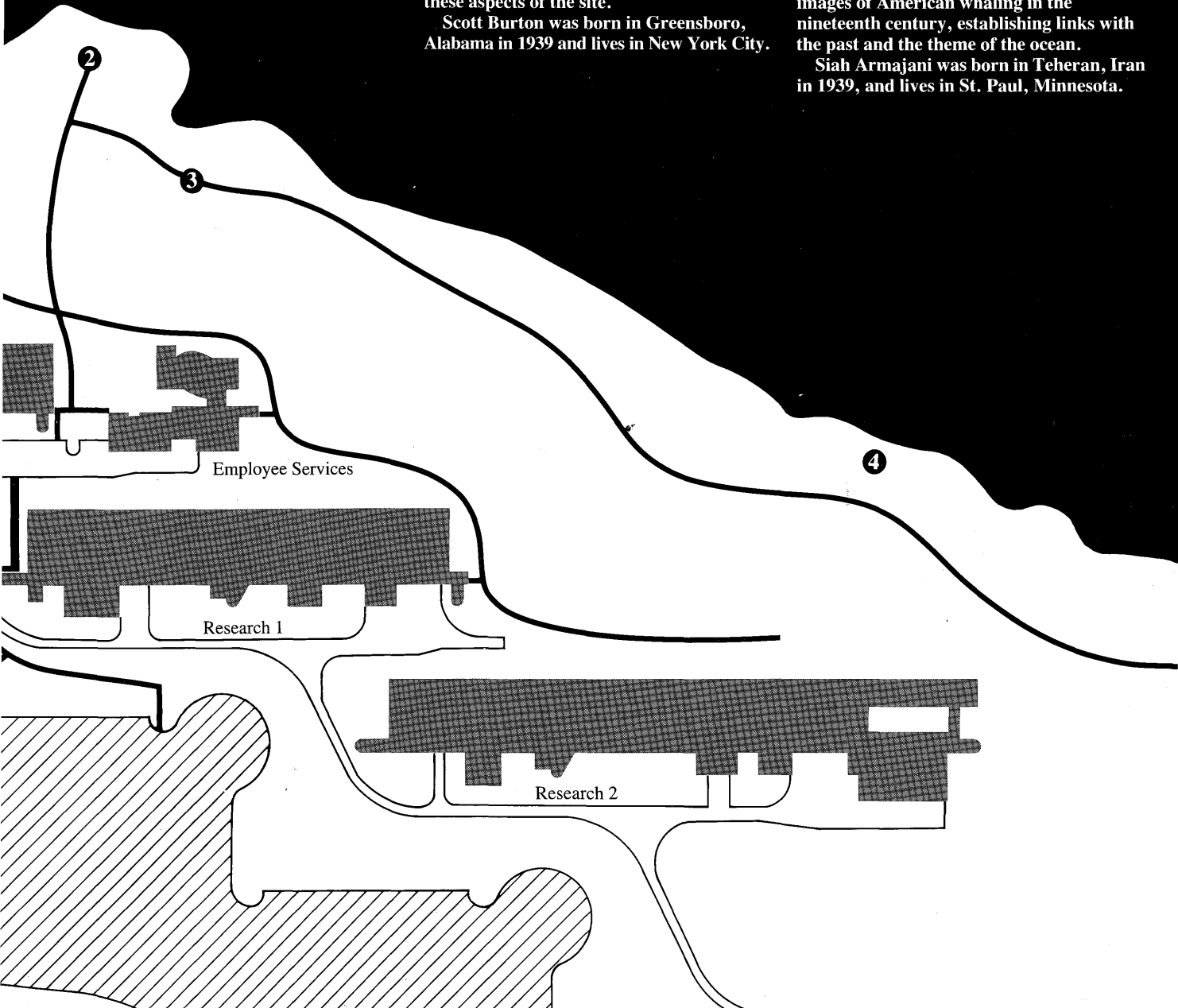
Scott Burton was born in Greensboro, Alabama in 1939 and lives in New York City.

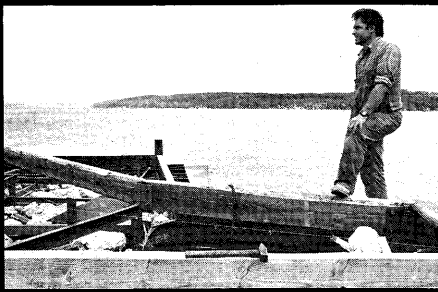
Siah Armajani
NOAA Bridge

③

Following the shoreline walk from the Viewpoint, one comes to Armajani's first bridge. The structure is functional, and also more than simply a bridge. Its sturdy geometry echoes the pointed gables of the hanger buildings across the site to the Southwest. The angled floor emphasizes passage over the cylinder beneath and through the landscape. The unbroken sides of the Bridge create an interior space which invites pausing. Cast-bronze letters along the floor and on the circular rim beneath carry passages from Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick*. Melville's words evoke images of American whaling in the nineteenth century, establishing links with the past and the theme of the ocean.

Siah Armajani was born in Teheran, Iran in 1939, and lives in St. Paul, Minnesota.





George Trakas
Berth Haven

4

“I felt the urge to work on the shoreline and create something that would bring people close to the interface of land, sea and sky in an intimate and integral way.”

George Trakas’ work articulates the transitional nature of the shoreline, creating a passage from the land out over the surface of the water. Using simple materials, steel and timber and rubble left at the shoreline from previous construction at the site, he has made accessible a privileged experience of the shoreline and the constantly changing surface of the water.

Trakas does not present the viewer with a self-contained object. Rather, the sculptural experience of his work depends on moving about on the structure. It unfolds in time and space as one traverses changes in level and materials, in textures and rhythm, and in the surroundings. These shifting relationships are not only visual, but felt through the body’s kinesthetic sense.

George Trakas was born in Quebec, Canada in 1944 and lives in New York City.



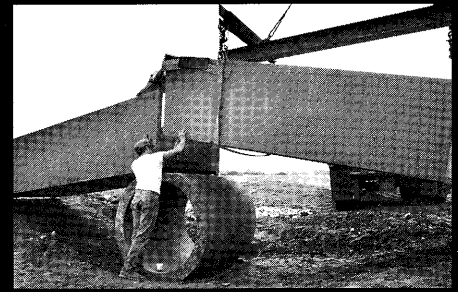
Douglas Hollis
A Sound Garden

5

“The Sound Garden speaks about the phenomena of the Wave, and our perceptual navigation over and through this Wave. The work incorporates a meandering path of triangular brick pavers, which winds up and over a gentle contour of land. Concentrated around the crest of this hill is a grove of linear steel towers which supports wind-activated organ pipes. Bearings allow a wind and air movement which re-orient these pipes to various wind directions. Kite-like benches are located in this area allowing the walker to stop and contemplate the surrounding view and listen.”

Hollis has transformed the ever-present, invisible and changing air currents playing over the land into audible sound. The area marked by the towers becomes a tuned zone of space, a sculptural experience of sound.

Douglas Hollis was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1948 and lives in Alameda, California.



Siah Armajani
NOAA Bridge

6

Marking the exit to the NOAA site to Magnuson Park, Siah Armajani’s second Bridge ends the shorewalk. “The Bridge is constructed between two points on a continuous line. Everything in the structure of the Bridge persists upon itself being useful. The Bridge brings together whatever comes before and whatever comes after the Bridge into one neighborhood.”

Lake Washington

Legend

Pedestrian Pathway
Parking Area
Road



5

6

Warren G. Magnuson
Park

All photographs by Colleen Chartier