

## JANET KARDON INTERVIEWS SOME MODERN MAZE-MAKERS

A Letter from Tony Smith, October 1975

Labyrinths and mazes are formal and symbolic analogues of a breakdown in intellect and will. They are of the underworld and they fascinate children. While I have seen photographs or drawings of many of these structures, only a few obvious examples remain in my memory: the labyrinth near Lake Moeris in Egypt as described by Herodotus, the so-far legendary one in Crete, the maze at Hampton Court. My own earliest images or impressions of related manifestations were without any conceptual basis: the rotogravure pictures of trench warfare in the Sunday papers, the ben-day scenes from the Newark tong wars in the local dailies. The unifying abstraction became isolated and clarified through puzzles, and by going through an actual, if flimsy, structure in a boardwalk amusement concession at Asbury Park. Any search for the center, or for the "recipe" for getting out of the maze failed to interest me. My experience of such configurations is on an intuitive and emotional level, without a rationale, or even any analysis. One exception to the above was a project for a water-garden at Hains Point, Washington. This was based on a rectangular grid, and, like the mosaics and tessellations in Roman and medieval pavements, more or less flat, a meandering pattern of concrete walks separated by flowing water. But the interest in subterranean complexes remained: fortifications, catacombs, mines, and quarries, caves, archaeological excavations, subway junction points, and highway interchanges (with their high berms). There have been many schemes for digging and filling (MAZE is modelled on one of these), and houses built at varying stages of emergence from the sod. Of course there was the *Portrait of the Artist . . .* and *Kafka*. The corrugated cardboard caves weren't developed as conceived, but I hang on to the intent. SMOKE, SMOG, and SMUG are mazelike still, as are the current pieces in marble which are based upon Klein and Fermi surfaces, and which are moving toward a topological "labyrinth of the car".



Tony Smith. *Bat Case at Guadivikiri* (detail), 1970