not furniture-not architecture

2000-2001 ACSA Faculty Design Award

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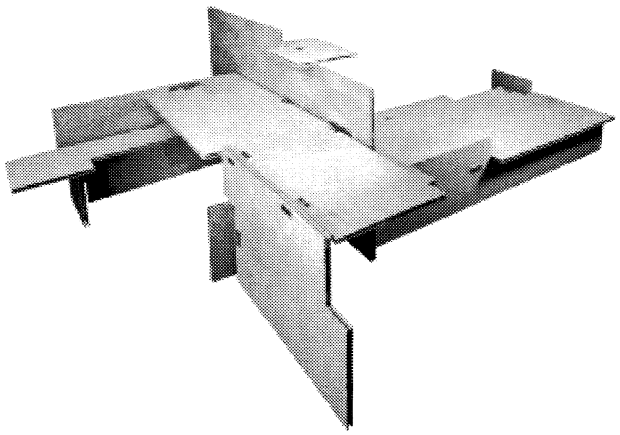
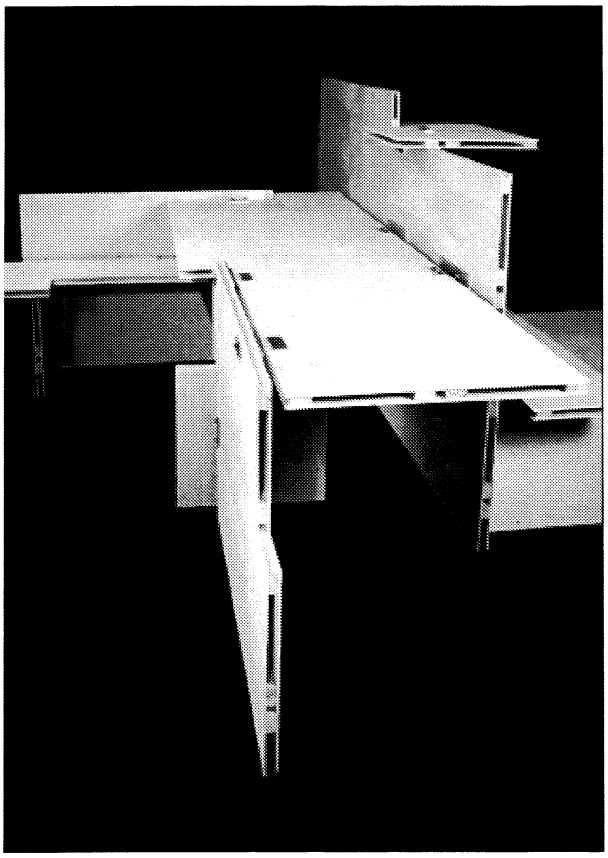
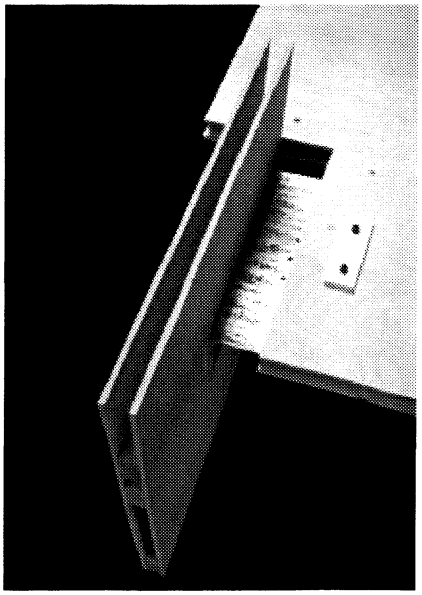
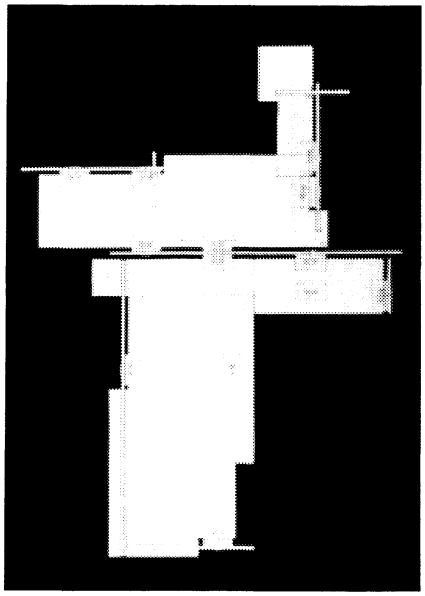
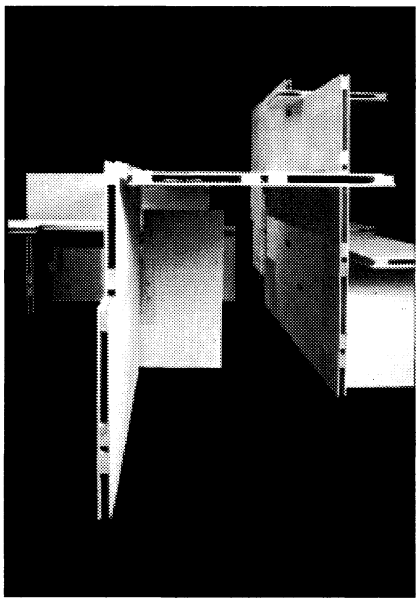




The project depicted here attempts to align field concept with field production. ("Field" is understood specifically as "spatial field" - a space or range of activity or opportunity, a nonhierarchical distribution with an emphasis on the system of production versus a fixed composition, and further understood, therefore, in opposition to the deterministic qualities of figure.) It consists of a system of variously shaped plywood panels and aluminum connectors - a collection of parts whose assembly can be configured to create an array of furniture formations. Systemization - relationship of size, shape, and connection - is the field "mechanism" operative in the design process, and systemization is the dominant characteristic uniting the panels, the connectors, and especially the assembled formations as a field. Aesthetically the project is associated with the gridded and planar production of early twentieth century De Stihl painting, while conceptually it parallels works of late twentieth century Conceptual art.

This project was initially conceived as a system of solid plywood planes that could be assembled into a limited variety of configurations. The range of sizes, notched shapes, and the vertical and horizontal interchangeability of the planes set in motion a dynamic of assembly which manifest an affinity for the planar compositions of van Doesburg - for example his Architectural Analysis of 1923. This De Stijl alignment introduced the potential of an implied field as the basis for configuration to the project (as distinct from a strategy of predetermined functionally based assemblies).

As the design process progressed the mechanism of systematic order became articulate, and the possibilities of field explicit. Panel modularity was adopted as much as it was created. Starting with the 48" sheet width, panel ribs were spaced 12" on center, and then paired (to accommodate cut lines) in a 9" - 3" o/c rhythm. Connectors also work with the 9 - 3 module, thus extending this order into three dimensions. (It is worth noting that this system of integrated integer relationships - order - was not an a priori schema imposed, but emerged through the processes of fabrication.) From fabrication to assembly, the order of the parts became the order for configuration - the limiting context of formation. Assemblies also responded to the requirements of function, support, and stability. The combination of order, self-limit, and function did not reduce project production to a set of preprogrammed furniture types. Rather, the

unified modularities of ribs, screws, shapes, connectors, and connection points resulted in a virtually unlimited number of assembly sizes and formations accommodating a range of functions - an open-ended array, rather than a set of finite objects.

Yet, an array of things does not necessarily a field make. Within all potential formations, as well as within each part of each formation, the formative order - the systematic logic - of their fabrication remains manifest. Thus inter-relatedness of shape and dimension, relationships of edge, face, and notch, and the punctuation of connector plates ("indexes" of connection), impart a non-hierarchic and systematized texture of surface, line, and point. Furthermore, in assembly the system is not subordinated to function. In fact it is not redundant to say that the assembled system is characterized by its systematic assembly, not by function as chair, table, etc. In this manner each formation completed maintains an emphasis on the system of its production, rather than on singular resolution. It remains its own matrix - a field.