

# The Second Lagoon

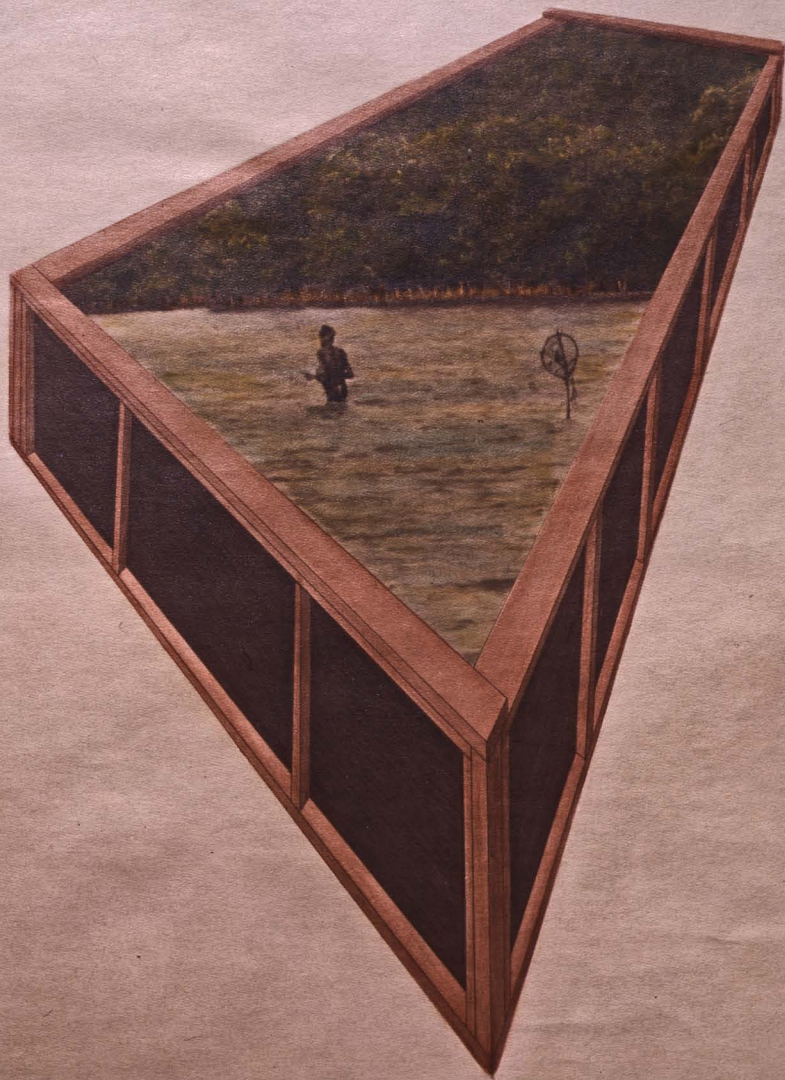
SEA GRANT

But  
the tank is not a lagoon  
nor is it a tidal pond  
nor does the mixing of fresh and salt waters  
make it an estuary  
filters are not the cleansing of the tides  
lights and heaters are not the sun  
and crabs in a tank do not make a life web

but  
the tank is part of an experiment  
and  
the experiment is a metaphor for a lagoon  
if the metaphor works  
the experiment will succeed  
and the crabs will flourish  
after all  
this metaphor is only a representation  
based on observing a crab in a lagoon  
and listening to stories

If  
the experiment isolates parts of a real lagoon  
and places them in a tank  
then the metaphor also refers to alienation  
to isolation  
to breaking the integrity of a real system  
After all  
a lagoon is self nourishing  
self-cleansing  
self-adapting  
If the metaphor is emptied  
other elements adjust to fill it

then  
suppose we adapt ourselves  
to supply what the crab needs  
then we become part of the experiment  
and as we nich ourselves in  
the system becomes  
self nourishing  
self cleansing  
self adapting  
then the metaphor for nature  
becomes more complete  
and we can not represent this system  
without representing ourselves



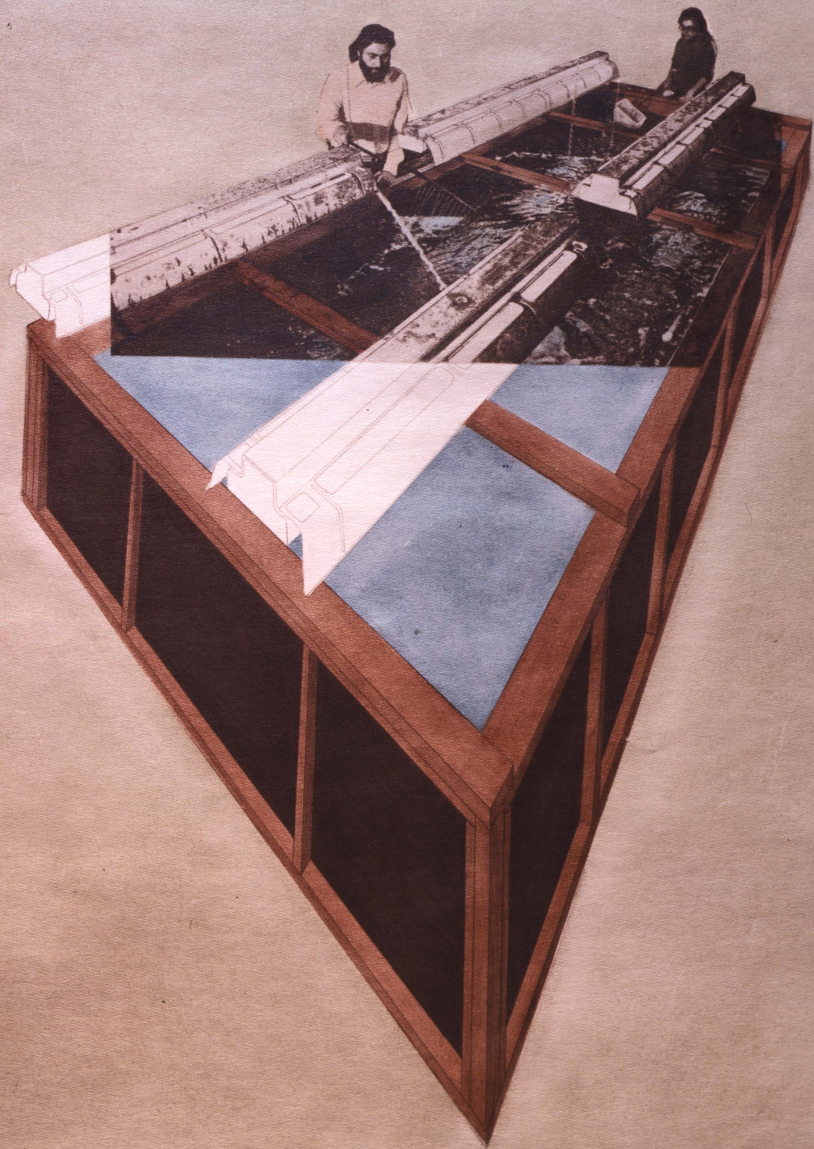
remember  
this crab is very special  
it has evolved high tolerance to stress  
it breeds quickly and survives  
like all of us  
by improving its existence  
as best it can  
with the materials at hand  
it will adapt and may thrive  
as do some of us  
when alteration and change  
become the requirement for continuing

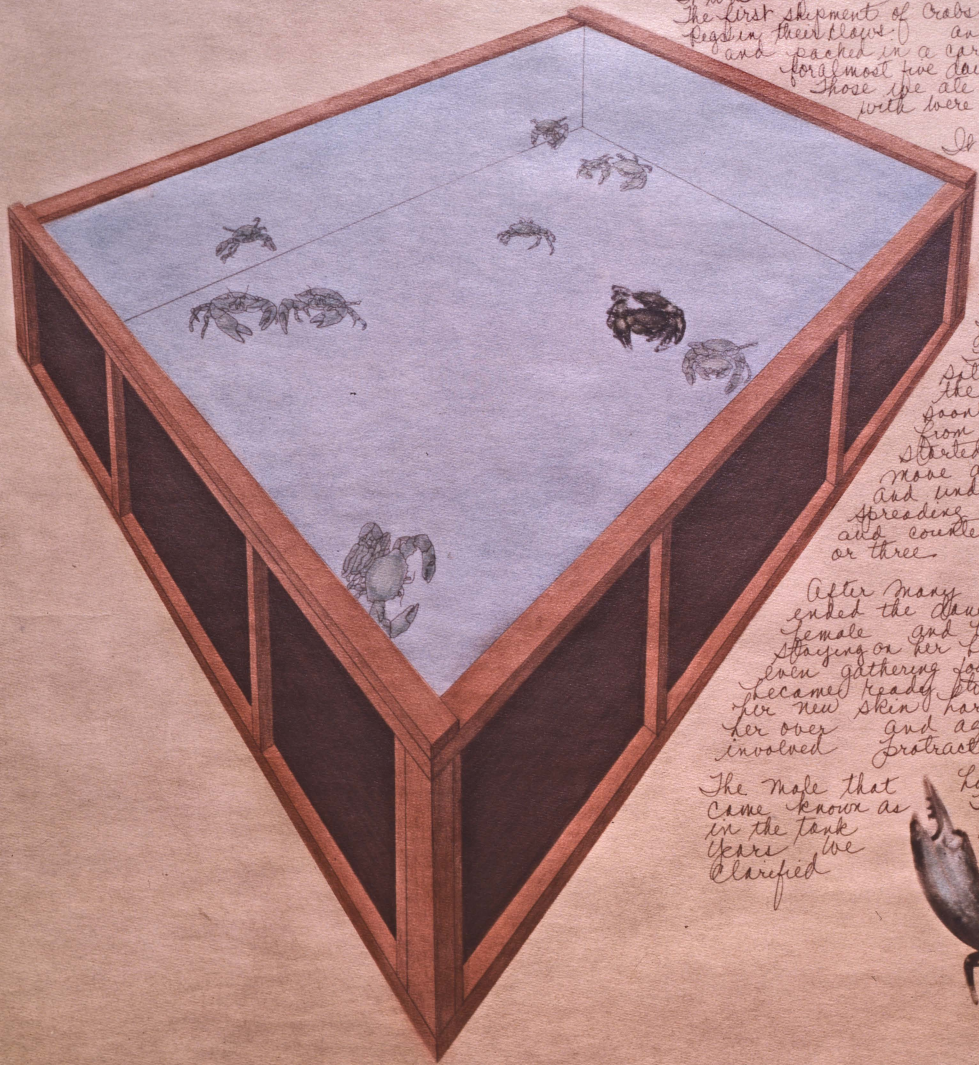
But an experiment is a fragile system  
and anything may go wrong  
the electricity may fail  
the tanks may break  
disease may enter  
or trace elements may not balance

remember  
a metaphor can be a powerful instrument  
if we believe it  
if we enact it  
it will develop a life of its own

But  
a metaphor can be a fragile instrument  
an improvisation born of discourse  
of observation  
and anyone may change or reinterpret it  
for any reason

yet the metaphor for nature is a strong metaphor  
an arrogant metaphor  
a useful metaphor  
an improbable metaphor  
a playful metaphor  
a dangerous metaphor that draws attention away  
from the destruction of habitat  
a valuable metaphor that will lead  
to the regeneration of habitat  
But it's only a tank  
the crabs don't know it's only a tank  
yet when we feed them they look up  
so already they behave differently





17 days August

The first shipment of crabs arrived from the marketplace in Colombo with fresh their claws and packed in a cardboard box. They had been en route for almost five days and most of them still lived. Those we ate were delicious. Those we experimented with were lardy.

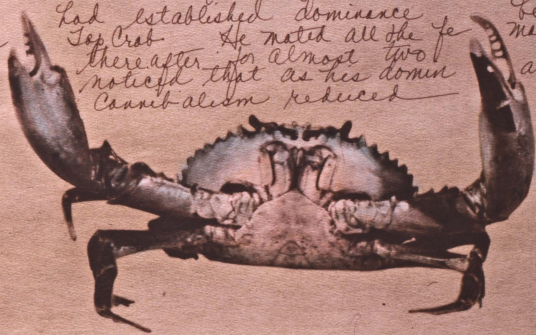
It was November

One day the crabs began to act strangely. They stopped eating our food. They stopped eating each other. Most movement ceased. Search behavior ceased. Challenge behavior ceased. They sat with folded claws. The mood was depression of the absence of well being. The metaphor of absence was compelling. We began to search for what might be missing and discovered it was monsoon time in Sri Lanka and that a monsoon changes the salinity of the coastal waters and ecriches the food supply. So we improvised a monsoon tank. We could not add fresh water from a hose. And within minutes the crabs started to behave differently. They began to move around excitedly. They began to spread and measure. Backing into corners and under each other. Challenging and measuring. Challenging in groups of two or three.

After many mock battles the largest male crab ended the charge. Mounting the back of the largest female and beginning an elaborate courtship. Straying on her back and embracing her with his claws. Even gathering food for her and feeding her until she became ready to moult. Then guarding her until her new skin hardened into shell. Then slipping her over and again mounting her for the long involved protracted act of mating.

The male that came known as the Tank Crab. We clarified

had established dominance. He mated all the females thereafter for almost two years. Cannibalism reduced.

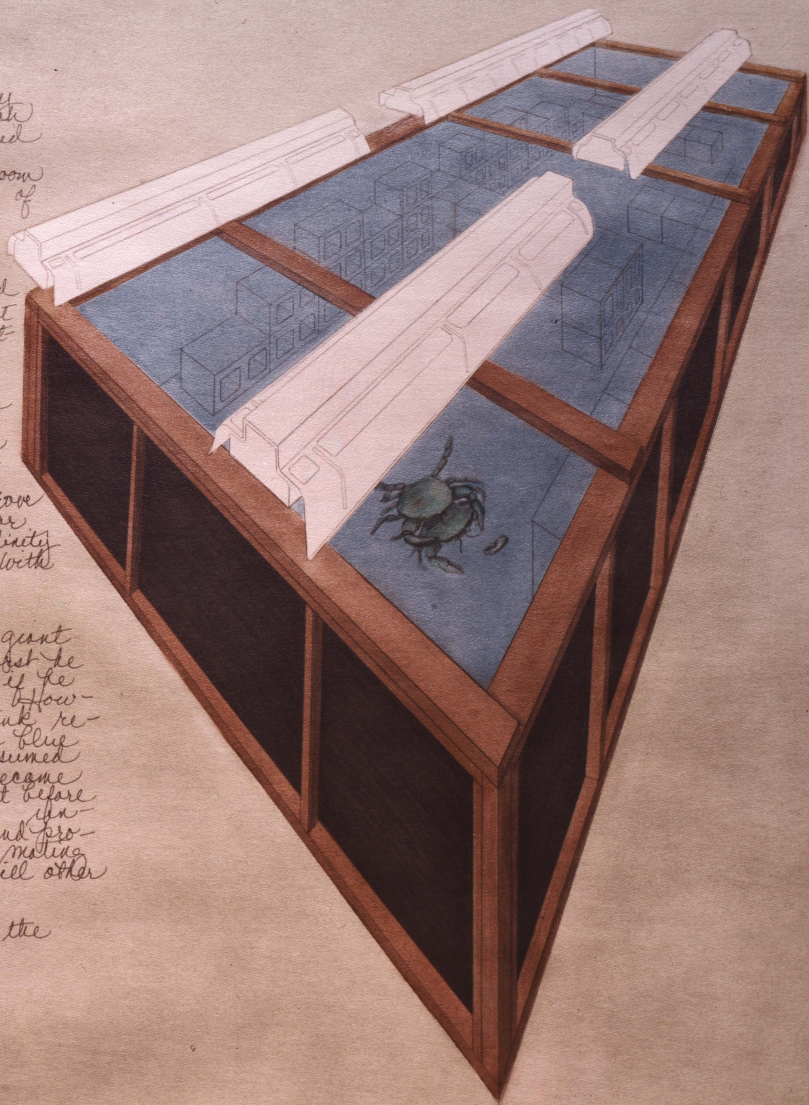


It was January  
One day we noticed the tanks were very quiet. All movement had ceased. Search behavior ceased. Challenge behavior ceased. No crabs were visible. Circling the tank looking for food. There was a feeling of doom. The mood was of fear and withdrawal of the absence of well-being. The metaphor of absence was compelling.

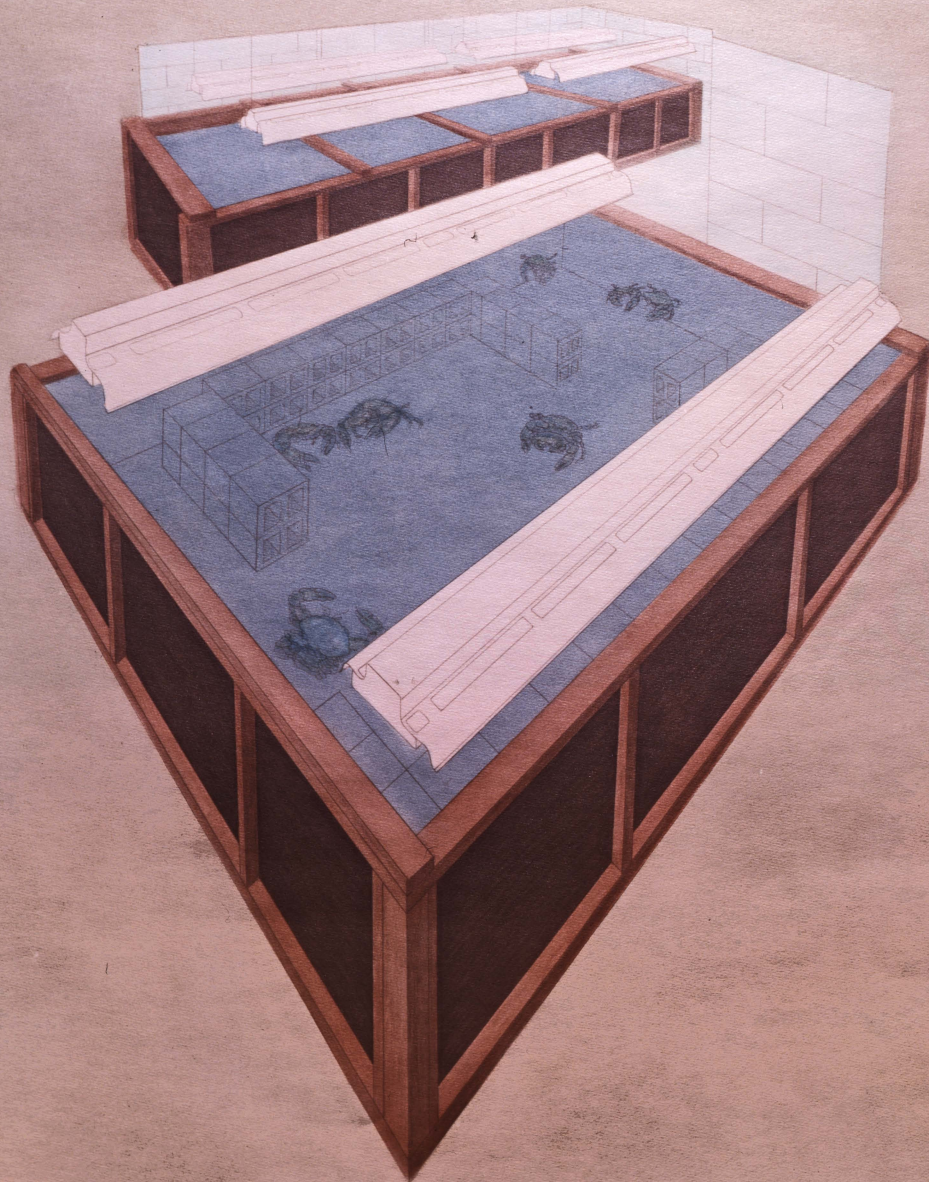
All crabs but one remained hidden among the few pieces of flowerpot scattered about the tank. The visible bag lay out in the middle of the tank dead and partly eaten. Its shell still soft from recent moult. We began to search for what might be missing and imagined what a crab at his most vulnerable might have in a lacon that might be missing from the tank. We thought of a bottom of sand or mud into which a crab at his most vulnerable might immediately disappear. We thought of tangles of mangrove roots. In the absence of mud bottoms or root tangles we began to insert an infinity of hiding places. All best we could. With timberblocks from the lumberyard.

It was March  
One day a blue-green crab moulted into a giant and became the largest crab. At first he seemed reluctant to measure claws as if he retained the memory of being smaller. However when the first female in the tank released sex hormones into the water, the blue-green crab whom we labelled Gigantico assumed control and mounted her. She too became giant after the mating moult but before she could disengage her eye Gigantico in cleared her turned and faced her and proceeded to eat her. After his second mating he did it again. He then began to kill other crabs without bothering to eat them.

We penned him into a corner and the cannibalism stopped.







**Development of a Commercial Aquaculture System for the Crab *Scylla serrata* (Forsk.)**

A study was undertaken of the breeding cycle of the crab, *Scylla serrata*, in order to develop a commercial aquaculture system for the production of crabs for export.



The present study, *Scylla serrata*, has been undertaken to develop a commercial aquaculture system for the production of crabs for export. The study was undertaken in order to determine the breeding cycle of the crab, *Scylla serrata*, and to develop a commercial aquaculture system for the production of crabs for export.

**Light and tank configuration.** In 1967 and 1968 the crabs, *Scylla serrata*, were reared in the laboratory under natural light and temperature conditions. The crabs were reared in the laboratory under natural light and temperature conditions. The crabs were reared in the laboratory under natural light and temperature conditions.

**Reproduction studies.** The present study was undertaken in order to determine the breeding cycle of the crab, *Scylla serrata*, and to develop a commercial aquaculture system for the production of crabs for export.



The two crabs were also reared in the laboratory under natural light and temperature conditions. The crabs were reared in the laboratory under natural light and temperature conditions. The crabs were reared in the laboratory under natural light and temperature conditions.

**Reproduction studies.** The present study was undertaken in order to determine the breeding cycle of the crab, *Scylla serrata*, and to develop a commercial aquaculture system for the production of crabs for export.



and because the crabs grew so well in the tanks I began to dream a crab-acre and others interested began to dream it with me

