

The Third Lagoon

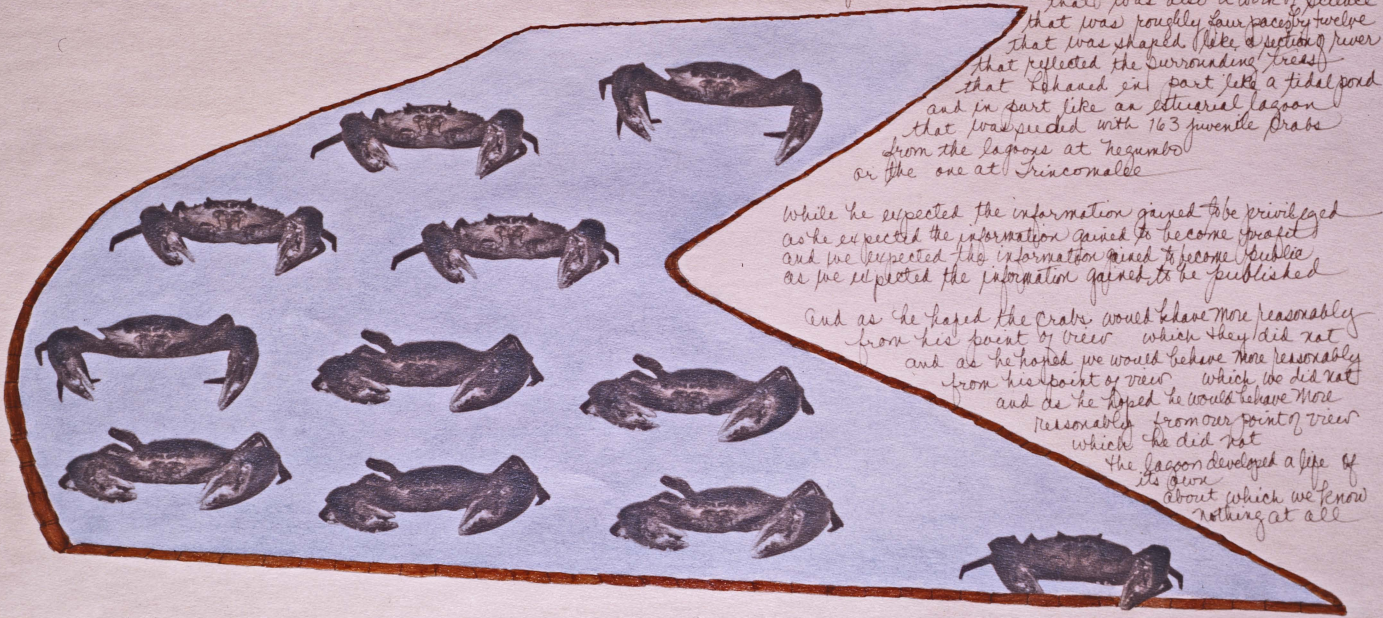
THE HOUSE OF CRABS



He said he dealt in commodities
mainly the future of food
he was fascinated by the idea of owning a work of art
that was also a work of science
that would be an outdoor pond
that would enhance his garden
that might add another pole to his life

We were fascinated by the idea of producing a work of art
that would further our investigations of cannibalism
that would seal up crab habitat experiments
that would test ideas about crab behavior
outdoors in the Los Angeles smog

So over time we produced this work of art



that was also a work of science
that was roughly four feet by twelve
that was shaped like a retreating river
that reflected the surrounding trees
that looked in part like a tidal pond
and in part like an estuarial lagoon
that was seeded with 163 juvenile crabs
from the lagoons at Tequimal
or the one at Rinconale

While he expected the information gained to be privatized
as he expected the information gained to become profit
and we expected the information gained to become public
as we expected the information gained to be published

and as he hoped the crabs would behave more reasonably
from his point of view which they did not
and as he hoped we would behave more reasonably
from his point of view which we did not
and as he hoped he would behave more
reasonably from our point of view
which he did not

The lagoon developed a life of
its own
about which we know
nothing at all



He was part of a commune at Wood's Hole that was working with whale systems. He said I heard you have a trouble creature a crab. He said he was forming a cooperative venture here and he wanted to combine his research on shrimp with ours on the crab in order to generate systems that could produce food cheaply.

We said we were interested. We gave him all our information on the crab. After a long wait we asked to see his installation. His partner said some of that information was privileged. He never called us back.

He was a scientist who worked in third world countries for governments and wealthy individuals solving biological problems related to agriculture. He said I hear you have an exotic creature a crab which might be farmable under technologically simple conditions. He visited the tanks he relocated on the crab acre. He said he would like to work with us. He would try to raise funds to scale up the experiments.

He sent us a letter of confidentiality, then postcards from Saudi Arabia and Iran but he never called us back.

He published a newspaper for the Los Angeles Asian community. He said I hear you have a tasty creature a crab. He said he knew our crab well as it was a favorite food in his native Thailand as well as in neighboring countries. He was certain that many of his associates in the restaurant business would be interested in locating a dependable source for this crab. Therefore he would consider assisting us with the development of a crab acre. He asked us to return in a week for further discussion.

The day before our appointment there were headlines in the Los Angeles press stating that a local Thai boss had been shot and killed in his office by person or persons unknown.

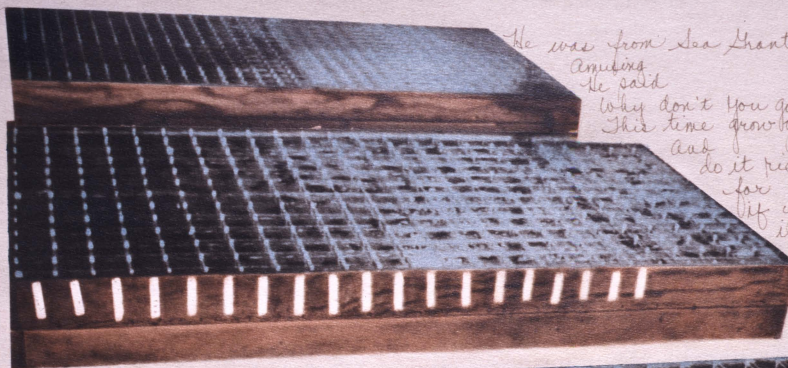


He was a scientist working with electricity in fish. He said I hear you have an interesting creature a crab. However to develop your crab acre you need more precise statistics. He offered to join with us to get a grant from the local utility company to use the warm water effluent from their southern cooling ponds to set up experimental tanks outdoors by the ocean.

We met with two men from the utility company. They took our information. They debated the proposal for nine months. Finally they said no.

He was an accountant who worked with tax structures. He said I hear you have a profitable creature a crab which might offer shelter or tax shelter to money. He said he had clients who were doctors and needed such a shelter particularly in December. The group of doctors wished to fund a project that could lose money now and as a consequence save money in April. But they also wished to be assured that someday there could be considerable profit and asked if we could produce an array of figures for him to ensure his desires were congruent with our system.

So we thought about what an amazing invention a tax shelter is. An invention that makes gain loss and loss gain and did the calculations but we never called him back.



He was from Sea Grant He found our adventures in the marketplace

Amusing

He said

Why don't you go for another Sea Grant

This time grow proper crab like the lobster

and

do it right

for

If your crab can grow from an ounce to a pound

in nine months

in an open tank environment

think how much faster it could grow

in a totally closed environment

like the lobsters

with one square foot per crab

The restricted movement will conserve

calories

while permitting surveillance

Let your research explore

artificial insemination

Let your research explore

selective breeding

focus on size and docility

Let your research

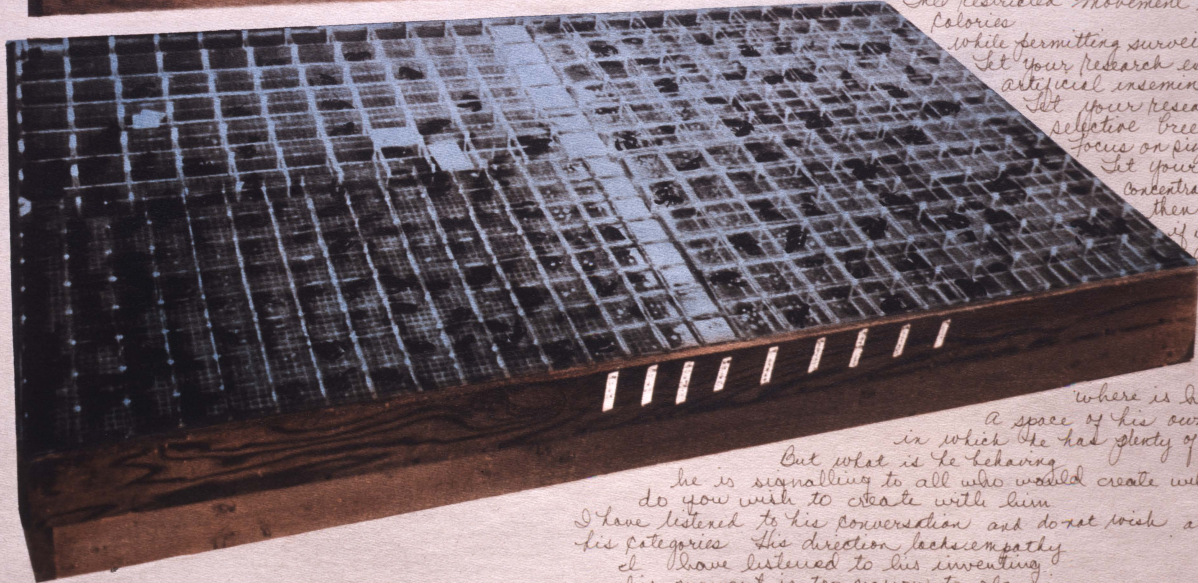
concentrate on control

then

if it is successful

a market will

emerge



where is he speaking from

a space of his own devising

in which he had plenty of company

But what is he behaving

he is signalling to all who would create with him

do you wish to create with him

I have listened to his conversation and do not wish a sojourn in

his categories His direction lacks empathy

I have listened to his inventing

this moment is too narrow to play in

then choose another conversation

an estuarial lagoon is the place where fresh and salt waters meet and mix it is a fragile meeting and mixing not having the constancy of the ocean or the rivers it is a collaborative adventure its existence is always at risk

heavy rains can increase its size and boundaries increasing nutrients while decreasing salts

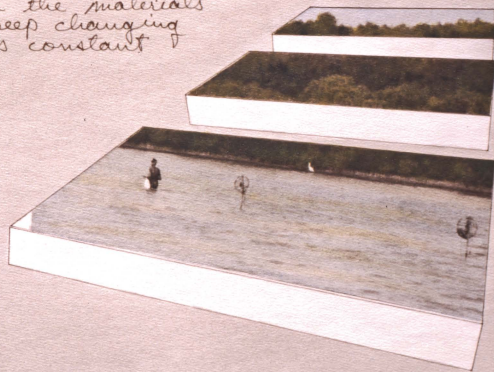
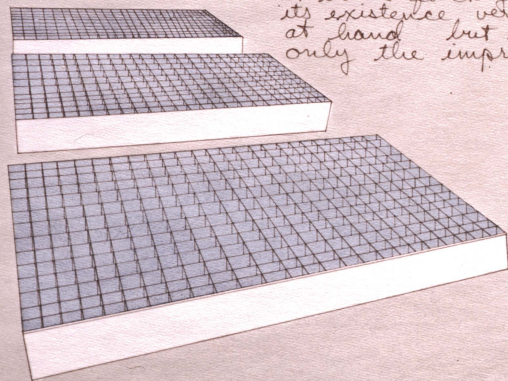
forest fire then rain can set up the conditions for heavy silting and a lagoon can turn first into a mud flat then into a swamp

if the day is warm the waters being shallow warm quickly if the night is cold the waters being shallow cool quickly

life in the rivers the lakes and the oceans where the properties of water are more constant is less stressful

but life in the lagoons is very special it has evolved high tolerance to the stresses that come about from sudden changes in fresh and salt water and temperature and available food for the life web

life in the lagoons is tough and very rich it breeds quickly like all of us it must improvise its existence very creatively with the materials at hand but the materials keep changing only the improvisation remains constant



Is it worth forgetting what he said
he is not here to suggest that we work with
containers and play within boundaries
but his choices are peculiarly inflexible
and oddly serious

And he has frozen his boundaries
leaving no room for flow or chance
or even a modest ambiguity

Now a lagoon is a container with flexible
boundaries wherein all the parts are
continually restating themselves
and continually reestablishing relationships
yes a system where constancy
is always at risk and the life is
turned to stress

let us improvise a lagoon
that is tough and resilient
let it have a becoming complexity
find me the elements of
a simple food chain
let it begin with broth
a planktonic mix
a primal soup
thus plankton
plankton-eater
eater of plankton-
eater.

will form a chain
ending with the crab
let the system be separated into parts
give each part a pond connected by water flow
then who takes a bite out of whom and how much
can be balanced then the parts can be harvested
and the wastes can be circulated nourishing the broth

How serious do you want to become about this lagoon
I see it as a playground but it could develop
a life of its own

If the key to the system is broth then the key to creating
the system is a pretty confluence of land and fresh and
salt waters

