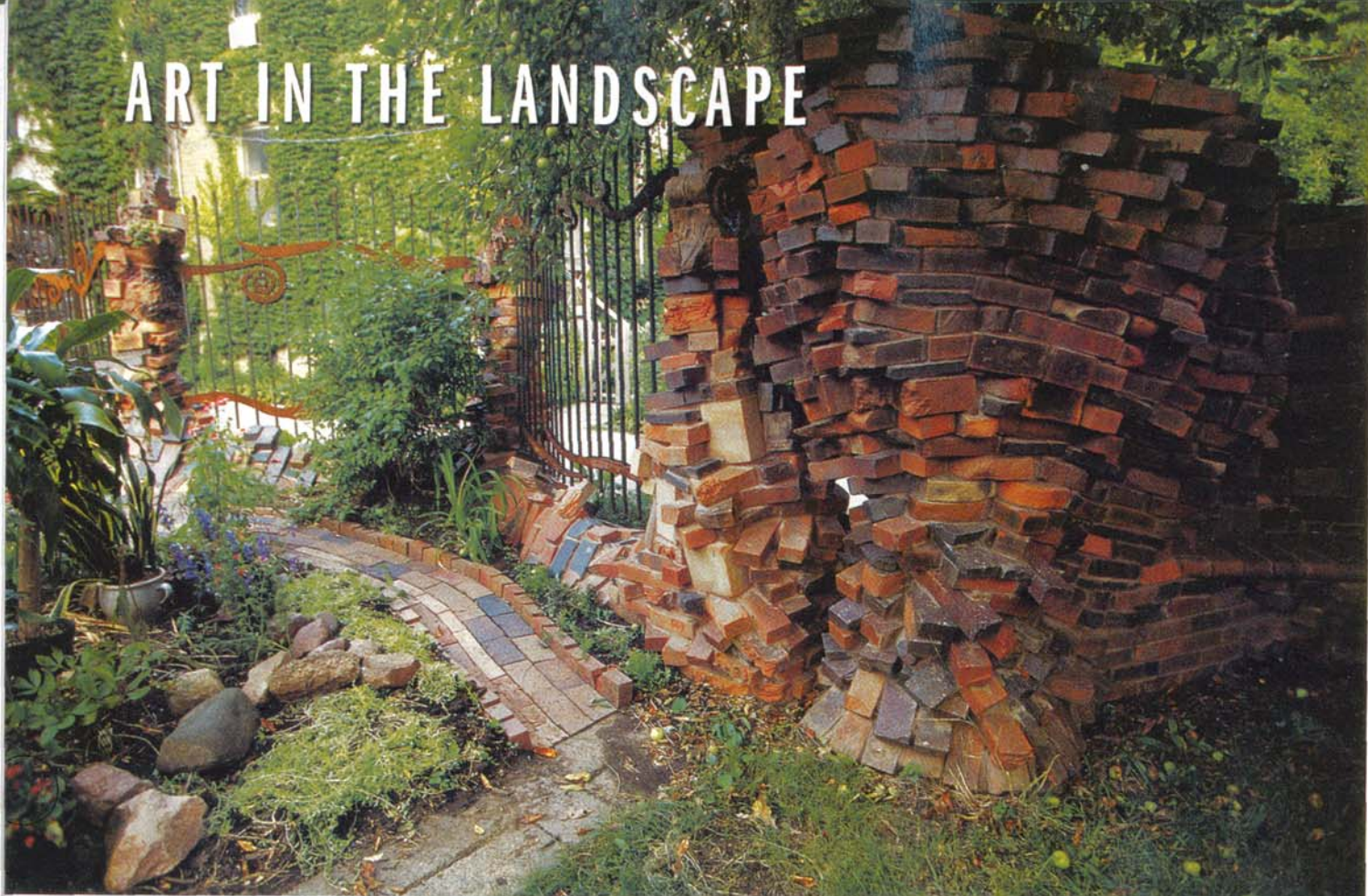


landscape architecture

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ART IN THE LANDSCAPE



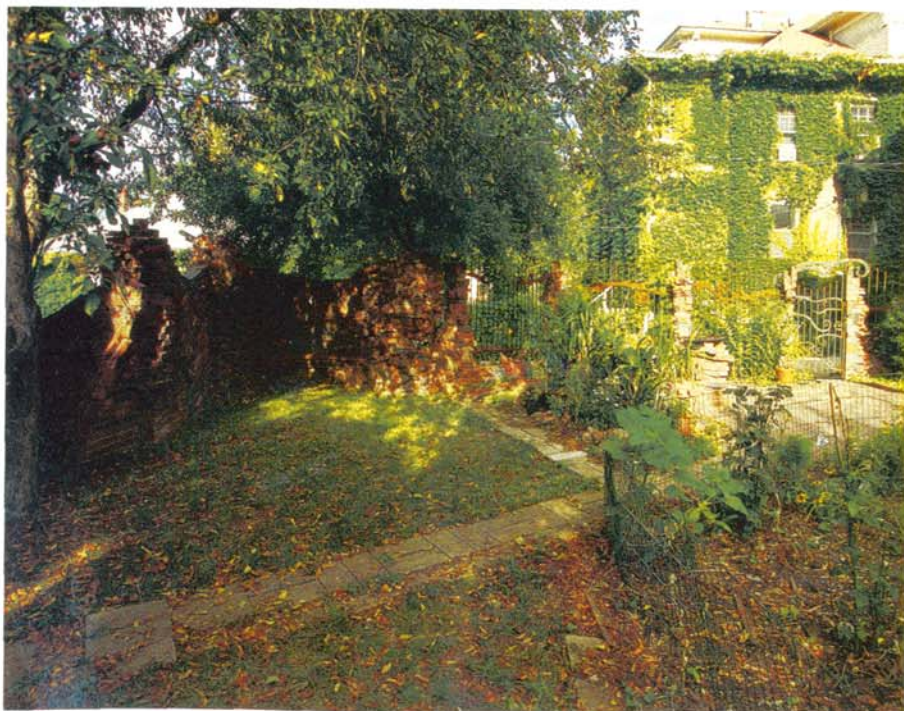
BRICK IS SEEN ALMOST universally as a building block for construction, but I find that its potential for metaphor makes it an intriguing material to use in art.

I first began manipulating brick while working on my BA in ceramics at Wolverhampton Polytechnic in England. I worked with sculptural ceramic objects but was bothered by their size limitations, and I also wanted my work to have a sense of relevance to place. In Wolverhampton, part of England's decaying industrial heartland, I would spend much time walking along brick canal paths, fascinated by the disused brick factory hulks that were returning to their natural state. Seeing the brick crumbling back into the earth helped me make the connection between the two natural elements. At this

Both *Keraunos Wall* and *Keraunos Wall Extension*, top and right, were private commissions completed over a two-year period. The original wall provided shade and a feeling of "growing" brick. The *Extension* continues with this idea, but the inclusion of metal railings allows for more sunlight.

NOT FOR WALLS ALONE

An artist bends brick to his will. **By Michael Morgan**

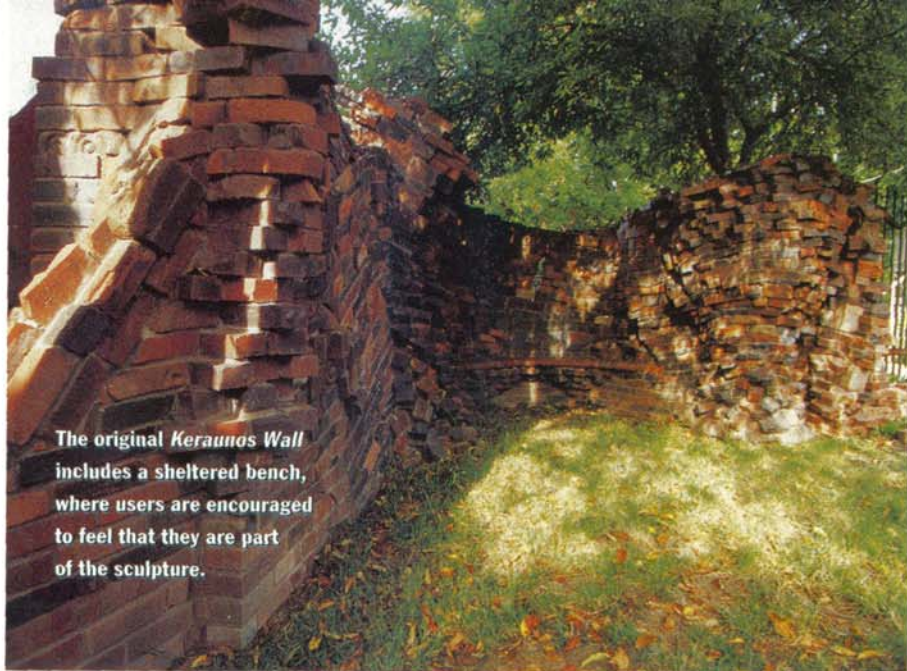


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point (about 18 years ago), I started working with brick as ceramic sculpture and have continued ever since.

My main reason for residing in Nebraska is that the clay indigenous to the southeastern part of the state, when it is high fired, makes a very durable and water-resistant brick. It is also a fine clay material, as opposed to the rough shale consistency of brick in other parts of the United States. The method of carving, or altering, that I use depends on the clay and the particular project.

It is important to me that my work communicate a unifying theme. The sculpture should project a direct connection between the earth and the constructed environment, so I emphasize the "clayness" of the brick. I work the unfired clay units,



The original *Keraunos Wall* includes a sheltered bench, where users are encouraged to feel that they are part of the sculpture.

place them in real space, and proceed to sculpt the clay, thus dissolving the pattern of brick and bringing out the plasticity of the material and form. I achieve this effect

by wetting the bricks down and then punching them, jumping on them, pushing my elbows or hands into them, or hitting them with branches. In this way, each

PERSPECTIVE

A Silo That Is No Silo

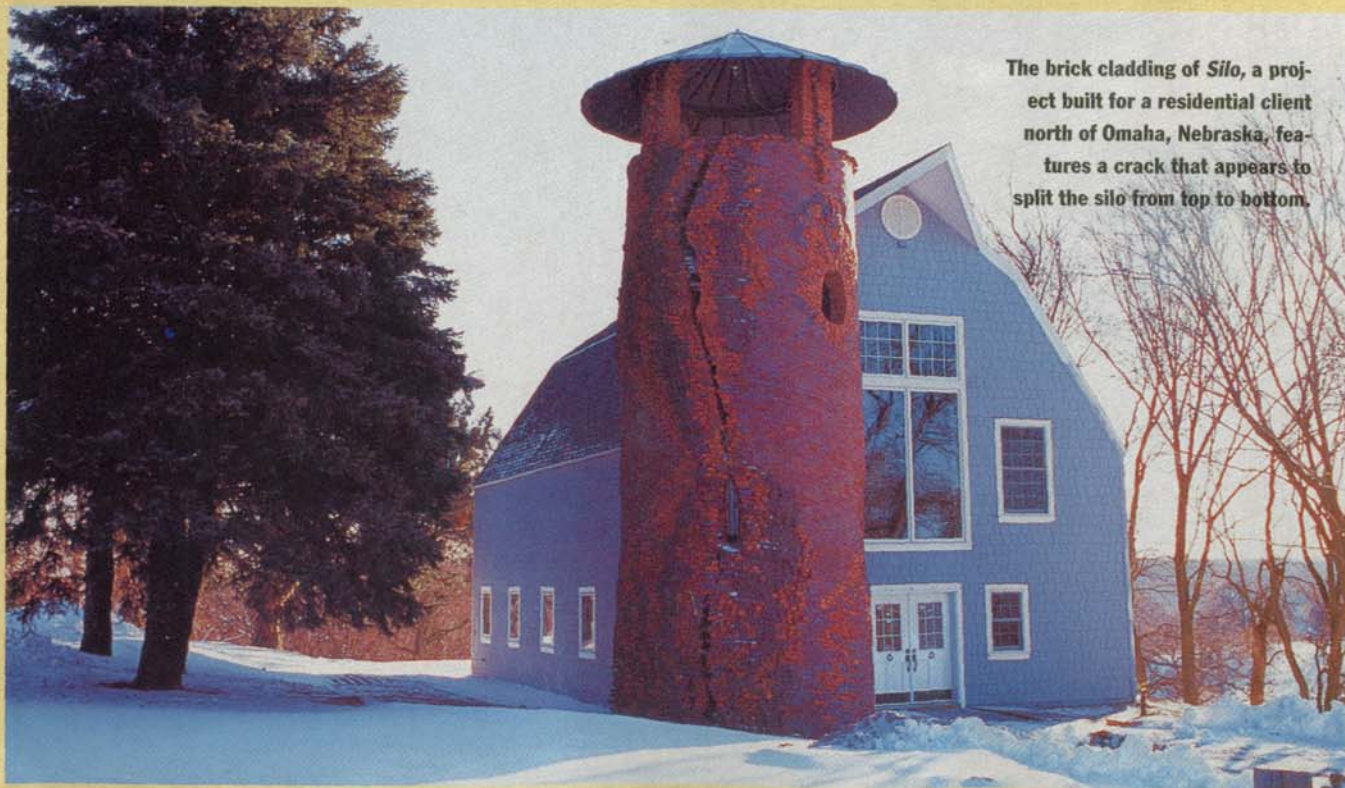
BY NORMAN GESKE

THE NEWEST PROJECT BY MICHAEL MORGAN is an adventurous expansion of the various

works in public places that he has completed to date. For the first time, his passion for sculptural form has taken on the scale and inherent symbolism of architecture.

The site for the project, a hilltop north of Omaha, Nebraska, is presently under develop-

ment as a country estate with completed buildings that include an elaborated stable and a large barn already converted to a guesthouse. A residence for the owner is yet to come. These buildings are in a sleek, modernized "country" style. The approach (SEE SIDEBAR PAGE 56)



The brick cladding of *Silo*, a project built for a residential client north of Omaha, Nebraska, features a crack that appears to split the silo from top to bottom.

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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 54)

to the property is a wide uphill sweep of road, and the view is an impressive sample of the Missouri River Valley landscape.

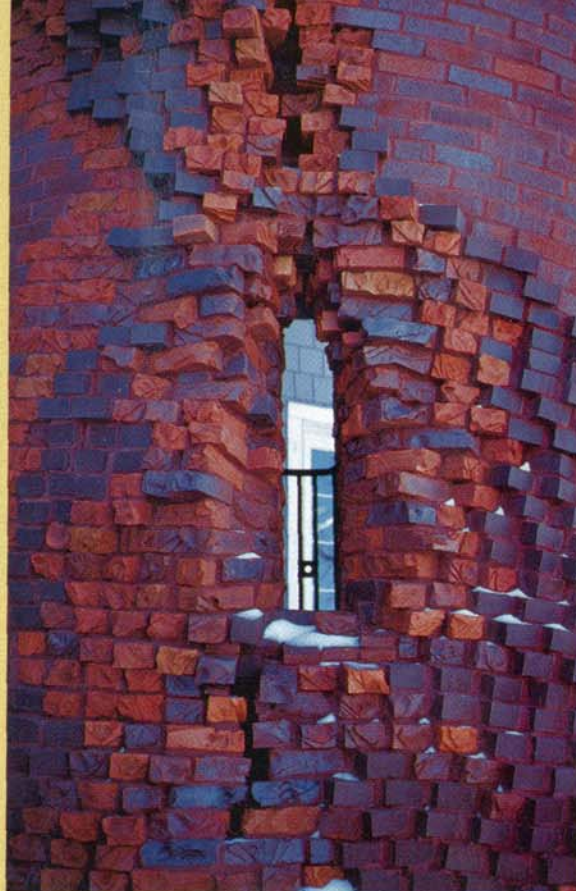
A large barn, and close beside it, as is customary, the tall form of a silo, can be seen to the right as one arrives at the site. The positioning of the silo and the barn is perfectly normal. The barn is big and capacious, and the silo is the tall, columnar form that one expects. But the silo is no silo, and the barn is no barn. What we have instead is the deliberate abstraction of canonic forms, barn and silo, in a combination that raises questions of intent and meaning. This is surely no accidental decision on the part of the owners. These two forms, although traditionally related, are seemingly at odds: The barn looks new, while the tower looks old, creating a dynamic that opens a whole range of meanings.

To examine the tower up close is to be amazed at the imagination of the artist. His singular devotion to the medium of fired clay in the shape of that most ancient of building forms, the handmade brick, is well-known. His manipulation of bricks is a process that achieves in each brick a unique contribution to the whole. His exploration of the color possibilities in the firing process is equally intuitive, and the achievement of textures, from silken smooth to fissured depths, is masterful.

The tower seems to grow like the trunk of an enormous tree out of the hollow in which it sits. Its outline against the sky swells with the sense of internal growth, and the split that tears the fabric apart for the entire height of

brick becomes a testament to a fleeting moment that is held forever like a fossil. After the bricks are somewhat dry, they are cut with a spackling knife and torn. This brings the clay object partially back to its brick state so that it is not merely an amorphous mass. It also gives the sculpture a sense of movement, creating high contrasts of light and shade, especially when the sun moves across it.

The final finished form is disassembled as unfired brick components, coded



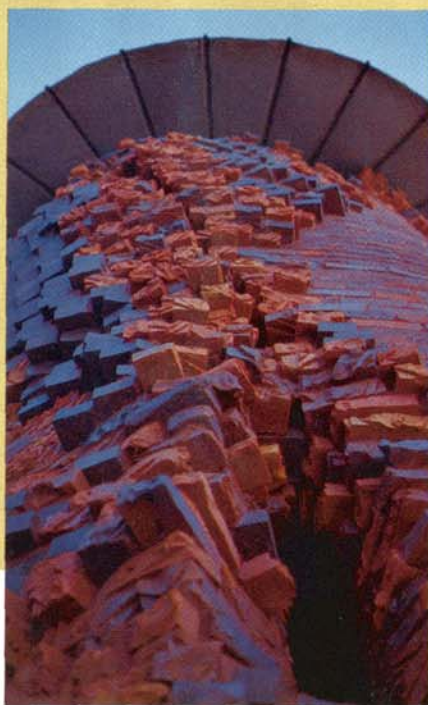
The crack down the center of Silo creates a slim window, left and below left.

the silo is a sensory experience that can be variously understood as the result of violence, combat, earthquake, or the mere subsidence of age. The play of color, from black through a deep blue to orange, suggests the action of extreme heat. A spiraling stair inside the silo leads to an access bridge to the neighboring barn/guesthouse and to the platform at the top for a view of the horizon. The stairway is anchored in a supporting internal wall of concrete block, the contribution of Morgan's colleague, painter and sculptor Larry Roots. This silo is in no small sense a collaborative achievement.

I was first reminded of the round towers that dot the Irish landscape, structures resembling medieval bat-

tlements that not only signal defiance but also have a domestic purpose. Farther afield, but not entirely dissimilar, are the fake temples and grottoes of the Orsini Park at Bomarzo in Italy. Explicitly similar is the ruined Ionic column that is also a house at the Desert de Retz in a garden near Paris. In the context of Nebraska, we have an avowedly romantic work of art that draws upon the ethos of the American past, the farm in its most characteristic forms, and that juxtaposes the past with the present in a way both evocative and questioning.

Norman Geske is retired from his position as director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln art galleries.



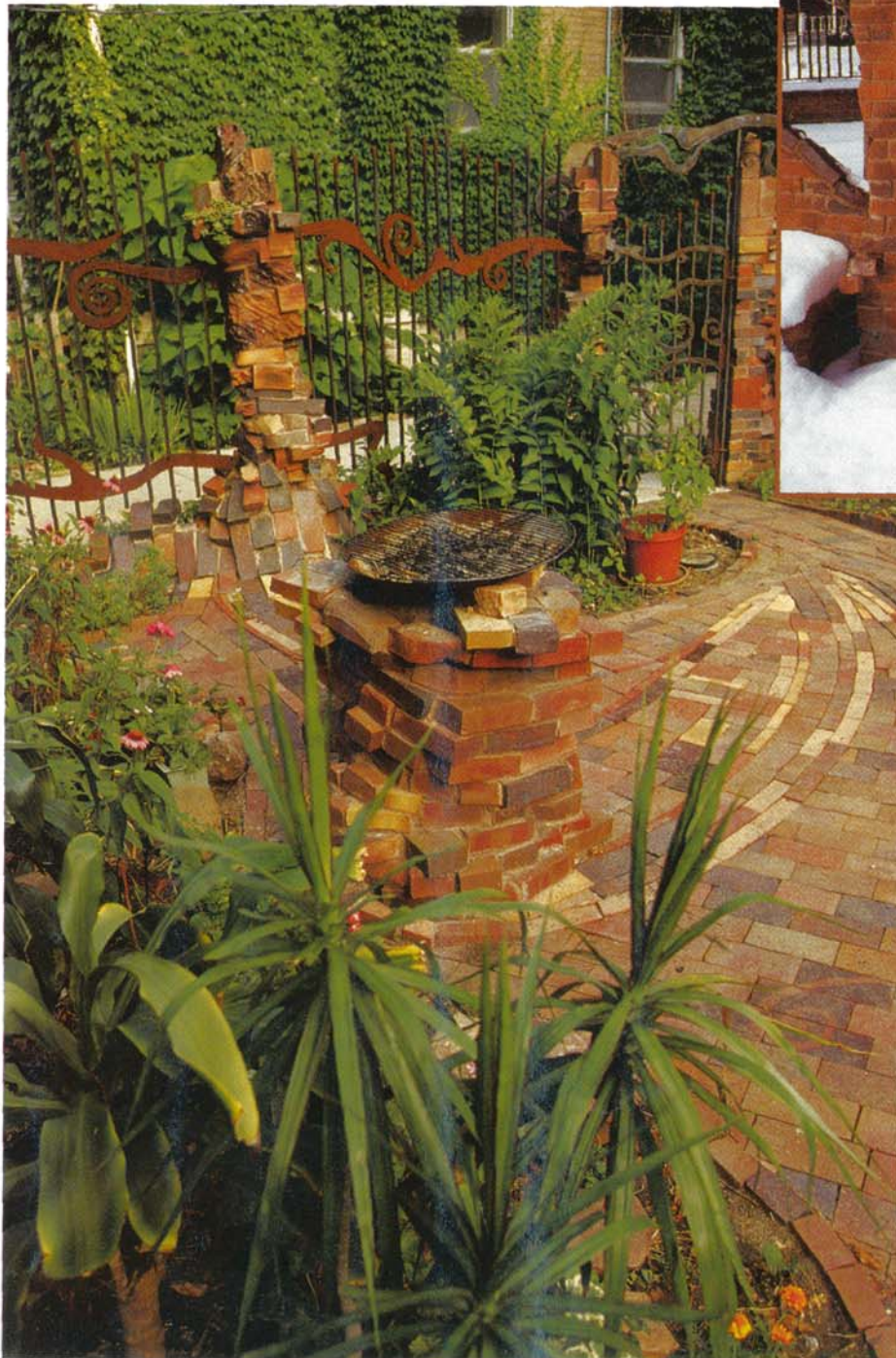
I work the unfired clay units, place them in real space, and proceed to sculpt the clay.

in batches, fired, and delivered to the building site location. It is then laid up with mortar. With the introduction of mortar joint, it is once again recognizable as brick. At present, I am working on a collaborative sculpture—a tower 34 by 14 feet in diameter—with Lincoln, Nebraska, artist Larry Roots and architect Dave Johnson. We refer to it as *Silo*, as it is being built in front of, and as an entrance to, a renovated barn. It consists of a concrete block tower with 4-inch-

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thick wooden treads built into the structure in a spiral formation going to the top. At 12 feet, there is an open doorway, which connects the silo to the barn. The top of the silo acts as an observatory, giving a good view of the steep bluffs in this part of Nebraska. We took the conical

Commissioned by Lincoln's Near South Neighborhood Association, this carved brick wall, right, includes seats and columns, with planters forming a connection between the fertile earth and the brick. Some of the columns of the *Keraunos Wall Extension*, below, also have planters, and the patio grows into them, making this connection all the more concrete.



The brick structure is laid up so all the bricks hump and dip all the way around.

roof from a demolished corncrib and welded it to a metal ring, which is secured to four piers.

My particular role in this project is cladding the concrete structure with 5,500 altered bricks that I have combined with 6,000 unaltered bricks. Some of the bricks are numbered and correspond specifically to certain designated areas. For example, those framing the door and encircling the round window are designed with a very specific pattern in mind. The bricks for the arch over the door (which actually extends and meanders up the wall) were stomped down to a wedge. Others are carved on their faces, their heads, or a combination of the two.

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I alter the bricks in a variety of ways and then place them on the sculpture.

The brick structure is laid up in an irregular fashion, so all the bricks, regular and altered, hump and dip all the way around. At the sculpture's narrowest point, the bricks are 2 inches from the concrete block, and at the widest point, they project out 18 inches. All bricks are attached with ties that hook into the reinforcement in the block. There is an opening in the overall structure, which gives the appearance of a crack that at one point connects to a slit window and extends right up the structure. I see the whole building as an organic extension of the earth; windows and doorways grow out of it naturally. *LAM*

Michael Morgan is a sculptor who resides in Lincoln, Nebraska. He can be contacted at www.michaelmorgan.net.

MICHAEL MORGAN'S BRICK SCULPTURES

- 1** *Haverstraw Trophy*, 2005 (still under construction). Seven columns in a circle, seats, and a path. Located in Haverstraw, New York, at Hudson River Park.
- 2** *Tide Clock*, 1999. Located at the corner of Flagler Avenue and Pine Street in New Smyrna Beach, Florida.
- 3** *Transition*, 2004. Two columns. Located at Dakota State University on Washington Avenue in Madison, South Dakota.
- 4** *Cer*, 1997. Wall, seating for ten, five columns with planters. Located in Near South Park, 19th and A Streets, Lincoln, Nebraska.
- 5** *Spring Valley Terms*, 2001. Two engaged columns. Located at Dallas Area Rapid Transit, Spring Valley Station, Richardson, Texas.
- 6** *Seven Herms*, 1999. Wall with seven



columns. Located in Near South Park, 19th and A Streets, Lincoln, Nebraska.

7 *Yoke Brick Sculpture*, 2001. Located at 3810 Stockwell Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

8 *Keraunos Wall Extension*, 1996. Patio, four columns, railings, and grill. Located at 1908 C Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

9 *Keraunos Wall*, 1994. Wall with bench. Located at 1908 C Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

10 *Librating Form*, 1999. Located at 1000 Aldrich Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

TOM TIDBALL, #7 AND #9; MICHAEL MORGAN, ALL OTHERS

