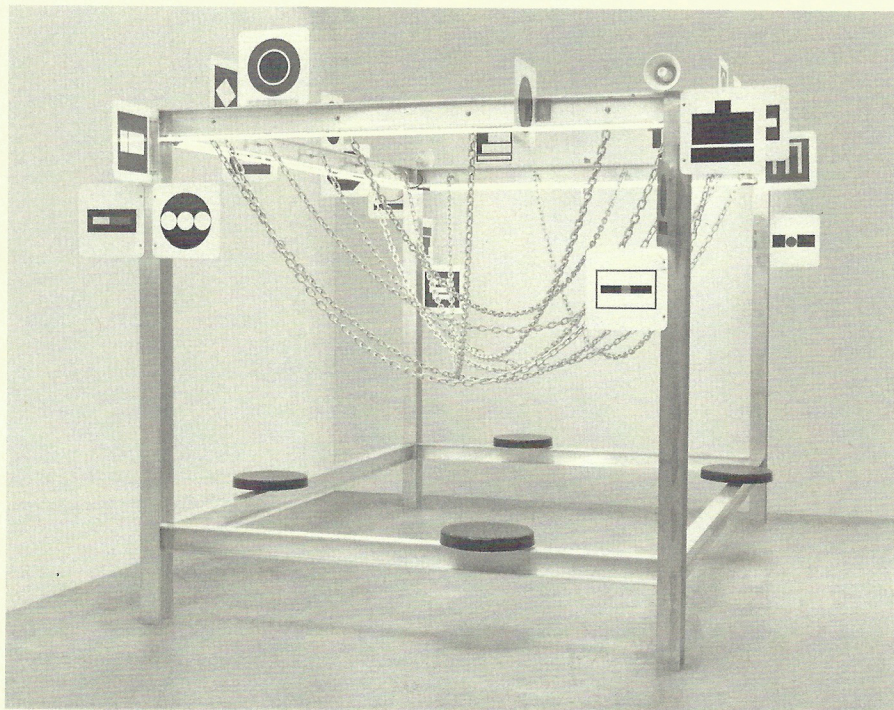
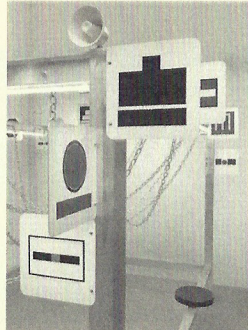


PHASE

David Schafer



No. 1



No. 2

PANTHEON

Pantheon explores how human relations and social structures are mediated through signs. The installation integrates seating, chains, neon lighting, and a layered soundscape, transforming viewers into active participants within its theatrical framework. The signs are derived from the logos of companies—from banks, to companies in the oil and gas, fast food, fashion, media, entertainment, military, credit card, and automotive industries. These logos have been reconstructed and filtered reducing them to a morphology of color and code. This code is a form of socialization, and generates a formal set of social relations analogous to money.

Pantheon is a relational structure, a theater of capitalism where corporations and code replace deities and gods. According to Gilles Deleuze, societies are regimes of coding that aim to bring about fixed modes of existing. For Deleuze, capitalism is a regime of decoding and leads to a perpetual sense of novelty and innovation, since coded flows are continually being turned into commodities through this process.

In the writing of Franco Berardi, semicapitalism is a form of capitalism in which signs, symbols, and information—not just material goods—become central to economic production and value. Berardi's work emphasizes the role of immaterial labor, ideas, and communication, and the commodification of cultural and symbolic elements in driving economic processes. Economic value is increasingly tied to signs, brands, and the emotional or symbolic resonance of products rather than their material utility. In semicapitalism, individuals internalize market logic, transforming personal identity and social interactions into performances or commodities.

Varying lengths of heavy chain drape down across the interior structure of *Pantheon*. Their presence has associations to enslavement and are activated by the participants. Giovanni Battista Piranesi's series of etchings, *Carceri d'Invenzione (Imaginary Prisons)*, created in the mid-18th century, depict vast labyrinthine prisons filled with monumental staircases, arches, chains, and machinery. In his analysis of these etchings, Michel Foucault linked them to themes of surveillance, power, and discipline. For Foucault, such architecture plays a key role in disciplining individuals, especially in prisons, schools, and asylums, evoking a sense of inescapable control. These spaces are not just physically confining but psychologically overwhelming, much like the Panopticon, which Foucault describes as a prison designed to make its inmates feel permanently observed, and thus self-disciplined.

Pantheon suggests that we may be trapped within a system too large to escape or fully comprehend, a world of semicapitalist confinement in which institutions ensure compliance through invisible yet omnipresent structures.



No. 3

COLOSSEUM

Colosseum addresses the public sphere that we are threaded through in the course of daily life. The installation's public address speakers announce a spoken word soundtrack, reciting names of institutions, civic services, and retail shops.

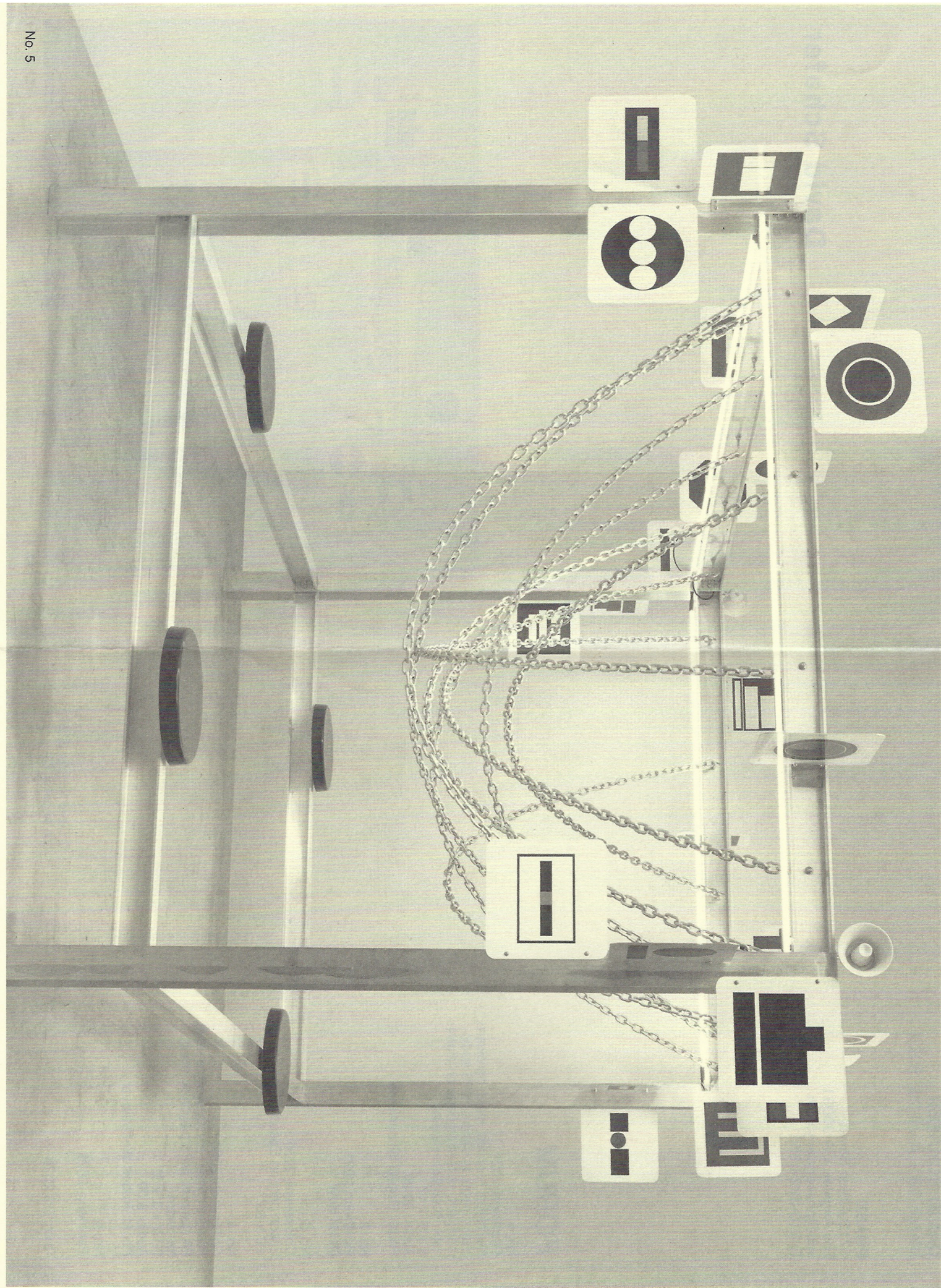
The installation references the ancient Roman Colosseum and its embedding within a system of imperial control, providing entertainment while reinforcing power and military dominance. In ancient Rome, spectacle was used as a form of social control—for example, both public executions and gladiatorial games served as displays of sovereign power, reinforcing state dominance through public punishment and violent entertainment.

Michel Foucault examined the mechanics by which human life is structured through enclosures and institutions that regulate behavior, knowledge, and power. He describes how modern societies are organized around institutions of discipline, such as schools, hospitals, prisons, factories, and the military. Each of these enclosures serves to regulate individuals, shaping them into obedient and productive members of society. In Foucault's thought, architecture plays a key role in disciplining individuals, and extends beyond the prison into all aspects of modern life. As people move from one enclosure to another they are constantly categorized, assessed, and disciplined, shaping what is considered normal and productive.

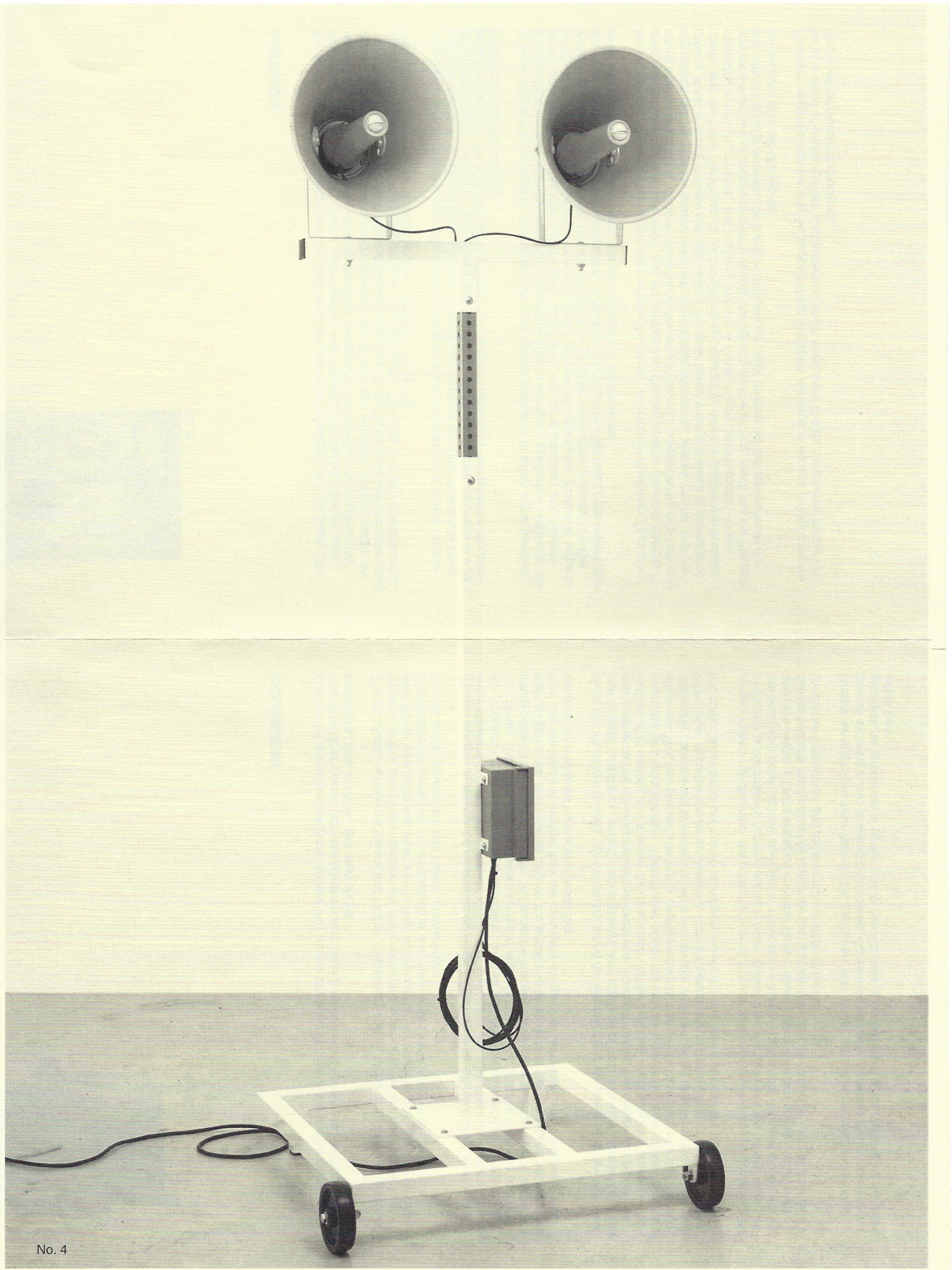
Much like Piranesi's prisons, contemporary urban development and shopping centers—with their lack of clear boundaries, endless passageways, and absence of exits—visually represent this idea that confinement is not just physical but existential. Foucault argues that disciplinary power permeates all of society, and that the dehumanization of the individual is an extended process of bureaucracy and rationalization. These hyper-organized spaces regulate behavior under the guise of efficiency. This has evolved into highly engineered social frameworks and platforms that are algorithmically compressed to maximize profit and density, while excluding specific strata of the public. With newer opportunities for surveillance, from the panopticon to digital tracking and data mining, the authoritarianism of our society is invisibly woven into the new models of the public sphere.

Jürgen Habermas describes the public sphere as a space where private individuals come together to discuss public matters, forming public opinion, distinct from the state and the private realm. As the bourgeois public sphere emerged in 18th-century Europe, particularly in coffeehouses, salons, and print media, citizens engaged in critical debate about governance and society. Later, public debate became manipulated by corporate and political interests, shifting from rational discourse to consumerist spectacle and passive consumption of media.

Recent developments have blurred this distinction, with virtual, private, economic, and political powers dictating public space and discourse. *Colosseum* sonically expresses the overshadowing architectural symbolism of power and its mechanisms of confinement, while challenging our place within them.



No. 5



No. 4

DAVID SCHAFER

March 29 – April 26, 2025

PHASE

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FORUM

No. 1

Pantheon, 2021

Aluminum I-beams, steel, hardware,
chain, neon, speakers, MP3 audio
playback, printed signage on alumi-
num, fiberglass seating

8' x 9' x 12'

Audio: 30:00

Photo: Robert Wedemeyer

No. 2

Pantheon, 2021

Detail view

No. 3

Colosseum, 2020

Epson print on Epson paper

45" x 60"

No. 4

Colosseum, 2020

Powder coated and fabricated steel,
PA speaker, MP3 playback, misc.
hardware

7-10' x 3' x 3'

Audio: 5:00

Photo: Robert Wedemeyer

No. 5

Pantheon, 2021

Texts: DS 2025

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