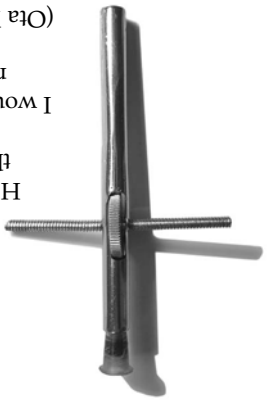


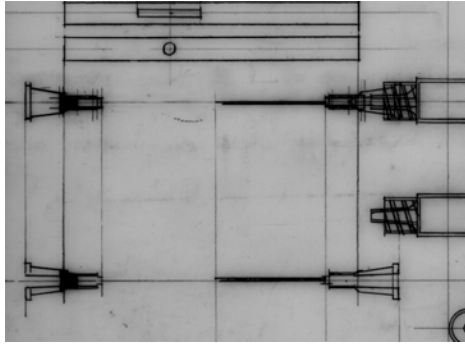
Tool for the Bride
Lian Chikako Chang

Had I not known
that I was dead
already
I would have mourned
my loss of life.

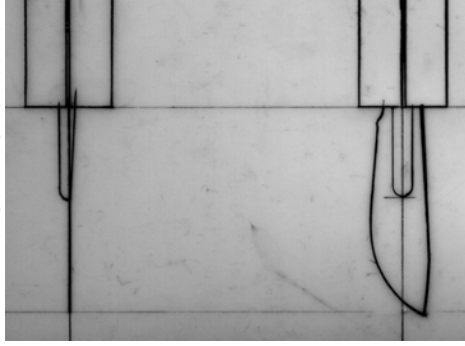
(Ota Dokan, 1432-1486)



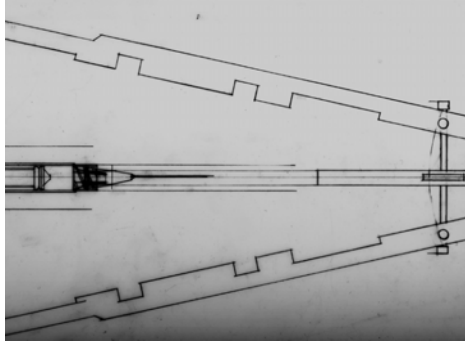
CHAPEL



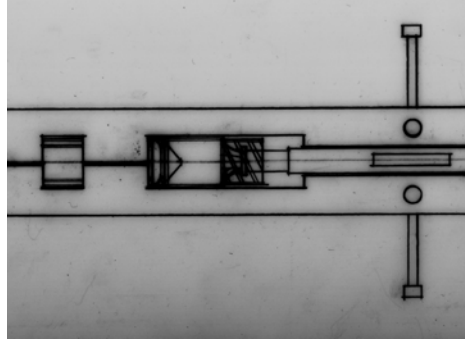
DREAM SEQUENCE



BLOSSOMING



RESTING PLACE



NARRATION IN PLAN, ELEVATION, and SECTION / a love story:

ARSENAL / site for a blind date. We begin with familiar tools from medicine and architecture: a scalpel, syringe, compass, and pen.

ANATOMY THEATRE / the doctor meets the architect; they gaze at each other across the table. The first step is the dissection of the given tools.

CHAPEL / a wedding has been planned. The chosen parts are prepared to be joined.

THE BRIDE and THE BACHELOR / an invitation to dance. Now the choreography can be visualized. The pair realizes that every part has been designed for this encounter.

DREAM SEQUENCE / making a life in this world. The knife is the tool for everyday use and outer strength in a life of technology: a world of dreams that passes in the twinkling of an eye.

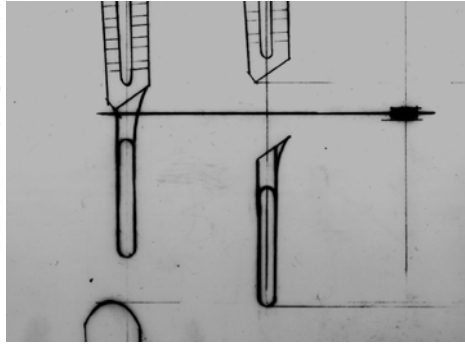
BLOSSOMING / an undeniable change in program. The legs open, the syringe/pen emerges. This is the core of the matter: the weakness of the inner tool is the driving force for the outer tool of strength.

MECHANICAL DUET / both prelude and postlude. Blood is drawn and a ritual sequence of rotations about the cross moves the tool towards its final task.

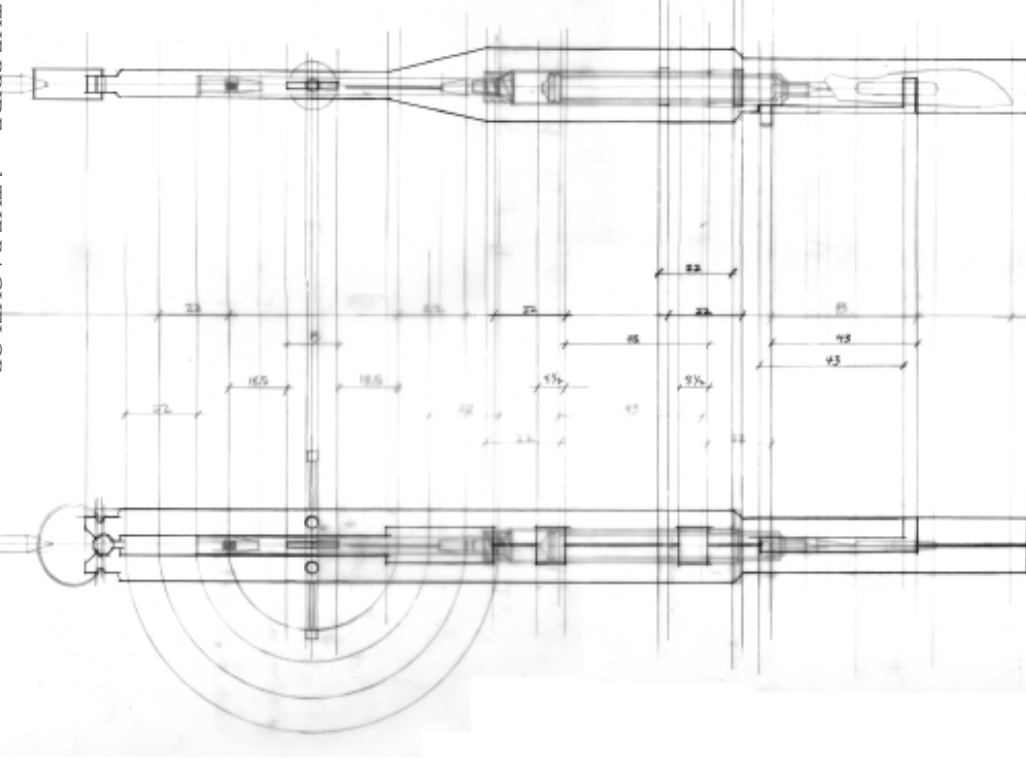
WHITE SHEET / although they cannot tell if the white is paper or linen, the doctor and architect have no choice but to continue. As the pen slides back into the syringe, the blood flows into the pen, from proof of life to permanent trace, in its death, as ink.

RESTING PLACE / the dance is complete. A subtle but crucial difference at the end of these events prevents the scalpel blade from being drawn again into use until a fresh needle is inserted and the original orientation around the cross is restored. Until then, the tool waits for the next encounter.

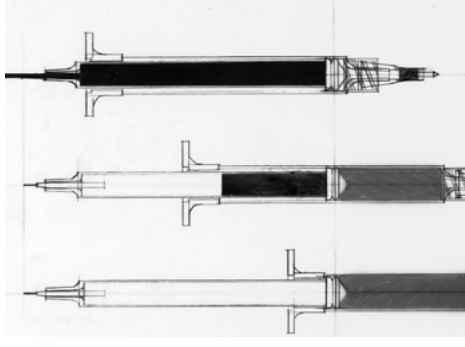
ANATOMY THEATRE



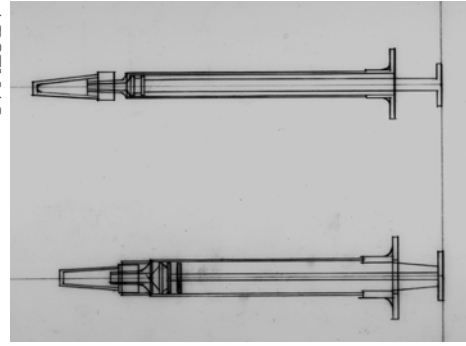
THE BRIDE and THE BACHELOR



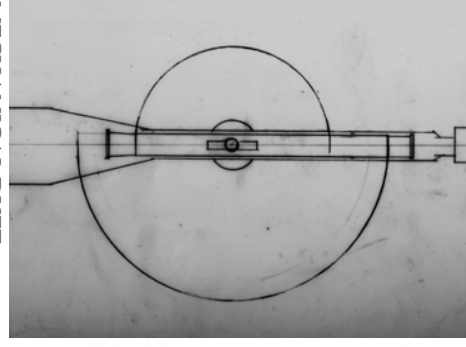
WHITE SHEET



ARSENAL



MECHANICAL DUET



The *samurai* carried two swords. The long, gracefully curved, one symbolized outer strength and was the *samurai's* chief weapon in combat. The short, dagger-like sword was used only for *seppuku* or ritual suicide, yet was worn at all times as an equally important symbol of the warrior's inner strength. Constant meditation on the ephemeral nature of life and preparation for death was necessary for the *samurai* to live honorably, to face his life in each moment without fear or shame. Although the contemporary urban dweller is not a warrior and lives far from the Zen Buddhist tradition of the *samurai*, we can nonetheless learn from their tools. In our modern practice of medicine, the very ill are often faced with two opposing modes of treatment: hospital curative care, which violently fights against death at all costs; and hospice care, which works towards easing the patient into what is considered an inevitable death as painlessly as possible. Most of us spend only a small part of our lives in such intensive medical care, but this philosophy of death as an unfortunate aberration or opposite of life pervades our outlook and daily actions.

Tool for the Bride is a search, within the technological context of modern medical tools, to remember that our fundamental weakness, our capacity to die, is always carried with us and is what allows us to live. The project developed as a series of modifications to tools from medicine (syringes, needles, and a scalpel), and architecture (a pen and a compass) in relation to each other to make a new tool. It is an exercise in re-programming, suggesting a choreographed series of events that draw on and subvert the tools' usual uses. The tool's most apparent use is that of a knife, as a small knob allows the scalpel blade to be efficiently slid out of its handle into a position of sturdy use. But the handle's form is held together by the logic and hardware of a compass. Rather than providing a point around which to draw circles, the compass serves as a metaphoric and functional hinge between the tool's outer and inner functions. Turning the compass' wheel turns to spread its two legs, the outer tool of the knife becomes useless and the inner tool, whose motion activated the outer tool, is revealed.

This inner tool, at the core of the project, is the syringe and the pen. The first normally draws from the body a fluid that serves as proof of life, a fluid that is analyzed and read by medicine but which is opaque and unsettling to our eyes. The other emits a fluid and has the potential to leave equally enigmatic traces of ourselves beyond our lives. The tool's central element combines these tools, suggesting that one might draw one's own blood into the large syringe cylinder, then, in sliding the inner cylinder back into its original position, transfer the blood into this inner pen. Contained in the inner pen cylinder is a toxin inducing apoptosis, or programmed cell death. In recent years, apoptosis has become understood as the body's means to allow cells to continually die, a necessary process for the health and life of the whole organism, and one whose failure can result, for example, in cancerous growth. Twentieth-century scientific philosophy, although faced with evidence of apoptosis, was unwilling to accept the fact of death as necessary for life. As in economics, technology, and the wider modern condition, this refusal to recognize weakness, death, and ephemerality underpins many of the troubles of our current lives.

The visible sign of this apoptosis, or lysing of the red blood cells, is a darkening of the living blood's vivid red into a darker and more viscous brown, the color of blood after death. This change, irrefutable evidence of the death of a part of oneself, is intended to provoke a visceral—as opposed to intellectual—realization of one's own mortality. Like the moment of the *samurai's* ritual death, this moment provides a point around which to meditate on the fragility of life. This inner tool may be used in recurring ritual moments, on the momentous occasion of one's last words, or never. What is most important is that the bearer of the tool, the bride—named for our tradition's prototypical bride in Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary, who are memorable for their weakness being their strength—should remember that while she uses the knife, the tool bears this inner function. Recalling that her life, her strength and her capacity to love are made possible by her capacity to die, she prepares to live in each moment without fear or shame.