



**Art:** *House Divided*

**Site:** Prairie swales

**Place:** Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park

**Location:** University Park, IL

**Artist:** Bruce Nauman



www.govst.edu/sculpture

Unusual for a couple of reasons: that you don't see that many permanent works by Nauman anywhere, and that this is as permanent an object as you might imagine – a concrete bunker, if you will. "House Divided" is somewhat literal, since it is divided inside by an impenetrable diagonal wall; also, it refers directly to President Lincoln's speech and, certainly, to our nation then as now. But, all that considered, what its strongest resonance is for me has to do with the Midwest: the landscape it sits in; the spareness and asceticism of its design; the idea of tornadoes that plague the plains and how this is expressed in this above-ground basement; and, most powerfully, how similar it is to cattle sheds and slaughterhouses – how its egress is blocked, with no escape, and how cold and harsh a reality it is, chillingly so. All these echoes of the plains states are in this single slab-form; its farm likenesses, its house likenesses, its death likenesses. It is colorless, basically, perfunctory and a tad scary – scary as to whether you want to enter it and, once inside, tomblike. It is so basic and geometric, minimal, really, yet is so loaded with angst. And it is perfectly placed on a small rise, remote in its distance from other artworks, barren except for grazeable grass encircling it. Its position is not unlike Stonehenge's, sitting on its perch on the Salisbury Plain, but the feeling generated by this structure and its site is far more removed and spooky. It is a headstone on the prairie.

**Impact:**

- Context/contrast
  - Scale
- Integrated in setting
  - Loaded imagery
    - Color
    - Minimal

**Art-to-Site Rating:** High

**View Date:** August 2007

