

Major and Minor Architectural Issues in the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark

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Abstract

This thesis explores a range of architectural issues that are raised by the œuvre of the artist Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-1978). In particular, it examines the ways in which his œuvre might expand our understanding of the central tenets of architectural modernism, and valorise some issues that modernism downplays or denies.

The thesis developed as a response to an awkwardness observed around the reception by both architects and the art world of Matta-Clark's work. It proposes that recent changes in this reception have involved the erasure rather than the acknowledgement of the causes of such awkwardness. In contrast to this general tendency, the thesis suggests that these causes are significant, and that for architecture in particular they provide a resource that can raise a number of important questions for the contemporary situation.

The method adopted to explore these questions develops as a response to the œuvre's own critical faculty. The intention of the thesis is to undertake neither an art historical nor a contextual analysis of Matta-Clark's œuvre. Instead, the contemporary relevance of the œuvre is explored by combining the issues it raises with a varied body of theoretical work. This exploration is structured around the explicit terminology of architectural modernism ('form,' 'space,' 'order,' and so on), referred to here as 'major' architecture, and those issues that are implicit, overlooked or repressed by this major discourse (the 'minor,' which here includes the contingency of user, process, and discipline).

Although the consequences of this exploration contribute to a clearer understanding of the complexity of Matta-Clark's œuvre, the more significant aspects of the thesis include the wider examination of a range of issues the œuvre raises, issues that can have an impact on, and offer to expand, contemporary architectural process and experience. The theoretical approach of the methodology can also be understood to have a wider relevance.

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Project Outline

The artist Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-78) was born in New York. He grew up within an artistic milieu; his mother, Anne Clark, had been a member of the Surrealist group in Paris, where she met his father, the Chilean Surrealist painter Roberto Matta Echaurren; his godfather was Marcel Duchamp; Buckminster Fuller was a family friend. This avant-garde artistic and social environment combined with the physical, and culturally bohemian, surroundings of lower Manhattan where he grew up, and with periods spent in Paris and in Chile, and are remarkable enough to be worth observing. Matta-Clark spent a year studying French literature at the Sorbonne in Paris shortly after enrolling at Cornell University, where he studied Architecture. He graduated from Cornell in 1968. His artistic career began shortly afterwards: hugely productive, it was cut short by his untimely death from cancer at the age of thirty-five.

Gordon Matta-Clark's status as artist is not in dispute, here or elsewhere. Despite the ephemeral nature of many of his projects, his work continues to attract attention. The nature of this interest is changing; there is an identifiable shift away from narrow preoccupations with the reception of the pieces themselves towards a wider examination of the relevance his œuvre can enjoy across various disciplines. A generation after their production in the 1970s, his projects can continue to articulate questions that bear on the contemporary production and reception of artistic and architectural work.

By the time of his death Matta-Clark was held in extremely high esteem by his peers and his mentors; in the decades since, his work has continued to exert an influence on artists, architects and critics. In spite of the breadth of this influence, he has no obviously apparent heirs: moreover, Matta-Clark's work found neither a substantial public audience nor attracted sustained critical engagement, and remained something of an awkward miss-fit in the years since his death. Paraphrasing Pollock and Orton's discussion of an unrelated yet equally awkward example, Matta-Clark's work occupies 'a problematic place' in conventional art historical schema, where the orthodoxies of art and architectural history 'break down' before the problems posed by his œuvre.¹

Only recently has this situation begun to change, with Matta-Clark's work now beginning to attract the attention of major players in the international art scene. This change has come about for

a number of reasons; while some of these reflect broader changes in the art world and in society at large, others involve a more active erasure of his work's awkwardness. In particular, the wide variety of stuff that makes up his *œuvre* has been progressively overlooked, allowing it to be reduced to a number of projects that provide a clear *magnum opus* (the 'building cuts' or 'building dissections'); the instability, uncertainty and impermanence of his work has been replaced by a tacit agreement concerning the stability and authorship of key projects, all of which ease his work's treatment according to art-historical orthodoxy.

This thesis sets out to address Matta-Clark's *œuvre* as a whole, in order to explore certain aspects of the ongoing awkwardness that it carries, and to articulate why, in spite of—or indeed because of—this awkwardness, his *œuvre* remains relevant to a wide range of situations and disciplines.

The story of this awkwardness runs in two opposite directions; on one hand, the art world has shifted very rapidly. What might have been a radically political gesture during the early 1970s now looks very naïve; what might have been framed as institutional critique is now found in the collections of the major players, and so on. In Matta-Clark's case, his work has recently been bought by the Guggenheim, MOMA New York, San Francisco, and been subject to a significant retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum in New York;² the kind of institutions whose role Matta-Clark so consistently criticised. On the other hand, Matta-Clark's work continues to be relevant, but this relevance now reads at a deeper level within his *œuvre*. His work was remarkably prescient, sometimes quite brilliant, at times laboured, consistently interesting.

While we should be mindful of Thomas Crow's concerns regarding art that lasts for ever, these divergent trends in Matta-Clark's current reception are both signalled in Crow's warning: 'if a work can last indefinitely, the contradiction [it contains] is illusory.'³ While the domestication and institutionalisation of Matta-Clark's work marks an attempt to make it last, its significance is indicated in the broader, shifting relevance it holds for many areas of contemporary concern, which can be revealed by articulating the more challenging aspect of his *œuvre* that continue to be marked by the contradictions it contains.

architecture

Within this broad claim for his *œuvre*, architecture was and continues to be a key ingredient and concern. Matta-Clark's own relationship with architecture was long and complex, and his *œuvre*

both sustains this complexity and allows it to open beyond the particulars of his personal and contemporary response. This thesis will explore various aspects of this relationship in order to open up its ongoing relevance, rather than to explain Matta-Clark's work, fix its meaning, or to recuperate his œuvre as architecture in any way.

Importantly, as much as he appeared to want to get outside architecture, Matta-Clark frequently articulated his criticisms of modernism in general through the specific terminology of architectural modernism. Adrian Forty has argued that the discourse of (architectural) modernism was and is particular in the history of art and architectural theory because it attempted to occupy the entirety of its field, its key terms had no opposite, and as a discourse it remained with no outside (no alternative position). Placing Forty's observations alongside Matta-Clark's œuvre provides a point of departure; I want to suggest that the relevance of Matta-Clark's œuvre lies, in part, in signalling a possible re-examination of the architectural values that it set out to criticise; that while he was working to contest the institutionalised modernism of the 1960s and 70s, his work operated both within the rules of modernist discourse that Forty analyses, but also took up a position beyond modernism's sphere of influence (*without* in the fuller sense of beyond and not possessing). This not only demonstrates that institutional modernism was actually contingent, rather than absolute, but it can more productively demonstrate an alternative way to value architecture, and suggest alternative ways that architecture might be practiced. This position demands that we ignore the caricature of Matta-Clark as the artist who cut up buildings, and instead suggest that his relationship with architecture was not one of simple rejection or knee-jerk criticism, but involved a thoroughgoing, constructive critique.

In order to signal Matta-Clark's awkward yet constructive engagement with the institutions of architecture and modernism, I will suggest his œuvre shows aspects of both *major* and *minor architecture*. This notion is borrowed fairly roughly and shamelessly from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In their book on the writer Franz Kafka, they introduce the concept of *Minor Literature* in order to discuss the relationship between Kafka's œuvre and the canon of great or *Major Literature*. They argue Kafka's work mounts an ongoing challenge to 'Major Literature' but importantly for them, and for the present work, this challenge comes from *within* the canon and aims to introduce an alternative way to experience and value such work.

While Deleuze and Guattari's short book chases the trajectory and strategies of the *Minor*, this thesis will pay attention to both *Minor* and *Major* and give them a roughly equal billing. There are various reasons for this difference. Deleuze and Guattari's concept is emblematic rather than

fully descriptive of the moves made here: rather than being adopted as a method, it serves as a device to focus and organise the discussion. Moreover, they begin from a reception of Kafka that already situates his work deeply within the canon of major literature, and they work to unsettle this position by demonstrating alternative (stronger) readings of his work; in contrast, Matta-Clark's oeuvre remains outside any major canon (notwithstanding the recent domestication of his work already noted), and certainly well outside the canon of architecture. Finally, it will be argued that Matta-Clark is not 'fully' modern in Deleuze's renovated sense (that contrasts to a reductive, institutionalised modernism), but occupies a more complex and awkward position as both/and, both High Modern and fully modern.

Although the relationship between minor work and the major canon it sets out to contest is not straightforward for reasons that will become apparent, the following thesis can be considered to have two parts, the first major, the second minor. The organisation of the chapters takes its cue from this positioning; the first two explore aspects of the relationship that Matta-Clark's oeuvre can be seen to hold with, or within, some of the key terms of modernism—Form, Space and Time. The second group of three chapters take up *Minor* aspects of his work in order to explore how his interest in User, Process and Discipline (so often written out of any discussion of the *Major*) might be encountered in his oeuvre and point to its possible operation without modernism.

The oeuvre

Returning to the issues raised by Crow's more general observation concerning work that lasts forever, Matta-Clark's oeuvre is being increasingly reduced to a number of works that have become known together as the building cuts or building dissections, while he becomes known simply as the artist who cut up buildings. This thesis refuses any such received hierarchy: what I take to be his oeuvre here is at odds with more conventional art-historical understanding and treatment of an artist's oeuvre as a selected and ranked group of works, where each object acts as 'a fetishised, commodified and displaced sign of the artist.'⁴ Instead, it takes the notion of *oeuvre* literally as 'total output,' and his realised projects (realised oeuvre) take their place alongside what might be called his written oeuvre, which comprises preparatory and speculative work, notes, correspondence, documentation and interviews that are in the Gordon Matta-Clark archive.

It is important to emphasise that the conventional understanding of oeuvre also reflects conventional distinctions between preparatory and realised work, between theory and practice, and

between work and words, all of which inform the very processes of art and architectural history. I will argue that whether it operates within or beyond orthodox art-historical frameworks, any such separations do violence to Matta-Clark's approach, which dissolved these distinctions.

Several of his close friends and collaborators have remarked on the similarities between his treatment of language and his treatment of other media, emphasising how he thought through doing. To include his words here is to acknowledge this aspect of his working process and its impact upon his *œuvre*, where they assume an importance alongside works that art-history can comfortably accommodate: they are not included to 'explain' the realised projects, neither is their role simply to contest the current laundering of awkward projects from his *œuvre*. While their inclusion does something of the latter, the broader motivation is to side-step the explanatory frameworks and hermeneutic expectations of orthodox art-history, in order to allow a speculative discussion that ranges beyond any hierarchy of works or issues that art history, the art market, or Matta-Clark himself might have identified.

Indeed, Matta-Clark's *œuvre* exceeds the context of its own production (there is more in it than he intended to put there, and there has been more pulled out of it than was available to the initial audience); it produces an excess that cannot yet be contained. This thesis is a response to this excess. Its overall aim is prospective and speculative, and consequently it sets out to develop a methodology that will allow such excess to be focused, or shifted, in order to open up and explore questions that Matta-Clark's *œuvre* can raise, and to articulate the relevance of his work to a number of contemporary debates.

introducing method

The methodology developed with this prospective aim in mind echoes significant aspects of Matta-Clark's own working method. Writing to Carol Goodden in 1973, he stressed: 'I WANT TO REINFORCE THE IDEA THAT THE AREA ... BEYOND THE INTRUSION IS EFFECTED AND THAT EFFECT AS WELL AS CAUSE IS AN INGREDIENT.'⁵ Although his letter to Goodden is somewhat elliptical, the approach he gestures towards here is ever present in his *œuvre*. While this approach will be explored more fully in the chapters that follow, I want to force this elliptical quality towards a fuller, compound understanding of the elliptical as a motif for the methodology that is developed here. This elliptical motif can be forced onto Matta-Clark's letter inasmuch as he links action and its effect beyond in such a way as to disrupt a straightforward causal relationship between the two:

effect is as much ingredient as cause. Putting the (elliptical) ambiguity of his letter to one side, it can be suggested that his method is unambiguously elliptical in that it has two centres or foci ('intrusion' and 'effect') and that the pattern that emerges from the interaction between them describes a circling rather than linear path.

The methodology developed here is similarly elliptical in that it is organised around a bi-centric structure that sets up a circling path while denying any causal link between these foci. Throughout the thesis, bodies of work from across Matta-Clark's *œuvre* will be juxtaposed with bodies of theory developed elsewhere, in order to generate a discussion at some remove from both foci, a discussion where the resonances his work might have for contemporary debates can be encountered and explored.

This movement around twin foci of Matta-Clark and theory is developed principally to open up and amplify resonances his *œuvre* can offer the present, although two important secondary consequences are that it emphasises both the absence of any causal link between theory and practice in his work, and that unlike much orthodox art-history the role of theory in this methodology is not instrumental.

While the motif of the ellipse as a figure can be grasped as a whole, the expository demands of writing according to such an elliptical methodology produce a text with a discernable rhythm; discussion will move to areas beyond the intrusion of theory only after an aspect of Matta-Clark's *œuvre* has itself been introduced and a theoretical focus established. While the overall development of the text itself is cumulative (though not linear), a compound of smaller elliptical sections, the major/minor quality of Matta-Clark's *œuvre* itself produces further overlapping sets of elliptical relationships across the whole: these will be discussed further in the concluding, discursive chapter.

The makeup of the compound theoretical foci shifts according to the focusing needs of each chapter or section, and they will be introduced and justified in that context; as the intention of the thesis is to take seriously both major and minor aspects of Matta-Clark's *œuvre*, the theoretical work that is drawn on is wide ranging. Although his *œuvre* itself appears hugely varied on first inspection, there are a number of fairly constant concerns that can be identified which in turn indicate the broad flavour of this theory.

Perhaps most important to Matta-Clark himself was his aim to broaden the possible range of experience available to people. Although manifest in a variety of ways, his work demonstrates a fairly constant valorisation of stuff that in some way managed to exceed or escape the rationalising

drive of high modernism and to contest the cerebral priorities it enshrined. Consequently, reference is made to work that might similarly be considered to question the hegemony of rationality and systemisation pushed by Idealism, and to challenge the downplaying of the ordinary, the familiar, the mundane, and so on. Deleuze has already been mentioned, and he will be hanging around (both on his own and with Guattari); his/their development of a radical empiricism draws from the work of Henri Bergson and William James amongst others; the work of these two will appear in its own right (particularly their work on the notion of judgement and questioning, as well as Bergson's better known work on matter and memory). There are fairly frequent contributions from the work of Henri Lefebvre, whose well-known demands for an active production of space clearly shares something of Matta-Clark's motivation.

Although the background to the emblem of major and minor architecture has been sketched out, the economy of the kind of inter-relationships they enjoy is nowhere understood better than in the work of Georges Bataille. Many other thinkers are drawn upon where this is appropriate to the argument; again, the overall intention is not to establish a coherent theoretical framework within which Matta-Clark's work can be 'understood,' but to allow these two ingredients to interfere with each other in such a way as to create patterns that bear on the present.

In addition to bringing to light primary source material from Matta-Clark's archive that has not been discussed previously, this thesis offers an original contribution to the knowledge of Gordon Matta-Clark's work, one that articulates an alternative understanding of his oeuvre that is prospective and speculative. While this demonstrates a far higher degree of consistency across the breadth of his oeuvre than is currently recognised (and contests the received hierarchy within it), this is something of a by-product of the principal concern, which is to read through his work in order to examine how his ambition to expand the range of possible human experience might lead to alternative economies for the valuing, understanding, practice, production and judgement of architecture, and how this might expose the difference between architecture approached as an object and architecture taken more broadly as a discipline and a process.

By providing a new way of reading Matta-Clark's work beyond contextual or causal accounts, this thesis also offers an original contribution in the development of an elliptical methodology that sets up a productive interference pattern by creatively combining aspects of an artist's oeuvre with a range of theory, one that here develops a discussion that is not *about*, but rather *with* and *around* Gordon Matta-Clark.

- ¹ Fred Orton, and Griselda Pollock, 'Les Données Bretonnantes: La Prairie de Représentation,' [1980] in Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996, p.60.
- ² For example, MoMA (NY) have bits of *Bingo* and *Bronx Floors*, a cut drawing and a number of sketches. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (NY) have *Reality Properties: Fake Estates*, a collage of *Conical Intersect* and *Office Baroque*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (NY) owns a collage of *Splitting*; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art have nineteen pieces including documentary photos and collages of *Splitting* and *Conical Intersect*, three films, and the extant fragments from *Splitting* known as *Four Corners*; the latter was the first Matta-Clark piece to be bought for over \$1million (in 2001).
- ³ See Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1996.
- ⁴ I am here paraphrasing Fred Orton, and Griselda Pollock's critique of art-historical orthodoxy, Orton and Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, *op.cit.*, p.vii
- ⁵ Matta-Clark, Letter to Carol Goodden (sent from Amsterdam), Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark, on deposit at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal (hereafter EGMC), *Letters, 1973*, Monday December 3rd 1973.

Chapter One: Coming to Matta-Clark

As stated in the outline, this thesis sets out to examine why Gordon Matta-Clark's work continues to attract attention, despite the ephemeral nature of many of his projects. Or coming at this the other way around, the thesis comes to Matta-Clark through the remarkable prescience of his projects wondering why is he not in fact *better* known.¹ Since his death his work has exerted an influence on artists, architects and critics. Now, a generation after their production in the 1970s, his projects can still raise questions that bear on the contemporary production and reception of artistic and architectural work. This thesis will suggest that one factor behind this paradoxical situation of the *œuvre's* frustrated and frustrating endurance lies in the way in which the reception of Matta-Clark's work has not been fully receptive to the questions his work can raise.

In fact, the reception of his work has predominantly been polarised as *either art or* (less frequently) architecture, and this polarisation is itself a significant obstacle.² Even across this polarised reception, there is little agreement about how his work fits: Corbeira for example asks what influence Matta-Clark's work has on the art and architecture that survives him, and replies for art, *prácticamente nula* (practically none);³ Pamela M. Lee is more cavalier; 'Matta-Clark's reception within contemporary art and architecture is easy enough to track. Artists of both sculptural and neo-conceptualist stripes have made claims for his importance, critics and historians vouch for his influence.'⁴ To some extent, they are both right: while it is *easy enough* to list a number of significant artists, architects and critics who express an interest in Matta-Clark's work, it has proved difficult to move any such connections beyond anecdote.

Matta-Clark's reception amongst architects

Anecdotal evidence suggests a number of architects practicing contemporaneously knew his work; letters in his archive indicate interest from SITE, from Will Alsop (who wrote to Matta-Clark at least twice on behalf of the *London Architecture Club* during 1975), from Frank Gehry,⁵ as well as other contemporary approaches such as that of Jean Baudrillard, who wanted to use Matta-Clark's work on the cover of one of his books.

Recent essays that address the work of Matta-Clark in the context of architecture, or examine the architectural aspect of his work seriously, include Peter Fend's essay on Matta-Clark's interest in pneumatic technology (*New Architecture and Matta-Clark*),⁶ which becomes little more than a thinly disguised exercise in recuperation. David Cohn's 'Gordon Matta-Clark y Los Cinco de Nueva York' and Darío Corbeira's own 'Desingar espacios. Crear complejidad' both in Corbeira's collection,⁷ position Matta-Clark in different architectural contexts. Corbeira's favoured reading of Matta-Clark (that he was creating complex spaces) leads him to suggest that the deeper influence of Matta-Clark can be found architecturally in practices such as SITE, or more recently Diller & Scofidio, Daniel Libeskind, Rem Koolhaas or MvRdV.

David Cohn is more circumspect about some of these connections; his excellent essay discusses Matta-Clark's *Window Blow Out* (1976) to position Matta-Clark's work in the context of the New York ghettos of the 1970s and the architectural establishment's shining starts (headed up by Eisenman); his epilogue, '*Beyond Formalism*,' suggests that apart from Diller & Scofidio, there is no legacy in the United States, and he stresses that there is no connection between Matta-Clark's work and the 'deconstructive' architecture shown, for example, in the MoMA exhibition *Deconstructivist Architecture* (New York, 1988).⁸

This superficial association between so-called 'deconstructivist' architects and Matta-Clark's work typifies the majority of artistic and architectural reception, which sensationalises and formalises his work, and reduces it to a straightforward attack on architecture, typified in titles like Aaron Betsky's *Violated Perfection*.⁹

There are few dissenting voices to this superficial view, few architects who move beyond the formalism and sensationalism that can be associated with some of Matta-Clark's work. One exception is Rem Koolhaas, who recounts how his own interest in Matta-Clark's work had evolved away from this position: 'I was fascinated by Matta-Clark. I thought he was doing to the real world what Lucio Fontana did to canvas. At the time, the most shocking, exciting aspect of his work was maybe the glamour of violation. Now I also think that his work was a very strong, early illustration of some of the power of the absent, of the void, of elimination, i.e. of adding and making.'¹⁰ Koolhaas' recognition of the *constructive* aspect of Matta-Clark's operations is almost unique. A commensurate, and more substantially argued, instance is provided by Anthony Vidler's recent essay, which asserts that 'Matta-Clark's actions developed not out of hatred of architecture but out of profound love and respect for what might, one day, be.'¹¹ In this regard, the positions of both Koolhaas and Vidler come closest to that assumed by this thesis; namely that however critical

Matta-Clark was of architecture, he took it seriously, that he worked with it not against it, and that his engagement with architecture was constructive and profound, not destructive and superficial.

Matta-Clark's broader public reception

While these examples suggest that his influence might be variously construed and potentially wide ranging, Matta-Clark has no obviously apparent heirs: although his work has belatedly found a public audience and is beginning to attract more sustained critical engagement, it has remained something of an awkward misfit between art and architecture.¹² Nevertheless, evidence regarding the nature and extent of interest in his work can be indicated by the fairly consistent and geographically wide ranging exhibition of his work, which annually includes a number of small solo exhibitions (usually in private galleries) and small contributions to larger group shows. Occasionally, there have been significant international exhibitions of his work, most notably *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective*, curated by Mary Jane Jacob at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, [1985]¹³ and *Gordon Matta-Clark*, curated by Corinne Diserens, at the IVAM Centro Julio Gonzalez, Valencia, [1992].¹⁴ Another major retrospective, *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure*, curated by Elizabeth Sussman, opened at the Whitney Museum in February 2007, and is still touring. Although such exhibitions all occasion articles in the art press or the arts pages of local and national newspapers, these mostly take the form of short exhibition reviews where Matta-Clark's work is either simply referred to in passing (it's there, it exists) or simply reviled or championed as an example of something. (Fig.1.1)

Substantial Catalogues

Clearly, there have been attempts to engage more thoroughly with issues raised by Matta-Clark's work; although these are comparatively small in number compared to the column inches accumulated by prosaic exhibition reviews, they are of far more relevance to the present study. Amongst the many catalogues produced to support the frequent exhibitions just mentioned, there are a small number of substantial publications. Some of these catalogues provide introductions to very particular areas of Matta-Clark's oeuvre, such as his involvement in the collective 'Food' covered by Klauss Bussmann and Markus Müller, (Eds.) *Food*, (New York: White Columns Gallery, 2000); some of his New York based films (Steven Jenkins (Ed.) *City Slivers and Fresh Kills: The Films of Gordon Matta-Clark*, San Francisco Cinematheque, 2004); his *Fake Estates*

Fig. 1.1. A variety of sensationalist headlines provoked by Matta-Clark's work.

This page; Kristine McKenna, "Gordon Matta-Clark: Wild Works by a Moody Maverick," in *The Los Angeles Times* Friday 21st June 1991, sec. Calendar Arts, p. F13. Opposite page, *Que d'art*, from the front cover of *l'Humanité*, 29th November 1975. Michael Sorkin, 'Decon Job,' in *The Village Voice*, 5th July 1988, p. 81. and Daniel Canogar, 'La Casa Herida' [the Wounded House], in *Lapiz* #9, 77, April 1991, p.46.

LOS ANGELES TIMES
FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 1991 F 13

ART REVIEWS

Gordon Matta-Clark: Wild Works by a Moody Maverick

By KRISTINE MCKENNA
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

In 1975, Gordon Matta-Clark was asked to participate in an exhibit showcasing work by several young architects; his response was to shoot out the windows of the exhibition space with a BB gun.

This gesture was typical of Matta-Clark, a subversive maverick whose wild original work of the 70s challenged conventional ideas about permanence and entropy, sculpture, architecture, and the American home. Using abandoned buildings as the raw materials for his work, he assumed them as if they were lumps of marble, making them with huge geometric cuts, slicing them in half, removing entire exterior walls to reveal gnarly sub-structures. Describing what he did as "architecture," Matta-Clark usually worked without permits and loved the idea of high risk. He once took a shower and shave at the top of a nine-story tower.

Before his death of cancer in 1978 at the age of 33, Matta-Clark blazed through the art world like a comet, leaving a small body of work most of which exists today only in the form of photographs. The subject of an exhibition at the Barnett Miller Gallery in Hollywood, Matta-Clark's pieces were usually demolished shortly after he completed them and all that's left is his prints in photographic documentation. As was the case among Conceptualists of that era, Matta-Clark's photos are pretty messy—they tend to be grainy, often a bit out of focus, pointlessly detail and unromanticized, and all seem to have been shot on gray days. It's unlikely that anyone unfamiliar with Matta-Clark's legend would be moved by these photos. For those who know his story, however,



A fragment from "Bingo," Gordon Matta-Clark's 1974 work of a suburban house in Niagara Falls which the artist cut into eight sections.

er, they're alive with emotion and complex meaning.

One of two sons born to Chilean Surrealist Roberto Matta (Matta-Clark's twin) topped to his death from the artist's studio window in 1976, Matta-Clark had a short life but a full one. Trained as an architect, he involved himself with drawing, sculpture, performance art, photography, film, political action and business (he was one of the original developers of Manhattan's SoHo district).

A second-generation Minimalist, Conceptualist, chiefly influenced by Robert Rauschenberg and Dennis Oppenheim, he embraced the Minimalist drive to pare a work down to the bare bones of its central idea with Conceptualism's relentless questioning of received beliefs about art. Perhaps most importantly, he represented a break from the then reigning Formalist sculptural style of artists like Donald Judd and Carl Andre in that his work incorporated elements of deconstructive idealism, populism and a functionalist practicality. Matta-Clark was a seeker for the grand gesture.

Matta-Clark never exhibited in Los Angeles during his lifetime and his work has been infrequently shown ever since, so that makes this show of particular interest. In view are fragments from "Bingo," a 1974 work composed of a suburban house in Niagara Falls that the artist cut into eight sections. The house was demolished before he finished with it. Five sections were dumped off a cliff in Artpark (Matta-Clark considered the dumping an artwork) and the remaining three were collected together to make the large sculpture on view here. Long and flat in the manner of a stage set, the green sometimes sections of two windows,

exterior shutters, and a portion of a stairway.

Also on view are photographs of a 1978 piece executed at a warehouse on a Manhattan pier that led to an arrest warrant being issued for the artist (he fled the country), a shot of a piece in Paris, and images of "Splitting," the work widely regarded as his masterpiece. Existing for just three months before being leveled, "Splitting" was a house in New Jersey that the artist neatly sliced down the middle. Matta-Clark described this piece—and all his work—as "an effort to convert a place into a state of mind." He'd no doubt be gratified to know that though the glasses where the windows have vanished, the spirit and the ideas he brought to bear on them burn on brightly.

• Barnett Miller Gallery, 606 N. La Brea Ave., Hollywood, to July 20 (213) 874-4757. Closed Mondays and Mondays.

• Maria Comrade Popova: Russian artist Liliush Popova was born 54 years before Matta-Clark and into an entirely different world, but there are notable similarities between the two. The careers of both were cut short at a time when their talent was just reaching full bloom (both died at the age of 33), and both were important innovators who struggled to liberate art from the bonds of history. The subject of an exhibition opening Sunday at LACMA (see review, F1), Popova can also be seen in a show of small works at the Margo Leavin Gallery in Hollywood, including 20 pieces dating from 1911-22. The exhibition centers on Popova's "Spatial Force Constructions," a ground-breaking body of work she was involved with shortly before her death in 1924.

Representing the culmination of her experiments with Constructivism, Popova's "Spatial Force Constructions" function as a textbook illustration of this ideology. In this series of analytic paintings we see her struggling to eliminate superficial elements in an effort to achieve maximum tension.

Consisting of filled webs of crisp intersecting black lines of varying width, the works attempt to merge art and technology and illuminate the interplay between form and space. At once elegant and rigorously scholarly, they're very musical drawings overlaid with an internal structural perfection evocative of a symphony.

• Margo Leavin Gallery, 812 S. Robertson Blvd., West Hollywood, to July 27. (213) 374-0609. Closed Saturdays and Sundays and Mondays.

Harvey meets Beetlejuice
A trippy comedy!
—by Dave Karger



DRÖP DEAD FRED

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project, including discussion and response from a number of contemporary artists as part of an event and exhibition curated by Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi and Frances Richard as *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates*, (Cabinet Books, in conjunction with Queens Museum of Art and White Columns Gallery, New York, 2005); the substantial catalogue raisonnée of his drawn work edited by Sabine Breitwieser, *Reorganising Structure by Drawing Through It* (Generali Foundation, Vienna, 1997); a catalogue of his written work edited by Gloria Moure, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Works and Collected Writings* (Ediciones Polígrafa, Barcelona, 2006); and the recent examination of his complex relationship with his father in *Transmission: The Art of Matta and Gordon Matta-Clark* (San Diego Museum of Art, 2006).

Alongside these very specific investigations, there are a number that address the whole breadth of Matta-Clark's oeuvre. These catalogues collate relevant reviews and articles from the art press, interviews (both with Matta-Clark himself and with those who knew and worked with him), as well as presenting some extracts from sketchbooks and illustrations of realised work. The first major catalogues, now out of print, were Florent Bex (Ed.), *Matta-Clark* (Internationale Cultureel Centrum, Antwerp, 1977) and Mary Jane Jacob (Ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark* (MoCA, Chicago, 1985). Substantial sections of these two catalogues have been reproduced in María Casanova (Ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark* (IVAM Centre Julio González, Valencia, 1993), and more recently in Corinne Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, (Phaidon Press, 2003) and Elisabeth Sussman (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure*, (Whitney Museum of American Art with Yale University Press, New York, 2007).

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Decon Job
BY MICHAEL SERRIN

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La casa herida

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The genealogical development and relevance of Matta-Clark catalogues

Although not a catalogue *per se*, the Phaidon monograph just mentioned follows the model of these significant Matta-Clark catalogues, and there is good reason to include it here as a knowing addition to this series. Indeed, the genealogy of Matta-Clark catalogues is more than anecdotal, as it serves as something of a barometer for the changes taking place in the nature of interest in his work. Moreover, it follows Griselda Pollock's criticisms of the centrality of the artist to art history, and its 'dominant written and exhibited forms, the monograph, the catalogue raisonné, the one person exhibit...'¹⁵ Pollock is generally critical of these for their role in the maintenance of a certain kind of institutionalised knowledge, with its strong links to a particular disciplinary model of art-history that is itself allied to major interests in the international art scene.

However, this genealogy is not a straightforward playing out of the dynamics of domestication and institutionalisation that Pollock observes, for it has lately also begun to foster counter-tendencies that she broadly advocates. While the particular trajectory of reception that is announced in these catalogues does indeed map and support Matta-Clark's increasing acceptance by the major institutional players in the art-world (culminating perhaps with the Phaidon monograph and the Whitney retrospective), it also incorporates another trajectory emerging (paradoxically) from within such catalogues, supported by other academic work from writers such as Attlee, Lee, Wagner and Walker. These two trajectories of reception might be referred to as those of domestication and challenge, and they will be discussed in that order here.

The trajectory of domestication

Diserens' *Gordon Matta-Clark* joined the ever-expanding shelves of Phaidon monographs, whose characteristic high-impact glossy illustrations are very much in evidence here. Its content (gathering disparate essays, articles, interviews, and lectures alongside an extensive Chronology and Bibliography) emphasises the extent to which it can be considered as the culmination of the series of major Matta-Clark catalogues whose forebears were noted earlier, running from the ICC (Antwerp, 1977), to MoCA (Chicago 1985), and IVAM (Valencia 1992), and notwithstanding the catalogue to the recent Matta-Clark retrospective held at the Whitney (2007) which will be discussed below. The fact that it was Diserens herself who edited the IVAM catalogue emphasises a continuity that is borne out both by the organisational and graphic aspects of the Phaidon 'catalogue,' and by the form of content (each evolutionary stage of this genealogy has reprinted significant sections of the previous stages). (Fig.1.2)

This is not to suggest that the Phaidon book simply replicates the IVAM catalogue, and it is interesting to observe the reversal that has taken place in the relationship between illustrations and text. The IVAM catalogue, itself based heavily on Jacob's approach for the Chicago catalogue, gives a balance of Matta-Clark's oeuvre across its illustrations, whereas Phaidon illustrate the 'famous' works, namely his building dissections, and the artist himself, more exhaustively. Whereas biographic resumé and photographs occupy only two of four-hundred plus pages near the back of the IVAM catalogue, photographs of Matta-Clark appear throughout Phaidon. (Fig.1.3) Alongside such photos of Matta-Clark that illustrate the opening section of the book, the only works reproduced are the *magnum opus* building dissections, whereas the first of these dissections only appears one third of the way through the IVAM catalogue. This change in the balance, number and nature of the illustrations between IVAM and Phaidon serves to illustrate Pollock's remarks regarding the relationship between catalogue-monograph and the machinations of the art industry. (Fig.1.4)

The centrality of the artist, and the emergence of a clear magnum opus, that Pollock observes has noticeably increased within the illustrations of the Phaidon catalogue: this new emphasis on the artist is, however, in contrast to the emphasis of the essays. In the IVAM catalogue these attempt to 'understand' the work, whereas the best of the new texts included in the Phaidon catalogue begin to undo the received framework for understanding his oeuvre and point beyond the projects themselves, placing more emphasis than previous critics have done on Matta-Clark's work in media other than the famous 'building dissections.'



Fig.1.2. The continuity between the IVAM and Phaidon publications is announced immediately, as both open with pages of stills from Matta-Clark's films (above). The lower images show IVAM, Phaidon and Whitney catalogues all following an approach to bookbinding that has become somewhat *de rigueur* for Matta-Clark catalogues (on this issue, see Linda Eeme, *Domus*, October 2003)

Figure 1.3 (this page, top)

The centrality of the artist that Pollock notes has clearly increased within the pages of the Phaidon catalogue (top), where photographs of Matta-Clark appear throughout Phaidon, reinforcing Pollock's point that it becomes a kind of fetish for the artist. In contrast, bibliographic resumé and photographs occupy only two of four-hundred pages near the back of the IVAM catalogue (bottom).

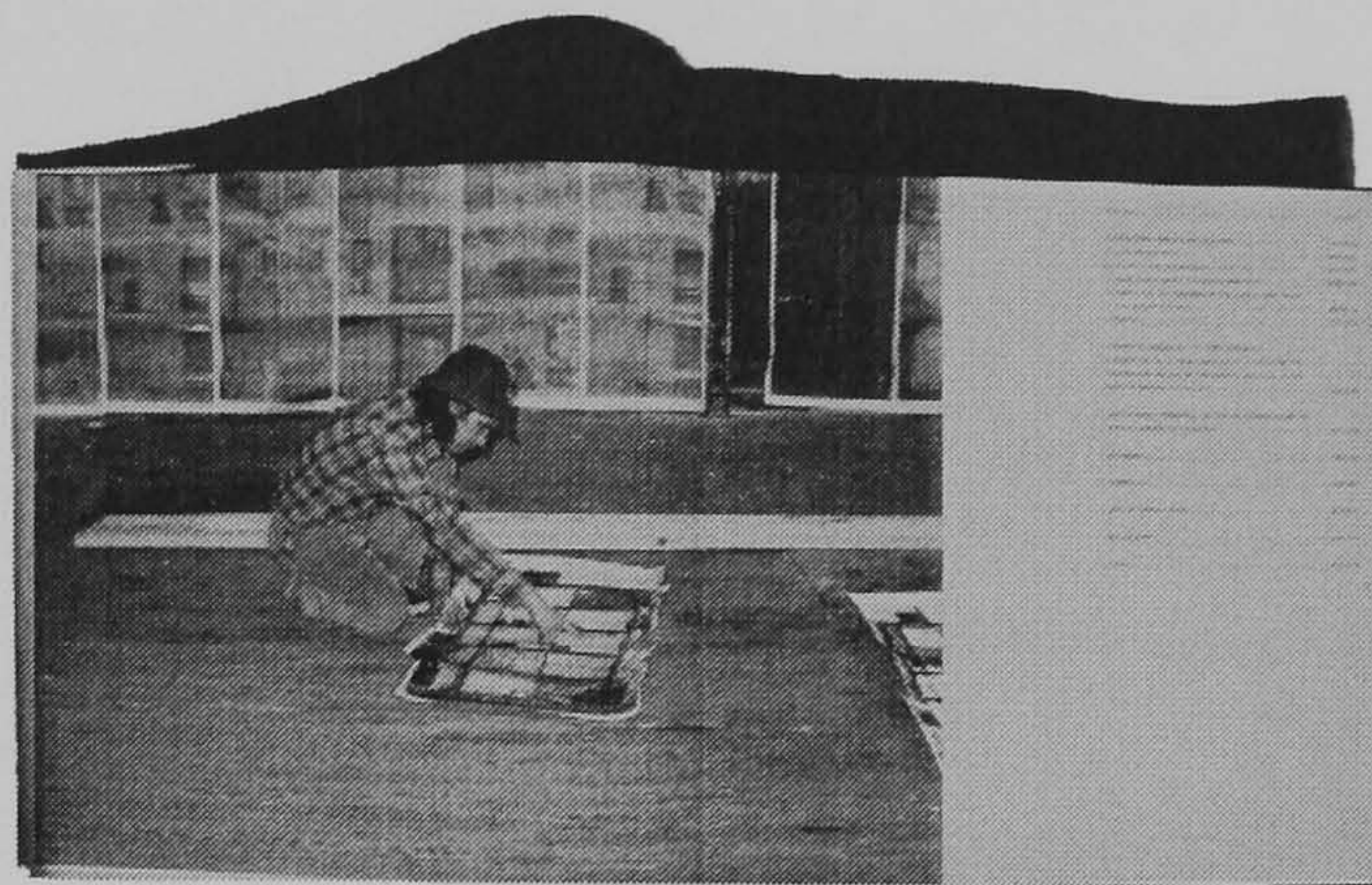
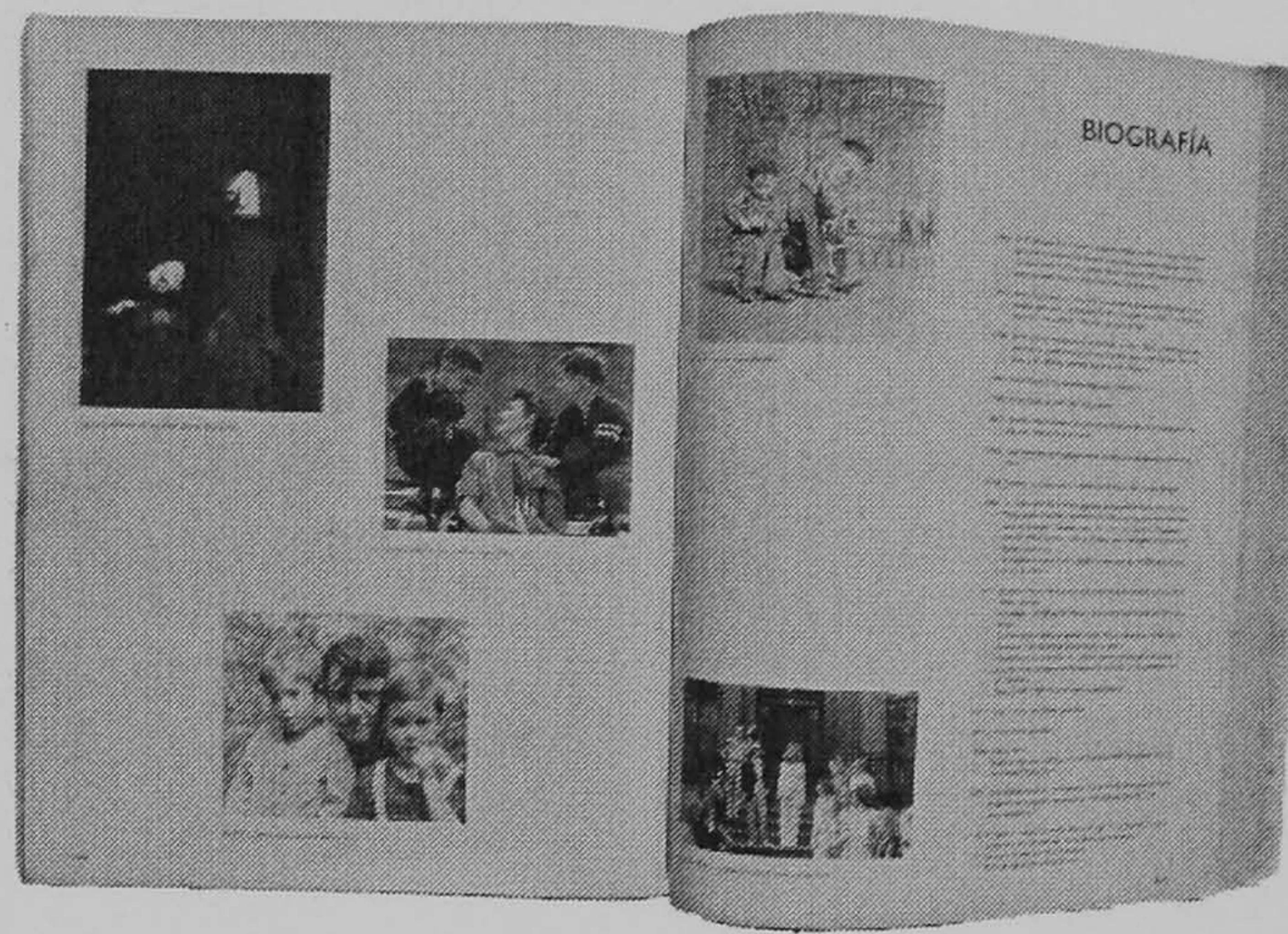


Figure 1.4 (this page, bottom; and opposite page)

Comparative dandograms outlining the changes in structure of catalogues, from chronological/integrated to thematic/separated. Highlighted here in orange is the proportion and position of the *magnum opus* building cuts. In red, the amount and position of biographical information is indicated.



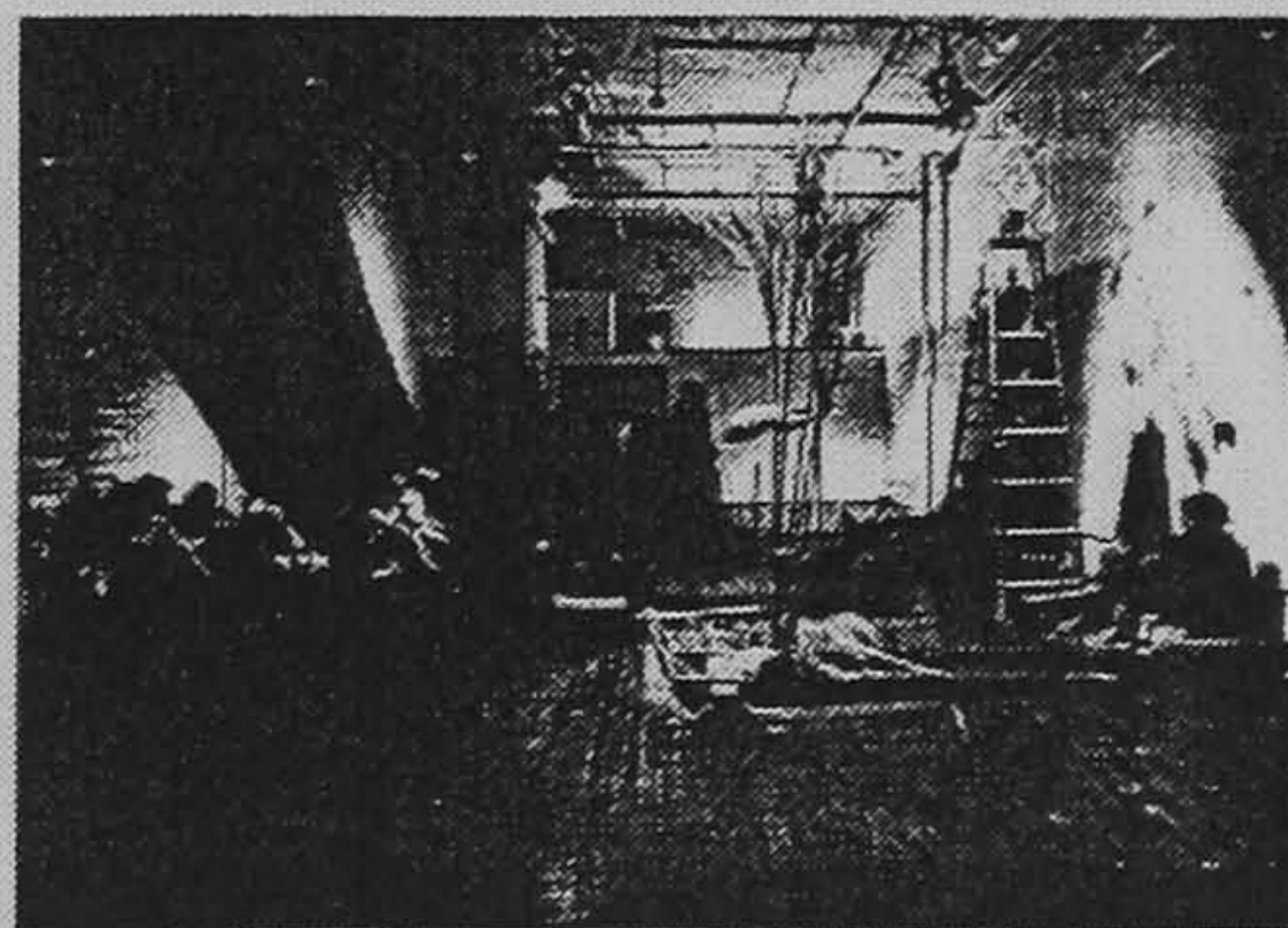
According to the curator, Mary Jane Jacob, the Chicago 'catalogue of works is organised chronologically by project. A partially illustrated, running checklist of works in the exhibition is integrated within each project section. Additional illustrations, of a more documentary nature, are similarly integrated... A chronology at the back of the book is intended to provide a framework for the period in which Matta-Clark was active, as well as a survey of his career.' Editors Note, p.17. . An example of this layout is given on this page.

This organisational approach was adopted by Diserens for the IVAM catalogue: indeed, the catalogue of works it contains is heavily reliant upon—and in many instances simply borrowed wholesale from—Jacob's 'Catalogue of Works' from the Chicago catalogue. Within this broad borrowing, IVAM adds more documentary work from elsewhere (essays and interviews with Matta-Clark) and fifteen interviews conducted by Richard Armstrong in 1980 (the Chicago catalogue includes forty-one interviews conducted by Joan Simon in June and December 1984). The kind of integrated, chronologically organised approach that Jacob established, embracing an open ended mix of disparate stuff, remains evident in the IVAM catalogue, although the mix is noticeably more stratified (IVAM contains several sections that collate drawings and phrases by period, for example, and gathers all the interviews together in one section). By the Phaidon catalogue, however, the form of this content has become rationalised further, with clear sections that group supporting essays, 'Documents,' and 'Chronology.' (The original forty-one Chicago interviews have been reduced to just ten, grouped together in one section.)

Christmas Piece, 1969

99 Greene Street Loft, New York

Occurring on December 25, 1969, this performance was staged on the occasion of a convivial gathering party for Alan Saret and the opening night of 99 Greene Street Loft, an alternative space for artists, poets, and performers started by Holly and Marky Solomon. Gordon Matta-Clark also designed and assisted in the construction of the gallery. The performance installation consisted of a darkened room illuminated only by theatrical lights on three trees: a Christmas tree, a holly bush, and a flowering peach tree. One hundred chairs stood stacked against the back wall; as each guest entered and took a chair, the piece was diminished as the party grew.



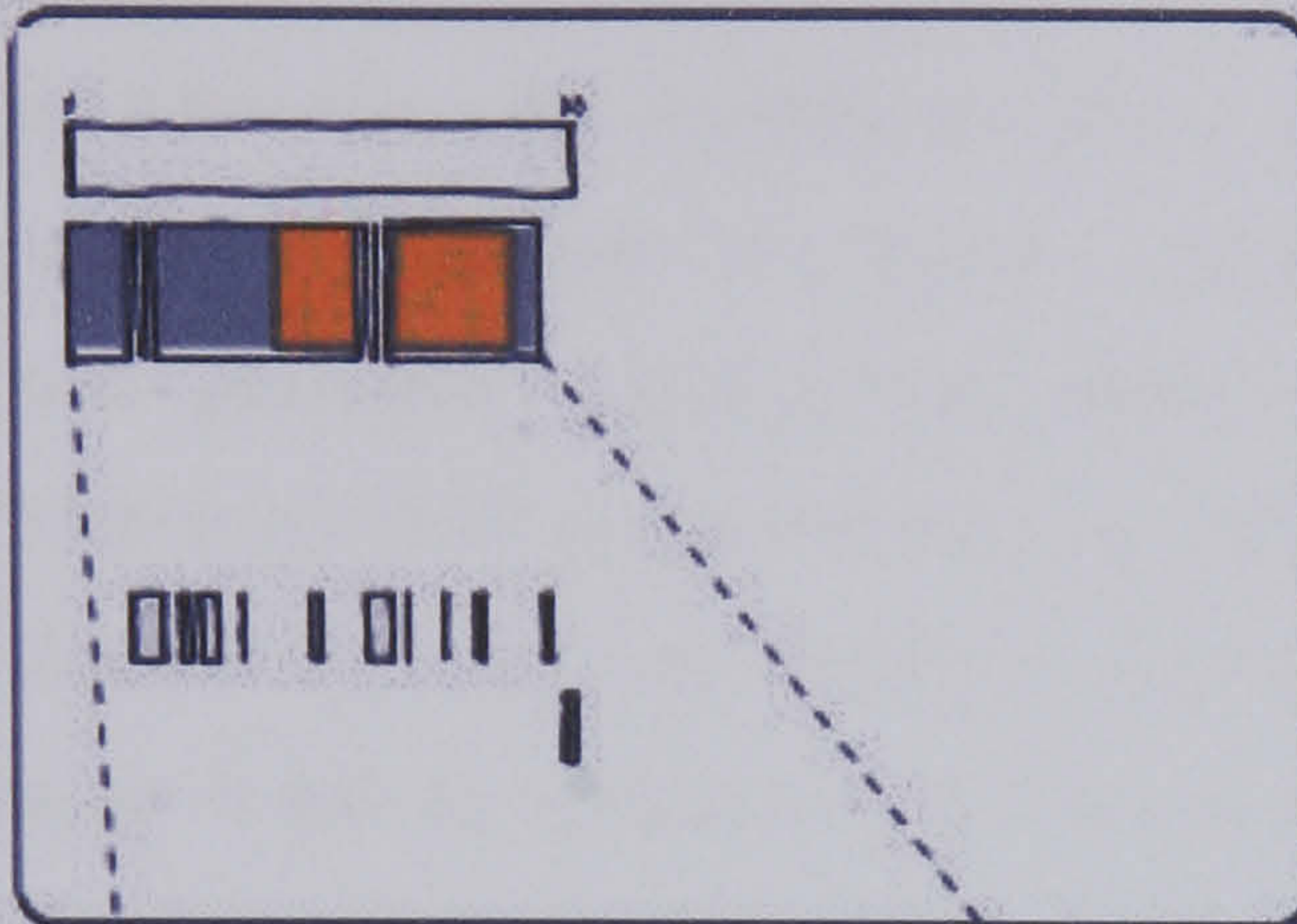
Holly Solomon: solitary detection and rehearsal of the Christmas Piece.

When Gordon took me to Gordon's studio — he was being in the same building as Charles Sorensen and John Ford. It's not even a studio that's elegant, brick walls, cement —

the work itself was impressive, amusing, energetic. Richard, Marky, Holly, Martin the Magician, March 10, everybody's amusement brought those parties together. The spot, even though everyone wanted that the party wouldn't last, I took those hours and being one of the stage people (Solomon, 1975) so my doing it — with a lantern, a chair, a chair. All with 1980s ready furniture and hardware. Can the table was an 'Christmas' decoration, something. And Gordon, Captain's 50 yard dash was also in the room. I remember Odenberg being a look at the Matta-Clark, squinting it, and saying: "Oh my God, you work," as he realised that by putting his hands on it, he wasn't really allowed to touch it. One evening, a dinner, and the dining room is designed: the walls did not being constructed by the light. I thought this piece beautiful. I was asked by the artist to participate in the piece. Then it began to shrink and I left the wall. I think it's been left in a small room.

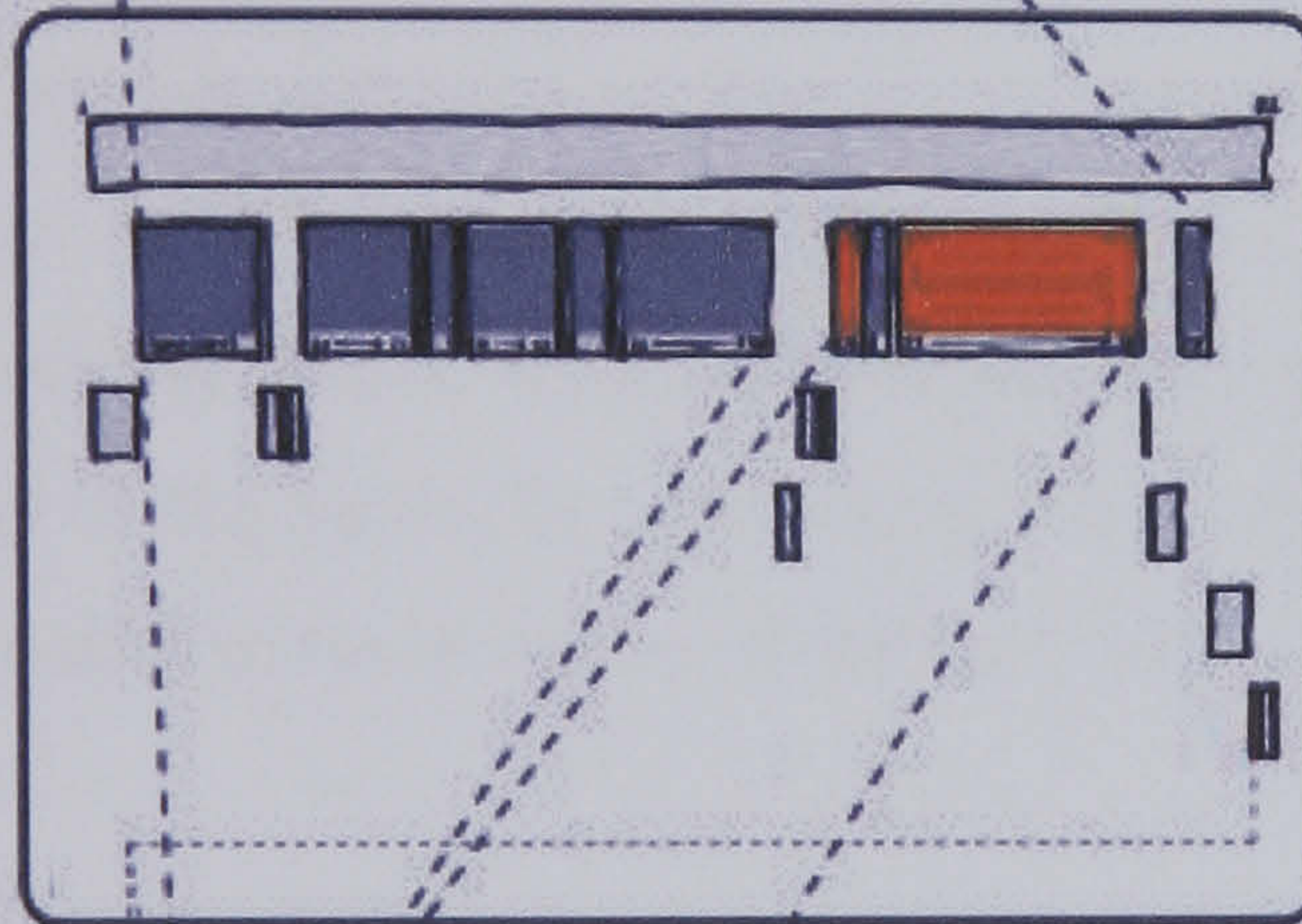
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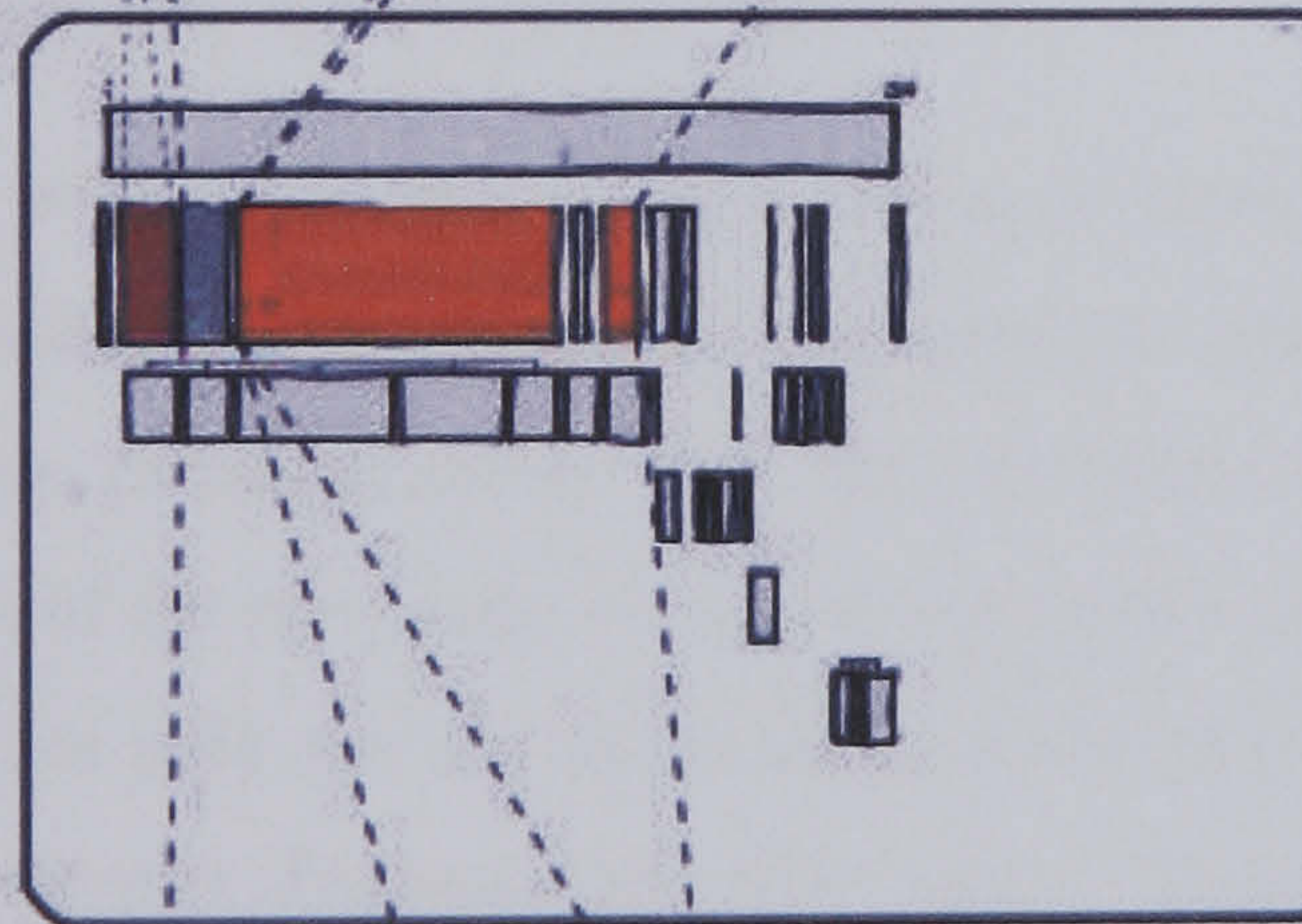
Chicago (1985)

Catalogue of Works
Secondary Essays & Articles
Interviews with Matta-Clark
Interviews about Matta-Clark
Chronology, Exhibitions, Bibliography etc.



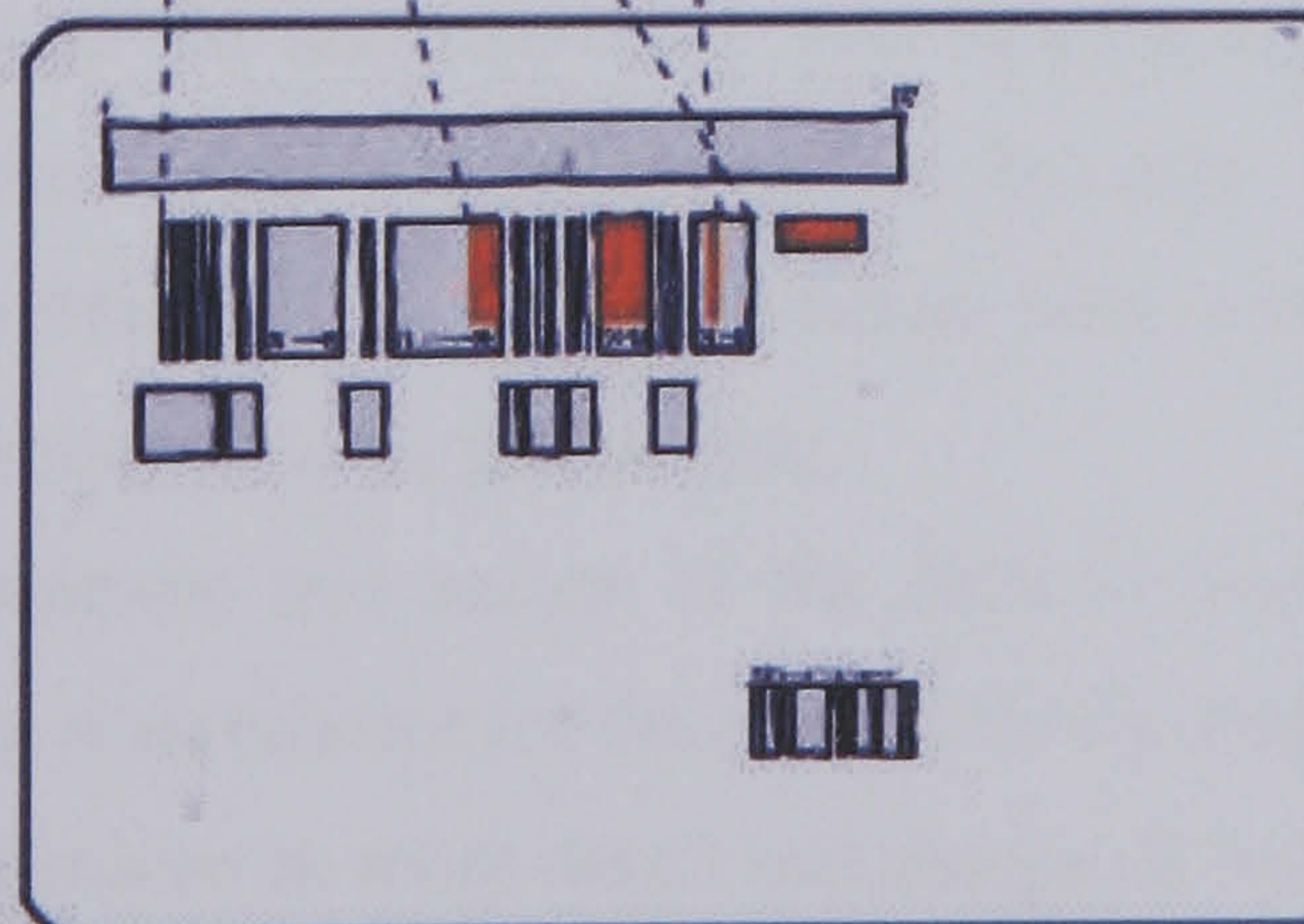
IVAM (1994)

Catalogue of Works
Secondary Essays & Articles
Interviews with Matta-Clark
Interviews about Matta-Clark
Chronology, Exhibitions, Bibliography etc.



Phaidon (2004)

Catalogue of Works
Secondary Essays & Articles
Interviews with Matta-Clark
Interviews about Matta-Clark
Chronology, Exhibitions, Bibliography etc.



Whitney (2007)

Catalogue of Works
Secondary Essays & Articles
Interviews with Matta-Clark
Interviews about Matta-Clark
Chronology, Exhibitions, Bibliography etc.

This paradoxical situation is announced, tangentially, in the editor's *Preface*, where Diserens hints at an editorial agenda that set out to explain in broad terms *why* Matta-Clark's work is important: in particular, she emphasises his concerns for engaging the spectator, and the 'profoundly political aspirations for artistic engagements in social space.'¹⁶ While Matta-Clark undeniably had 'profoundly political aspirations,' Diserens' remark is left in such a bald and ambiguous form it could be construed that she believes the work illustrated in the book provides the answer. Around this issue, the benefit of positioning the Phaidon monograph as a 'catalogue' breaks down, as it has to operate on its own terms rather than in conjunction with a show.¹⁷ Diserens' editorial statement will have to remain ambiguous, and the paradoxical, opposing trajectories of texts and images will have to remain simply as noted. It is more important for the current study to explore the trajectory of challenge that some of these Phaidon texts announce—and that is evident both in the balance witnessed within the 'catalogue of works' and the subjects of the essays in the catalogue to the recent Matta-Clark retrospective at the Whitney (2007)— as they signal a shift in the reception of Matta-Clark's work that is becoming evident elsewhere.

The trajectory of challenge

Concurrent with his access into the canon of 'great' twentieth century artists announced by the Phaidon publication and Whitney retrospective, there is an emerging but identifiable shift away from narrow preoccupations with the reception of the pieces themselves towards a wider examination of the resonance his *œuvre* can enjoy across various disciplines.

2003 not only saw the publication of the Phaidon catalogue, it was also the date of a small exhibition *Gordon Matta-Clark: The Space Between* (CCA Glasgow and AA London). This exhibition, and the accompanying slim catalogue by James Attlee & Lisa Le Feuvre (Nazraeli Press, Tuscon, 2003) are significant in that they announce a move away from a retrospective approach to Matta-Clark, and ask instead what contemporary relevance Matta-Clark's work can hold a generation after its production.

The moment and nature of the shift in reception that Matta-Clark's *œuvre* is currently experiencing is significant for the present thesis; this significance can be approached by discussing *The Space Between* in more detail and alongside both the main texts in the Phaidon catalogue and Pamela M. Lee's book *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*.¹⁸

Attlee & Le Feuvre's *Gordon Matta-Clark: The Space Between* was produced as a catalogue to accompany the eponymous exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow, which travelled to the Architectural Association, London (changing its emphasis in the process). In spite of the conversation it strikes up with the exhibition, its format is very unlike an exhibition catalogue: beautifully presented by the specialist fine-art Nazraeli Press, it is a sparsely illustrated essay, heavy with footnotes. In this, it is perhaps closer to Lee's *Object to be Destroyed*, which remains the only academic monograph to date. This book explicitly sets out to approach Matta-Clark and his work from within the discipline of art-history, endeavouring to construct the context and to plug the hole in art history's scheme that has prevented it from accommodating his work so far.

Taken in their own right, each of these publications offers a substantial contribution to thinking on Matta-Clark, although on the face of it, the three projects are very different. They do, however, share some concerns with the inability of orthodox art historical methodologies fully to address Matta-Clark's oeuvre. While their motivations behind and responses to these concerns differ, they are important for the present thesis because it similarly sets out to address the awkwardness of the oeuvre. Before their similarities can be discussed, each will be introduced briefly.

'Object to be Destroyed'

Pamela M. Lee's book developed out of her doctoral thesis at Harvard,¹⁹ and in both she makes it abundantly clear why Matta-Clark's work continues to raise questions for architects, dealing as she does with a wide range of complex notions that include perceptions of space, movement, and spectatorship; languages of architecture, institutions and architecture; architectural education; privacy and retreat; and urbanism (de-centralisation, suburbia, gentrification and regeneration, and the politics of planning). Her conclusion includes a lengthy caveat reminding the reader that despite the length of this list and the architectural possibilities that Matta-Clark's projects announced, it is important to recognise that his works were not works of architecture.

The intentions of Lee's book are essentially twofold: to plug the gap in art history's treatment of Matta-Clark, and to raise questions about the writing of art history (and *a fortiori*, of history) more generally. Regarding questions of history, the writing of history, and the historiographic dimensions of Matta-Clark's work, she claims the book 'presents this work as

countering a certain model of history, one bound inexorably to Hegelian models of progress and the lockstep march of its own teleology.’²⁰

Around the chronological march of the main text, various and difficult topics are addressed, including the awkward relationship with violence that the artworks involve, and which has provoked much (often hostile) reaction during and since the time when these works were produced; the complex notions of subjectivity that are brought into relief by his projects, which Lee discusses firstly on an individual and then on a collective level; and the problematics of dealing with and classifying his work, which she discusses firstly through its relationship with ‘property,’ and then through its re-presentation. In various ways, each of these difficulties is dealt a timely response; that is to say, Lee proposes different, temporal analyses for each particular topic.

This broad concern with time is announced in the introduction, which hints that Matta-Clark was something of an artist out of time, and Lee concludes her conclusion by suggesting that the force of Matta-Clark’s larger critique revolves around the question of ‘what it means to be contemporary—to be with time.’²¹ In Lee’s book, then, there are two projects. What wins is art history, as her project accepts Matta-Clark’s situation *out of time* and explores the problematic relationship art history has enjoyed with the legacy of Hegelian philosophy. To this extent, her regard is retrospective, and as such she does not explore the contemporary force of the work itself. While this thesis is mindful of the problematics of art history that Lee addresses, the principal research questions emerge around the contemporary relevance of Matta-Clark’s oeuvre, and consequently the thesis sets out to develop a methodological response that is more prospective. Although this thesis shares with Lee’s work a move away from Matta-Clark’s project towards more general observations, the direction of such a move is different here: while Lee concerns herself particularly with the status of the ‘work’ and the temporal, philosophical and disciplinary (here art historical) frameworks within which this might be positioned, this thesis intends to address more fully the theoretical implications for our contemporary situation that can be raised by that work.

Putting this another way, Matta-Clark’s work becomes subservient to Lee’s broader engagement with art history: the oeuvre itself becomes an *Object to Be Destroyed*. Lee’s punning title, and much of her text, revolves around issues of material destruction, and as such runs fundamentally against the underlying reading in this present thesis, which takes Matta-Clark’s as a

constructive operation stressed by Koolhaas and Vidler's approach mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Crow's Phaidon 'Survey'

The major contribution to the Phaidon 'catalogue' in both length and importance is Thomas Crow's excellent survey. Crow's survey is acutely mindful of '...the perils of applying conventional models of progressive development to the trajectory of [Matta-Clark's] career...'²² and although the survey is structured chronologically, it neatly sidesteps such perils by introducing substantial evidence through apparent anecdote, skilfully maintaining the momentum of a broader discussion while providing an academic rigor. A sequence of thematic sections overlays the broad chronology, and the repetition of quotes in different sections helps to disrupt further any straightforward progressive reading of the survey.

These devices are Crow's strategic response to his belief that despite its enormous variety, Matta-Clark's oeuvre can be unified: 'The attitude that unifies his output from start to finish is an acute dissatisfaction with the inert quality of conventional sculpture and architecture...'²³ It is around the nature of such unification that Crow's work addresses an aspect of Matta-Clark's oeuvre that is significant to the way in which this thesis develops: for Crow, such a unity will not surrender to conventional methods of writing art history because of the oeuvre's inscription of multiple complex (mystic, metaphysical, pre-scientific as well as artistic) interests that exceed the empirical particulars of its production. Clearly, Crow's observation regarding the inadequacy of orthodox art-historical approaches for dealing with Matta-Clark's oeuvre echoes one of Pamela M. Lee's central concerns. However, unlike critics before him, Crow emphasises the existence and the importance of Matta-Clark's wide-ranging interests, and argues that each one becomes manifest within Matta-Clark's work in two differing ways: the bookish and the physical. 'For the work as a whole to make sense, one needs to pay attention to both.'²⁴ This thesis accepts Crow's assertion here, and extends his advice into areas that are less concerned with 'making sense' of the work and more interested in opening up the possible questions his oeuvre can continue to pose.

'The Space Between'

This enjoyment of conflicting interests is also central to Attlee's essay in *The Space Between*. Citing Richard Nonas' observation that Matta-Clark's work gained energy from juxtaposing ideas that didn't go together, Attlee puts a similar strategy into play, bouncing forward and backward

between ideas and fragments of work. Attlee's essay travels far, from long jumps with the *Situationists*,²⁵ to considerations of Matta-Clark's relationship with language, his desires to colonise airspace, his interest in alchemy, while also discussing biographical and contextual issues.

Implicit in this energetic, jumping approach is a questioning of traditional art-historical method already noted in the work of both Lee and Crow. Although this approach falls away over the course of Attlee's essay (which finishes, exhausted, clinging onto a thematic-chronological technique not unlike that which it criticises), this thesis will develop a methodology that is similar inasmuch as it too echoes aspects of Matta-Clark's own working process, operating around unfamiliar or unexpected juxtaposition. While Attlee's discussion takes this notion as something of a motif, and pursues various disparate discussions, these always find their way back towards an 'explanation' of Matta-Clark's work: in contrast, this thesis develops a methodology that is more rigorous and measured in its structure, in order to focus exploration on particular aspects of Matta-Clark's œuvre, and that aims to move away from his work rather than back towards it.

The fragmentation and juxtaposition that do enjoy success in Attlee's essay also inform the broader structure of the book; sparse, beautiful plates illustrate his essay but these are also brought to life by Le Feuvre's separate *Notes*, which work with and against her *Work References*. In short, there are several accounts of Matta-Clark which overlap across this book in a productive antagonism, and which Le Feuvre enjoys in her Foreword, *Thinking About the Space Between*. More important than its outline of the exhibitions of photographic pieces linked to the book, the Foreword develops a series of questions about the status of the work now, a generation after its production. It is this spirit of prospective questioning that this thesis sets out to pursue.

The Phaidon moment: both domestication and challenge

It is around this prospective questioning that the differences between these publications can be drawn out. Kravagna's contribution to the Phaidon book argues that Matta-Clark's photographs and films 'fill the void left by the loss of the "actual" works,'²⁶ and thus tacitly subscribes to a hierarchy of genre within Matta-Clark's œuvre that the layout of the Phaidon project outwardly supports. In contrast, Le Feuvre's Foreword requests a far broader evaluation. Following Bourdieu, she argues that to consider Matta-Clark's work now expands the definition of that work: *The Space Between*—both exhibition and publication—invites connections, 'situating [Matta-Clark's] work within an extended present.'²⁷ Although Le Feuvre points to a spatio-temporal

location where such connections might be sought, the broader questions raised by these three significant publications concern Matta-Clark's status in art history and his relationship to architecture; they are questions about the changes occurring in approaches to his work, about who is looking at him and what they (already) know.

While the Phaidon monograph can be taken to mark the close of one era, announcing Matta-Clark's definitive acceptance into the canon, it opens out onto the next, signalled by Attlee and Le Feuvre. Just as Crow's survey is sure to become the standard art-historical text on Matta-Clark, it also inscribes multiple counter-strategies that open onto something like Le Feuvre's *Space Between*. This conjunction, with the opposing trajectories of domestication and challenge and all they involve, I will refer to for convenience as the 'Phaidon moment.' Behind this observation we encounter not only a strategy for reading these books, but an imperative to continue the work they begin. Taken together, they offer us something of a Janus – though Crow's notion of twinning, which he takes up at some length, could offer an equally useful image at this juncture – marking the opening up of a space where such debate can take place (though not supplying the questions).

So it is not without irony that Crow is central to the Phaidon project and the institutional acceptance it bestows. Elsewhere, Crow has warned more generally that 'if a work can last indefinitely, the contradiction [it contains] is illusory.'²⁸ Crow's concerns regarding art that lasts for ever are clearly not unique,²⁹ and are voiced in the face of Matta-Clark's increasing accession into the collections of major international players in the art world: his work has recently been bought by the very institutions whose role Matta-Clark so consistently criticised, such as the Guggenheim and the Museum of Modern Art, both in New York, the San Francisco Art Institute, and so on.

Although the discussion of the genealogy of Matta-Clark catalogues earlier in this chapter traced changes in the reception and status of his oeuvre, where the instability, uncertainty and impermanence of his work has gradually been replaced by a tacit agreement concerning the stability and authorship of key projects, all of which ease his work's treatment according to art-historical orthodoxy and its increasing tendency to ignore Crow's warning, it must be stressed that this progressive institutionalisation is not just a posthumous affair. Late on in his short career, Matta-Clark clearly suffered from what Brian O'Doherty's has termed art-historical 'slotting;' in the *Afterword* to his well known book *Inside the White Cube*, O'Doherty describes 'slotting' as the externally induced binding of an artist to the moment of their greatest contribution, whereafter no change to their style is tolerated. 'Originality is reified: so is its creator.'³⁰ In his preparatory work

for the last major project he produced before his death, *Circus: Caribbean Orange* at the Museum of Modern Art in Chicago [1978], he made a variety of proposals that were rejected by the Museum—not, as had usually been the case during his career because the proposals were too ‘destructive,’ ‘unsafe’ and so on—but because he was not proposing to produce a ‘trademark’ building dissection.

In addition to these various tendencies towards the active erasure of his work’s awkwardness, broader changes in the art world and in society at large have also clearly had an impact on his œuvre’s reception. The art world has shifted very rapidly, both during Matta-Clark’s working life and after; while he was frustrated by the reification he experienced—to commission a building dissection was to miss the point, he would have argued—his broader concerns were more explicitly political, an attitude he clearly shared with many other artists of his generation. As much as institutions out-manœuvred and co-opted avant-garde work, so the avant-garde sought to develop further strategies to side-step these institutions. These broad shifts in artistic production and institutional attitude are surveyed very well by Julie H. Reiss and Miwon Kwon in their books *From Margin to Centre* and *One Place After Another* respectively.³¹ One consequence of these surveys is to throw Matta-Clark’s intentions into relief; what might have been a radically political artistic gesture during the early 1970s now looks very naïve; by this token, aspects of Matta-Clark’s œuvre that he would have considered to be most important and effective appear increasingly hackneyed. As O’Doherty notes, he is not alone in this regard: ‘Seventies art remains troubled ... Its makers are socially concerned but politically ineffective.’³²

These broad surveys around the context contributing to the ‘Phaidon moment’ again bring us back to the question of why Matta-Clark’s work continues to attract attention, or—if we are to acknowledge some of the problems just raised—we should now perhaps ask more precisely which aspects of his work manage to escape institutional domestication, and how the questions or contradictions contained there operate and endure. The fact is that Matta-Clark’s œuvre cannot simply be positioned as site-specific art and read according to Kwon’s survey (this is not her intention), nor can it be accommodated and ‘explained’ by readily available models from art history, as Lee, Crow and Attlee all make clear. Paraphrasing Orton and Pollock’s discussion of an unrelated yet equally awkward example, Matta-Clark’s work occupies ‘a problematic place’ in conventional art historical schema, where the orthodoxies of art and architectural history ‘break down’ before the problems posed by his œuvre.³³

While Matta-Clark's oeuvre can partly take up a position within these models, it will continue to escape: I will argue here that the important and enduring questions raised by his work are more successfully approached when his oeuvre is addressed both as a whole (prior to any art-historical sorting), and as a constructive response to the legacy of modernism that extends beyond the issues raised by art-historical surveys. Matta-Clark was consistently critical of the ways in which modernism championed systematic and rational thinking, and the reductive effect he believed this had on human experience. His response, his work, was not self-consciously 'site-specific art' or 'art' at all; he used whatever means he could get hold of, whatever he felt was most appropriate to counter this reductiveness and instead broaden the possibilities for experience.³⁴

For various reasons that will be discussed in a little more detail below, this response was and can continue to be read as much through architecture as art. Architecture was and continues to be a key ingredient and concern in Matta-Clark's oeuvre, not simply as a formal exercise, but in terms of the way it is linked into systems of power that establish and maintain the way things can be valued. His own relationship with architecture was long and complex, and his oeuvre both sustains this complexity and allows it to open beyond the particulars of his personal and contemporary response.

On Matta-Clark between art and architecture

Corbeira warns that to talk about Matta-Clark and architecture together implies having to deal with the difficult relations that have been maintained between art and architecture for the past fifty years.³⁵ While this is a salient warning for anyone hoping to undertake a full account of Matta-Clark's work, this thesis has a slightly different focus, one that asks what Matta-Clark's work can articulate about our present situation. Consequently, while dealing with some of the difficult relations Corbeira points towards, it will ignore others that are caught up overmuch in hermetic disciplinary disputes; instead, it will introduce issues from other fields of cultural enquiry in order to avoid the domestication typified as one trajectory of the 'Phaidon moment.'

While the Phaidon moment's tendency to domesticate the challenge of Matta-Clark's work was introduced in terms of the art market and its supporting institutions, it can clearly also be read in architecture's ability to domesticate challenges to its authority. In this context, Corbeira suggests that Matta-Clark would find himself positioned 'just where he would not have liked to be,'³⁶ due to the way in which the discussion and increased reproduction of works such as the

building dissection *Splitting* has valorised a formal aspect of his projects to such an extent that they have become stylistic badges (*sellos estilístico*) for architectural deconstruction. The marginal illustrations of his projects (usually the building dissections) around discussions of architecture (or indeed of art, as the opening sections of this chapter demonstrate) epitomise this problem with the general reception of his work, though such examples can also indicate the disjunction between his œuvre and the progressive readings they purportedly illustrate. (Fig.1.5)

While this reduction of Matta-Clark's œuvre to a stylistic badge is clearly problematic, it is not inevitable. In contrast to Betsky, Pérez-Gómez and Pelletier, Robin Evans' *The Projective Cast* explores far more ambiguous relationships between architecture, representation and meaning raised by Matta-Clark's œuvre. Evans' marginal account of Matta-Clark's work focuses on the latter's exclusion from the MoMA 'Deconstructivist Architecture' show in 1988;³⁷ Evans suggests, between the lines, that this exclusion from architecture (in its public position within the polite art gallery) highlights the problems of the discipline of architecture rather than Matta-Clark's work. In contrast to the literal and formal readings of critics such as Betsky, Pérez-Gómez & Pelletier, and Pallasmaa, where Matta-Clark's cuts are 'acts of revelation' that open up the workings of architecture (as object) for scrutiny, Evans refers not to a building dissection but to the lesser known 'Window Blow Out' [1976], a project which reveals far more about the links between the discipline of architecture and socio-political institutions.

What Evans introduces more broadly as *equivocation* is instructive in thinking through the particularities of the ambiguity of Matta-Clark's relationship with architecture, not because Evans' project denies any meaning to architectural representations or architectural objects, but because it suggests that there might be more than one meaning, that these meanings might conflict, and that the production of such meanings might not only lie with the architect and within Architecture, but that they might come from beyond their range.

The methodology adopted in order to follow this possibility acknowledges the importance of shifting the consideration of Matta-Clark's work away from its general polarised reception as either art or architecture. Moreover, and in contrast to most of those working at the architectural pole who take his work as either anti-architectural or reduce it to a 'stylistic stamp,' the approach assumed by this thesis is underwritten by a broad assertion that Matta-Clark's œuvre was constructively engaged with architecture, despite almost all popular and critical reception which assumes the contrary.³⁸

This can have a number of consequences, particularly on the ways in which architecture's territory are conventionally understood to be bounded. Indeed for Dan Graham, one of a minority of critics who push the exploration of Matta-Clark's relationship with architecture beyond the formal, this questioning of architecture's disciplinary limits was one of the most significant aspects of Matta-Clark's work. Graham argues 'Matta-Clark's work starts by setting up a dialogue between art and architecture on architecture's own territory. It doesn't generalise the art gallery as the site of a repressive architecture, identified with the Establishment, but now links itself to the urban environment on an experienced political architectural historical basis which includes its relation to itself as a memory of archetypal architectural form.'³⁹ Corbeira pushes Graham's assertion more strongly: 'The whole of Matta-Clark's life and his work are united by architecture, by architecture not as a discipline or regulated profession, but by architecture both as result and as authority straining from political locations, that's to say the city, and as the vast intangible territory from where it can reflect on attaining that same position.'⁴⁰

Beyond the seriousness with which both Graham and Corbeira consider Matta-Clark's relationship with architecture, their discussions

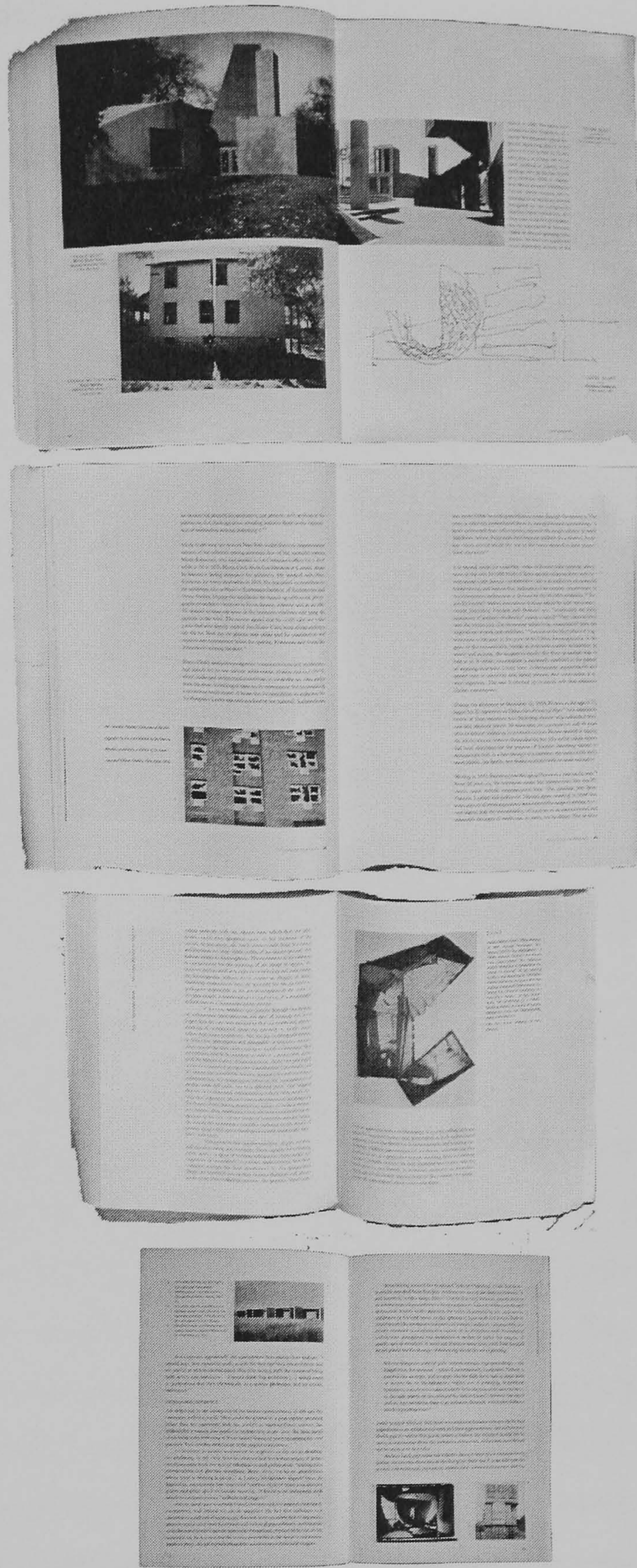


Fig 1.5: Comparative illustrations of Matta-Clark's work in architectural publications: From top, Aaron Betsky, *Violated Perfection: Fragmentation in Modern Architecture* (1990); Robin Evans, *The Projective Cast: Architecture and Its Three Geometries* (1995); Alberto Pérez-Gómez & Louise Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (1997); Juhani Pallasmaa, *Aesthetics and Existential Space: The Dialectics of Art and Architecture* (2007)

also reiterate Evans' willingness to explore architecture's *equivocation*, pointing as they do to the importance of considering architecture as polyvalent, able to occupy an uncertain territory that can be simultaneously real, political and theoretical. Although Matta-Clark had 'given up' architecture as a career, he continued to rely predominantly on architectural discourse when he talked about his own position and work. When he did make explicit reference to art, it was generally to the work of particular artists rather than to broad movements. He was comfortable in this grey area between the two disciplines, and his approach drew on both simultaneously, rather than transposing the rules of one onto the other. Matta-Clark stressed this during an interview with Liza Béar:

The whole thing of introducing architecture into my work has been developing for a long time, that's becoming clearer to me. It's not about using sculptural ideas on architecture, it's more like making sculpture through it. So it seems that there's always been a constant relationship in my work between architecture and sculpture, and now one has taken over the other, rather than one having to do with building the other.⁴¹

Matta-Clark reiterated the importance he placed on this disciplinary grey area when he returned to the broader question of where his work was situated with the benefit of hindsight:

My initial decisions were based on the avoidance of making sculptural objects and an abhorrence of flat art. Why hang things on a wall when the wall itself is so much more a challenging medium? It is the rigid mentality that architects install the walls and artists decorate them that offends my sense of either profession.⁴²

Described by Matta-Clark in this way, his approach seems to be open to a contextual explanation: the issues of *flat art*, *sculptural objects*, and professional or disciplinary regulation were of particular concern to the era of artistic and architectural high modernism, and that he was educated and worked during a period that saw various and increasingly successful reactions to high modernism is a straightforward observation.⁴³ However, this in no way provides a satisfactory explanation of the continuing awkwardness associated with his *œuvre*. In order to address this, this thesis argues that his work should not be taken a simple attack, either on architecture or on high modernism; although he 'abhorred' and 'avoided' some of high modernism's criteria and expectations, its presence runs deep within his *œuvre*. I want to suggest that architecture stands not only as one moment and one discipline that Matta-Clark targeted, but that it assumed a far broader, more thoroughgoing and ambiguous role in his response to various manifestations of modernism within society and culture. While there have clearly been significant socio-cultural changes in the years since Matta-Clark was working, the legacy of modernism continues to bear on many areas of our contemporary situation, and it is arguably here that the endurance of his *œuvre* can be encountered and its continuing relevance explored. This speculative exploration will involve

bringing several aspects of Matta-Clark's œuvre into particular and new focus by reading it through a compound lens of theory; the following chapter will introduce this methodological approach more fully, as well as introducing the wide variety and varying status of stuff that makes up his œuvre. Before that is done, the final section of this chapter will outline existing patterns of combining Matta-Clark and theory.

Matta-Clark and theory

Addressing Matta-Clark 'theoretically' is clearly nothing new. Previous work that has read Matta-Clark together with theory has generally put them together in one of two ways;⁴⁴ the majority has put theory to work in order to 'explain' Matta-Clark's projects, and includes early attempts by Marianne Brouwer, Judith Russi Kirshner and Dan Graham, whose work anticipates more recent connections in that they draw on the work of Georges Bataille (particularly his interest in scatology, waste and so on, which is generally read through Denis Hollier), and on quasi-Marxist political criticism (Graham's analysis borrows issues from Manfredo Tafuri, Walter Benjamin as well as Marx himself in order to argue for the Matta-Clark's connection with architecture in political terms; clearly this was Matta-Clark's stated intention, and Graham draws this out well, but as just discussed it is also the aspect of his work that is now, at least overtly, the most dated and naïve). More recent work in this mode demonstrates the continuing popularity of reading Matta-Clark superficially with Bataille (Pamela M. Lee claims to organise her own reading within Bataille's understanding of General and Specific economies⁴⁵), as well as making passing connections with the Situationist International. As already mentioned, this thesis does not attempt to understand or explain Matta-Clark's work, and although the insights of some of these writers will be referred to, their methodologies will not be adopted.

Less common (and generally more recent) readings reverse these links, putting Matta-Clark to work to illustrate or develop theory. Although they have different motivations, the particular examples that will be mentioned here all include an explicit desire to either contest or side-step the perceived shortcomings of orthodox art historical approaches. As discussed earlier in this chapter, for example, the broader ambition of Lee's *Object to be Destroyed* was to contest and alter art-history's available framework by working through Matta-Clark's work. In this vein, Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss' project *Formless* uses Matta-Clark to illustrate and develop a theoretical position: as with Lee, their main theoretical framework is provided by Bataille,

although Matta-Clark is only one of many artists they use to explore this, and it is Bataille's notion of *Informe* (rather than Lee's use of his economics) that is put to work in order to offer an alternative reading of recent art history.⁴⁶ While there are aspects of these works are significant for this thesis, its intention is not to establish a theoretical framework through its exploration of Matta-Clark.

Thomas Crow's *Survey* and James Attlee's essay, both of which were introduced above, share something with Lee's work and the approach of Bois and Krauss inasmuch as they too open Matta-Clark's oeuvre to an examination that lies beyond art history's conventional framework. While they do this in part through the relationship established between his work and other theoretical readings, their respective theoretical frameworks do not target art history first and foremost, in contrast to Lee and Bois & Krauss. (Indeed, it could be said that Crow in particular maintains and contributes to art-historical appreciation of Matta-Clark's work while also exceeding the possibilities of an art historical understanding.) Neither sets out to understand Matta-Clark's work in its context, nor do they put this work at the service of theory; instead, they demonstrate that behind Matta-Clark's particular confrontations with different disciplines there lay a more thoroughgoing engagement with various more pervasive aspects of modernism, and that successful approaches to the enduring aspects of Matta-Clark's work can emerge by opening up his own engagement with modernism.

In this respect, the relevance of Bois and Krauss' project for this thesis lies less in the balance of the relationship between Matta-Clark and theory, and more in the parallels taken up vis-à-vis modernism. Bois records their interest in Bataille's *informe* around 'certain operations that brush modernism against the grain... without countering modernism's formal certainties...'⁴⁷ and he goes on to stress the importance they attach to fissuring modernism's unity 'from within [so] that certain works will no longer be read as they were before.'⁴⁸

It is important to emphasise here that while Matta-Clark's work will be approached through modernism in an attempt to 'fissure its unities,' it was neither 'theoretical' nor did it set out to illustrate theories. His work in fact dissolved the theory-practice separation, and the methodology adopted here will reflect that fact. In their own ways, both Crow's and Attlee & Le Feuvre's projects enact a more creative combination of theories and Matta-Clark's oeuvre than either Lee or Bois and Krauss: this conjunction and approach is significant for this thesis, which will develop a methodology that draws on both in order to develop the prospective questioning that they begin to signal.⁴⁹

1 Indeed Thomas Crow made a similar remark in his lecture 'On The Splitting Series of Gordon Matta-Clark,'
 2 given to the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) 27th November 2001.

3 As Vidler notes, 'an increasingly specialized world of art criticism... has found it difficult to make
 4 comprehensive sense of the architectural practice of Matta-Clark.' Anthony Vidler, "'Architecture-to-Be":
 5 Notes on Architecture in the Work of Matta and Gordon Matta-Clark,' in Betti-Sue Hertz (ed.),
 6 *Transmission: The Art of Matta and Gordon Matta-Clark*, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, 2006, p.63.

7 'prácticamente nula, no sólo no ha tenido seguidores sino que, cualquier intento de relacionar su trabajo con
 8 entregas posteriores acaba como mucho en las buenas intenciones...' Darío Corbeira (ed.), *¿Construir.o
 9 deconstruir? Textos sobre Gordon Matta-Clark*, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca, 2000,
 10 p.168

11 Pamela M. Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1999,
 12 p.215.

13 Alsop wrote to Matta-Clark on 13th January and 14th May 1975. The Texas Gallery wrote to Matta-Clark on
 14 November 3rd 1976: 'The client who is interested in purchasing a piece is a Los Angeles architect by the
 15 name of Frank Gehry. He does good work and aberrantly (for architects) collects good art. Frank is also
 16 interested in getting a commission for you in Los Angeles and we have supplied him with all the information
 17 he will need.' In 1974 there were approaches from Baudrillard's publisher for Graffiti images, and from SITE
 18 for 'theoretical, unrealised or realised projects' for publication in their magazine. All in EGMC *Letters* files.

19 Sabine Breitwieser (ed.), *Reorganizing Structure by Drawing Through It*, Generali Foundation, Vienna, 1997,
 20 pp.46-55.

21 Corbeira (ed.), *¿Construir.o deconstruir? op.cit.*

22 Robin Evans also rails against the nature of this 'connection:' see Robin Evans, *The Projective Cast:
 23 Architecture and its Three Geometries*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1995, pp.89-91. The show included
 24 architects such as Eisenman, Gehry, Libeskind, Koolhaas, Hadid, Coop Himelb(l)au or Tschumi. In his essay
 25 for the exhibition catalogue, Mark Wigley attempts to explain the selection criteria that led to the inclusion of
 26 these architects and the exclusion of 'provocative' work, which he illustrates with projects by both Matta-
 27 Clark and SITE, in terms that typify much of the superficial reception of Matta-Clark's oeuvre: '...any
 28 provocative architectural design which appears to take structure apart—whether it be the simple breaking of
 29 an object (figs. 2, 3) or the complex dissimulation of an object into a collage of traces—has been hailed as
 30 deconstructive. These strategies have produced some of the most formidable projects of recent years, but
 31 remain simulations of deconstructive work in other disciplines, because they do not exploit the unique
 32 condition of the architectural object. Deconstruction is not demolition, or dissimulation. While it diagnoses
 33 certain structural problems within apparently stable structures, these flaws do not lead to the structures'
 34 collapse. On the contrary, deconstruction gains all its force by challenging the very values of harmony, unity,
 35 and stability, and proposing instead a different view of structure: the view that the flaws are intrinsic to the
 36 structure... A deconstructive architect is therefore not one who dismantles buildings, but one who locates the
 37 inherent dilemmas within buildings.' Mark Wigley, 'Deconstructivist Architecture,' in Philip Johnson and
 38 Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, MOMA New York, 1988, p.11.

39 James Wines' criticism of the architectural establishment's superficiality is trenchant. He accuses
 40 Johnson/Eisenman/Wigley of stealing the idea for the MoMA show from Aaron Betsky's proposals for a
 41 'Violated Perfection' show, then weeding out any 'non-formalist participants.' James Wines, 'The Slippery
 42 Floor,' in Andreas Papadykos, Catherine Cooke & Andrew Benjamin (eds.) *Deconstruction AD Omnibus
 43 Volume*, Architectural Design, London, 1989, [originally published in *Stroll* magazine, June 1988, pp.15-23],
 44 p.136. '[Matta-Clark] this architect turned-artist, if any figure in the past fifteen years deserved to be called
 45 Deconstructivist, fits the definition (although he probably would have rejected such a categorisation). His
 46 omission from the MOMA show had to be one of the most narrow-visioned and irresponsible in curatorial
 47 history.' *ibid.*, p.137.

48 Other, more accommodating, architectural hosts for Matta-Clark's work include the UCLA Department of
 49 Architecture, which was co-sponsor of a conference based around Matta-Clark's films (Los Angeles Forum
 50 for Architecture and Urban Design, and SCI-ARC9-11th October 1997—the conference itself debated his
 51 ongoing fascination for architects), and the Architectural Association in London, which hosted 'Gordon
 52 Matta-Clark: The Space Between,' 1st -31st May 2003.

53 Aaron Betsky, *Violated Perfection: Architecture and the Fragmentation of the Modern* (Rizzoli, NY) 1990.
 54 For relevant sections on Matta-Clark, see p.104-5 and 49-53.

- 10 John Rajchmann, 'Thinking Big (John Rajchmann talks with Rem Koolhaas),' in *Artforum*, 33, December 1994), p.99.
- 11 Vidler, 'Architecture-to-Be,' *op.cit.*, p.59. Vidler had been developing this position for some years; in an early, shorter review, he suggested: 'Close attention to the terms of Matta-Clark's discourse reveals a fundamental internalization of these principles [of architectural modernism from Rowe *et al* at Cornell—SW] without which his tenacity in seeking to undermine, destabilize, and reconstrue them is incomprehensible... [considering space as it would have been understood then, post Giedeon] we might reinterpret Matta-Clark's cuttings in a new mode: not so much destructive, or deconstructive, in relation to architecture but constructive of an architecture that (finally) would embody the modernist spatial promise in a way denied by the systematic vulgarizations of modernity built by corporate efficiency.' Anthony Vidler, "Splitting the Difference," *Artforum* Summer 2003, p.36.
- 12 Although Pamela M. Lee, whose work I will discuss shortly, has suggested that the reason for this is that Matta-Clark was an artist 'out of time,' Brian O'Doherty's more general observation regarding American—he is discussing the United States—avant-gardes might more persuasively suggest that Matta-Clark was an artist out of (geographical) place: 'American innocence is sustained by a variety of delusions which recent successful avant-gardes have tended to share... Anarchic gestures in America do not do well. They tend to refute the official optimism born of hope... Whatever its excesses, the American avant-garde never attacked the *idea* of a gallery, except briefly to promote the move to the land which was then photographed and brought back to the gallery to be sold.' Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, [1976. 1986], University of California Press, 1999, pp.93-4.
- 13 This *Retrospective* then travelled to New York, (both to New York City's Brooklyn Museum and to upstate New York, paradoxically at Cornell University's Herbert F. Johnson Museum), Pennsylvania and California, and abroad to Amsterdam, Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Finland, and Canada.
- 14 Traveling to London and Marseille
- 15 Griselda Pollock 'Agency and the Avant-Garde: Studies in Authorship and History by Way of Van Gogh,' in Orton and Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, *op.cit.*, p.316. The increasing relevance of 'authorship' for contemporary art is emphasized throughout Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*, MIT Press, 2003. For more stinging attack, based on the artistic avant-garde's knowing manipulation of self-image to serve their 'self-interest,' see Richard Bolton, 'Enlightened Self-Interest: The Avant-Garde in the '80s,' in Grant H. Kester (ed.), *Art, Activism, & Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage*, Duke University Press, Durham & London, 1998.
- A discussion between the major curators and conservers of Matta-Clark's work formed part of the symposium organised by the Getty Research Institute at the San Diego Museum of Art, 8th October 2006. (Betti-Sue Hertz, Elizabeth Sussman, Mary Jane Jacob, Gwendolyn Owens, and Christian Scheidemann) This round table discussion clearly demonstrated the changing approaches to exhibiting Matta-Clark, along with concomitant tensions.
- 16 Diserens, *Preface*, in Corinne Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, Phaidon Press, London & New York, 2003, p.6.
- 17 Around this issue, the benefit of positioning the Phaidon monograph as a 'catalogue' breaks down; Diserens' editorial statement will have to remain ambiguous. It is possible however to look at earlier catalogues in the context of the curatorial policy for their respective exhibitions, and relate this back to the trajectory of domestication just noted culminating in Phaidon. Indeed, the form of the Chicago exhibition suggests that Jacob's project was actually much more political (for various reasons): the exhibition itself was more explicitly set out not simply to be more participatory (*Fresh Air Cart* and *Open House* were remade and available as participatory exhibits) but to point toward the political potential of Matta-Clark's work in terms of broader social participation and impact; the Chicago exhibition aimed to display Matta-Clark's work in ways that could continue to raise questions for visitors, examining the nature of the work itself (given that the curatorial process itself had to justify the use of documentation to exhibit work that no longer existed, something that was a more acute theoretical problem in the 1980s than it might be now) and the ways in which its 'remaking' by visitors could constitute Matta-Clark's projects as kind of lens on art and life. (All of this from Mary Jane Jacob's address and subsequent discussion during the round table on *Gordon Matta-Clark: The Challenges of Display and Conservation* at the symposium *The Architecture of Other Spaces: A Symposium on Matta and Gordon Matta-Clark*, San Diego Museum of Art, 7th October 2006.) In contrast, the political aspirations mentioned by Diserens are distinctly ambiguous: the nature of this distinction is picked up tangentially in the following discussion of the exhibition *Gordon Matta-Clark: The Space Between* (CCA

Glasgow and AA London, 2003) and the accompanying slim catalogue by James Attlee & Lisa Le Feuvre (Nazraeli Press, Tuscon, 2003).

MIT Press, 2000.

Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed*, *op.cit.*. Completed PhD theses on Matta-Clark include: Pamela M. Lee, "Object to be destroyed: the work of Gordon Matta-Clark," Harvard, 1996. and Blanca Lleó Fernández, *La Casa, Sueño de Habitar en el Proyecto Moderno un Proyecto Inacabado*, ETSAM Madrid, 1996. PhDs in process include Roula Mater-Perret, University of Rennes 2 (France), and Bahar Beşlioğlu, METU Ankara (Turkey).

Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed*, *op.cit.*, p. xiii

ibid., p.233.

Thomas Crow, 'Gordon Matta-Clark,' in Corinne Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, Phaidon Press, London, 2003, *op.cit.*, p.33.

ibid., p.19.

ibid., p.27.

He notes Matta-Clark 'arguably achieved what SI failed to.' James Atlee, 'Gordon Matta-Clark: How to Explain?' in James Atlee and Lisa Le Feuvre (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark: The Space Between*, Nazraeli Press, Tuscon AZ & Portchester, 2003, p.30.

Christian Kravagna, 'It's Not Worth Documenting if it's Not Difficult to Get: On the Documentary Nature of Photography and Film in the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark,' in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.134.

Lisa Le Feuvre, 'Foreword: Thinking About the Space Between,' in James Atlee and Lisa Le Feuvre, *Gordon Matta-Clark: The Space Between*, Nazraeli Press, Tuscon AZ & Portchester, 2003, p.7.

See Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture*, Yale University Press, 1996. Thomas Crow opened up the related issues of reappropriation, domestication, and application that have accompanied previous normalisations of Matta-Clark's work: Thomas Crow, 'The Splitting Series of Gordon Matta-Clark,' address given at the *San Fransisco Art Institute*, 27th November 2001. Crow's own approach was to trace a consistency through Matta-Clark's work via a parallel with the mythographic exercises of Claude Levi-Strauss, exemplified in his *The Raw and the Cooked*. Strauss claims there to be after some kind of universal framework or fabric within which 'systems of truths become mutually convertible and therefore simultaneously acceptable to several different subjects, the pattern of those conditions takes on the character of an autonomous object, independent of any subject.' p.11. Interesting in the present context is the demand placed upon this framework to contain the apparently contradictory: Strauss himself notes the difficulty of locating a centre to the work of myth.

Brian O'Doherty, for example, has demonstrated how despite working beyond the gallery system, many avant-garde artists found their work being co-opted, and that even 'site-specific, temporary, nonpurchasable, outside the museum, directed to non-art audience, retreating from object to body to idea—even to invisibility—have not proved impervious to the gallery's assimilative appetite.' O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, *op.cit.*, p.96.

ibid., p.113.

In her Doctoral thesis (later published as Julie H Reiss, *From Margin to Centre: The Spaces of Installation Art*, MIT Press, 1999) Reiss traces the background to the increasing politicalisation of the artist during the mid-late 1960s in the USA, particularly their alignment with the peace movement; anti-museum art works more or less overtly attacked the US involvement in Vietnam. Reiss doesn't really develop other political aspects (she mentions W.A.R. and GAAG, workers art groups and black groups in passing). Although the artists were becoming politically active, this activity was not particularly reflected in their work itself; see also Lippard, 'Intersections,' in *Flyktpunkter/Vanishing Points*, Olle Granath and Margaerta Helleberg (eds.), *Moderna Museet*, Stockholm, 1984. Also, see Janet Kardon (ed.) *1967: At the Crossroads*, ICA Philadelphia, 1987. Reiss sidesteps Lippard's criticisms somewhat, arguing that the development of new ways of showing work, of bypassing the gallery/museum structure was in itself radical and therefore political: 'All of these forms [Installation, Performance, Earthart, Video, Process, and Conceptual art, etc.] were difficult or even impossible to collect and commodify. By virtue of their ephemeral nature, these forms challenged the market system of the art world and by extension became a protest against the politics of the institutions.' Reiss, *From Margin...*, *op.cit.*, p.77. As O'Doherty notes, these attempts to challenge the market were short lived; Reiss makes a similar observation, suggesting that the art market was the first to recognise the 'value' of this stuff, and consequently the museum/institutional infrastructure picked it up and supported it. Following a decade dip from mid/late '70s, installation surged to international acceptance by 1990, accompanied by big money, big shows, academic domestication, and so on. (Reiss mentions *Dislocations*, MoMA, NY, 1991-2; and *From*

the Inside Out, Jewish Museum, NY, 1993), but this situation was perhaps epitomised by the merger of MoMA and P.S. 1 announced in 1999.

Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, MIT Press, 2002, similarly developed out of her doctoral thesis at Princeton University. An extract is published as Miwon Kwon, 'One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity,' in *October*, 80, Spring 1997).

Developments of these two survey texts include Buskirk, *The Contingent Object*, and Claire Doherty (ed.), *Contemporary Art: From Studio to Situation*, Black Dog Publishing, London, 2004; the former digging deeper, the later moving the debate forward to focus on work carried out within the last decade.

O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, *op.cit.*, p.79.

Fred Orton, and Griselda Pollock, 'Les Données Bretonnantes: La Prairie de Représentation,' [1980] in Orton and Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, *op.cit.*, p.60.

Joan Simon notes that 'Matta-Clark and his contemporaries referred to their art-making almost generically as "pieces" or "works." Implied were both something tangible and an assumption of the mutable relationships between processes and products. Often barely recognisable as art, some of these pieces were by-products of collaborative and conceptual actions; others were deliberate manifestations of extremely personal perceptions in nonart situations and structures.' Joan Simon, 'Interviewers Note,' in Mary Jane Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 1985, p.18.

In a short review of shows at Artists Space ('Pictures') and David Zwerner gallery ('New York ca. 1975'), Jeffrey Kastner, makes a similar point: he notes that while some stuff feels dated ('Rosler's dour 1975 recitative *The Semiotics of the Kitchen*, like the pedagogical critique of the intersection of art and money seen in Hans Haacke's *The Chase Advantage*, 1976, [which] has aged perilously close to parody...' p.3), other work 'shocks today perhaps even more than then.' p.3. 'Gordon Matta-Clark's freewheeling, anti-categorical modes of production also suggest something of the ambient spirit, if not the specific direction of the work in 'New York ca. 1975'.' 'C1975 and All That,' in *Art Monthly*, 249 (September 2001), p.3.

Corbeira (ed.), *¿Construir.o deconstruir?* *op.cit.*, p.155.

'justo donde no le hubiera gustado estar.' *ibid.*, p.166.

The broader context of this association is discussed at length in Robert Holloway's contribution to Corbeira's collection 'Matta-Clarking,' in *ibid.*, pp. 203-225, although Holloway's argument is in support of Betsky's position, emphasized in his title's attribution to the latter's argument.

Atlee remarks 'Matta-Clark was both inside and outside architecture' Atlee, 'Gordon Matta-Clark,' *op.cit.*, p.45.

Dan Graham, 'Gordon Matta-Clark,' in *Art Magazine*, reprinted in Corinne Diserens and María Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, IVAM Centre Julio González, Valencia, 1993, p.378.

'La totalidad de la vida y la obra de Matta-Clark están unidas a la arquitectura, a la arquitectura no como disciplina o profesión regulada sino a la arquitectura tanto como resultado y poder tensionado desde los lugares políticos, es decir la ciudad, como por el vasto territorio intangible desde el cual reflexionar para llegar al mismo punto.' Corbeira (ed.), *¿Construir.o deconstruir?* *op.cit.*, p.154.

Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Lisa Béar 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Splitting the Humphrey Street Building' from *Avalanche*, Dec. 1974, pp.34-7. (Reprinted in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, pp.374ff., and in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.166.)

Gordon Matta-Clark, Interview from Florent Bex (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, Internationaal Cultureel Centrum Antwerp, 1977, p.8ff. (Interviewer not credited, but according to Johannes Pas, it was Bex himself.)

In addition to the more rigorous reactions or critiques, Vandeburgh and Ellis mention several 'direct attacks on buildings,' as well as other widely-mediated examples of modernism's apparent 'failures' such as the 'seminal' demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex in 1972, Peter Blake's *Form Follows Fiasco* (1977) and Brent Brolin, *The Failure of Modern Architecture* 1976 (the latter, like Pugin's *Contrasts* a century before, set out to promote the impression that the modern movement was solely responsible for the ills of society.) David J. T. Vandeburgh and W. Russell Ellis, 'A Dialectics of Determination: Social Truth-Claims in Architectural Writing, 1970-1995,' in Andrzej Piotrowski and Julia Williams Robinson (eds.), *The Discipline of Architecture*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London, 2001.

In a lecture to SFAI, Crow suggested that Matta-Clark's work has been 'normalised' in three different ways; through re-appropriation into philosophical strata (he mentioned Pamela M. Lee's approach as an example of this, though we could add works such as *Formless*); through domestication or familiarisation (in common with the fate of many other avant-garde practices); and enlisted into architectural practice. He noted that attempts to find confirmation of consistency within his oeuvre, or beyond it with the work of others, are problematic, as they give power to the writer, although his own work does then go on to suggest that Matta-

Clark's work can be shown to have a certain consistency. In this lecture he attempts this with reference to the constellation of paradoxical terms maintained beyond paradox by Levi-Strauss' Raw and Cooked anthropology: Crow's *Survey*, the most thorough art-historical account of Matta-Clark's career and surely the standard text in this area, is itself organised chronologically, although he observes the problems of reading the artist's career as one of linear development. He sets out four thematic chapters as a counter-strategy and demonstrates the potential of reading across the *œuvre*.

45 For a clear exposition of Bataille's economics, see Paul Hegarty, *Georges Bataille*, Sage Publications, London, 2000 esp. Ch.2. For a fuller discussion of Bataille's *Informe* in the context of architectural production, see Stephen Walker, 'Animate Form: Architecture's Troublesome claims to Formlessness,' in Pat Cowley and Paul Hegarty (eds.), *Functions of Formlessness*, Peter Lang, 2004.

46 In common with Lee, Crow and Attlee & Le Feuvre, Bois & Krauss' target is the 'interpretive grid' which they contest by establishing a new 'classification' that sets out 'to declassify the larger unities that are the very stuff of art history: style, theme, chronology, and... *œuvre* as the total body of an artist's work.' Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss, *Formless: a User's Guide*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1997, p.21.

47 Bois, 'The Use Value of Formless,' in *ibid.*, p.16.

48 *ibid.*, p.21.

49 Other recent examples of this combinative approach include Anne Wagner on Splitting and Doubling, which discusses Matta-Clark's work in terms of twinning (this itself is something of an echo and amplification of Crow's suggestion that *Splitting* be read (psychologically) as twinning rather than splitting. See Anne M. Wagner, 'Splitting and Doubling: Gordon Matta-Clark and the Body of Sculpture,' in *Grey Room*, 14, (Winter 2004).

Chapter Two: Major & Minor Architecture

Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated that despite the widely varying reception of Matta-Clark's work, very few accounts take architecture as anything other than a fairly straightforward target. While he was clearly and consistently critical of architecture, this thesis argues that Matta-Clark's work actually enjoyed an awkward and complex relationship with architecture; this study takes this relationship seriously and suggests that there was more to his work than a simple knee-jerk attack on architecture or a naïve reaction against modernism more broadly. Moreover, I will argue that approaching his work through this relationship will not simply broaden our appreciation of his work on its own terms (although this is something of a by-product), but that it can more importantly open up his *œuvre's* ongoing relevance for aspects of our contemporary architectural situation.

In order to discuss this ongoing relevance, the thesis responds to various intersecting issues that emerge around the trajectories of the 'Phaidon Moment' discussed earlier. In particular, it sets out to navigate around the trajectories of domestication in order address Matta-Clark's *œuvre* anew: in doing so, it will pick up some of the lessons from the trajectories of challenge present in the work of Crow, Attlee & Le Feuvre, and Bois & Krauss, and develop a methodological approach that brings aspects of Matta-Clark's *œuvre* alongside a varied body of theory.

This chapter gives an account of this methodological approach and explains how this informs the structure of the thesis. It will discuss Matta-Clark's *œuvre* and its perceived status in more detail, not only to demonstrate the breadth of material in the *œuvre* that has been increasingly laundered as a consequence of the gradual institutionalisation discussed in the previous chapter, but also to demonstrate the inseparable connections between the awkwardness manifest in art-historical attempts to deal with this *œuvre* and Matta-Clark's own working process. This process is significant in two respects; it provides some degree of substantiation for the ways in which this thesis expands the *œuvre*, and it informs the way in which the methodology develops

in conversation with issues of process that Matta-Clark himself deemed important. While this method involves the juxtaposition of Matta-Clark's oeuvre with a wide range of theorists, some of whom will be introduced later in the chapter, it is itself structured by three theoretical moves or devices. These focus and organise both the methodology's operations and the structure of the text, and they will be worked through sequentially in this chapter.

The first of these, which provides the context for the overall approach to architecture, is Adrian Forty's discussion of a particular characteristic or problem with the discourse of modern architecture itself. While Forty's careful analysis of this problem can help to identify a blind-spot where aspects of Matta-Clark's work can be taken to operate, it cannot in itself provide any purchase for the kind of combination or interference with Matta-Clark's work that is aimed for here. This kind of strategic response to Forty's observations comes instead from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whose concept of *Minor Literature* provides a steer for the approach to Matta-Clark's work as a challenge to accepted definitions of architecture. On one level, *Minor Literature* operates here simply as a motif, providing the second strategic approach to the broad structure of the thesis. To achieve even this, their concept clearly needs alteration and expansion to become what I will term *Major and Minor Architecture*; but once this is undertaken, it can be shown to reflect Matta-Clark's uneasy relationship with the accepted canon of architecture and thus identify more precisely the ways in which Matta-Clark's work can be approached as a response to Forty's observations. At the point in the chapter when these issues have been discussed, a more detailed account will be given of the structure of and rationale for the argument that follows, and of the selection, status and distribution of stuff from Matta-Clark's oeuvre across this structure.

Beyond this, the alteration and extension of *Minor Literature* also provides a clear link to one of Matta-Clark's main working methods, which he referred to as *discrete violation*. The third and last theoretical focus to the methodology emerges from an exploration of the nature of this link: Matta-Clark's notion of 'discrete violation' is explored and its significance for the present work emphasised with reference to Henri Bergson's interest in *inventive* or *creative questioning*. While this discussion reflects on *Minor Literature* and provides a further rationale for its qualified adoption, it more significantly provides a focus for the method that is adopted at a smaller scale within the movement of the text, and which in turn enacts its own working by bringing discrete violations to bear on Matta-Clark's oeuvre itself. This chapter will finish with a discussion of one of Matta-Clark's early projects at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago, Chile (1971),

which serves both as an example of this approach, and clarifies how these three principal organisational and focusing aspects of the methodology work in concert.

The intention of this methodological approach is to instigate and support a discursive analysis that can enjoy both the breadth of exploration and the constructive paradox of Matta-Clark's approach—*discrete violation*. He worked tirelessly to point out that apparently static and stable disciplines such as architecture actually enjoyed multiple and conflicting ingredients: crucially, he showed these conflicts were productive rather than being simply contradictory or destructive. Irrespective of format or medium, his best work inscribed such productive conflict into the projects themselves, establishing an enduring invitation for questioning and exploration, rather than providing set responses or answers. While the main text of the thesis will take up the 'how?' of this invitation, it is appropriate here to introduce the 'what' in a little more detail, and more importantly to situate it in the context of the 'Phaidon Moment.'

Introduction to the *œuvre*

This thesis draws upon work from across Matta-Clark's *œuvre* in order to articulate the broad questioning that it contains, and which continues to prove so enduring. What I refer to as the *œuvre* needs some introduction. As the previous chapter demonstrated through the discussion of the 'Phaidon Moment,' Matta-Clark's '*œuvre*' is increasingly reduced to a number of works that have become known together as the building cuts or building dissections, while he becomes known simply as the artist who cut up buildings.

The thesis refuses any such received hierarchy within the *œuvre*, and contests this increasing domestication by demonstrating the significance of projects that receive little (and steadily decreasing) attention. However, neither does it attempt a full art-historical inventory of Matta-Clark's projects, nor even a full description of those projects it discusses. What I take to be his *œuvre* here is at odds with more conventional art-historical understanding and treatment of an artist's *œuvre* as a selected and ranked group of works, where each object acts as 'a fetishised, commodified and displaced sign of the artist.'¹ This thesis approaches his *œuvre* as what Griselda Pollock referred to as 'an artistic resource,'² in order to draw out particular aspects of a range of work, and moves backwards and forwards across his *œuvre* as the main concerns of the thesis are addressed.³ An important aspect of the *œuvre*-as-resource is that it has its own critical faculty (indeed, it is here that its awkwardness might reside), it enjoys an equality with the theories that

are brought alongside it, rather than being subjected to them in an operation of critical investigation.

A prodigious worker, Matta-Clark produced a huge amount of stuff in a wide range of media—performative and durational pieces, works on and with paper, films and videos, installations, collaborative projects, collages—in addition to sketches and unrealised projects, and a vast quantity of photographic and video documentation of his own work. What constitutes his entire *œuvre* was produced in a period of less than ten years and at what should have been just the start of his career; attempting to give an account of it by genre, media or chronology can be misleading. Moreover, what I take to be his *œuvre* here takes the notion of *œuvre* literally as ‘total output,’ and his realised projects (realised *œuvre*) take their place alongside what might be called his written *œuvre*, which comprises preparatory and speculative work, notes, correspondence, documentation and interviews that are in the Gordon Matta-Clark archive.

It is important to emphasise that the conventional understanding of *œuvre* also reflects traditional distinctions between preparatory and realised work, between theory and practice, and between work and words, all of which inform the very processes of art and architectural history. I will argue that whether it operates within or beyond orthodox art-historical frameworks, any such separations do violence to Matta-Clark’s approach, which dissolved these distinctions. Indeed, reading the archive demonstrates a far higher level of consistency across his *œuvre* than is legible in the wide variety of projects he realised, although these consistencies lie more in the issues Matta-Clark addressed than the particular means he adopted to explore them. This demonstration of consistency is another by-product of the method adopted here, rather than an aim in itself: Matta-Clark’s projects were experiments, means to ends, and it is at the level of these issues that this thesis operates.⁴

His close friend, the sculptor Richard Nonas, has suggested that in order to explore and communicate a particular idea or issue, Matta-Clark would use and manipulate *any* medium that he thought appropriate.⁵ For Matta-Clark the work was a strategy, a way of getting through to what he called the *real idea* that involved the various relations bearing on a particular situation, in such a way that the full possibilities of that situation could be approached and possibly reopened. This working strategy was open-ended: frequently, any particular stage of a project provided raw material for further working— building dissections were drawn, the drawings cut, choreographed, the buildings cut, performed in and visited, then worked through and over as photographs and then as photo-collages; films would be shot, screened, edited, and finally collaged beyond the point

where they were able to be projected— in a constant examination and reformulation of this questioning. (This constant reformulation will be discussed in detail in the second or *minor* part of the main text below.)

For Nonas, this constant overworking was a problem: ‘He never knew when to stop, only in the later work. All the earlier work was flawed because he would go too far. He would see another piece after the completion of the first, then second, then third...’⁶ Although Nonas’ reproval must be taken in the context of his clear admiration for Matta-Clark, it does raise the awkward fact that most people are happy to organise Matta-Clark’s oeuvre within a fairly traditional hierarchical framework, one that not only anticipates the Phaidon moment by prioritising the building dissections in ways already mentioned, but that also distinguishes between the earlier ‘flawed’ work and his mature output, and valorises realised work over preparatory notes, individual pieces over collaborative projects, and tends to ignore Matta-Clark’s own written and verbal accounts of his work.

In contrast, this thesis aims to assign equal status to all the stuff that makes up Matta-Clark’s oeuvre, across both the projects that constitute the public face of this oeuvre and the wide range of material that remains in his archive (this is not to suggest that all his work was of the same quality or importance). There are two justifications for re-evaluating the status of work in his oeuvre; firstly, at the level of ideas where this thesis operates, all this material proves equally relevant and demonstrates the level of consistency noted above, a claim that can only be partly substantiated in the thesis (the selection and deployment of illustrations will go some way to doing this). Secondly, examining the varied contents of his archive reveals extensive repetition that clearly demonstrates many of Matta-Clark’s apparently off-the-cuff replies in interviews, for example, had been extensively rehearsed over a significant period of time. Identical responses explaining his work and approach crop up in a variety of interviews undertaken at different times with different interviewers asking about different projects. In his sketchbooks, working notes and letters he returns over significant periods of time to repeat, more or less verbatim, passages of writing where he reflects on his own work or the world around him, and to redraw numerous diagrams and ideas.

Indeed, this thesis draws as much on Matta-Clark’s working notes and sketches as on the rest of his oeuvre.⁷ Here, passages of Matta-Clark’s own writings, taken mainly from his notebooks, are cited more or less verbatim. The crossings out, mis-spellings and other ‘inconsistencies’ that they include are not taken as the marks of a ‘draft’ that can be erased in the neat, final version, but are another instance of his broader working method, and their inclusion in this state is important as

they demonstrate a deliberation and care that is always overlooked (it ought to be remembered at this point that he spent a year studying poetry at the Sorbonne), and permit more direct association with his work in other media.⁸

Matta-Clark's use of words, in much the same way as his broader oeuvre, has attracted both critics and supporters.⁹ Pamela M. Lee is fairly dismissive of both his written and verbal explanations and expansions around his work; she suggests the former were at best unstable due to his self-confessed dyslexia,¹⁰ while the latter were on occasion 'frankly inarticulate.'¹¹ Lee's willingness to take Matta-Clark's claims to be dyslexic at face value seems disingenuous, perhaps a convenient art-historical justification for side-stepping this aspect of his work. In contrast, several of his close friends and collaborators have remarked on the close similarities between his use of language, his thought process and his working method, between his verbal and artistic energy, and between his treatment of language and his treatment of other media, emphasising how he *thought through doing*.¹² Carol Goodden and Richard Nonas both described the experience of talking to him in similar terms:

Gordon's mind worked in forward-revolving circles. And that's how he talked – skipping words and whole sentences as he cometed forward until something would bring him back and he'd pick up a thought that he'd left behind. It took me a year before I knew what he was talking about.

—Carol Goodden¹³

His speech never caught up with his thoughts. He abandoned thoughts in the middle of a sentence and then joined them again like a dance. When Gordon talked, after two or three sentences it didn't make sense, he got energy from juxtaposing ideas that didn't go together. His sentences never ended, they didn't end...

—Richard Nonas¹⁴

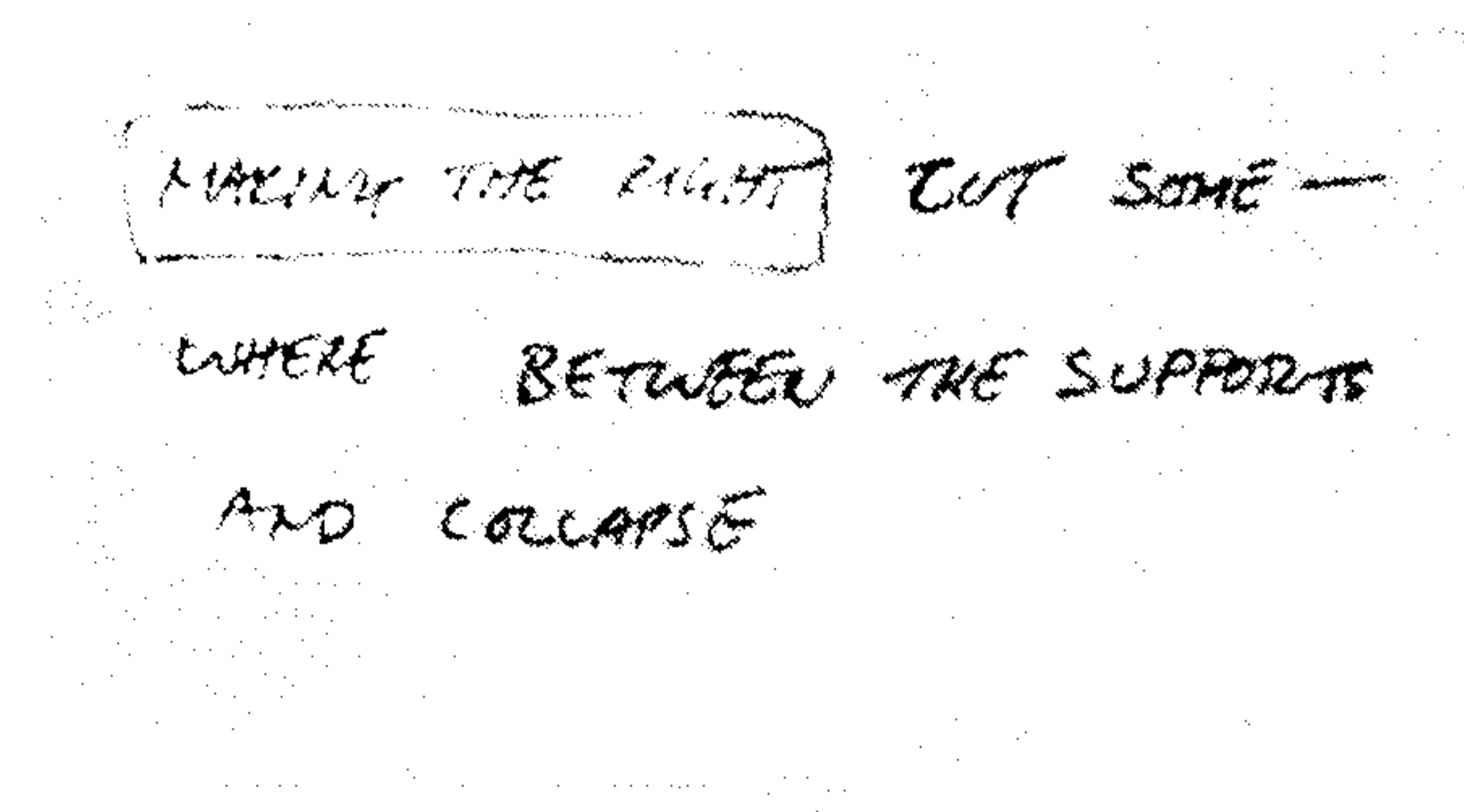
Laurie Anderson, who was part of the *Anarchitecture* group along with Matta-Clark, goes further, arguing not only that his *verbal stuff* was essential to any understanding of his work, but that it should in fact take priority within his oeuvre: 'Gordon was great with words. There was a funny split between what he would say and what he would do. He would put on his construction hat and go cut away. Then he wouldn't talk *about* the work, he would talk *around* it. For some people that verbal stuff is a hobby rather than a way to be. For Gordon it wasn't an exercise; words were his way, even more than the physical work.'¹⁵

My intention in citing these various accounts of Matta-Clark's particular way with words is to offer some justification for raising their importance within his oeuvre, rather than valorising them over the 'physical work' as Anderson suggests. Interestingly, Lisa Le Feuvre and Thomas Crow, both (separately) part of the trajectory of challenge around the 'Phaidon Moment,' both

differ from critics before them by taking Matta-Clark's words seriously: each demands that Matta-Clark's work is taken up in ways that balance these two aspects of his *œuvre*. Le Feuvre suggests marking out the space between his words and projects as an important site in his *œuvre*: '...there is a gap between how Matta-Clark described his practice and what actually happened. One could think of language (as well as the space between the words and the art object) as being one of the very mediums that Matta-Clark worked with. A Duchampian fascination with puns, spelling ruptures, and play on words run through Matta-Clark's practice.'¹⁶ In a different way, Crow argues that the various complex influences on Matta-Clark's work becomes manifest in two opposing ways: the bookish and the physical, and that importantly: 'For the work as a whole to make sense, one needs to pay attention to both.'¹⁷

While mindful of this advice to pay attention to both, the intention of this thesis clearly differs from the work of Le Feuvre and Crow, in that it neither sets out to examine any quasi-Duchampian relationship between words and work, nor to make sense of the work as a whole. The inclusion of his words here is an acknowledgement of this important aspect of his working process and its impact within his *œuvre*, where they assume an importance alongside works that art-history can comfortably accommodate: they are not included to 'explain' the realised projects, nor to provide documentation that fills out something of the context of their production; neither is their role simply to contest the current laundering of awkward projects from his *œuvre*. While their inclusion does something of the latter, the broader motivation is to side-step the explanatory frameworks and hermeneutic expectations of orthodox art-history, in order to allow a speculative discussion that ranges beyond any hierarchy of works or issues that art history, the art market, or Matta-Clark himself might have identified. In this sense, the broad approach of the thesis does follow Laurie Anderson's central observation regarding the relationship between words and work, inasmuch as it sets out to talk *around* rather than *about* the work. This thesis will pursue new combinations from within his *œuvre* in the general direction of our contemporary situation, opening them up through the interference of theoretical work from elsewhere.

introduction to methodology



MAKING THE RIGHT CUT SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE
SUPPORTS AND COLLAPSE¹⁸

Matta-Clark emphasised the importance of both maintaining a given context *and* creatively exceeding that context, a process that he hoped could offer new possibilities for engaging with and understanding one's circumstances. Indeed, his *œuvre* exceeds the context of its own production (there is more in it than he intended to put there, and there has been more pulled out of it than was available to the initial audience); it produces an excess that cannot yet be contained. This thesis is a response to this excess: it argues that this was not a result of some naïve enjoyment of novelty, and sets out to demonstrate the broad artistic, architectural and theoretical importance of his method (rather than slavishly reconstruct it), how it marked both a sophisticated involvement with the broad socio-cultural, artistic and architectural context within which he was working that called into question the basic tenets of modernism, and how it can also illustrate possibilities for the present. The overall aim of the thesis is prospective and speculative, and consequently the methodology develops to allow such excess to be focused, or shifted, in order to open up and explore questions that Matta-Clark's *œuvre* can raise, and to articulate the relevance of his work to a number of contemporary debates.

However, this does not license the thesis to proceed without caution: there are several moves that could turn on this excessive quality, prematurely use it up or divert attention away from it rather than focus it. Concomitant with the indirect reappraisal and reinvigoration of his *œuvre*'s impact, there lurk other dangers of recuperation that might close down the *œuvre*'s political and architectural awkwardness (amongst others) that motivated this study in the first place, such that the *œuvre* becomes domesticated through re-invention. Alongside this, there is also a danger that the questions the thesis attempts to open up might simply replace those already associated with his *œuvre*, or that these become co-opted by the disciplinary machinations that were contested through Matta-Clark's *œuvre* and which will be explored again in the thesis. This section will outline the

composite nature of the methodology that has been developed to approach the œuvre's excess while remaining mindful of the dangers just noted. It will position this methodology in the context of recent developments in art and particularly architectural history.

As already established through the exploration of the 'Phaidon Moment,' this thesis does not set out to pursue any of the central concerns of orthodox art or architectural history (establishing the position and importance of the artist or architect as individual genius in a reflexive circuit with their paintings or buildings, undertaken within some variation of canonical structure—genre, provenance, periodisation or chronology, formal analysis or principles of style, form, expression—all of which serve to make the subject, in Pollock's words, 'unavailable to those without the specialised knowledge of its processes'¹⁹). Various responses to the sort of criticisms of orthodox art or 'old' history voiced by Pollock have led to alternative methods for doing 'new' art history. Although these have been around for at least twenty years, there is no clear agreement on what the 'new' and the 'old' are; neither has 'new' replaced 'old.'²⁰

A similar situation pertains regarding architectural history; in 1988, John Whiteman identified an 'emerging tendency to tie and untie architectural theory at the intersection of several issues at once cultural and architectural. Each paper included [in the collection *Strategies in Architectural Thinking*] has the virtue, perhaps the burden, of tracing a line of thought between issues primarily regarded as architectural... and issues thought to be more cultural and therefore extrinsic and somehow irrelevant to architecture...'²¹ It is perhaps worth remarking on Whiteman's reference to architectural *theory* rather than history (even to sidestep the pitfalls of tracing this distinction by adopting his more forgiving notion of *Architectural Thinking*), by way of suggesting that the 'new' histories, whether art or architectural, can be distinguished from the 'old' to the extent that they follow cultural studies methodologies and draw upon a range of theories from outside their own discipline.²² In their introduction to *InterSections: Architectural Histories and Critical Theories*, Iain Borden and Jane Rendell discuss the difficulties of 'resisting the gravitational pull of the object' encountered in conventional architectural history and historiography, and the potential contributions of critical theory to architectural history.²³

One of the recurring claims made on behalf of these 'new' approaches is their capacity to operate both inside and outside the discipline under scrutiny. This is significant for this thesis in two important ways, reflecting both the 'material' it works with and its prospective intention. Regarding the material, it echoes the claims made in the previous section regarding Matta-Clark's œuvre, particularly that its awkwardness emerges in its capacity to exceed attempts to account for

it by any one discipline (inasmuch as it already takes up position inside and outside any one discipline). Regarding the prospective intention of the thesis, asking how Matta-Clark's *œuvre* might play a role in expanding the way in which the discipline of architecture, these 'new' approaches generally can be understood to question the disciplinary limits that modernist discourse upheld or took for granted.²⁴

While this general advocacy of 'new' approaches would suggest that an appropriate method for this thesis would be found there, there are few particular examples that provide an appropriate response to the main research questions of this thesis. This difficulty is encountered around the way in which theory is combined with architecture, and it is worth mentioning couple of other examples before introducing the particular methodology adopted here.

Debra Coleman has argued explicitly against the unreflective addition of architecture plus theory (in her case, feminism), advocating instead their 'strategic and speculative'²⁵ conjunction, where there is a clear exchange between the two fields brought together that has the potential to open up new ground.²⁶ While Simon Ofield reiterates this general point when he makes a distinction between 'invasive' and 'expansive' methodologies, he advocates—and importantly here, provides a methodological example for—the need to supplement existing research methodologies ('invasive,' 'old' methods which he links with a 'detection and revelation' mindset) with alternative, more 'informal' practice that is always already caught up in, but denied by, the particular discipline under scrutiny.²⁷ He terms his methodology 'cruising;' echoing Coleman, and important for this thesis, is his assertion that 'cruising is a productive rather than reductive process, and has an in-built potential for diversion, irregular connections and disorderly encounters.'²⁸ While acknowledging that Ofield's description of 'cruising' here could cover aspects of the thesis, and mindful of the general points just noted, the methodology developed here has drawn most closely from another example.

Although this thesis does not adopt their approach fully, the closest thing to an exemplar for the methodology here is provided by Orton and Pollock's notion of a 'composite text.' Notwithstanding the more recent and more architectural methodologies just noted, theirs remains the most useful, applicable, and approaches the particular character of Matta-Clark's *œuvre* most closely. Their challenge to art-historical orthodoxies, their attention to the notion of *œuvre* and to the status of an artist's written work, and their method of combining these with their own critical text, all echo significant issues that have been discussed in the previous chapter. These issues will

be introduced in a little more detail here, as will the move away from their ‘composite text’ towards the ‘elliptical method’ that develops here.

Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock have been collaborating since the 1970s. They have written, together and separately, on a wide range of artists and artistic, socio-cultural and political issues. Their ‘composite text’ was developed as a methodology to address the work of Vincent Van Gogh, who also provides a focus for their reflections on this method and other issues. Without wanting to imply any parallels between Matta-Clark and Van Gogh’s work, there are certain similarities that are relevant for and motivate both Orton and Pollock’s response, and the approach of this thesis.

Their ‘composite text’ was a response to the shortcomings they perceived in art-history’s treatment of Van Gogh.²⁹ While their broad criticisms of the discipline of art history centre around ‘the total personalisation of art or the personality cult that typifies institutionalisation’³⁰ (a criticism clearly reflected in the genealogy of Matta-Clark catalogues discussed in the previous chapter), their particular response to the work of Van Gogh set out to contest the homogenisation and institutionalisation that resulted from this broad approach in the face of what they perceived to be insurmountable evidence that he couldn’t be so easily accommodated. Reflecting on the difficulties of writing on Van Gogh in an essay published in 1989, Pollock argued;

...I shall have to represent [the practice ‘Van Gogh’] as a series of manoeuvres which encountered and intersected with the formations of the Dutch and Parisian avant-gardes in an oblique fashion. The study of this ‘Van Gogh’ becomes historically useful by throwing into relief those cultural formations precisely through the degree that Van Gogh was incapable of accommodating his practice to them and normalising their protocols and concerns.³¹

It is possible to paraphrase Pollock’s reflections in order to account for my treatment of Matta-Clark around a very similar point of awkward misfit, suggesting that he intersected with various contemporary concerns ‘in an oblique fashion’ and failed to, or more strongly refused to, normalise or accommodate them in his practice: the notion of major and minor architecture, which will be discussed in more detail in the later sections of this chapter, has been adopted to focus this question of failure or refusal. As I have argued above, there is something inherently awkward in Matta-Clark’s œuvre that has made it difficult for art history and the art market to deal with, and that his recent accession to the canon has occurred in large part in tandem with the erasure rather than the accommodation of this awkwardness. While the ‘oblique fashion’ of his engagement with contemporary issues produces the awkwardness, and arguably the currency, of Matta-Clark’s œuvre, and underwrites the principal research questions of this thesis, Pollock’s text also signals the point at which the two approaches diverge.³² The principal concern of the thesis is not to analyse Matta-Clark in order to understand those cultural formations better, but to analyse in order

to open up the *œuvre* around its oblique qualities in order to examine its possible consequences for the present. Consequently Orton and Pollock's 'composite text' will need to be altered to reflect this changed purpose.

This broader issue concerning an *œuvre*'s relationship with its broader present (which we might follow Le Feuvre, following Bourdieu, and call an 'extended present'³³) is discussed by Pollock. The issues raised here again echo central concerns of the thesis. Pollock argues 'Art is not objects caused by someone or something. Culture is practice, that is, it is one of the social activities of which objects/texts are both the effect and the actual forms. Cultural practices operate in a tension between collective modes and individual projects.'³⁴ While aspects of this complex relationship will be explored in more detail in the chapters of the main text, two observations are important in the present context; the first concerns the complex modality of cultural practice, such that it is understood to coincide as both motivation and result. (Here again, the broader understanding of the notion of *œuvre* is important, for in this context it can more comfortably span the modalities of 'work.')

The second, related, observation is that this aspect of Pollock's argument echoes (coincidentally, to be sure) significant aspects of Matta-Clark's own working method. Writing to Carol Goodden in 1973, he stressed: 'I WANT TO REINFORCE THE IDEA THAT THE AREA ... BEYOND THE INTRUSION IS EFFECTED AND THAT EFFECT AS WELL AS CAUSE IS AN INGREDIENT.'³⁵ Although his letter to Goodden is somewhat elliptical, the approach he gestures towards here is ever present in his *œuvre*. While this approach will be explored more fully in the last section of this chapter, where it is read through his notion of 'discrete violation,' and in the main body of the text, it is helpful here to force this elliptical quality towards a fuller, compound understanding of the elliptical as a motif for the methodology that is developed here in ways that acknowledge Orton and Pollock's model of the 'composite text' while altering this in ways that respond to the complex modality of *œuvre* just noted.

Orton and Pollock's 'composite text' was developed as the methodology for their early collaborative work *Rooted in the Earth: A Van Gogh Primer*.³⁶ It involved the juxtaposition of their own 'second-order discourse' with Van Gogh's work. (Fig.2.1) Significant in light of the demands raised in the previous section around Matta-Clark's *œuvre*, Orton and Pollock's understanding of Van Gogh's 'work' included sketches, letters, poems and so on, as well as his famous paintings. They argue the importance of his letters, for example, as more than just documentation or 'spontaneous outpourings,' positing instead that 'they are carefully considered

'other' examples were counter examples to institutionally accepted 'knowledge' that could contest art history, there is something of a parallel with the way in which this thesis works to establish intersecting and dispersing discourse, but one that is prospective rather than retrospective.³⁹ With this prospective intention in mind, the methodology here is to set up a 'composite text' that inscribes both Matta-Clark's total output (works and his commentary) and other bodies of thought that resonate with this in some way, along with my own critical commentary that sets out to orchestrate, to justify the relevance, and to articulate the consequences of this approach.

Returning to Matta-Clark's letter to Carol Goodden introduced above, the motif of this kind of 'composite text' can be forced onto his move to link action and its effect beyond in such a way as to disrupt a straightforward causal relationship between the two: effect is as much ingredient as cause. Putting the (elliptical) ambiguity of his letter to one side, it can be suggested that his method is unambiguously elliptical in that it has two centres or foci ('intrusion' and 'effect,' which anticipate Pollock's 'effect' and 'form') and that the pattern that emerges from the interaction between them describes a circling rather than linear path.⁴⁰

The methodology developed here is similarly elliptical in that it is organised around a bi-centric structure (Matta-Clark's *œuvre*: other bodies of thought) that sets up a circling path (the critical commentary) while denying any causal link between these foci. Throughout the thesis, bodies of work from across Matta-Clark's *œuvre* will be juxtaposed with bodies of theory developed elsewhere, in order to generate a discussion at some remove from both foci, a discussion where the resonances his work might have for contemporary debates can be encountered and explored.

This movement around twin foci of Matta-Clark and theory is developed principally to open up and amplify resonances his *œuvre* can offer the present, although two important secondary consequences are that it emphasises both the absence of any causal link between theory and practice in his work, and that unlike much 'old' art-history the role of theory in this methodology is not instrumental.

While the motif of the ellipse as a figure can be grasped as a whole, the expository demands of writing according to such an elliptical methodology produce a text with a discernable rhythm; discussion will move to areas beyond the intrusion of theory only after an aspect of Matta-Clark's *œuvre* has itself been introduced and a theoretical focus established. While the overall development of the text itself is cumulative (though not linear), a compound of smaller elliptical sections, the awkwardness and complexity of Matta-Clark's *œuvre* itself produces further

overlapping sets of elliptical relationships across the whole: these will be discussed further in the concluding, discursive chapter.

Introduction to theory

Theory is involved at two levels or stages of the methodology: the three principal theoretical moves that focus and organise the methodology have already been sketched out, and the remaining sections of this chapter will work through these in more detail. This broad framework has been developed to address his oeuvre ‘in an oblique fashion’ in order to allow an examination of the major and minor architectural influences that can be shown to operate there, examine them in ways that can be shown to bear on the present. Within this frame, particular aspects of Matta-Clark’s oeuvre will be positioned and then read alongside or against a second, more varied stage or focus of theoretical work. This second focus is there to produce a creative intersection with Matta-Clark’s oeuvre, rather than being an end in itself, and the works encountered there are selected because they can provide insights into the oeuvre, or where they can amplify or articulate its possible relevance. The makeup of these compound theoretical foci shifts according to the focusing needs of each chapter or section, and they will be introduced and justified in that context; as the intention of the thesis is to take seriously both major and minor aspects of Matta-Clark’s oeuvre, the theoretical work that is drawn on is wide ranging. Although his oeuvre itself appears hugely varied on first inspection, there are a number of fairly constant concerns that can be identified which in turn indicate the broad flavour of this theory.

While one important consequence of the prospective and speculative approach is the possibility of ‘finding’ something in the work that Matta-Clark never intended to put there, the concomitant danger is that it might on occasion be taken to suggest a causal relationship between Matta-Clark’s work and a particular theorist. It was stated in the closing stages of the previous section that there is no causal link between the two foci that establish the elliptical methodology, and this can only be stressed again here; it is almost certain that he never read nor was even aware of any of the theorists whose work appears at this level of the thesis, and any whiff of causality must be strongly denied. However, it must also be emphasised that this is not to suggest he was ‘anti-theoretical:’ although Matta-Clark’s projects appear very immediate or unmediated intuitive responses, his library demonstrates that he had an interest in a variety of theoretical work,⁴¹ and his sketchbooks and interviews draw on a wide range of reference. Richard Nonas emphasises that

‘[h]e was not an artist who disdained ideas expressed in traditional or academic ways. He was well-read, well-educated and had a wide range of experience.’⁴² That said, this thesis does not attempt to re-read his œuvre through what might have been his original influences in the way that Crow redeploys Lévi-Strauss, for example.

Another consequence of this speculative move is that while there is an underlying theoretical consistency to the broad method of the thesis, the many and various theorists whose work is drawn on at this second level of structure do on occasion make strange bedfellows. This is not a concern; the aim was neither to establish a neat theory nor to demonstrate a previously unknown harmony between these theorists, but to select work whose intersection with Matta-Clark’s œuvre was — to borrow Fried’s paraphrase of Judd— *merely interesting*.⁴³ Within each chapter, where particular aspects of major or minor architecture are addressed, supporting work is introduced appropriate to the discussion undertaken at that point. As the discussion itself is broadly cumulative, these theorists tend to resurface in later chapters.

The range of theorists drawn on to some extent echoes the major-minor dualism that is written into the structure of the thesis itself, inasmuch as the discussion needs to return to and through some of the principal genealogies of modernism while also offering alternative, conflicting accounts. This will take us, for example, from Kant back through Descartes to Plato, or from Greenberg and Giedion back to Vasari to Plato, in order to trace a number of relevant reductions that have accompanied modernism’s advance. (There is far more to link Matta-Clark to Plato than most caricatured versions of either modernism, Matta-Clark or Plato would sanction.)

While the work drawn on to contest these usual suspects is more wide ranging, there is a fairly identifiable constellation of thinkers that appears across the thesis; William James and Henri Bergson, Georges Bataille, Henri Lefebvre, and Gilles Deleuze (both on his own and with Félix Guattari). However much their work differs, however much they are uncomfortable together,⁴⁴ these thinkers, and the many others not mentioned here but who will be encountered in the detailed discussion of the main text, are put forward in the context of Matta-Clark’s criticism of the overbearing rationality at the heart of modernism’s project, and his interest in the role and nature of questions. These are thinkers who share a similarity with Matta-Clark inasmuch as they all took modernism seriously while working to radically reformulate it. Their work, and its inclusion here, also serves as an important warning against the simple replacement of rationalism with empiricism. A frequent retort to empiricism is that it remains an answer without a question. While several of the thinkers whose work is included might be rather clumsily grouped together around

the banner of radical empiricism, the more important aspect of their work for the present discussion lies in the interest they have shown in the nature of the question. (Bergson's explicit examination of 'false problems,' for example, or the interest in the question that motivates Deleuze and Guattari's early work (on) *Kafka*.) In both these aspects, they share something of Matta-Clark's attitude towards questioning and 'problem solving,' which will itself be introduced in a later section of this chapter when examining discrete violation's ability to support both reason and imagination. There is also something of a shared interest amongst these thinkers in *habit*, and in thinking on the familiar, the stuff that is taken for granted. The importance of habit is that as a locus of this both/and attitude it pulls experience in two directions, along axes of imagination *and* reasoned judgement. Habit is taken to be involved in both the maintenance and instability of familiar situations that is central to Matta-Clark's notion of discrete violation, and it will be discussed in more detail in the concluding chapters of the main text below. It might be said that these disparate works, either of theory or of practice, are all works of *experimentation* in a strong sense.⁴⁵

While the intention of bringing these together as one focus of the elliptical methodology is to reformulate approaches to producing, experiencing and discussing architecture in broad terms, this move inscribes an insurmountable theoretical contradiction at the heart of the thesis. According to Deleuze, for example, subjectivity linked to such experiment/experience can only be *enacted*, not theorised: such experience always outstrips attempts to theorise it, and indeed this theorising process itself results in a productive excess. The excessive character of Matta-Clark's *œuvre* has already been identified as the principal motive behind the research questions and the development of the elliptical methodology, and the methodological implications of this further theoretical excess will be reflected upon in the final discursive chapter of the thesis, where other work on aesthetic experience (particularly Peter de Bolla's excellent work on the theories of sublime experience) will be drawn on to help suggest that this excess is in fact central to the awkward endurance of Matta-Clark's *œuvre*. For now, it is suffice to observe that this mixed cast of characters all in their own way happily accept these contradictions between theory and experience, and that indeed the pull between reason and imagination provides the motivation and the motor for their work.

More anecdotally, there is some common ground in their acceptance and enjoyment of stuff that cannot be classified or controlled, and that continues to escape modernism's attempts at explanation. This suggestion that there always remains an outside to rationalism can be read in

different ways in all these theorists, but perhaps most clearly in Bataille's notion of General Economy: while Bataille emphasised the usefulness of secondary or 'particular' economies such as science, he demonstrated the importance of acknowledging their limitations, and how this acknowledgement could be brought about through the mechanisms of the particular economy concerned, rather than simply by contrast with other competing systems. In the present context, this reiterates the importance of reading through Matta-Clark's work from major to minor, which now requires a fuller introduction.

From Architectural Modernism to Major and Minor Architecture

Before the exploration of Matta-Clark's work can be convincingly framed as a dialogue between major and minor where these expressed interests in ambiguity can be taken up, the predominant readings of his work as simple anti-architectural statements need to be refuted and its more complex, potentially constructive relationship to architecture sketched out. Matta-Clark emphasised the extent to which his architectural education foregrounded formal concerns, and he positioned his work with respect to both this reductive notion of architectural form and to contemporary artwork that had begun to engage critically with the boundaries of architectural space established by modernism. Interviewed by Liza Béar, he stated:

...the things we studied [at Cornell] always involved such surface formalism that I had never a sense of the ambiguity of a structure, the ambiguity of a place, and that's the quality I'm interested in generating what I do... Asher and Nauman have done strictly sculptural impingements on architecture: that is, the space as a whole is never altered to its roots... they always dealt with aspects of interior space, but I don't think they penetrated the surface, which would seem to be the logical next step. Of course, this kind of treatment has been given to canvas, to conventional art materials.⁴⁶

Matta-Clark's comments here could lead to a variety of different observations about his work. At face value, they provide support for arguments that this work, and in particular the building dissections, was a simplistic anti-formalist gesture, explicable as a knee-jerk reaction to an architectural education he despised.⁴⁷ However, as other comments are considered, a different reading becomes more persuasive, one that develops around his stated interest in ambiguity rather than as an outright attack on architectural form. Indeed, in another interview from this time, Matta-Clark emphasised that he did not consider formal work to be exclusively reductive, nor the term 'formal' to carry only a pejorative sense: 'I do recognize that certain kinds of activity can be essentially formal without being rigid or mortuistic.'⁴⁸

Taking him at his word demands that we separate two different areas of ambiguity that are each different in kind, yet both involved with his *œuvre*. One is associated with modernism and internal to its definition, the other is precisely that which exceeds modernism. (As the previous section outlined, this situation is what holds the varied constellation of theorists together.) The hypothesis here is that Matta-Clark's interest in the latter was explored through the internal ambiguity (or more forcefully, the contradictions) of modernism's own attempts at definition. Rather than reacting to one modernist tendency, such as the surface formalism of his Cornell education, and rather than simply contesting the underlying expectations of disciplinary purity that many modernists held to, his *œuvre* involved these various, often contradictory, approaches and held them together in different, difficult relationships.

For Matta-Clark, if there was any consistency to the various definitions of modernism, this lay more in the general tendency towards definition itself than in any resultant architectural or artistic movement. However ambivalent he was toward the purity of medium or the role of function, he consistently criticised modernism's attempts at systematisation, for while he admitted that a particular work could be interesting and valuable, to raise the particular to a general law was nothing short of 'ORGANIZED MONOPOLY.'⁴⁹ In the particular case of architecture, the consequence of this monopoly that most concerned him was this tendency towards systematisation 'inherent in the machine tradition,' rather than the formalist approach to architectural design associated with it, as he stressed to Donald Wall:

If... you unquestioningly admit the notion that things *can* be asserted with finality, that the human condition can be dictated... then you unquestioningly also assume that things can be solved. This is one of the attitudes that the politics of architecture intentionally promulgates, one which is inherent in the machine tradition. Even monumentality as an attitude seems relatively playful compared to machine-determinist mentality... [which] guarantees the elimination of whole ranges of sensibility. Where you have people solving, eventually you get the total solution.⁵⁰

Adrian Forty's recent work on modernism provides a number of observations that can broaden and clarify Matta-Clark's position. Forty's examination explores whether the definitions of any of modernism's various strands attain consistency. Of particular relevance is his account of the system of judgement that developed alongside the terminology of architectural modernism, and which he argues was the first to operate without any binary oppositions: 'What is... striking about the critical terms favoured by modernism – 'form,' 'space,' 'order' – is the indefiniteness of their opposites... 'Form,' 'space,' and 'order' were generally presented as absolutes, concepts that embraced the entirety of their categories, that subsumed their 'other.' This is a feature that

contributed much to the impenetrability of modernist language and part of any enquiry into critical terminology must involve consideration of their opposites.’⁵¹

Forty’s own work seeks to enjoy as much as open up the complexity that ensues, and while he is careful not to provide any alternative system, he does raise this key issue and prepare the ground for its exploration extensively. I want to suggest that Matta-Clark was actually working along similar lines, probing what he took to be the impenetrability of modernist language, and that his work sits both within and without modernism; in this respect it can offer one (of many possible) productive examples to read alongside Forty. Numerous aspects of Matta-Clark’s oeuvre can be considered as enquiries into modernism, enquiries that took issue with various moves made by modernism to support its claims to absolutism and purity. Clearly he did not articulate his projects in these terms, but the resulting ‘consideration of [modernism’s] opposites’ can be identified in his interest in the ‘other ranges of sensibility’ or the ‘ambiguity of a place.’ Significantly in the light of Forty’s observations, it can be shown that Matta-Clark shared a related discomfort with modernism, that his understanding of it was, in its own way, as expansive as Forty’s, but that his response offers a different way of exploring what modern architecture might be, of considering its problems and its promise.⁵²

Matta-Clark operated by knowingly working within modernism’s system, but all the while with a keen interest in the stuff that modernism both eliminated and overlooked. This twofold approach, proceeding simultaneously within and without modernism, can help broaden our consideration of the oeuvre itself, and it can allow discussion of the things within his work that exceed modernism and its other. More generally it can highlight things that different epochs and disciplines of modernism took for granted: aspects of this approach can be brought to bear successfully on issues that continue to concern us today. Although there are no easily applicable models to speed this undertaking, there are a number of kindred spirits that offer (at the very least) mutual support, and that can provide, where appropriate, certain techniques that can be appropriated in order to provide a method of moving between Adrian Forty’s observations and Matta-Clark’s oeuvre. One of these that has been taken up within the title of this study is Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s notion of a *Minor Literature*, which they introduce in their book on the writer Franz Kafka. While Deleuze and Guattari’s short book chases the trajectory and strategies of the *Minor*, this thesis will acknowledge that ultimately Matta-Clark’s work bears on *both* major *and* minor aspects of architectural modernism, and thus falls short of the claims made by Deleuze and Guattari on behalf of Kafka.⁵³ There are various reasons for this difference.

Deleuze and Guattari's concept is emblematic rather than fully descriptive of the moves made here. Moreover, they begin from a reception of Kafka that already situates his work deeply within the canon of major literature, and they work to unsettle this position by demonstrating alternative (stronger) readings of his work; in contrast, Matta-Clark's oeuvre remains outside any major canon (notwithstanding the recent domestication of particular works noted earlier), and certainly well outside the canon of architecture. Finally, it will be argued that Matta-Clark is not 'fully' modern in Deleuze's renovated sense, but that he enjoys a more complex and awkward position as both/and (High Modern and fully modern). Nevertheless, their motivation and their understanding of canon formation clearly have something to offer the present study, in addition to certain aspects of their concept and techniques.

Deleuze and Guattari develop the concept of *Minor Literature* in order to discuss the relationship between Kafka's oeuvre and the canon of great or *Major Literature*. They argue Kafka's work mounts an ongoing challenge to 'Major Literature' but importantly for them, and for the present work, this challenge comes from *within* the canon and can only be undertaken by mal-practicing an established code, and aims to introduce an alternative way to experience and value such work: 'A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language... Only the possibility of setting up a minor practice of major language *from within* allows one to define ["marginal literatures"]'⁵⁴

The important step that I want to suggest here is that by considering Matta-Clark's oeuvre as a minor practice a significant strategy can be borrowed to focus and organise the methodology. Some caveats have already been given for this move; several difficulties associated with it will be dealt with on the way through, and the various alterations required will be clarified. However, what supports this connection at the outset is the way in which it opens up a constructive traffic with Forty's work on architectural modernism. While Forty's work is extremely helpful in mapping out the various ways in which the critical vocabulary of modernism operated in a quasi-tautological manner to ensure the hegemony of modernism's own preferred definition, Matta-Clark's oeuvre and Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka* both develop strategies that actively contest quasi-tautology and the claim to absolutism it supported, and attempt to broaden the experience of what modernism might be. To labour the point, minor practice as it is considered in this thesis is not just a contestation of the absolutism that Forty observes, the identification of modernism's hidden other(s), but an active, creative operation that opens beyond the experience sanctioned by modernism. The point is not simply to establish a link between these two aspects or to replace

major with minor, but to hold both together in order to explore not just this broader experience, but to examine the conditions of possibility that permit or prevent such experience; Deleuze and Guattari warn against naïve substitution of opposites when they rubbish the simple replacement of one system with its formal opposite; ‘that’s stupid as long as one doesn’t see where the system is coming from and going to...’⁵⁵

It is because minor practice mal-practices existing codes that it does not simply replace one hegemonic system with another, but works to alter the rules of the major and inscribe these within the minor: minor practice operates both with(in) and without the established rules of modernism, but it does this knowingly and does both together. Moreover, these moments with(in) and without enjoy a complex relationship that the hegemonic definitions of modernism cannot recognise; rather than simply being different parallel systems that vie for supremacy (an economy of simple replacement, *either* modernism *or* its/an other), minor practice precipitates different economies that actively prevent such simple replacement by juggling *both* major *and* minor. This has a number of significant effects on the experiences of modernism that this thesis sets out to explore.

One such effect that will be examined early on concerns modernism’s relationship to form, which was clearly a target for Matta-Clark; it is again important to emphasise that the minor practice of form was not simply anti-formal, but that it involved for example a more active mal-practice of the surface-formalism Matta-Clark criticised in his Cornell education. The important issue here involves not purity of form, but form’s more deep-seated relationship to the establishment of meaning. On Deleuze and Guattari’s account, the minor has the capability to disorganise its own forms,⁵⁶ in contrast to the major, which they argue maintains a strong form allied to prescribed meaning (such that one finds the meaning that was put there): ‘... a minor, or revolutionary, literature begins by expressing itself and doesn’t conceptualise until afterward... Expression must break forms, encourage ruptures and new sproutings. When a form is broken, one must reconstruct the content that will necessarily be part of a rupture in the order of things.’⁵⁷ The promise of minor practice, whether in Kafka or in Matta-Clark, lies not so much in the fact that it breaks form, but that it offers a way of avoiding established frameworks of epistemology and resists measure against prior models of judgement, a promise that is also taken up by the elliptical methodology developed here. More precisely, it reverses the accepted direction of judgement and the locus of authority that traditionally accompany this acceptance, an issue that will crop up in many of the chapters that follow.

The structure and organisation of these chapters reflect the balance that such a major and minor interplay can strike within Matta-Clark's oeuvre, and the following section gives some account this organisation and the rationale behind these broad moves, as well as indicating some of the consequences this minor practice has for the writing of the thesis. The final significant section of this chapter will explore the relationship between Matta-Clark's own accounts of his working process and this externally imposed elliptical method. He explained his working method as a 'Discrete Violation' of existing contexts; this will be introduced with reference to his project *Circus: Caribbean Orange* (1978). The relation between discrete violation and modernism will be explored at greater length, as this sets the approach of the thesis and rehearses several key relationships between the issues that inform its structure.

The structure

Although the relationship between minor work and the major canon it sets out to contest is not straightforward for reasons that will become apparent, this thesis can be considered to have roughly two parts, the first major, the second minor. The structure of the chapters takes its cue from this positioning; the first two explore aspects of the relationship that Matta-Clark's oeuvre can be seen to hold with some to the key terms of modernism—Form, Time and Space—and examines how Matta-Clark's work asks questions regarding the broad tenets these support. The second group of three chapters take up *minor* aspects of his work in order to develop issues within his oeuvre that fit less comfortably into such tenets, exploring respectively how his interest in role of the User or Observer, the importance of Process, and the role of Discipline (so often written out of any discussion of the *Major*) might be encountered in his oeuvre.

Having set out this structure so baldly, there are a certain consequences and caveats that ought to be outlined here; these bear on the relationships between parts that make up this structure, and the progression of the text itself.⁵⁸ Across the thesis, the apparent clarity between the two parts is unravelled; the key terms that any particular chapter refers to enjoy different relationships with the major, the minor, or both. For example, while the opening chapter of the main text, Chapter Three: FORM (& MATTER), can demonstrate a fairly unproblematic claim to the major, and a fairly commonly accepted hierarchy within the major between the dominant term *Form* and the subservient *Matter*, the same clarity is not enjoyed between the two terms of Chapter Four, SPACE (& TIME). Moreover, the minor chapters address issues that were important to the maintenance of

the major terms of modern architecture; indeed, these chapters frequently address minor terms to reveal the extent to which major architecture repressed them. The particular balance and positioning of these terms for any one chapter will be summarised in the conclusion (Chapter Nine).

Within each chapter, a number of categories within and outside architectural modernism will be used to structure the argument; within each chapter, Matta-Clark's work will be brought into intersection with a theoretical frame that can focus the discussion. As was suggested earlier in this chapter, there is no simple, consistent or overall rationale for the selection of theory at this level of the thesis: although something of a case will be made for each on the way through, the only real justification that there is cause for this selection is provide through force of example, witnessed in the productive relationships these are able to set up with Matta-Clark's oeuvre.

By the nature of the topic there are close links and inter-relationships between the chapters, both methodologically and materially; although the discussion is broadly cumulative, the adoption and redeployment of major-minor approach also licences a certain repetition (of quotes, for example) within and across the structure, though these will be found to be aligned to either a major or a minor analysis in each case. Similarly, the relationship between figures and captions and the main text sets out to permit a degree of fluidity regarding their location and role; as already mentioned in the project outline, the intention of the main text is not to give a comprehensive account of Matta-Clark's oeuvre but to analyse aspects of its endurance, so introductions to and descriptions of the projects mentioned are removed into the relevant captions, where they enjoy a semi-autonomy. Before returning to issues of methodology and its relationship to its impact at this level of the text through Matta-Clark's own method of *discrete violation*, the particular major and minor aspects and the discursive intentions of each chapter will be outlined.

3 Form (& Matter)

Matta-Clark was broadly critical of the role that 'form' played within modernism, although it has been suggested above that his work should not be approached simply as an anti-formalist response. Matta-Clark emphasised that he did not consider formal work to be exclusively reductive, nor that the term 'formal' should carry only a pejorative sense. Chapter Three sets out to explore how Matta-Clark's projects might have an impact on the way in which form can be considered; in particular, it will embrace his concession that form may hold some promise, and his suggestion that considerations of form need not be restricted to static objects but may also be involved in

certain kinds of activity. This chapter examines how Matta-Clark contested modernism's valorisation of pure form. It will discuss how the 'building dissections' for which he is best known exceed both the architectural and artistic static object of modernism. The revelation of matter beneath the surface of form is taken up and explored with reference to Matta-Clark's alchemical interest, which most directly influenced his projects from 1969-71 such as *Agar* and *Incendiary Wafers, Museum, Garbage Wall* and *Jacks*.

4 Space (& Time)

Chapter Four will develop questions of change through time raised by the discussion of matter in the previous chapter. Just as modernism subordinates matter to form, so its time—the time of science—is subordinate to extension and subsumed by space. Matta-Clark consistently criticized situations where quantifiable terms dominated, although his oeuvre addressed modernism's dominant terms *form* and *space* obliquely. Rather than approaching their role as co-principles of modernist architecture or art, this chapter will proceed through a discussion of Matta-Clark's interest in experience, and how this demands a different framework based around memory and movement. His reflections on experience within the building dissections will be supplemented with an examination of other projects such as *Open House/ Dumpster* (1972) and his interest in the labyrinth, in order to illustrate an approach to space that could resist quantification, and which he described as possessing a 'covert and durational complexity.' The chapter will then explore his attempts to develop collage techniques to represent such complexity. The closing section will link these issues to his interest in archaeology, discussed with reference to some of his filmic work — *Substrait* (1976), *Sous-sols de Paris* (1977), and the related *Underground Paris* (1977)— raising questions for the observer that are explored in the next chapter.

5 User (observer/viewer)

The expanded notions of time, space, matter and form that Matta-Clark's projects offer cannot be sustained without the work of the observer, a situation that contrasts with that expected of Modernism's passive viewer. This chapter explores how his work questions the implicit demands that sustained such a viewer, including the hierarchy of the senses and their traffic with the mind. It develops away from a universal relationship epitomized by modernism's 'White Cube' gallery space towards a more contingent one, where the observer's body becomes significant in the establishment and maintenance of the complexities introduced in the previous chapters. It will

return to a number of projects, as well as introducing Matta-Clark's suspension pieces and related performances such as *Tree Dance* (1972), in order to discuss a locational framework for such expanded experience.

6 Process

Chapter Six takes up the implications of contingency on the production of art and architecture. In contrast to the autonomy and stasis of most modernist work, Matta-Clark claimed that his projects never reached completion, but instead just continued 'over and over.' The performative aspect of his working method, its strong relation to context, and the ambiguity with regard to public and private realms that his work implied, will be introduced through his projects *Homesteading* (1970) and *Clockshower* (1973). The final section of this chapter suggests that this working method brings about an alteration in the relationship between disciplinary authority and the creative process; traditional liaisons between artistic or architectural discipline and the legal profession which provide a figure of the 'form-giving judge' (Cardozo) will be contrasted with Matta-Clark's own notion of 'directional law.'

7 Discipline

Chapter Seven will begin by discussing his projects *Hair* (1972) and *Reality-Property: Fake Estates* (1973) in order to examine the affects of Matta-Clark's work on disciplinary boundaries. Modernist art and architecture carefully policed their respective boundaries, promoting medium-specificity and self-critique to underwrite disciplinary purity: Matta-Clark's oeuvre demonstrated such boundaries to be porous and unstable, opening up the criteria for both production and evaluation. This can have a greater effect on the discipline of Architecture, not only with respect to its continuing adherence to derivations of Vitruvian criteria, but more radically by asking questions about the medium of Architecture in itself. The final sections of this chapter will examine how his projects unsettle Architecture's tendency to set itself up as a meta-system used not only to discipline other disciplines but also to institutionalise Nature, and how the *Anarchitecture* group (of which he was a member) offered an alternative model for architectural disciplinary working.

8 Discrete Violation

The concluding chapter will draw out the importance of Matta-Clark's method of *Discrete Violation*, emphasising its role as an example of creative questioning. His work was not a 'simple' attack on disciplines or boundaries, on Art or Architecture, or on the modern more broadly: his real target was the very tendency to systematise that brings about the petrification of such categories. Beyond any limitations that arise from his projects' historical specificity, and countering frequent criticisms of his work as simply 'destructive', this chapter will show that discrete violation must be positioned both within and beyond modernism, and that it enjoys an enduring relevance as a creative process for all those involved in the production and enjoyment of art and architecture.

From *Major and Minor* to Discrete Violation and Creative Questioning

Aspects of Matta-Clark's own working method inform the approach that is adopted across the chapters that follow. In particular, this method developed from his early observations which frequently expressed an interest in the possibilities that could open up when particular rules break down: 'WHEN A MEASUREMENT DOESN'T WORK ...A MORE INTIMATE NOTION OF SPACE BEGININGS...'⁵⁹ Not content to simply highlight instances when this occurred in the world around him, he actively developed methods to precipitate such moments. Expressing his intentions in this way, Matta-Clark's work can be understood as being directed towards the conditions of modernism's existence, rather than simply at the experience these conditions might bring about. Moreover, his projects demonstrate the importance he placed on situating both of these aspects, an approach he articulated most clearly as *Discrete Violation*. The relation between discrete violation and modernism will be explored at length here, as this sets the approach of the thesis and establishes the relationships between issues that inform its structure. This chapter will then finish by discussing one of Matta-Clark's early projects at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago, Chile (1971) as an example of this approach.

Gordon Matta-Clark raised the notion of discrete violation in the context of his last major project, *Circus: Caribbean Orange* (1978).

What [visitors to *Circus: Caribbean Orange*] could identify with in terms of art activity is this kind of discrete violation of their sense of value, sense of orientation. This has become a bigger [issue]; I mean the cutting is the activity and so forth, but the real idea is not that. So, I guess people need little— need doorknobs and cut doors and things like that to cling to as a way of relating it back to something that is familiar...⁶⁰

Such discrete violation points again to the apparent contradiction that much of Matta-Clark's art enjoyed, though the mechanics of this contradiction can here be taken to be brought about by a movement between familiar experience and its disorientation. Sufficient remained of the familiar, such as a doorknob, to anchor experience, but sufficient was taken away to violate expectations and call into question that which was taken for granted. From the remains of a door, to the activity of the cutting, to the central concerns that motivated Matta-Clark's work, his projects established a complex traffic between the objects of familiar experience and what he here refers to as the *real idea*, associated with the conditions of that experience while also pointing to possibilities that lay beyond. In the case of works such as *Circus*, this traffic aimed to produce a 'clearly new sense of space' alongside the alterations to the sense of orientation. Matta-Clark emphasised the point:

Usually the thing that interests me is to make a gesture that in a very simple way complicates the visual area I'm working in. Looking through the cut, looking at the edges of the cut, should create a clearly new sense of space. But the cut also must reveal a portion of the existing building system, simply as that which exists.⁶¹

Importantly, these activities of defamiliarisation must be distinguished from the techniques of other art practices that operate through destabilisation, as Matta-Clark's discrete violations brought about their disorientation by revealing *too much* about the familiar.⁶² Matta-Clark's works revealed the familiar as an excessive site through their remorseless traffic back and forth from familiar objects, demonstrating the actual situation of these within a complex web of different, and often conflicting, systems. In the face of such a demonstration, the familiar could no longer simply provide reassuring answers for experience, and 'familiar' experiences were instead opened up as questions.

The visitor's encounter with his work may have been felt as a violation of their sense of value or orientation, though here again there exists a certain ambiguity as to whether this violation was taken as a teasing disturbance or a harmful gesture, an ambivalent failure to respect particular values or a positive transgression.

These discrete violations, then, operated on the visitor's experience, not to de-value it, but precisely the reverse; by calling it into question, by taking it as a question rather than an answer, Matta-Clark's work attempted to open up human experience and invigorate it; 'Trying to encourage the inclusion of some sort of expanded being.'⁶³

*

Discrete violation is taken as a strategy for the present work with the intention of enjoying both the breadth of exploration and the constructive paradox of Matta-Clark's own project. He worked to suggest that apparently static and stable disciplines such as architecture actually enjoyed multiple and conflicting ingredients: crucially, he showed these conflicts were productive rather than being contradictory or destructive. His best work inscribed such productive conflict in the projects themselves, establishing an enduring invitation for questioning rather than providing set answers, irrespective of the particular format or medium.⁶⁴

As a strategy, discrete violation here also goes some way towards acknowledging the problems of writing about Matta-Clark's oeuvre. Such writing itself inevitably performs a certain violence, as there is a possibility that through it, Matta-Clark's work becomes re-invented or domesticated.⁶⁵ A potentially destructive paradox lurks here, inasmuch as writing about works that were themselves so eloquent carries with it the implicit danger that it only dilutes Matta-Clark's broader project. The violence associated with the present writing, then, must rise to the challenge that Matta-Clark's oeuvre issues. Without such discrete violation, his work might itself fall prey to the static categorisation that he contested so vigorously.

Discrete Violation and Creative Questioning

A sound response puts
down roots in the question.

—Maurice Blanchot⁶⁶

The truth is that in
philosophy and even
elsewhere it is a question of
finding the problem and
consequently of *positing* it,
even more than of solving
it... stating the problem is
not simply uncovering, it is
inventing... Invention gives
being to what did not exist;
it might never have
happened.

—Henri Bergson⁶⁷

FORM—PLAN—PARTI—UNITY—ORDER

MEASURE—SCALE—PROPORTION—RHYTHM

? ? ? ? ? ?

WHICH OF THESE IS AN ANARCHITECTURAL ANSWER

A. REALIZING RATHER THAN SOLVING PROBLEMS

SOLUTIONS ARE STRUCTURALLY WEAK A FORMALLY DYNAMIC

Q SOLUTIONS ARE THE WEAKEST FORMS ~~OF~~ AT WORK

—Gordon Matta-Clark⁶⁸

Across his oeuvre, Matta-Clark's discrete violations worked with aspects of familiar experience, and attempted to balance *the supports and collapse* of that which is taken for granted about such experience. Building dissections such as *Circus*, whether in their 'real' form or in subsequent reworkings such as the photocollage in Figure 2.2, are open to a literal interpretation of this balance. It is clear that Matta-Clark has removed a substantial quantity of the building's primary structure, as we are presented with the raw ends of timber floor joists at every turn; secondary elements such as partition walls similarly present their raggy innards, now finishing in mid-air, all of which immediately call into question the building's structural integrity. Is it about to fall down? Evidently, the building confounded such expectations and continued to stand, and visitors were able to move around the building without precipitating its collapse. Certainly, their movement through the building would be radically different from that of previous occupants, and we can appreciate how their sense of the building's spaces might approach the 'entirely new' condition that Matta-Clark pointed toward. At this level, Richard Nonas' assertion that Matta-Clark's work was fundamentally concerned with the production of emotionally charged spaces appears to be straightforward, with the response brought about by a feeling of danger to the visitor's own person.⁶⁹ However, if we take account of Matta-Clark's claims for discrete violation, the full resonance of Nonas' comment begins to emerge, and the emotional charge can be understood to involve many more dimensions than just a fearful reaction.

Circus clearly presents the original building in a sufficiently coherent state to permit observers to understand it as a building; in addition to the recognizable elements such as the

'doorknobs and cut doors and things like that,' the original disposition of spaces is entirely legible through the substantial fragments of floor, wall and ceiling that remain. Matta-Clark's cutting activities disrupt this legibility, and it is only with a concerted effort that it can be momentarily regained. The cuts impose a new mode of behaviour, a new reaction to the spaces of the building. Familiar sequences of spaces and movements are replaced with new possibilities that simultaneously expand the visual space within and through the building, and both expand and restrict its physically accessible spaces on the limits of perception, and the existence of other kinds of space.⁷⁰

At this point, it is helpful to refer to Bergson's position set out in the epigraph above. Considering *Circus* in the light of this, Matta-Clark's discrete violation will be taken not simply as an uncovering, but as a process of inventing: *Circus* posits a question rather than provides an answer. Beyond this basic assertion, Bergson's own work can help articulate how such an inventive question operates within Matta-

Clark's oeuvre. At first sight, these two may seem strange bedfellows, and the move to bring them together should not be taken to suggest that Matta-Clark was directly or indirectly influenced by Bergsonian philosophy. However, there are significant points that they have in common, and it is a relationship that will develop in later chapters of this thesis. Both were interested in broadening the possibilities for human experience beyond the limits sanctioned by scientific thinking, yet both

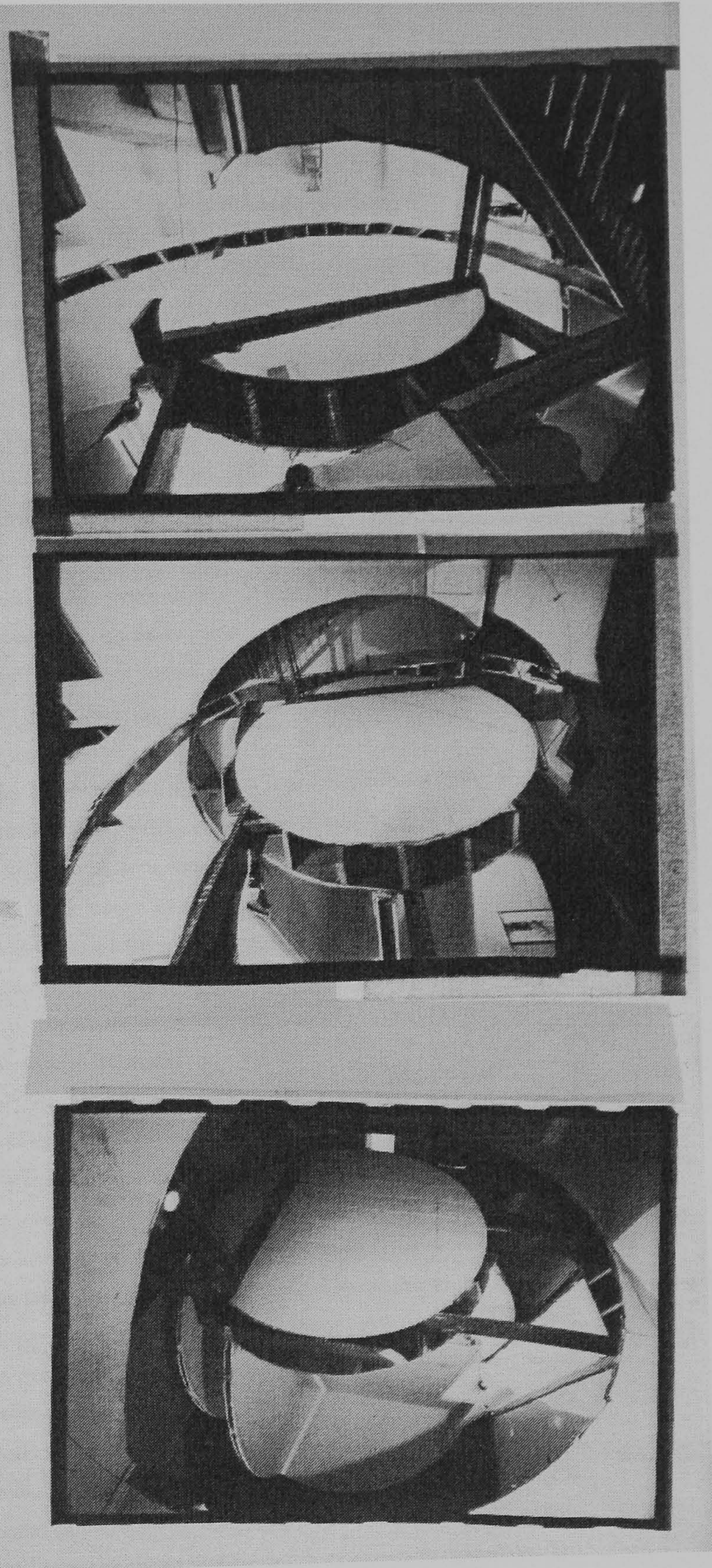


Fig 2.2 Gordon Matta-Clark, *Circus: Caribbean Orange*, 1978. Photocollage

were particularly mindful of the importance of science: recall Matta-Clark's demand that discrete violation maintain the conditions it sets out to exceed.

Addressing the inventive question posited by *Circus*, Bergson's work can clarify how this mode of question differs from scientific questioning. For Bergson, (bad) science was concerned with the repeatable: to get at what eludes scientific thought 'we must do violence to the mind, go counter to the natural bent of the intellect. But that is just the function of philosophy.'⁷¹ Bergson distinguished intellect from instinct, but crucially he argued that however much they diverged, they did so from a single point of origin, and could not be 'entirely separate[d] from each other.'⁷² Moreover, his plea for a violent philosophy was not aimed at eliminating the intellect, but making it more supple, in order to allow for a '*perpetual creation of possibility* and not only of reality.'⁷³ He expands on this point:

[Our logic] sees in a new form or quality only a rearrangement of the old—nothing absolutely new... To be sure, it is not a question of giving up that logic or of revolting against it. But we must extend it, make it more supple, adapt it to a duration in which novelty is constantly springing forth and evolution is creative.⁷⁴

Bergson's criticisms of scientific questioning were directed at situations that denied this extension and that operated by rearranging the old. Such a questioning ultimately relied on the 'retroactive movement of truth,' where judgement was traditionally taken to be eternally valid and to pre-exist the question. A 'logical' reading of *Circus* could accept it as a question, though it would articulate a response by recourse to prior experience or rules of architecture (*it is about to collapse*). Accepting Matta-Clark's discrete violations as an inventive or creative question, a more supple response can take account of the radical novelty that is produced in that question. The excess that is generated by this novelty is manifest in the demands the works can make on the observer, experienced, for example, in the movement back and forth between the familiar and the 'clearly new sense of space.' Indeed, it is in this negotiation that the object and the observer establish themselves and their mutual relations, product and productive of the emotionally charged space. The excess in creative questioning bears on the answer or solution it provokes, and offers to distinguish it from the retroactive solution of the scientific question.

Discussing Bergson's work in this area, Deleuze argues that 'the problem always has the solution it deserves';⁷⁵ the more appropriate and articulate the problem or the question, the better the solution. But this is not to suggest that any particular question was there to be answered once it had been uncovered; 'true problems' were those that demanded a creative, inventive articulation. The *Anarchitecture* group, of which Matta-Clark was an influential member, expressed a very

similar position, emphasising the importance they attached to establishing an articulate question over the attainment of a particular solution:

ANARCHITECTURE ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE NO PROBLEM BUT TO REJOICE IN AN INFORMED WELL-INTENDED CELEBRATION OF CONDITIONS THAT BEST DESCRIBE AND LOCATE A PLACE ⁷⁶

The conditions celebrated by *Anarchitecture* were explicitly contingent and provisional; inventive questioning by its nature exceeded any established rule, not through the wilful disregard for the particular, but because it relied on a more acute appreciation of *all the senses* to establish the question. The concern expressed here was that if the ongoing invention of questions fell away, it would be replaced with a systematic approach that would progressively blunt a previous question by applying it to contexts for which it was not appropriate, establishing it as a measure that ultimately would fail to respond to any qualities not initially included, and effectively eliminating other questions or problems because they would entirely fail to be recognised.

... ANARCHITECTURE IS A SEARCH FOR QUALITIES BEYOND THE RULE. A CLOSER AWARENESS OF ALL THE SENSES WITH LITTLE FAITH IN THE EFFICIENCY ARMY OF PROBLEM SOLVING—PROBLEMS SOLVED—NO PROBLEMS ⁷⁷

Although the attack here is phrased against the *efficiency army*, where it might be assumed an overarching rationalism wins out as the rule is established, it is important to add, beyond the *Anarchitecture* argument, that were a similar hegemony to be established by inventive irrationality, it would be equally problematic. The danger would arise not through the elimination of the question—no problems— but rather through the instability this might instil in the solutions they deserve. Matta-Clark's discrete violation, like Bergson's violent philosophy, held that a fully inventive statement of a problem, a creative question, inscribes both reason *and* imagination, however much these two dimensions might pull against each other.⁷⁸ This antagonism in no way prevents the question being answered (*Circus* can be navigated, for example), but calls for an answer that is different in kind to that given to a scientific question (the visitor or observer can 'make sense' of *Circus* once their 'logical' response has embraced the new spatiality and become more supple). Moreover, this answer could bring about further creative questions, though these would not become linked together in a dialectical progression towards a single goal: Matta-Clark's demand, *Anarchitecture's* demand, was that an inventive, creative questioning should maintain these irreconcilable dimensions in a relation that could point to particular ends in particular circumstances, but that must remain open to further questioning, 'JUST KEEPING GOING AND STARTING OVER AND OVER.'⁷⁹

If the movement of Matta-Clark's work maintains such a relationship—and the bulk of the present work is taken up suggesting how and why this might be the case, and examining the consequences of this on the production and consumption of art and architecture— then this can also suggest why his broad oeuvre appears to have resisted art-historical systematisation so successfully, and how it might be considered more fruitfully as a shifting constellation that permits an ongoing and creative interrogation. As such, it continues to overreach itself, a result of the necessarily excessive dimensions of the questions associated with each piece.

This excess brought about by the creative question is not a failure, it does not signal a wilful avoidance of any attempt to offer an answer. While opening up an examination of the real, it simultaneously inscribes a reasoned and an imaginative dimension to this experience, and expects a reciprocal acknowledgement to occur in the process of offering a response: this demand extends both to the artist and to the visitor or observer of the work. Deleuze emphasised the importance and the awkwardness of this kind of relationship, noting that what is beyond reason actually allows it to function *but* will continue to escape it: 'It is not because reason solves problems that it is itself a problem. On the contrary, for reason to experience a problem, in its own domain, there must be a domain that escapes reason, putting it initially into question... Reason can be put into question and can raise the problem of its nature, because it does not apply to all there is.'⁸⁰

Any solution offered to a creative question posed by Matta-Clark's work necessarily refers to an aspect of that which escapes the domain of reason. While this permits a reasoned response — either from the artist or from an observer—it prevents that response from becoming the one correct way to respond to the work. This is admittedly hard work; Bergson suggests scientific questioning ushers in a response that is '...easy and can be prolonged at will...', in contrast to which a creative questioning '...is arduous and cannot last.'⁸¹

These demanding excursions beyond the domain of reason also help account for the difference in the way that the answers are assimilated: '*The fact is there are two kinds of clarity*'⁸² Whereas a scientific question can lead to an answer that is immediately clear, a creative question may provide an answer that '...ordinarily begins by being obscure, whatever our power of thought may be.'⁸³ This initial obscurity arises not because the answer is necessarily complex, but because of the novelty, the excess, brought about by the creative question: there are no ready-made answers for it. Bergson remarks further that these two types of clarity can be distinguished in terms of their light, whether they keep it for themselves or whether they illuminate a whole region of thought. The clarity emerging from creative questions '...can begin by being inwardly obscure;

but the light they project about them comes back in reflection, with deeper and deeper penetration; and they can have the double power of illuminating what they play upon and of being illuminated themselves.’⁸⁴

Returning again to *Circus*, we can recall that Matta-Clark pointed out the cutting was the activity, but the ‘real idea’ lay somewhere else: the cutting as an activity does not posit the creative question nor provide the answer. It can either be understood in isolation (*he’s cutting that floor*), or as part of a whole (*he’s cutting that floor*), both of which are clear in the sense that they are comprehensible on their own terms. In contrast, the ‘real idea’ of *Circus* posits a creative question when its implications prevent the new situation being entirely understood against previously established criteria. In itself, the operation might even remain obscure, but the new clarity that gradually emerges in an observer can help them to understand the assumptions that they might have made regarding the previous situation, and demonstrate the broader possibilities of experience available. It is important to emphasise that through this operation, the findings of creative questioning are made available to the intellect: discrete violation and the creative questioning that sustains it operate to broaden experience by encouraging a suppleness within reason.

It is helpful at this point to introduce another of Matta-Clark’s projects, an early, untitled piece he produced in Chile in during the autumn of 1971. In addition to introducing Matta-Clark’s interest in the use of light and its effects on the perception of architectural space, it can operate on a metaphorical level around Bergson’s own metaphors for light and clarity, and thus extend the present discussion of inventive or creative questioning, as well as demonstrating several other preoccupations that will be examined in later chapters.

Obscurity and Light: Gordon Matta-Clark’s renovated *Camera Obscura*

This project is one of the earliest instances of Matta-Clark making cuts into a building: it took place in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago, Chile, where together with Jeffrey Lew, his travelling companion during his South American trip, he produced work in the museum at the invitation of the curator, Nemesio Antúez.

As Lew describes it, the museum was virtually abandoned awaiting refurbishment; a 1910 ‘Petit Palais’ style building with a great hall covered with a ‘monumental glass dome’ roof.⁸⁵ Their two works were inter-related, more by chance than design, both concerned with the effects of light; light from above (Matta-Clark) or light from below (Lew). Matta-Clark’s piece, illustrated in

Figure 2.3, was located in a basement urinal from where he then ‘made a lens system all the way to the roof, reflecting the sky’s images of birds and clouds on a screen or mirror right in the basement urinal.’⁸⁶

To permit the passage of light from the glass dome, Matta-Clark had to cut away part of the floor: he frequently expressed his interest in ‘admitting new light’ into the heart of a building,⁸⁷ and the configuration of this particular passage, and the broader issues that it raises, can be further explored with respect to the Camera Obscura. This optical device, literally a dark room into which images of objects outside were projected through a pin-hole or lens, which was popular during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was widely taken up as a metaphor that permitted the relationship between the human subject and the observed object to be explored, and that could provide an account of the production of ‘truth’ about the observed world.⁸⁸

Without suggesting that the Camera Obscura simply repeats the Platonic schema, its adoption as a metaphor by philosophers over the two-hundred year spell of its popularity did broadly repeat the separation of the realm of truth from the stuff of the world, and it privileged the sense of vision over the other bodily senses, ultimately echoing Plato’s insistence on the mind’s eye by effectively replacing the role of the eye with a mechanical apparatus.⁸⁹ Many of Matta-Clark’s own projects mimic the schematic mechanism of the Camera Obscura, but in such a way as to introduce a discrete violation that questions this pervasive hierarchy.

In the specific case of the Santiago project, the simple redeployment of the traditional Camera Obscura arrangement led to the subversion of its exclusively cerebral enjoyment; beyond any homage to his Godfather, urinal artist *par excellence* Marcel Duchamp, the selection of the urinal upset claims to any direct mental communion with truth. Instead, the screen of this Camera Obscura was framed in a familiar receptacle for bodily waste, positioned in the basement toilet rather than the elevated ‘chamber’ of polite society, and connected directly to the sewers beyond, as well as to the sky above.

The popular metaphoric use of the Camera Obscura during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries effectively decorporealised vision, as Jonathan Crary demonstrates. Philosophers from a variety of persuasions deployed the Camera Obscura as a means of explaining how it might so position the observer that truthful observations of the world could be made. Important here was the separation of the observer from the world observed; withdrawal into the dark chamber was the necessary action to be taken if ‘truth’ was to be gained, and as such this separation between observer and thing observed ushered in a new notion of subjectivity. According to Crary, the

works of physicist Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and the philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) 'demonstrate ... how the Camera Obscura was a model simultaneously for the observation of empirical phenomena and for reflective introspection and self-observation.'⁹⁰

The price for this truth was the elimination of the body: 'The Camera Obscura *a priori* prevents the observer from seeing his or her position as part of the representation.'⁹¹

By firmly positioning the observer in the complex spatiality of the world, this and

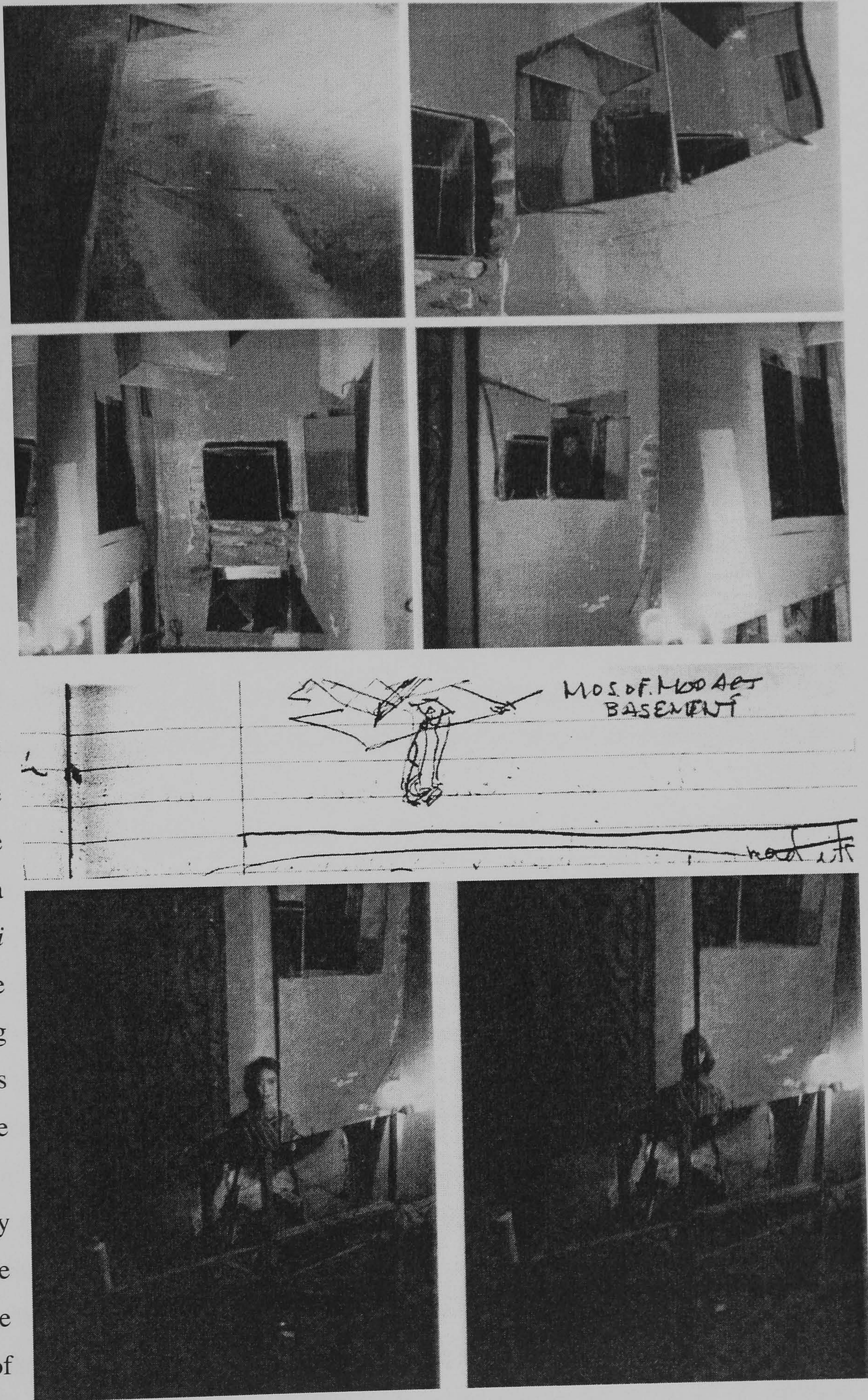


Fig 2.3 Gordon Matta-Clark, *Untitled*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile, 1971. Extract from sketchbook (EGMC #828) showing schematic approach to the lens system (centre), and installation shots (below).

other projects attempted to avoid the observer's traditional removal from the process of representation. By locating the screen of the Santiago piece in the basement urinal, for example,

the observer would have been made aware of an overlapping spatial situation, with the reflection of the sky framed within the sanitary-ware and including fragmentary reflections picked up *en route* between the glass dome and the screen; instead of the dark room of the traditional Camera Obscura, which allowed the fundamental separation between observer and world, Matta-Clark's optics operated to highlight their connections.

This distinction is important; the separation between interior and exterior effectively predicated the use of this metaphor in the philosophical writings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Crary argues that there occurred an epistemological shift during the early years of the nineteenth century, and it suits his project to maintain and emphasise this interior-exterior separation up to that point.⁹² However, it is no surprise that we can find differing approaches within the variety of Camera Obscura metaphors. The most interesting of these in the present context was that held by the philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), who used the metaphor to develop his notion of the monad in his *New Essays on Human Understanding* (*Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain*, completed 1704, but published posthumously in 1765), where he discussed the resemblance between the understanding of a man and 'a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible images.'

Most frequently, Leibniz's monad is taken as an interior without an exterior, though in his discussion of the resemblance between understanding of a man and 'a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible images,' Leibniz was dissatisfied with the accepted metaphor, and found the need to complicate the screen that for others was simply an inert surface. 'To increase the resemblance we should have to postulate that there is a screen in this dark room to receive the [sensible] species [which travel from the object to the distant sense-organ], and that it is not uniform but is diversified by folds representing items of innate knowledge; and, what is more, that this screen or membrane, being under tension, has a kind of elasticity or active force, and indeed that it acts (or reacts) in ways which are adapted both to past folds and to new ones coming from impressions of the species.'⁹³

The notion that the monad was an interior without exterior stems from Leibniz's refusal to conflate human and divine points of view. Unlike Descartes' happy, necessary acceptance of a centred world, Leibniz's *Monadology* responded to the impossibility of such an acceptance, developing instead a radically decentred, multi-centred version. This is precisely not to suggest that *Monadology* argued for the elimination of the outside, nor for the elimination of any

possibility of an ordered universe, but instead for the development of an understanding of the relationship between observer and the world that could respond to this radical contingency. Leibniz's qualified use of the Camera Obscura metaphor challenged the predicative role of architecture witnessed in its usage by his contemporaries: instead of a passive model of the understanding traditionally provided by the dark room, he demanded an active role for the observer, whose *elasticity* responded to past and current experience.

Just as Matta-Clark's Santiago piece subverted the traditional Camera Obscura configuration by disrupting the actual architectural surroundings, Leibniz's metaphoric architecture upset usual expectations. Although operating in different ways, both can be taken to have subtly yet forcefully reconfigured the correspondence between interior and exterior by introducing a complex torsion into the observer's experience of their inter-relationship. For both, an important pre-requisite to this reconfiguration was an elevation in the status of matter, and both projects demonstrate, contra Plato, the survival of matter beyond rationality, and both enjoy literal and metaphoric uses of this distinction as they re-articulate architectural space and mental space, or more precisely here, epistemology. Indeed for Deleuze, working through Leibniz in *The Fold*, matter (or body) occupies one of the two 'floors' or levels in the Leibniz's thought: the other is occupied by the soul or mind. However different these might be, they are not two separate worlds, but coexistent and are mutually reinforcing.⁹⁴ Attempts to overcome matter and encourage the mind to establish knowledge on its own terms, such as those played out in Plato's story of the cave or in the philosophies of Leibniz's contemporaries, most famously and enduringly in the 'faulty Cartesian argument,'⁹⁵ are criticised for effectively using up matter, going beyond it in order to establish (or return to) a once-and-for-all truth.

Inasmuch as Matta-Clark and Leibniz both diverge from the traditional formulation of the Camera Obscura, their respective projects can illustrate paradigms of knowing which operate without a final (or pre-existing) truth, working from the assumption and with the demand that the observer must remain a subject and an object as they enjoy a 'knowledge' of the world. Deleuze emphasises that for Leibniz, the mind cannot attain the self-sufficiency so often claimed for it: '[Leibniz] is not saying that only the body explains what is obscure in the mind. To the contrary, the mind is obscure, the depths of the mind are dark, and this dark nature is what explains and requires a body.'⁹⁶ Bergson too stressed that the mind overflows the intellect,⁹⁷ and his assertion that there are two types of clarity is instructive at this point, suggesting that this obscurity of the mind cannot be clarified by scientific questioning or reason, but that it can only be illuminated by

the creative question. Leibniz's demand for a flexible screen, however metaphoric, can complement Bergson's hope for creative questioning, inasmuch as both attempt to open up human understanding and experience beyond that which could be sanctioned by reason alone. Such an understanding, which both resists the overcoming of matter en route to 'truth' and refuses to conflate mind and reason, can reiterate the importance and the operation of the creative question in Matta-Clark's work. He hoped for an active and ongoing role for human beings; participation was central, in much the same way that Leibniz demanded our whole involvement in the production of what he termed 'complex ideas:' '... not only do we receive images and traces in the brain, but we form new ones from them when we bring 'complex ideas' to mind; and so the screen which represents our brain must be active and elastic.'⁹⁸

However else their projects differ, Leibniz, Bergson, and Matta-Clark all worked to sustain 'irrationalities,' even contradictions, in their efforts to demonstrate that scientific questioning could not establish complete understanding of the world. If we recall Adrian Forty's observation that the discourse of modernism tended to absolutism by attempting to contain its opposite (effectively to leave nothing outside its main concepts), then the operations of creative questioning can demonstrate the possibilities of creating an opening (though not necessarily an outside) within this discourse. As Matta-Clark stressed over and over again, this was not an act of replacement, but a discrete violation that depended as much on the maintenance of the initial discourse as it did on the establishment of an interruption. Bringing discrete violation more explicitly alongside the discourse of modernism, its operation can be brought to bear on several of its broad claims raised earlier: in particular, the widespread aspiration to scientific method, and the demands for medium specificity and disciplinary 'purity' exemplified by Greenberg. The main text of the thesis will explore the consequences this combination can have on a number of architectural modernism's central claims and terms, beginning in the next chapter with its valorisation of form.

¹ I am here paraphrasing Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock's critique of art-historical orthodoxy, Orton and Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, p. vii. Paraphrasing their discussion of an unrelated yet equally awkward example, it could be argued that Matta-Clark's work occupies 'a problematic place' in conventional art historical schema, where the orthodoxies of art and architectural history 'break down' before the problems posed by his oeuvre. After their 'Les Données Bretonnantes: La Prairie de Représentation,' [1980] in Orton and Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, *op.cit.*, p.60.

² Griselda Pollock, 'Artists, Mythologies and Media Genius, Madness and Art History,' in *Screen*, 21, 3 (1981), p.66.

³ Gloria Moure has recently argued that Matta-Clark's work 'should be analyzed as a continual flux and, as such, in its entirety.' Gloria Moure, 'Short Term Eternity,' in Gloria Moure (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark: Works and Collected Writings*, Ediciones Polígrafa, Barcelona, 2006, p.9.

- 4 Different approaches would demonstrate a fragmented or rigidly categorised œuvre, such as Pamela M. Lee's art-historical approach, or political-art reading of Cohn, and so on: see caveats below. Some of the stuff in his œuvre was very focused as a response to his education, the situation in architecture at that time, changes in the art world, and so on. Some of it was purely speculative (recall Nonas stuff, didn't know when to stop just continued over and over.
- 5 Richard Nonas, in conversation with the author, David Zwimmer Gallery, NY, 10th January 2002. Joan Simon similarly notes that 'Matta-Clark and his contemporaries referred to their art-making almost generically as "pieces" or "works." Implied were both something tangible and an assumption of the mutable relationships between processes and products. Often barely recognisable as art, some of these pieces were by-products of collaborative and conceptual actions; others were deliberate manifestations of extremely personal perceptions in nonart situations and structures. And whether they were ephemeral or realised for the long-term, these artworks signalled the valuation once again of personality and a messy confluence of forms.' 'Interviewers Note,' in Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.18.
- 6 Richard Nonas, interviewed by Richard Armstrong, 14th October 1980, New York City, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.399. In my own conversations with Nonas, (David Zwimmer Gallery, New York City, 10th January 2002) he has argued somewhat conversely that Matta-Clark's work was nowhere stronger than when it was driven by and searched for raw emotion, both in space and in/on paper, and that his work lost something in the later work, when it became too neat (well, comparatively).
- 7 Although Deleuze and Guattari's work on Minor Literature has not yet been introduced properly, it is worth noting that they argue in a similar vein that Kafka's letters must be taken seriously, that they are an integral component in his œuvre, 'an indispensable gear, a motor part for the literary machine...' Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, [1975], tr. Dana Polan, University of Minnesota Press, 1986, p.29.
- 8 The recently published collection of Matta-Clark's collected writings are transcriptions that remain faithful to the 'punctuation and crossings-out in the originals... except where they have rendered the text illegible, [and to the] artist's use of capitals or lower case letters, given the importance he accorded to the mode of expression.' Gloria Moure (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark: Works and Collected Writings*, Ediciones Polígrafa, Barcelona, 2006, author's note, p.7.
- 9 For a discussion of this broad dynamic, see James Attlee, *In Other Words...Matta-Clark and Language*, in Attlee and Le Feuvre, *The Space Between*, Ch.4, pp.45-53. Published more recently, Gloria Moure is more bullish about the value of Matta-Clark's words: for her, they are not only valuable in their own right, approached as 'a sculptural space of writing,' but can 'shed definitive light on his [work, and] give us a clear idea of total cohesion [...] and makes possible the actual meeting between thought and reality.' Moure, 'Short Term Eternity,' *op.cit.*, p.12.
- 10 Matta-Clark discusses 'my own dyslexic manner' with Judith Russi Kirshner in terms that clearly demonstrate that this term should not be taken in its conventional medical application, but far more obtusely as a creative and active disinterest—or discrete violation of—stable structures and conventions of communication. See Kirshner, 'Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark,' in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.392.
- 11 Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed, op.cit.*, p.153
- 12 Briony Fer makes a similar claim; 'I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that Matta-Clark thought through drawing.' Briony Fer, 'Networks: Graphic Strategies from Matta to Matta-Clark,' in Betti-Sue Hertz (ed.), *Transmission: The Art of Matta and Gordon Matta-Clark*, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, 2006, p.41.
- 13 Carol Goodden, (Caroline Yorke Goodden) interviewed by Joan Simon 1984, in Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.39, reproduced in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.195.
- 14 Richard Nonas, interviewed by Richard Armstrong, 14th October 1980, New York City, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.399.
- 15 Laurie Anderson, interviewed by Joan Simon, in Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.18.
- 16 Lisa Le Feuvre, *Thinking About the Space Between*, in James Attlee & Lisa Le Feuvre, *op.cit.*, p.9.
- 17 Crow in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.27.
- 18 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1330 (the same text appears on Notecard #1178)
- 19 Pollock criticises orthodox art history's tendency to 'sever art and artist from history and to render both unavailable to those without the specialised knowledge of its processes which art history claims for itself.' Pollock, 'Artists, Mythologies and Media Genius, Madness and Art History,' *op.cit.*, p.65.
- 20 The 'new' and the 'old' are still disputed terms. In broad terms the 'new' in various (often mutually conflicting) formats involve an emphasis on radical, social, critical agendas, and have been set up to contest

the institutionally dominant, mainstream and traditional modes of doing art history, although the 'new' has itself become institutionalised. For recent snap shots of this situation, see for example; Dana Arnold, *Art History: a Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004; Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, London & New York, 2001; and David Carrier, 'Current Issues in Art History, Aesthetics and Visual Studies,' in Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (eds.), *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, Yale University Press, 2003. The latter states a similar position to Borden and Rendell in *InterSections* (which explores some of the architectural versions of the 'new' and is discussed below) in that it points to the broader need for disciplinary envelopes to constantly shift, a point that is also relevant for the present work

²¹ John Whiteman, Introduction, in John Whiteman, Jeffrey Kipnis and Richard Burdett (eds.), *Strategies in Architectural Thinking*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1992, p.7. This collates the proceedings of a conference held in Chicago in 1988.

²² The broad, if tribal, acceptance of such approaches can be witnessed in the increasing number of publications that set out to discuss the appropriateness of such methodologies to architecture, such as the following: *Strategies in Architectural Thinking* (ibid.) has already been introduced. Other significant publications include, chronologically, Iain Borden and Jane Rendell (eds.), *InterSections: Architectural Histories and Critical Theories*, Routledge, London & New York, 2000; Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault (eds.), *Anxious modernisms: experimentation in postwar architectural culture*, Canadian Centre for Architecture & MIT Press, Montréal. Cambridge, MA, London, 2000, Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*, MIT Press, 2001; ; Esa Laaksonen, Tom Simons and Anni Vartola (eds.), *Research and Practice in Architecture*, Alvar Aalto Academy, Helsinki, 2001, Andrzej Piotrowski and Julia Williams Robinson (eds.), *The Discipline of Architecture*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London, 2001; Thomas A. Markus and Deborah Cameron, *The Words Between the Spaces: Buildings and Language*, Routledge, London & New York, 2002; Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen and Esa Laaksonen (eds.), *Architecture + Art: New Visions, New Strategies*, Alvar Aalto Academy, Helsinki, 2007; along with journals such as *October* [1976-], *Assemblage* [1986-2000], and *Grey Room* [2000-].

²³ Borden and Rendell (eds.), *InterSections, op.cit.* While they go on to ask how the historian could 'make sense of' the complexity of architecture, with its overt and hidden meanings and practices, their answer has implications for the thesis regarding the importance they accord the raising of questions; 'The aim [of the historian] must be, first of all, to recognise the grounds on which the historical interpretation is being made, by which is meant not so much the meanings that can be located *within* the historical object as the *questions that may be asked* of it according to an explicit historian-centred agenda.' p.6, original emphasis.

²⁴ It is significant for this thesis that Borden & Rendell suggest that 'one of the most fruitful arenas for this kind of intellectual labour has come in the rethinking of the modernist condition...' ibid., p.17

²⁵ Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze and Carol Henderson (eds.), *Architecture and Feminism*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1996A focused example of this prospective, speculative conjunction of an architectural example with a field of theory (coincidentally, here again this is feminism) is provided by Sarah Wigglesworth's essay in *InterSections*. Importantly, she also points to the broader implications this conjunction can have on our understanding of modernism: 'By using the Maison de Verre as a specific example in which a number of issues implicated in modernism are condensed, I show how the ideology of modern architecture represses particular concerns, and in so doing, point the way towards a reappraisal of a neglected aspect of architectural knowledge.' Sarah Wigglesworth, 'A Fitting Fetish: The Interiors of the Maison de Verre,' in Borden and Rendell (eds.), *InterSections, op.cit.*, p.92.

²⁶ As Borden and Rendell put it, 'the rethinking of theory and history must be a two-way process—not an application of one to the other, but a true intersection, an inter-production of both at once.' Borden and Rendell (eds.), *InterSections*, p.12. In their essay in the same collection, Fraser and Kerr are more forceful about the demands of this interrelationship; while they acknowledge the positive contribution heralded by the switch to Cultural Studies approaches to architectural theory (in terms of the broadening of the conceptual framework within which architecture is situated) they warn against the problem they associate with the primacy now granted to theory. 'The unfortunate product of these ... overriding theoretical dictates is the creation of an illusory critical space...' Murray Fraser and Joe Kerr, 'Beyond the Empire of the Signs,' ibid., p.125.

²⁷ Simon Ofield, 'Crusing the Archive,' in *Journal of Visual Culture*, 4, 3 (December 2005) pp. 351-364. The works that Ofield discusses in his article are a short story and a painting (David Rees, 'The Milkman's on His Way' [1986] and David Hockney's 'Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures),' [1971]), significant here in that, taken along with his critical discourse, they work as an accidental 'composite text.' The notion of

cruising as a research methodology is to avoid research methods implicated in the 19th or 20th-century desire for disciplinary and epistemological certainty: 'Although compelling, cruising does not provide an escape from these disciplinary regimes, neither in practice nor in theory. Indeed, the virtue of cruising is its investment in both acknowledging and dodging different disciplines.' Ofield, 'Crusing the Archive,' *op.cit.*, p.362.

28 Ofield, 'Crusing the Archive,' *op.cit.*, p.357.

29 They acknowledged the paradoxical situation that 'while he had become one of the most secure 'Great Artists' in the literature of art, his work was probably the least analysed and worst understood among all the early modernists.' Orton and Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, *op.cit.*, p.i.

30 *ibid.*, p.iii.

31 Pollock, 'Agency and the Avant-Garde: Studies in Authorship and History by Way of Van Gogh.' in *ibid.*, p.340.

32 While Orton and Pollock are explicit in their discussion of their work as an attack on orthodox art-history, contributing instead towards the development of the social history of art: 'The ambition must be not just to do better art history, not just to produce novel, interesting, convoluted or complex interpretations of what can be seen to be the case, but to move towards a continual reconceptualisation and reappraisal of the theories and methods appropriate to producing social and historical accounts of the production of art and art practice.' *ibid.*, p.iii. In contrast to their revolutionary demands directed towards art history, the method developed in this thesis is more evolutionary; its purpose is not to improve art history, or even to directly address gaps in its method as did Lee, Crow, and Attlee & Le Feuvre discussed in the previous chapter. Instead, it grows out of observations regarding the nature of his oeuvre and his/its awkward position, as well as the relevance or promise it holds for the now, and approaches all of these without art history. To the small extent that it might be considered an art-historical work, this thesis might well 'usefully throw[...] into relief those cultural formations,' but this occurs only as a by-product.

33 Lisa Le Feuvre, 'Foreword: Thinking about the Space Between,' in Attlee and Le Feuvre, *The Space Between*, *op.cit.*, p.7.

34 Pollock, 'Agency and the Avant-Garde: Studies in Authorship and History by Way of Van Gogh.' in Orton and Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, *op.cit.*, p.339.

35 Matta-Clark, Letter to Carol Goodden from Amsterdam, EGMC, *Letters*, 1973, Monday December 3rd 1973. Pollock writes of art in surprisingly similar terms: 'Art is not objects caused by someone or something. Culture is practice, that is, it is one of the social activities of which objects/texts are both the effect and the actual forms. Cultural practices operate in a tension between collective modes and individual projects.' Pollock, in *ibid.*, p.339.

36 This was issued under the publisher's title *Van Gogh: Artist of his Time*, 1979, Phaidon. It is reprinted, under their intended title, together with a long account of the institutional demands that this difference in title demonstrates, in *ibid.*, pp.1-52.

37 *ibid.*, p.4. They saw this as a development of a social history of art, though reflect on its shortcomings in their 'Memories Still to Come...' the intro to *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*. Elsewhere, Pollock discusses the construction or constitution of an artists's oeuvre, and notes that according to common art historical approaches, '[w]ords, whether VG's [van Gogh's] or others, are seen as obstacles on the way to the paintings.' Pollock, 'Artists, Mythologies and Media Genius, Madness and Art History,' p.63 (she is here reading A. M. Hammacher's 'Vincent van Gogh and the Words,' in J. B. de La Faille *et al.*, *The Works of Vincent van Gogh—His Paintings and Drawings*, Amsterdam, 1970). Instead of taking them as obstacles, Pollock argues that Van Gogh's letters 'can be read, not as direct historical evidence for the paintings, but as parallel texts which are part of a network of practices and representations.' *ibid.*, p.81.

A complementary, and specifically architectural, position, is provided by Markus and Cameron, *The Words Between the Spaces*, *op.cit.*, where the authors argue that the 'texts about buildings often turn out to be a source for the social, political and ideological values...; we... treat the analysis of buildings and the analysis of texts about them as complementary approaches to the same project.' p.4. In their Chapter 7, Markus and Cameron note that the study of combination or 'complex texts' which combine images with language 'are almost non-existent. So there is a lot of work to do before we begin to understand the potency of such texts in the production of the built environment...' p.149; They go on to add a qualifier; 'The literature about images, in the fields of art, psychology, philosophy, and cultural studies is immense. But here we are concerned less with images *per se*, but with architectural texts where image and language work together as multi-modal texts.' p.150.

38 Orton and Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, *op.cit.*, p.vi.

39 To put this more carefully, it is prospective in a different way to Orton and Pollock: while they mounted their attack by opening up ‘determining conditions,’ their target was the discipline of art history (in the present), which shares something of the disciplinary issues addressed later. However, the architectural disciplinary needs pull these concerns in different directions, discussed at length in the main text, especially Chapter Seven ‘Discipline.’

40 Tafuri also uses the ‘diagram’ provided by the ellipse to describe the push and pull of the critical discourse on architecture: ‘As such, it has to remain a readable diagram of an intolerable situation. The parallel between Picasso and Schwitters, between Schönberg and Stravinsky, between Gropius and Häring does not disappear, but closes itself in an elliptical presence of opposites. In such a *mixture* the role of the observer becomes ambiguous... And as the critic... is nothing but a privileged observer, his position enjoys an even more accentuated ambiguity: from the position of committed collaborator he is pushed into the front row to witness, as a silent accomplice, the show offered by an architecture continuously splitting itself in an exhausting mirror game.’ Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, tr. Giorgio Verrecchia, Granada, London, 1980, 97.

41 It included books on a wide range of subjects, from alchemy to anthropology, Piranesi’s drawings to Rudofsky’s *Architecture without Architects*, spiritualism mysticism and religion, town planning, critical theory (Lukacs, Marcuse), poetry and literature (Blake and Borges, Donne and Milton, Kafka and Neruda), and cybernetics, as well as art and architectural theory (Vasari, Wittkower and Banister Fletcher, Peter Murray, Eliel Saarinen and Rayner Banham).

42 Richard Nonas, interviewed by Richard Armstrong, 14th October 1980, New York City, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.398.

43 We will return to the broad issues at stake in the spat between Michael Fried and Donald Judd in the main text below; Fried’s attack appears in his well-known essay ‘Art and Objecthood’ first published in *Artforum*, Summer 1967. (Reprinted in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (ed.), *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, [1992] Blackwell, Oxford, 2003, pp.822-834, Here, he takes issue with uncertainty in art (which we will return to in the later discussion of judgement and process), and cites Judd’s claim that ‘A work needs only to be interesting.’ See Donald Judd, interviewed by Bruce Glaser, in Lucy R. Lippard (ed.) ‘Questions to Stella and Judd,’ in *Art News*, LXV, no.5, September 1966.

44 Lefebvre clearly hated Bergson and dismissed pretty much everyone else except Bataille: Deleuze describes his work as a kind of buggery, taking philosophers like Bergson from behind to produce *monstrous children*. (See for example the first section of Lefebvre’s *Production of Space*, where he rubbishes just about every contribution to philosophy and critical theory, and Deleuze’s letter to Michel Cressole, where he describes his strategy for escaping the received weight of the history of philosophy, in Michel Cressole, *Deleuze*, Editions Universitaires, Paris, 1973, p.111.)

45 *Experimentation* here is more akin to the French *expérience* or Spanish *experimentar*, both of which indicate both experience *and* experiment. This is something that crops up frequently in Deleuze, and we will return to it periodically below. One instance that is relevant in the present context can be found in the first Chapter of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Kafka*, where they emphasise their interest in Kafka lies only in the latter’s ‘*experimentation* that is without interpretation or significance and rests only on tests of experience.’ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka, op.cit.*, p.7. (original emphasis)

Although the combination of Bergson, Deleuze and architecture is quite unusual, the work of Elizabeth Grosz is a significant exception; the collection of her essays, Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside, op.cit.*, pursues many of the key questions that run through this thesis, albeit in a more abstract context.

46 Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Liza Bear, ‘Gordon Matta-Clark: Splitting (the Humphrey Street Building),’ in *Avalanche*, (December 1974), *op.cit.*, pp.34-7.

47 In a letter written to his mother shortly after his arrival at Cornell, he declares that ‘This school was a mistake,’ and he refers to Cornell as ‘this prison on a hill.’ EGMC, *Articles and Documents, 1942-76*.

48 Gordon Matta-Clark, *Transcript: Interview Between Wall and Matta-Clark: Rough Draft*, circa late 1975/early 1976, Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark, (Articles and Documents, 1942-76), #4. ‘Things die as they become formal... When a thing does not have any life at all, it seems to be a lot of manipulation for manipulation’s sake. And I suppose that’s the way I interpret the word “formalism”.’

49 ‘THE TENDANCY IS TO HAVE ~~ONE~~ PROJECT AN IDEA OVER A WHOLE RANGE OF SIMILARLY ~~SHAPED~~ CHARACTERIZED BUT ESSENTIALLY DIFFERENT SITUATIONS- ORGANIZED MONOPOLY.’ Gordon Matta-Clark, Loose leaf notes, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942-76*, c.1973.

50 Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript, op.cit.*, #8.

- 51 Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2000, p.61. An interesting parallel to this observation can be found in Greenberg's establishment of value-judgement that accompanies his definition of modern painting. Not only does he establish pseudo-scientific criteria against which to judge modernism, he then extends these right back through the history of painting to the Paleolithic painter, although he concurs that many past masters are just that, he suggests that they were elevated to the canon by their contemporaries for the wrong reasons. He does not revise the canon, but more subtly replaces the judgements made previously against the erroneous criteria of earlier generations with those made against his absolute definition of painting. see Clement Greenberg, *Modernist Painting*, [1965] in Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (eds.), *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, [1982] Paul Chapman in association with the Open University, London, 1988, and also *American Type Painting* [1955], in the same volume. In the same interview with John Rajchmann where he argues for a constructive understanding of Matta-Clark's work, Rem Koolhaas makes a remark that echo's Forty's position here. Koolhaas suggests that 'Bigness liberates us from the obligation of the "general," which in retrospect may be the greatest weakness of Modernism—its inability to deal with, to accommodate, to theorize, the specific. But it is therefore a limited manifesto, or a "weak" manifesto.' Rem Koolhaas, 'Thinking Big (John Rajchmann talks with Rem Koolhaas),' in *Artforum*, 33, (December 1994), *op.cit.*, p.53.
- 52 In a short review, Anthony Vidler pulls together these various ingredients and suggests that they would make a fruitful area of reflection: 'One [frame of reference that might serve to ground his practice as a whole] would be to take Matta-Clark more seriously at his word, or rather to understand his words within the vocabulary of architecture itself. For of all the artists in the '70s who sought to break the boundaries of their practices, Matta-Clark was uniquely a product of professional architectural training. In the context of that training, his conceptions of "form," "surface," "monumentality," the "temporary," and "space" take on a special meaning, as do the projects that for the rest of his life were projected, so to speak, against the ground of this hermetic profession. And nowhere was the terminology of architecture so consistently developed in its formalist and modernist references as at Cornell University in the '60s.' Vidler, "Splitting the Difference," *op.cit.*, p.36. This passage is repeated, with some changes, and the issues raised are discussed more fully, in Vidler, 'Architecture-to-Be,' *op.cit.*
- 53 It must be noted at this point that the thesis also differs from Jennifer Bloomer's strategies of minor architecture; Bloomer has suggested the 'transfer (with modifications) of the concept of "minor literature" of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to architecture' Jennifer Bloomer, *Architecture and the Text: the (S)cripts of Joyce and Piranesi*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1993n.6, p.64. (She 'elucidates' this in her 'D'or' in Beatrice Colomina (ed.), *Sexuality and Space*, Princeton, 1991.) Just as I have referred to Adrian Forty's work on the discourse of modern architecture to imply an outside, Bloomer discusses the use of the term *major* architecture in Tafuri's 'Architecture as Indifferent Object and the Crisis of Critical Attention,' in Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, *op.cit.*, pp.79-102 (*major* is italicised in the original): From this, she argues that 'Major architecture implies the presence of an other architecture, which would be, by the logic of the implication, 'minor architecture.' And into this category of minor architecture, it follows, the 'ambiguous objects' fall... This vaguely minor architecture is an assemblage of partial objects, a tesseraic text, a patchwork.... And its stands in difference to *major* architecture, instruments of reflection of the 'divine cosmos,' Tablets of Stone with the WORD OF GOD writ large.' Bloomer, *Architecture and the Text*, *op.cit.*, p.55. While this thesis adopts the same motif, and for broadly similar reasons, the mode of transfer here is different: Bloomer attacks architecture's role in the establishment and maintenance of clear meaning, and warns that the willful attack on architecture will miss the target—we can again read the frequent criticisms or caricature of Matta-Clark here—her work approaches both major and minor architecture as objects of theory, and implies that the important sphere of operation, and contestation, occurs at the level of text where meaning is established. While aspects of her work offer encouragement for the methodology developed here, Bloomer approaches theory as the object of her study, and the relationship between major and minor architecture is played out between competing texts and as a textual practice directed towards architecture's assumed epistemological, ontological status and role. Architecture as a discipline, an 'actual' practice, a thing or an experience is a somewhat absent 'object' of her analysis, which while hugely creative, is at times willfully obscure. This thesis does not enact minor architecture as Bloomer does, but looks instead to explore how and why it might be important, and to draw upon it in order to structure the investigation of Matta-Clark's oeuvre.
- 54 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, *op.cit.*, p.16, p.18, emphasis added.
- 55 *ibid.*, p.7.
- 56 *ibid.*, p.28.

57 *ibid.*, p.28.

58 A further caveat stretches beyond the thesis itself, and concerns the possible impact that the *major* or *minor* designation might have on Matta-Clark's œuvre, where it might impose another fixed framework within which certain projects were positioned as either one or the other. However, the promotion of his œuvre as 'total output' involves a desire to engage equally with major and minor issues: this in turn led to the introduction of certain techniques discussed in the text at this point—for example, the repetition of certain quotes and examples of work in different contexts across different chapters in both parts—that go some way to disrupt such either/or categorization.

59 Gordon Matta-Clark, 'MEASUREMENT AND THE PLAN,' c.1972, EGMC, Articles & Documents 1942-76. He begins 'ALL MEASURE IS AN ADMINISTRATIVE (FUNCTIONAL) PART A CONVENIENT FRA[C]TION OF WHATEVER CONSTANT... MEASUREMENT WILL ALWAYS BE A FU[N]CTION OF SOME RULE AND ARE JUST NOT AS IMPORTANT AS THE SENSE OF SPACE.'

60 Matta-Clark, interviewed by Judith Russi Kirshner, Chicago, February 13th 1978, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.392.

61 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript, op.cit.*, #15. Earlier in the interview, Matta-Clark emphasised the importance of maintaining sufficient of the original situation to permit a clear reading: '...the situation must be common enough so that everyone can still understand it even after I undo it. Especially after I undo it, the original situation must remain undiminished in clarity. This imposes restrictions of another kind which the professional architect doesn't have...' #1.

62 Most obviously, it needs to be distinguished from Surrealist juxtapositions, which transposed familiar objects and contexts to produce defamiliarising or surreal effects. There are certain biographical links to Surrealism that were sketched out at the beginning of this chapter, but which are beyond the concern of the present work.

63 Judith Russi Kirshner, *Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark*, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.391.

64 Richard Nonas, in conversation with the author, David Zwimmer Gallery, NY, 10th January 2002.

65 Thomas Crow opened up the related issues of reappropriation, domestication, and application that have accompanied previous normalisations of Matta-Clark's work: Thomas Crow, 'The Splitting Series of Gordon Matta-Clark,' address given at the *San Fransisco Art Institute*, 27th November 2001.

66 Maurice Blanchot, *The Future and the Question of Art*, in *The Space of Literature*, [1955], tr. Ann Smock, University of Nebraska Press, 1982, p.212.

67 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, tr. Mabelle L. Andison, F. Hobner & Co., New York, 1946, pp.58-9.

68 Gordon Matta-Clark, Loose leaf notes, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942-76*, Anarchitecture Period c.1973.

69 Richard Nonas, in conversation with the author, David Zwimmer Gallery, NY, 10th January 2002. He makes a similar point in *Gordon's Now, Now* in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*

70 Matta-Clark expands on possible other spaces, 'the kinds of space we all, all of us, have stored in our memory...spaces that are detailed and precise, or very general, at all levels of reminiscing. And of course once you get into reminiscence an infinite number of associations ~~surface~~-emerge concerning real space, desired space, imagined space, ~~false~~ amorphic space, grotesque space, nostalgia enters space perception, sentimentality...' This list emerges in the context of a discussion of the differences between the work of Roger Welch and Keith Sonnier. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Matta-Clark, Wall Transcript, op.cit.*, #11a

71 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, tr. Arthur Mitchell, Macmillan and Co., London, 1911, p.31.

72 *ibid.*, p.149.

73 Bergson, *The Creative Mind, op.cit.*, p.21. Emphasis added.

74 *ibid.*, p.28. He stresses the point: 'Thought ordinarily pictures to itself the new as a new arrangement of pre-existing elements; nothing is ever lost for it, nothing is ever created.' p.38. The 'retroactive movement of truth' has a further effect, allowing us to 'find' in the past more than was there. Coincidentally, this retroactive movement can describe very precisely what Greenberg does, projecting his categories for painting back through the ages, not in order to challenge the canon of art history, but to 'correct' the terms of judgement that had established it over the course of history. see for example Greenburg, *Modernist Painting*, in Frascina and Harrison (eds.), *Modern Art and Modernism*,, *op.cit.*

75 Giles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, [1966], tr. Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam, Zone, New York, 1988, p.16.

76 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1153, Anarchitecture Period c.1973.

77 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1208, Anarchitecture Period c.1973.

78 'Instinct and intelligence...represent two divergent solutions, equally fitting, of one and the same problem.' Bergson, *Creative Evolution, op.cit.*, p.150. The difference between the order of knowledge in both cases is

crucial, and will be explored in more detail in the chapters that follow: for instinct, innate knowledge acts upon objects, 'definite points in space and time' without having learned them. For intelligence, knowledge has no implicit object, but addresses *relations*. 'Let us say...that whatever, in instinct and intelligence, is innate knowledge, bears in the first case on things and in the second on relations.' *ibid.*, p.156, emphasis in the original.

79 'ANARCHITECTURE———WORKING IN SEVERAL DIMENSIONS MAKING THE DISCUSSIONS THE SHOW AND THE WORK.—KEEPING IT AN ONGOING OPEN PROCESS NOT FINISHING JUST KEEPING GOING AND STARTING OVER & OVER' Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1218, Anarchitecture Period c.1973.

80 Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, [1953], tr. Constantin V. Boundas, Columbia University Press, New York, 1991 *op.cit.*, p.33.

81 Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, *op.cit.*, pp.38-9.

82 *ibid.*, pp.38-9. Emphasis added.

83 *ibid.*, pp.38-9.

84 *ibid.*, pp.40-1.

85 Jeffrey Lew, Letter to IVAM, October 1992, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.370.

86 *ibid.*, p.370.

87 'Light admitted into space or beyond surfaces that are cut... Simple gestures spatial complexities and admitting new light.' Gordon Matta-Clark, catalogue entry by Margery Salter. *Double Doors*, August 1973. Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark *Articles and Documents 43-76*.

88 On some Camera Obscura stuff, see Mark A. Cheetham and Elizabeth D. Harvey, 'Obscure Imaginings: Visual Culture and the Anatomy of Caves,' in *Journal of Visual Culture*, 1, 1 (April 2002); for a set of further references see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, MIT Press, 1990, particularly Ch.2.

89 There are important differences though, particularly regarding the way in which truth is authorised in each case. Richard Rorty takes up this issue in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, 1979, arguing that the observer for Descartes and Locke was conceived in a fundamentally different way to anything in Classical or Mediaeval thought.

90 Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, *op.cit.*, p.40. Italics in the original.

91 *ibid.*, p.41.

92 The new model of vision ushered in with Modernity, according to Crary, replaced the passive recipient of stimulus-truth with far more self-sufficient understanding of sense perception, which was accompanied by a drive for the quantification of knowledge and a fragmentation of the body and its senses. He argues that this physiological knowledge '...simultaneously provided techniques for the external control and domination of the human subject *and* was the emancipating ground for notions of subjective vision within modernist art theory and experimentation.' *ibid.*, p.85.

93 G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, [1765], tr. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, (Book II, Ch.xi) p.144. Discussing the interaction of the soul with the body in Book III, Ch.x, 'Of the Abuse of Words,' Leibniz disputes the validity of 'the 'intentional species' which are supposed to let the soul interact with the body; though perhaps one might tolerate the 'sensible species' which travel from the object to the distant sense-organ, tacitly understanding this as the propagation of motion. I grant that Plato's 'soul of the world' does not exist, since God is above the world – an extramundane or rather supramundane Intelligence.' *ibid.*, p.343. The notorious dialogue form of the 'Essays' allows us to take Leibniz's complication of the Camera Obscura metaphor as a direct criticism of Locke's version.

The first passage is cited in Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, *op.cit.*, p.51, and referred to by Giles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, tr. Tom Conley, The Athlone Press, London, 1993, p. 27ff. For the greater clarity of his main project, Crary notes but doesn't pursue the actitative notion of the observer in Leibniz's use of the metaphor, and overlooks the historical dimension that it inscribes in its notion of *past folds and new ones*.

94 'The monad is the book or the reading room. The visible and the legible, the outside and the inside, the façade and the chamber are, however, not two worlds...' Deleuze, *The Fold*, *op.cit.*, p.31.

95 Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, *op.cit.*, Bk.I Ch.i. p.72.

96 Deleuze, *The Fold*, *op.cit.*, p.85. A typically Deleuzian demand for reciprocal causality or reciprocal presupposition which echoes the relationship between reason and that which escapes it.

- ⁹⁷ This assertion arises in Bergson's criticism of Kantian epistemology, and in particular the reductive spatialisation of matter that Kant's system brings about. Bergson stresses that matter *can* be spatialised by the intellect, but that this epistemological approach necessarily excludes aspects of matter considered in the domain beyond reason. '*This adaption [the progressive adaption of the intellect and matter] has ...been brought about quite naturally, because it is the same inversion of the same movement which creates at once the intellectuality of mind and the materiality of things.*' Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, *op.cit.*, p.217, emphasis in the original.
- ⁹⁸ Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, *op.cit.*, Bk.II, Ch.xi, p.145. He continues 'This analogy would explain reasonably well what goes on in the brain. As for the soul, which is a simple substance or 'monad': without being extended it represents these various extended masses and has perceptions of them.'

Part I: Major Architecture

Chapter Three: Form (A Memory)

Now on the face of it nothing seems more ridiculous than undoing a building. Quite the contrary. Undoing is a terribly significant approach for advancing architectural thought in this point in time. Everybody, to some extent, accepts architecture as something to look at, to experience as a static object. Few individuals think about or bother visualising how to work away from it, to make architecture into something other than a static object.¹

Matta-Clark was broadly critical of the role that 'form' assumed within modernism, how it contributed to the acceptance of architecture as static object. However, as we have seen, he did not consider formal work to be exclusively reductive, nor did he perceive the term 'formal' as merely pejorative:

Things die as they become formal... That's ~~reverse~~-obtuse thinking, so let me reference that: when a thing does not have any life at all, it seems to ~~be~~ have a lot of manipulation for manipulations sake. And I suppose that's the way I interpret the word "formalism". At the same time I do recognise that certain kinds of activity can be essentially formal without being rigid or mortuistic.'²

When Matta-Clark spoke out against formalism, he targeted the 'manipulation for manipulation's sake' that he witnessed in (North American) high modernism, although the response that can be read through his projects was oblique. Form returns there after pursuing something of a detour, and when it returns it does so in a mode that is different to that of modernism.

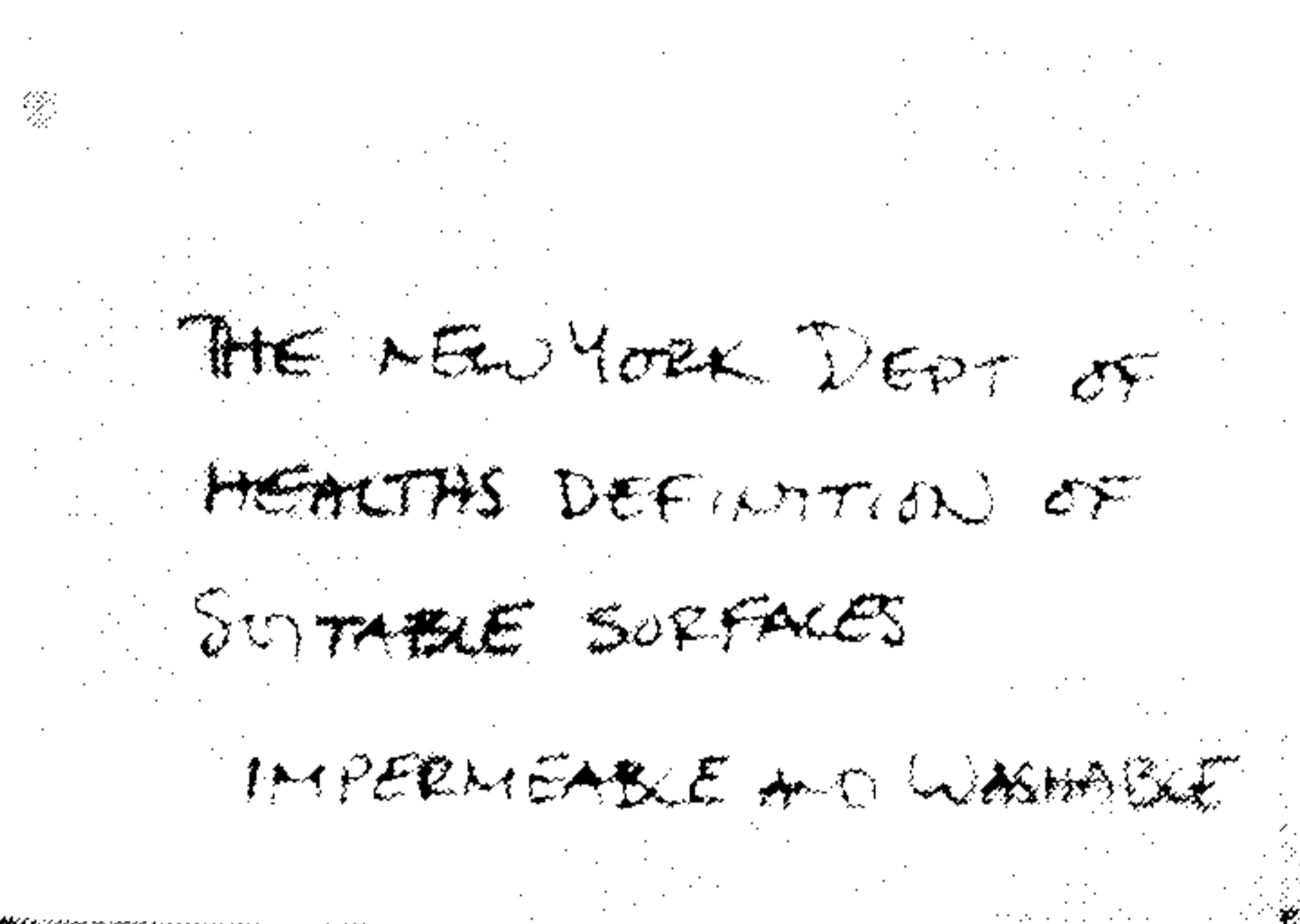
Matta-Clark's concerns were that modernism's license to manipulate form came at a price it is was not prepared to acknowledge, and that the authority it claimed for this license was established by a sleight of hand. Both of these issues emerged as a result of modernism's general drive for disciplinary purity, which in the case of painting or architecture involved form being linked to a quality of surface. More particularly, pure form referred not simply to outward shape, but to an ideal surface that was distinct from the material or 'literal' surface of a thing. This apparently straightforward situation not only denied other contemporaneous modernisms, it also

concealed one of the most long-running and contentious debates within Western philosophy, aesthetics, art and architecture concerning the role of form. In particular here, this involved its relationship with ideas, on the one hand, and with matter, on the other: it concerned, in other words, the relationship between design and realisation.

For influential art-critics such as Clement Greenberg, or his follower Michael Fried, bad art ('non-art') was marked by its inability to attain pure surface form, due to the intrusion of other aspects of a thing that would reveal its broader involvement in a network of unsanctioned relationships.³ Similarly, modern architecture's preoccupation with pure surface form motivated attempts to launder form of any concerns or relationships that prevented it from occurring on its own terms.⁴ The 1932 *International Style* exhibition's covert rejection of any socio-political agenda in favour of a definition of architecture as (preferably regular) volume echoed Le Corbusier's famous assertion that architecture was nothing but the play of volumes in light. Rowe's architectural Contextualism, which provoked such strong criticism from Matta-Clark, was also explicitly idealist and shared a taste for surface formalism.

For Matta-Clark, the aim of attaining purity of superficial form was hugely reductive: although there were instances of painting that had implicitly attacked this aspect of modernism by penetrating the surface, he remarked that the same could not be said of architecture.⁵ This situation led him to produce an extensive series of works that were in part an investigation of surface formalism.

Surface Formalism



THE NEW YORK DEPT OF HEALTHS DEFINITION OF SUITABLE SURFACES
IMPERMEABLE AND WASHABLE
—Gordon Matta-Clark⁶

Matta-Clark was suspicious in equal measure of both impermeable surfaces and the institutions that deemed them suitable. His project *Circus*, discussed in the previous chapter in terms of 'new kind of space' that he sought through his method of discrete violation, also demonstrated an equally strong interest regarding the process of cutting into the material of the building itself. This was the last of many realized cuts, which had begun modestly with projects such as the Santiago

project. This, together with other early cuts such as the series *Bronx Floors* illustrated in Figure 3.1, sought to introduce new experiences of space by opening up unexpected views through a building. Reflecting on the emergence of his cutting projects in an interview with Liza Béar, Matta-Clark stated that alongside these new views, he was perhaps more interested in the consequences of the cut upon the material — and particularly the surface of that material— itself.

At that point [around 1973] I was thinking about surface as something which is too easily accepted as a limit. And I was also becoming very interested in how breaking through the surface creates repercussions in terms of what else is imposed by a cut. That's a very simple idea, and it comes out of some line drawings that I'd been doing... [I]t was the kind of the thin edge of what was being seen that interested me as much, if not more than, the views that were being created... the layering, the strata, the different things that are being severed. Revealing how a uniform surface is established.⁷

He made very similar remarks to Donald Wall, though dwelt a little more on the establishment of surface: ‘...what interests me more than the unexpected views that were being generated by removals is the element of stratification. Not the surface, but the thin edge, the severed surface which reveals the autobiographical process of its making.’⁸ This ‘autobiography’ and the spatial complexity were both products of the cutting operations, and clearly they were closely inter-dependent.⁹ Moreover, they both contested the ‘static object’ conception of architectural form that Matta-Clark criticized, working away from the cut surface in two different directions. The spatial experience of these projects could not be anticipated from any of the ‘ideal’ forms of which they comprised; it had to be a three-dimensional, dynamic experience, one that occurred over time and continued to offer ‘unexpected views.’ Additionally, the revelation of what was usually hidden away behind the surfaces of walls, floors and ceilings displayed the process of making, its maintenance and decay, in short the process of change, that the built ‘object’ was caught up in.

As Matta-Clark stated in the context of *Circus*, the discrete violation of a visitor's sense of space presumed that aspects of the previous situation would comfortably survive the cutting operation and remain a crucial ingredient in the new experience. The same cannot quite be said of the cut surface (where what was revealed did not belong to the same mode of experience presumed by the surface itself), and we might at this point ask whether, and if so how, Matta-Clark's projects usher in a *clearly new sense of form*.

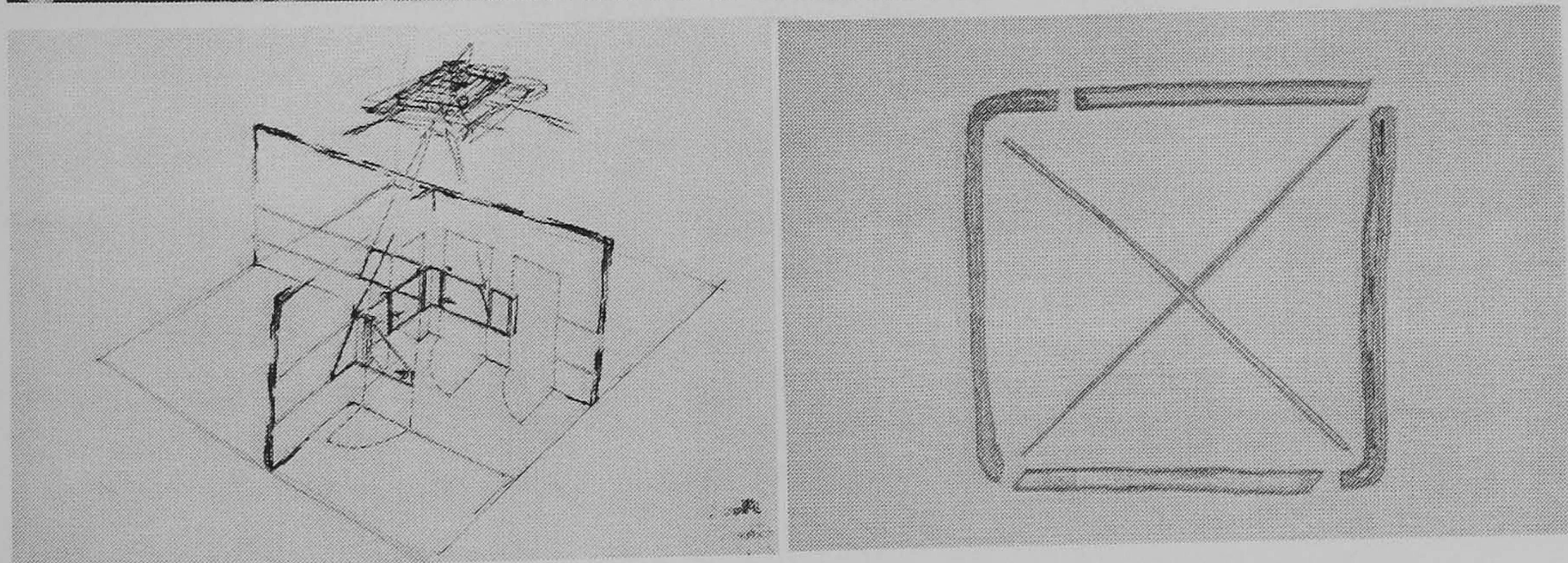
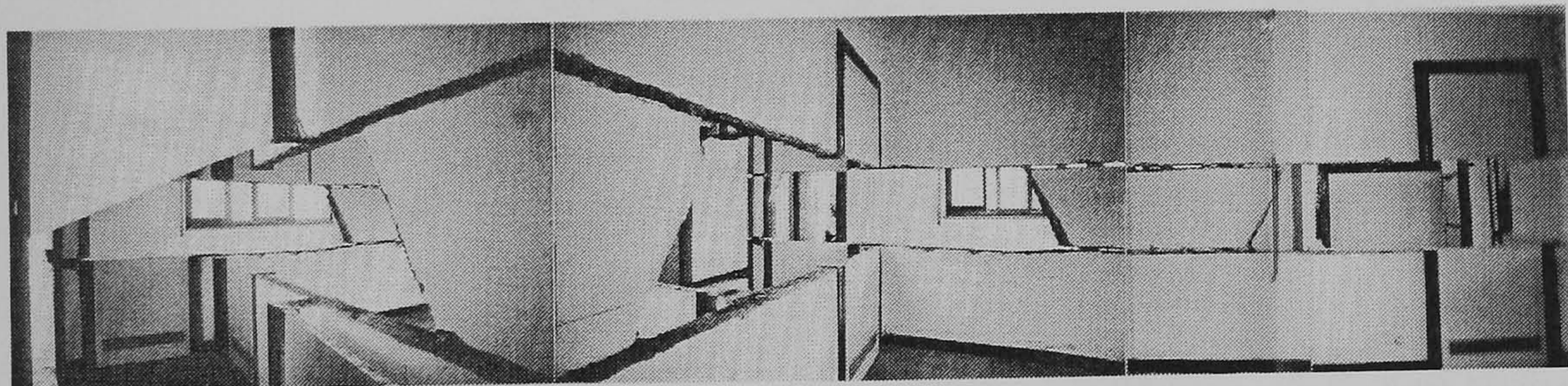
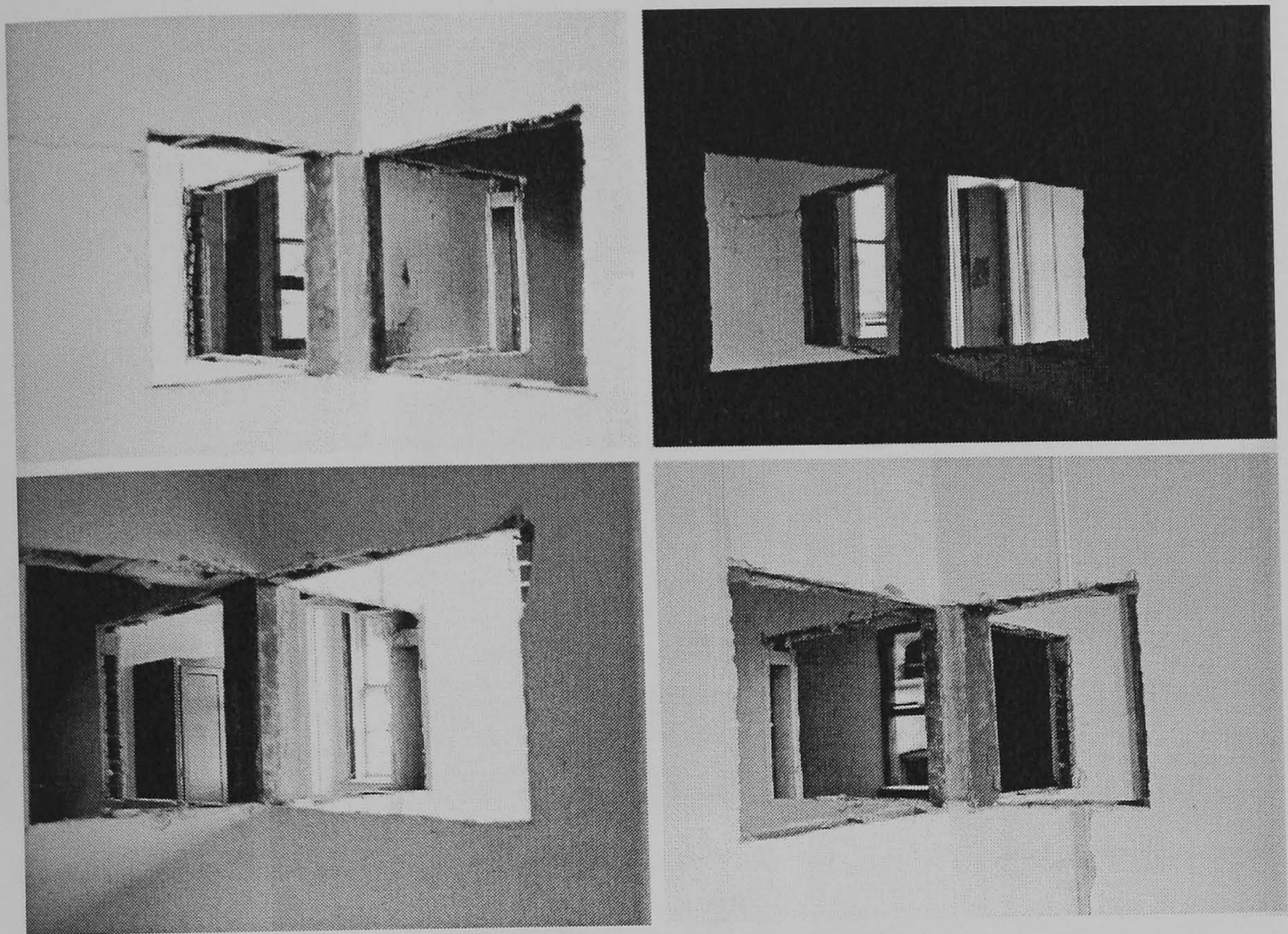
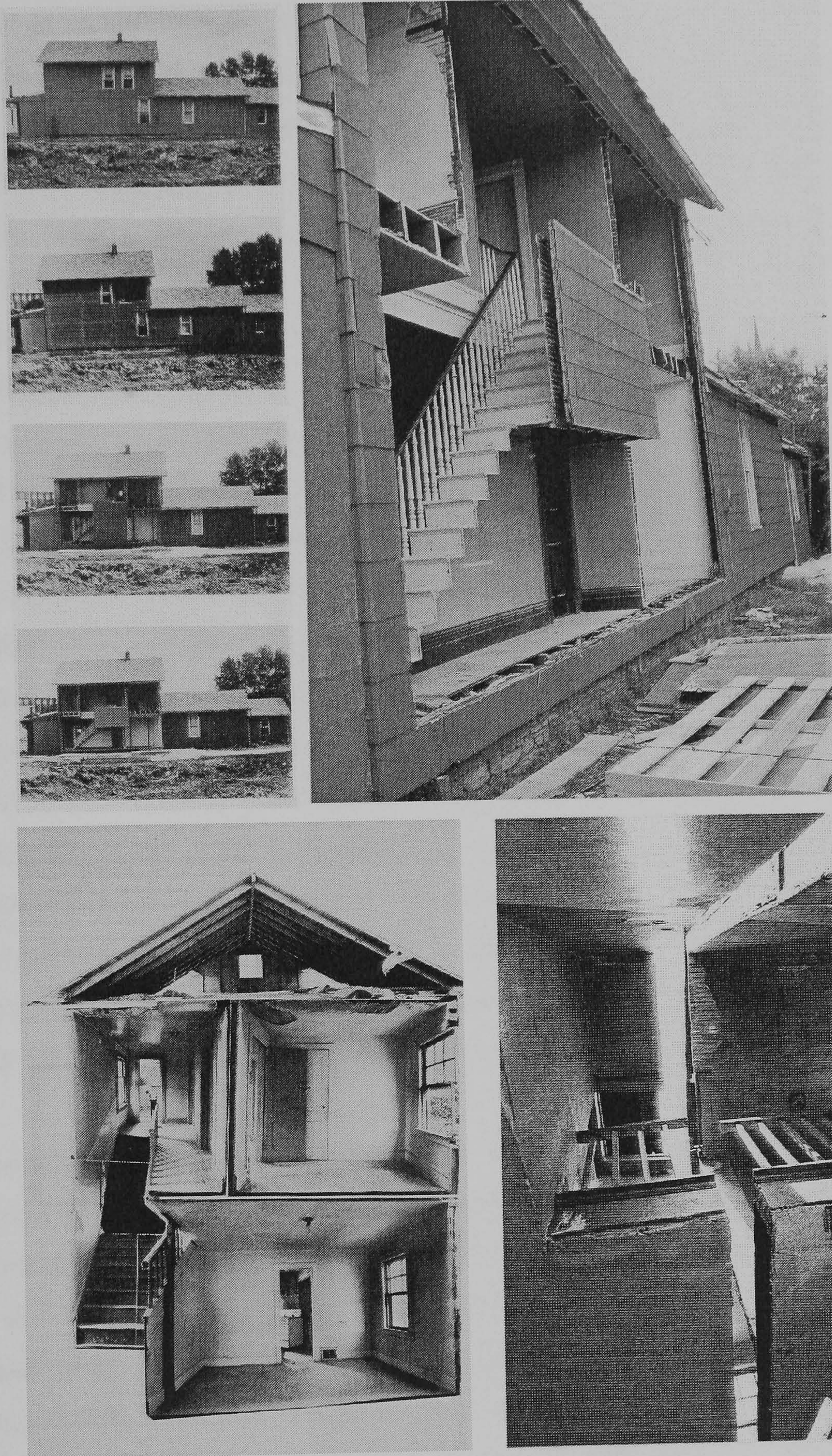


Fig. 3.1 Gordon Matta-Clark
(This page) *Bronx Floors: Four-Way Wall*, 1972 (top), and *A W-Hole House: Datum Cut*, 1973 (bottom). In addition to the photographs of these cuts, the latter also includes a schematic sketchbook drawing and one of four cut drawings Matta-Clark made for the exhibition of *Intraform* and *A W-Hole House: Datum Cut* at Galleriaforma in Genoa, 1973, underscoring the point that his cut drawings were not simply a precursor to a building dissection (Opposite page) *Bingo*, 1974; and *Splitting*, 1974. These, and *Datum Cut*, operate by deploying simple techniques of architectural design, in particular the orthographic drawing convention s out of the usual sequence, out of the protected domain of the architect and onto the building proper.



Matta-Clark's cutting illustrates his broad concern to address form and architectural object together; as a technique, it cut against not only the surface formalism of his Cornell education, nor modernism's close liaison with form, but with a far longer architectural tradition that sought to separate architectural form from built object. Although the white walls that characterize, even caricature, modern architecture mark the apogee of this separation by appearing to deny any kind

of material involvement in architecture, this really just marks the culmination of a process that emerged during the Renaissance, when architecture sought to separate itself from the manual trades of construction. Moreover, the idealised approach to architectural form that emerged to justify that separation was itself linked back to a much older difficulty concerning form that can be traced back within the Western tradition to pre-Socratic thought, though which is perhaps epitomized by Plato's Theory of Forms.

According to Plato's theory, forms were located in an ideal, metaphysical realm. Things in the world were imperfect imitations of these unchanging ideal forms; although the imperfect form of worldly things was available to the human bodily senses via their outward shape, the ideal form they referred to could only be approached by the intellect. Plato used the word *eidos* (*ειδος*) for both these situations, form-as-shape apprehended by the senses, and form-idea comprehended by the intellect. (To this already complex situation subsequent work in natural philosophy and aesthetics has only added more complications.) For Plato, how one proceeded beyond the surface of a thing and negotiated this complex relationship between surface form-shape and form-idea was crucial, and he believed that the method for this negotiation would guarantee the supremacy of his philosophy.¹⁰ The method he established for this process (the dialectic) was based on division and composition, and would permit the enlightened beings who practiced it to grasp truth and attain true being. He was adamant that truth would only give itself up to objective enquiry. To get below the superficial appearance of things required that they be divided up in a way that was informed by and respected the component forms that together made up each thing: '...we are enabled to divide into forms, following the objective articulation; we are not to attempt to hack off parts like a clumsy butcher...'¹¹

Sidestepping the broader applications that Plato sought for this method, there are two aspects of it that are important in the present context. Firstly, the method of division itself needed to be 'scientific' or 'objective:' secondly, the same method provided Plato with the model he recommended for 'skilful' or 'scientific practitioners' of artistic production. For example: 'Whenever... the maker of anything keeps his eye on the eternally unchanging and uses it as his pattern for the form and function of his product the result must be good...'¹² Now while this echoes accounts of Cornell Contextualism given by those such as Schumacher,¹³ Matta-Clark's technique clearly looked the other way, and got below the surface of form thanks to some very deliberate and clumsy butchery, and thus called the underlying assumptions and priority given to form-idea into question.

While his work was not anti-intellectual, it did operate by reintroducing, or re-evaluating, the balancing role played by form-as-shape, with all the material, worldly implications this brought. For example, *Circus*, which was generated by the inscription of three spheres (the most perfect of all the Platonic solids) into the existing rectilinear geometry of a Chicago townhouse, did not prevent either of these geometric forms being perceived. However, as Figure 2.2 demonstrates, what the cutting did bring about was a disruption in the usual legibility of surface form, the ease with which surface form could be perceived, and thus a disruption in the unquestioned assumption that experience should proceed from perceived experience of clear surface form to clear understanding that is linked somehow to an unchanging truth. In this example, the disruption is not caused by a contest between two strong geometric formal systems, but by the *role* of surface form being disrupted by the mutual interference between architectural form and cut surface. This was not just an interplay between a positive and negative spaces or forms, but between architecture as static object, and architecture as a dynamic, contingent process. To reiterate the broader claims made earlier for Matta-Clark's notion of discrete violation, this operated by setting up a process of creative questioning, rather than with the intention of providing a clear answer.

eidos, disegno, and formal clarity

The consequence, at least on the idealist account of form in either its traditional or modernist guises, of Matta-Clark's shifting 'objective' formal analyses out of the realm of the intellect by bringing them to bear so tangibly on things is that the forms attained through such operations would allegedly lose their intellectual clarity. That is to say, there is a possibility that Matta-Clark's cuts would prevent 'form' from escaping the mundane world of surface, and that they would remain incomprehensible. For Plato, this approach would be a turn away from unchanging, universal truth, though Matta-Clark was clearly aware of this and attentive to the repercussions of cutting in this way.

Indeed, several of his other cutting projects, such as those illustrated in Figure 3.1, literally enacted objective, intellectual approaches to dividing the form-shape of whole objects: *A W-Hole House: Datum Cut* inscribed a datum, conventionally established as an abstract horizontal plane against which the relative vertical position of points can be established; *Splitting* inscribed a vertical cut conventionally used in orthographic drawing to produce an architectural section; *Bingo*

took Colin Rowe's method of super-imposing a grid on the drawing of a building's plan or façade to demonstrate the 'regulating lines' of that building's formal composition.¹³

However, these projects, like *Circus*, are comprehensible; if they elude formal clarity, this is not because they have removed form in a dumb, anti-formalist gesture, but because they provided *more* form than idealism could register (and this would be high modernism's discomfort with Matta-Clark). Rather than their form eluding clarity, it refused to give itself up totally to the objective, scientific clarity sought by Idealism, thanks to the disrupted role of surface form brought about by the mutual interference between architectural form and cut surface.

The repercussions of the cutting are such that the modality of formal clarity must alter to respond to the variety of forms that these projects reveal within the same thing. Form no longer bears the absolute, eternal truth, but is now raised as a question. In the terms introduced during the discussion of discrete violation, it can be suggested that these projects include two types of clarity; in order to explore this suggestion, it becomes important to examine the possibility that form could overflow the intellect.

The notion of form has been taken up by art and architectural theory in a way that established a strong link between form and intellect. This link involves the complex definition of Platonic form or *eidos* (*ειδος*), which Bergson rehearses as follows: 'The word *ειδος*, which we translate here by "Idea," has, in fact, this threefold meaning. It denotes (1) the quality, (2) the form or essence, (3) the end or *design* (in the sense of intention) of the act being performed, that is to say, at bottom, the *design* (in the sense of drawing) of the act supposed accomplished.'¹⁴ Indeed, we can read Bergson's third clause in the definition of design given by renaissance writer Giorgio Vasari: Vasari discussed form as idea or design, or to maintain the original term, *disegno*:

Seeing that Design [*disegno*], the parent of our three arts, Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting, having its origin in the intellect, draws out from many single things a general judgement, it is like a form or "idea" of all the objects in nature, most marvelous in what it compasses... Seeing too that from this knowledge there arises a certain conception and judgement, so that there is formed in the mind that something which afterwards, when expressed by the hands, is called design [*disegno*], we may conclude that design [*disegno*] is not other than a visible expression and declaration of our inner conception and of that which others have imagined and given form to in their idea.'¹⁵

For Vasari, *disegno* was the foundation or *animating principle* of all the fine arts, and on first inspection his position seems to correlate with Plato's recommended procedure for the 'skilful practitioners' of art. However, the two positions do diverge around their accounts of what happens to the form-idea as it is realised.¹⁶ For Plato, the adoption of his dialectical method was no guarantee of good art: the artist needed a 'corresponding discernment' regarding what was most

appropriate for the audience concerned, and the success or otherwise of the art would be judged according to the affect it had on that audience. According to Lodge, '[t]he important question is, does the artist reproduce (as so many of them do) something hardly worth reproducing—such as the image of an un-ideal house— or does he (like the inspired artist of *Laws*..., or like the dialectician or philosopher-artist of *Republic*...) depict the ideal life in such a way as to stimulate us to enter upon it?'

¹⁷

Within Vasari's theory, there is no equivalent of this second stage, no acknowledgement of the artist's discernment, and the physical aspect of the artistic operation becomes a transparent term, ideally an unobstructed conduit between idea and receiving intellect.

...what design [*disegno*] needs, when it has derived from the judgement the mental image of anything, is that the hand, through the study and practice of many years, may be free and apt to draw and to express correctly... whatever nature has created. For when the intellect puts forth refined and judicious conceptions, the hand which has practiced design [*disegno*] for many years, exhibits the perfection and excellence of the arts as well as the knowledge of the artist.¹⁸

The consequences of this are manifold; it separated the task of the artist from the production of objects, perhaps most famously and decisively in architecture, where Vasari argued that '...because its designs [*disegno*] are composed only of lines, which so far as the architect is concerned, are nothing else than the beginning and the end of his art, ...all the rest... is *merely the work of carvers and masons*.'¹⁹ Matta-Clark often discussed the role that drawing played in his work, though his use of the term 'drawing' demands a more expansive definition than usual, in order to accommodate the 'simple cut or series of cuts [that] act as a powerful drawing device....'²⁰ Although not strictly interchangeable with the activity of cutting, his drawing was frequently the work of carver and mason: in an interview with Liza Bear, he discussed the similarities and differences between a cut seen as a graphic thing only, and a cut deployed as an analytical probe, and in this regard, his notion of drawing carries some of the intellectual operations included in Vasari's *disegno* (and Plato's *eidos*, if we recall Bergson's translation) while simultaneously exceeding the sphere of architectural activity that Vasari sanctioned.²¹ Indeed, Lee suggests that Matta-Clark deployed 'drawing' towards 'the undoing of stable form' and that his 'line, whether cut or drawn, might be read as literalizing the fundamental tenets of the earlier models [of art history, viz. Vasari and Wölfflin] only to reveal the relative "indeterminacy" of form that such theories implicitly suggest.'²²

Matta-Clark's drawing enacted something of a *reductio ad absurdum* on the principles of architectural form as these had developed since the Renaissance. By lodging itself firmly in the stuff of the world, his drawing deliberately attempted to carry over principles from the realm of the

intellect and maintain them in things: 'The idea is to superimpose drawing on structure.'²⁴ Drawing thus became a property of the thing itself, and not just a generating principle: '...it's as much the idea of a cut as the functional construct that interests me.'²⁵ What is challenged by this *reductio* is the alleged reduction or purification of form, by demonstrating that 'form' cannot be located, or that it must substantially overflow any single location in the material object, in the architectural *disegno*, or in the intellect. These drawings, such as the Platonic sphere of *Circus*, or the section drawing of *Splitting*, produce not one form but several, all of which can be understood, but none of which are definitive: they refer not to a static form-object, but return the form of the actual thing as a positive source of ambiguity.

Crudely put, the role of form has been to make things intelligible. As theories of form have shifted over centuries, the acknowledgement and role of ambiguity within such theories has generally been downplayed as access to a definitive, frequently eternal and unchanging, Ideal form was made more direct. As Bataille notes, 'for academic men to be content, the universe would have to take shape [*forme*]. All of philosophy has no other goal...'²⁶ Matta-Clark's projects disrupted such easy access to definitive form, and thereby challenged the way in which they could become intelligible. In this respect, he is closer to Plato than we might imagine: Plato would locate true-form within a cluster of 'madnesses' by singling out the 'right' madness of divine love.²⁷ Obviously, they move in different directions from this situation: Plato was concerned to avoid clumsy butchery in his analytic method and to avoid the wrong madnesses in his answer, whereas Matta-Clark clearly worked to reveal and maintain these madnesses in his projects. His target was the static form of modernism, though the consequences of his work are to alter the role that form plays in the establishment of meaning. Bergson's own re-examination of Platonic form [*ειδος*] is instructive in this regard:

...we might, and perhaps we ought to, translate *ειδος* by "view" or rather by "moment." For *ειδος* is the stable view taken of the instability of things: the *quality*, which is a moment of becoming; the *form*, which is a moment of evolution; the *essence*, which is the mean form above and below which the other forms are arranged as alterations of the mean; finally, the intention of *mental design* which presides over the action being accomplished, and which is nothing else, we said, than the *material design*, traced out and contemplated beforehand, of the action accomplished.'²⁸

Bergson's argument with Plato really concerns philosophical method. He disputes Plato's assertion that '...we are enabled to divide into forms, following the objective articulation...' by contending this method involves a sleight of hand that establishes speculative philosophical thought according to a model appropriate only to active thought. Bergson and Matta-Clark are

expressly or implicitly critical, respectively, of Plato's Theory of Forms, arguing that it moves in the wrong direction (towards the eternal and immobile) from an improper starting point.²⁸ Bergson's revised translation, which provides for an intelligibility *and* instability, offers to articulate the repercussions of cutting that Matta-Clark explored. Matta-Clark's work demonstrates an altered modality of form, where its role was both as an active destabilising *and* clarifying principle. For this to be other than contradictory requires that it be read through the notion of the creative question that was introduced in the previous chapter, which would propose that form enjoys two kinds of clarity.

The first clarity draws on the 'mean form' for a stable 'view' that permits intelligibility, but this is no longer the static form that acted as the defining principle of things (or the 'higher' of the co-principles Form and Matter, to which we'll return in a moment; indeed for Bergson, stable form is a provisional agreement between matter and intellect). The second, obscure clarity, draws on the alterations of this 'mean form', what I earlier referred to as 'ambiguity,' but which can now be more precisely approached as a formal clarity not available to the intellect, the domain of form that escapes reason but allows it to function.²⁹

While modernist architectural conceptions of form deny the latter, Matta-Clark's work demonstrates that it cannot be laundered completely from the architectural object. Thanks to the role of the observer, and the continuing presence of material, obscure clarity always promises to be available to those wishing to draw it out.

The relationship with matter³⁰

It should not be suggested that Matta-Clark or Bergson were attempting to reinstate Plato's theory of Forms, although the indetermination accompanying 'form' through the classical period and beyond finds certain echoes in their work. Any discussion of form can only go so far without the involvement of its Siamese twin, 'matter.' For Plato, matter and form were incomplete co-principles of things. Although this conception was juggled and disputed ever since, was famously challenged by Aristotle, and undertook a multitude of further developments in the legacy of Aristotelian, Alexandrian and neo-Platonic philosophies, matter did remain a key co-principle or essence, and a source of creative ambiguity,³¹ until it was rationalised by the new science of the seventeenth century.

Ernan McMullin has argued that '[t]he direction taken by physics in the seventeenth century called this assumption [granting matter an ontological role—sw] into radical question', and he stresses the impact of Descartes: 'After Aristotle himself, there is probably no more crucial figure in the entire story of the concept of matter than Descartes.'³² Cartesian physics, although colossally inadequate 'in the face of even the simplest natural phenomena,' was hugely attractive in the coherence and explanatory power that it promised: 'The concept of matter functioned...for Descartes as a means of dividing the universe into two sorts of substance, and consequently of dividing knowledge into two sorts of science.'³³ With this move, Descartes laundered matter of any radical indeterminacy: it needs must give up all its secrets to physical science. Matter fell within the domain of modern physics, which sought a calculable and predictive understanding. The consequences of this move that are relevant in the present context are that ultimately Newton replaced the concept of matter with "mass," and that natural science and philosophy parted company. Bergson laments this move; for him, it is a bad philosophy that leaves matter to science.³⁴

The demise of the role of matter in natural philosophy had a slightly earlier parallel in the demise of the status of material in Renaissance art, typified in Vasari's discussions of *disegno* that were introduced earlier. However significantly the meaning of 'form' has changed since the classical era, it has retained its importance within art and architectural theory. Clearly matter has suffered a different fate. Matta-Clark's oeuvre consistently refuted concepts of matter that held it as either a simple problem, something to be overcome (through the use of quantifiable scientific method), or used up on the way to establishing a more important, unchanging truth (form-idea). The various ways in which Matta-Clark's projects worked with matter reveal both the extent to which it can enjoy a continuing involvement in the operations of art and architecture, and the complexity of relationships it establishes as part of this process.

The self-explanatory *Photo-Fry* (1969)³⁵ marked a transition from Matta-Clark's earliest performances to more complex pieces where the production of an object involved a performative aspect. These works are difficult to classify, and we will have cause to explore the nature of these difficulties, and the role of performance in Matta-Clark's work and its reception, in Part II. For the time being, it is enough to explore how this work addressed materials in such a way as to challenge matter's assumed subordinate relationship to form. Some of his earliest works explored how changes could be both brought to and brought about by matter. Projects such as his various *Agar* pieces (1969-70) or *Incendiary Wafers* (1970), illustrated in Figure 3.2, experimented

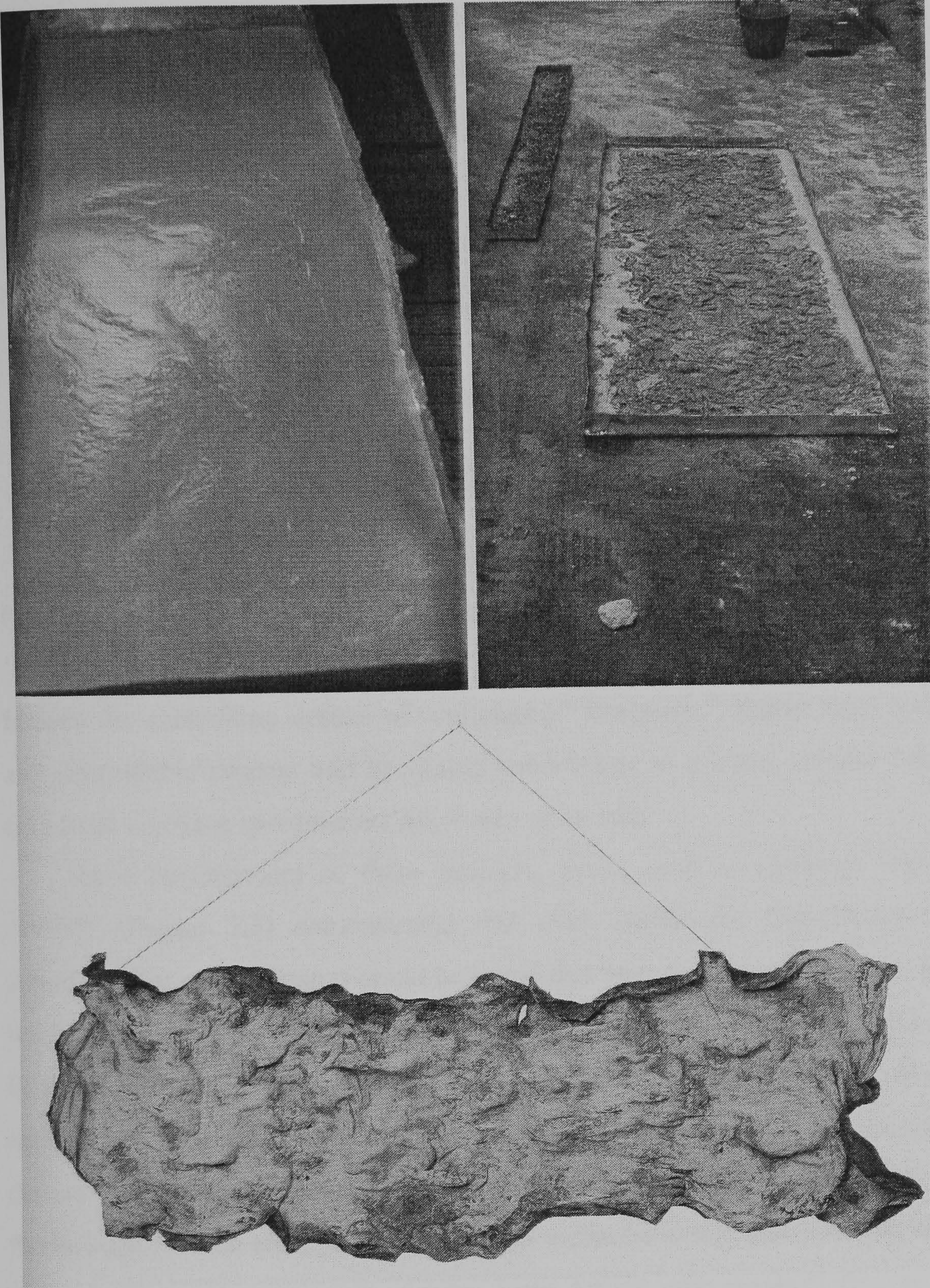


Fig. 3.2 Gordon Matta-Clark, *Agar pieces in process (top) and on display; Land of Milk and Honey (bottom), 1970-1*. This series of works involved 'batches of undefinable stuff...constantly brewing in large vessels or fermenting in large flat trays... Acting as a host for micro-organisms in the air...' A number of these pieces were displayed in an exhibition entitled *Museum* (Bykert Gallery, New York, June 1970), where his installation filled a wall he hung further stuff to mimic the typical arrangement of a nineteenth century picture gallery; in the space in front of the wall he hung further stuff from a chaotic lattice of vines; these moldering pieces were supplemented with a microscope and batches of contained organisms, provided to allow the visitor to make more detailed inspections of the life of the agar-matter.

directly with stuff like agar (a seaweed-based gelatine-like substance), glass, metals, minerals, food and non-foodstuffs, street debris and so on.³⁶ He mixed these ingredients up into random batches of indefinable stuff that were left to brew or ferment in large vessels and flat trays, producing strange and unpredictable concoctions with no regard for the stable good form expected of artworks.

These experiments with unusual materials, with matter, signalled what were to become central preoccupations. Although the unpredictable changes that occurred to the Agar pieces raised

issues of transmogrification that developed initially to address the effect of situation on matter, particularly on the modality of its classification, this consequently opened onto social and political concerns that can be read across his oeuvre more broadly.

Alongside the latent humour of these experiments and the obvious, even explosive, hilarity of works they spawned (one of the *Agar* pieces unintentionally blew up), there lay a more serious concern; in notes from around 1970, he railed against the violence done to natural materials by the 'American horde:'

The supremacy of the new modle proposed by suburbia ... dramatizes the exclusive domestication of nature...[I]t must sustain the battle against all spontaneous life forces so in one interpretation the docile, home life modle becomes a repository for war trophies ... Defoliation is allowed...because it is an allien chaotic form that is being destroyed...³⁷

Considering this battle of the cultivated against the naturally chaotic, Matta-Clark's work from this time involved both spheres of what he referred to as this 'dualistic conflict' between 'nature' and humans. The projects just mentioned demonstrated that matter stubbornly remained beyond the controlling desires of 'cultivating' humanity.³⁸ Rather than undergoing a predictable and controllable process and becoming subordinate to a static, regular form, matter was shown here to be enjoying *spontaneous life forces* of its own.

As a development of these projects, works such as *Garbage Wall* (1970-1) and *Jacks* (1971)³⁹ (Figure 3.3) demonstrated that even within the domestication carried out by the suburbanizing model, matter could be found that was *no longer* cultivated. By working with urban waste, these projects drew attention to this aporetic chaos within the cultivated sphere. As Dan Graham observed, 'Matta-Clark came to the position that work must function directly in the actual urban environment. "Nature" was an escape; political and cultural contradictions were not to be denied.'⁴⁰ The notion of escaping to nature picks up both Matta-Clark's criticisms of the 'new modle' (*sic.*) which attempts to domesticate a chaotic nature that it clearly situates beyond the city, and the contemporary practice of many Land Artists, who similarly fled the gallery and the city to produce work in 'natural' environments. For Matta-Clark, nature did not stop at the city boundary, and matter remained present in the formed materials of the cultivated realm; these projects effectively recycled this stuff and gave it form and status, and thereby challenged both the location of waste by celebrating its continuing location *within* this system, and the belief that waste was useless and formless.⁴¹

Matta-Clark's interest in the multi-faceted properties of matter can already be recognised to be at play in these small works; but at this time he was anticipating the possibility of working this



Fig. 3.3 Gordon Matta-Clark, *Jacks and Garbage Wall*, 1971
 Both projects actively demonstrated a life-cycle of the 'cultivating' process beyond the specific 'Cooking' work of 'time and the elements,' and thus challenged the claims these processes made for timeless supremacy. In contrast to the Agar pieces, they also clearly articulated the 'Selection' and 'Preparation' operations, by arranging easily recognisable debris into deliberate compositions.

interest through at a bigger scale, in order to exercise the political and cultural dimensions to which Graham referred.⁴² As his work became more complex, the various properties, or more awkwardly 'moments,' of matter revealed separately by the *Agar* pieces (demonstrating the insubordination of matter, its ongoing resistance to being formed and forced to assume position or

meaning within the cultivated sphere) or by the *Garbage Walls* (demonstrating the continued presence of de-formed and ‘meaningless’ matter within the cultivated sphere) were combined, reflecting his broader interest in the role of matter both within the process of artistic production and within the formed object, in contrast to the various idealist positions already mentioned.

In Matta-Clark’s sketch books from this time, he likens the production of art to the process of cooking, ‘WHERE THE FLAME, TIME AND THE ELEMENTS ARE ONE’S PALLETTE.’⁴³ But ‘COOKING’ was the last of three stages in this process; the preceding ones, ‘SELECTION’ and ‘PREPARATION,’ were equally important to him in the constitution of ‘A COMPLETE SET OF ...OPERATIONS.’ His building dissections illustrate how the acknowledgement of THE FLAME, TIME AND THE ELEMENTS moves the process beyond the control of the artist or architect. Although the three stages can be identified, such that SELECTION here relates to the search for a suitable site as a key ingredient for the work (which always proved tricky); PREPARATION to the planned alteration (which in the case of a project like *Circus*, proved contentious, as Matta-Clark had put forward several ‘dishes’ that the Museum refused to swallow, because they wanted a signature building cut); and COOKING to the actual realization of the piece, with all the contingent difficulties and unexpected encounters working on site produced.

The ‘dish’ resulting from this complete set of operations was influenced both by Matta-Clark’s own cutting, and by the repercussions of the cut. This exposed the secret, spontaneous and chaotic quality of alien matter involved in the object’s initial making, and which continued to exist behind the apparently uniform, cultured façades —walls, floors and ceilings— of static form expected by polite society. A balance is struck between the ‘alien’ and the familiar across the edges exposed around the cut; it is not a question as to which is out of place, rather it returns us to the earlier discussion by offering to expand the traditional notion of form, from form-object or form-idea to Bergson’s form-moment or form-view include the ‘obscure formal clarity’ of unstable form, brought about as a contingent agreement, a stable moment of understanding, in an ongoing, dynamic relationship between matter and intellect.

Matta-Clark held that the raw edges resulting from the process of cutting were much more informative than any manicured, cultivated edge or surface. Raw and cultivated were thus required to coexist in the work, though this was no easy co-existence; he emphasised the point: ‘...the edge is what I work through, try to preserve, spend this energy to complete, *and at the same time* what is read...’⁴⁴ Of particular importance here is the expenditure of energy required to complete the work, as it raises questions that did not bear on the art produced under the aegis of modernism or

disegno, concerning when making occurs and when (and where) it stops. Although Matta-Clark refers to his own process of working the material, it was also a demand that was passed on to the observer, who was challenged by the contradictory modalities of matter revealed by these projects.

This demand for the ongoing addition of energy, both from the artist and the observer, distinguishes Matta-Clark's take on matter from the broad treatment it had received since the widespread take-up of Cartesian science in the late seventeenth century. Instead of the attenuation of matter which this science achieved through its exclusively spatialised, quantifiable and located definition, Matta-Clark's work suggests that matter continues to carry temporal dimensions. He was entirely accepting of the fact that matter enjoyed an independent temporality, although he did not simply link this to decay, but to an active *life force*. Indeed, he stressed that he would avoid working in situations 'where I would be competing with factual disintegration.'⁴⁶ It was through this dualistic aspect of his work, which established matter alongside culturally specific material form, that the aspect of decay was itself put alongside a broader movement of ongoing renovation and change.

entropy and alchemy

Projects such as the building dissections, *Garbage Wall* and the *Agar* pieces drew attention to impact upon form brought about by the insubordinate temporal character of matter. Matter never fully submits to the process of making by taking up the 'correct' form and location, thus upsetting expectations that it remain inert once 'cultivated.' Cindy Nemser's contemporary review of Matta-Clark's *Museum* installation at the Bykert Gallery in New York (1970), which included a number of his *Agar* pieces, picks up the relation between the natural and the cultivated within the work: '...Matta[-Clark] leaves only remnants of actions or gestures that have already taken place, and when the natural processes he has set in motion slow down to an almost imperceptible state of activity, we have only his stratified accumulation to tell us what has gone on in the past.'⁴⁷

There was considerable contemporary interest in notions of slow-down and material decay, particular among the minimalist artists, with their well documented interest in entropy.⁴⁸ Although it has just been suggested that Matta-Clark's projects demand a reconsideration of the relationship between matter and form, his engagement with the role of matter demonstrated the need for ongoing involvement and an *investment* of energy to sustain his or any other 'work,' in contrast to Minimalism's valorisation of the dissipation of energy characterised by entropy.⁴⁹

Thus for Nemser to link *Museum's* remnata to a slowing-down and to chase them back into the past is only one possible reading. The title of her piece bills Matta-Clark as 'The Alchemist,' and this, in addition to the various alchemical references within the review, would more persuasively suggest that Alchemy's claims to speed up natural processes, and overcome natural time, might point in the opposite direction.⁵⁰ Nemser's temptation to describe Matta-Clark as an alchemist is understandable enough, nor was she alone; not only had he studied alchemy in some detail during the late 1960s, but his seemingly endless, obsessive production of agar pieces and glass ingots seem to fit the quest, reinforced by pictures of his studio from this time, which show it as more of a mad scientist's den than as an artist's place of work.⁵¹

In this context, the particular material situation of the building dissections itself warrants further attention, both to emphasise their distance from entropic Minimalism, and to clarify Matta-Clark's conception of 'nature.' It has just been suggested that his work was precisely not entropic, nor was alchemical interest in matter focused on transmutation of base metals first and foremost. If there is any mileage in making an alchemical comparison, it must be prefaced with a warning that Matta-Clark's attempts at alchemy were serious and ridiculous at the same time.

Aside from the emblematic alchemical result that appears to treat matter as proto-gold, Matta-Clark's interest in alchemy was directed towards the more ambiguous balance of relationships between human beings, the cultural sphere, and the natural world.⁵² Here again, we can encounter a paradoxical situation where alchemy would hold that 'Nature can Overcome Nature.' To read this as anything but a reductive contradiction required alchemists to understand the *solve et coagula* of matter, the possibility of a unending movement of matter from one state to another: although this was usually traced between an unconditioned state of matter as *materia prima* and formed objects, it can implicitly involve the cultural work done to establish matter in a certain form and position. On this account, to take natural or cultural forms as final and static would be erroneous. As Titus Burckhardt writes in *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, which Matta-Clark had in his library: 'In the world of forms Nature's 'mode of operation' consists of a continuous rhythm of 'dissolutions' and 'coagulations'.⁵³ To this extent Matta-Clark's work enacts an alchemical position, expending energy to sustain this rhythm.

But there is a more difficult issue that arises out of this situation, one that has led 'logically' to the *supremacy of the new model which dramatizes the exclusive domestication of nature*, and which Matta-Clark's entire oeuvre opposed. As Eliade observes, 'On the plane of cultural history, it is... possible to say that the alchemists, in their desire to supersede Time, anticipated what is in

fact the essence of the ideology of the modern world.’⁵³ The alchemical acknowledgement of *solve et coagula* of matter was qualified by a concomitant belief in the potential of nature not simply to change but, given favourable circumstances, to develop or mature, and it was this aspect of maturation that the alchemists sought to control. Vincent of Beauvais, writing in the fourteenth century, hints at this goal: ‘*These operations, which Nature achieves on minerals, alchemists set themselves to reproduce: that is the very substance of their art.*’⁵⁴ Alchemical operations attempted to replicate, and crucially to speed up, the developments of nature from geological to experiential time in order to precipitate this natural potential to evolve towards perfection.

In both its alchemical and modern guises, this ideology secularised nature, reduced it—and matter—to something that would be quantitatively accountable. In contrast, Matta-Clark’s projects demonstrated the *solve et coagula* of matter, revealed and maintained its complexity, and offered this to the observer as a situation where they could assume a role in holding together cultured material and natural, raw matter. Rather than adopting an alchemical temporality (subsuming natural time as matter falls under human control), and rather than adopting an entropic position (eliminating ‘[t]ime as decay or biological evolution’⁵⁵ as matter slid towards total homogenisation), Matta-Clark’s treatment of matter was clearly resistant to these attempts at laundering its ongoing and simultaneous involvement in a number of potentially conflicting temporal processes. Bergson similarly believed that full human involvement in the world should be taken as a *resistance*: he argued that the creative evolution of human life marks an attempt to *retard* the natural course of material change, in contrast to alchemical speed up (or even entropic homogenisation).⁵⁶ He expands on the consequences of this position in such a way as to return us, shortly, to the question of form:

...if the divisibility of matter is entirely relative to our action thereon, that is to say, to our faculty of modifying its aspect, if it belongs not to matter itself but to the space which we throw beneath this matter in order to bring it within our grasp, then the difficulty [reconciling matter and memory in perception—SW] disappears.⁵⁷

The broader consequences of this stance need to be examined in more detail in the following chapters; in this immediate context, it clearly contests the ‘matter’ that we have come to take for granted thanks to the success of Newtonian physics in explaining everyday phenomena, by going against the latter’s repeatable predictability. Instead, it reinvigorates matter as a term that responds to a question: the potency of matter, or its ‘creative’ function, approaches something of the role it had assumed in classical thought.⁵⁸ However, both Matta-Clark and Bergson differ substantially from classical positions in that their projects locate resistance in human agency rather than in

things themselves. This resistance is played out in the relationship between human beings and the world, where human action can divide up matter without following Plato's 'objective articulations' of nature.

Form, Matter, and the Energy of Clumsy Butchery

REARRANGING HOW THE BUILDING MUST WORK TO HOLD ITSELF TOGETHER⁵⁹

Matta-Clark's comment here could be broadened out to cover what he and Bergson were attempting; a rearrangement of how human contact with the world must work to hold itself together. Their motivation was to make this contact more human, and in so doing they rearranged the roles of form and matter, both as separate concepts and together as co-principles of things. Instead of focusing on either form or matter, their projects concentrated more on the relations that could be brought about by the act of division itself. Bergson gently mocked Plato's model of the good philosopher, likening him to a skilful cook, carving an animal without breaking its bones.⁶⁰ He implicitly offered an alternative model based on the clumsy butcher, where form and matter would be treated separately, freeing up matter from its age-old subservience to form. Gordon Matta-Clark's projects, such as those discussed during this chapter, enact this model very closely; his cutting operations usher in a notion of form as an active destabilising *and* a clarifying principle, while matter is re-established as a question by being simultaneously offered to the observer in 'natural' and cultivated states.

In both situations, form and matter no longer fall exclusively within the domain of reason. Central to moments when reason is overshot is the expectation that energy is expended, either by the artist or by the observer. When the creative question was introduced earlier, it was suggested that it offered a second type of clarity, over and above that resulting from scientific questioning, and that this second clarity cost an effort, was hard to sustain, and involved the imagination. In the present context it can be argued that the imagination, inscribed within the operation of the creative question, works alongside reason to sustain contact with the world. Deleuze emphasises this position but puts it more strongly: '...there are no physical objects or objects of repetition except in the world. The world as such is essentially the Unique. It is a fiction of the imagination—never an object of the understanding.'⁶¹

To suggest that the world is, at least in part, an object of our imagination must not be taken as a denial that it exists, but it does shake accepted notions of our relationship with it. As such, the

world can only be approached, never fully possessed. In terms of the balance Matta-Clark's projects strike with matter and form, the work demanded of the imagination is important, for it must provide the visitor or observer with the means to engage the world and sustain reason: the imagination must negotiate between matter-as-stuff and cultivated matter, and between stable-form and its variations. That this is a balance is worth repeating: it does not pit the cultivated world against the natural, but sets them in relief against each other. As Matta-Clark repeatedly observed, discrete violations required that something of the initial situation be maintained in order to provide a degree of familiarity for the observer. Indeed, for Deleuze, contact with the world needs to maintain both nature and human nature: '...empiricism will not be correctly defined except by means of a dualism.'⁶³

For Matta-Clark and Bergson, such a dualism both stuck a balance between empiricism and idealism, matter and form, and it attempted to open up an area prior to these. However much their projects can be shown to share such concerns, their work on this mode of contact with the world led them in different directions: for Bergson, his interest was in renovating speculative thought, and his work on active thought was only the beginning of this project. Matta-Clark's interest, in contrast, was in how this contact could affect the production of things.

IF NEEDED WE WORK TO DISPROVE THE COMMON BELIEF THAT ALL STARTS WITH THE PLAN.
THERE ARE FORMS WITHOUT PLANS—DYNAMIC ORDERS AND DISORDERS⁶⁴

Matta-Clark's *Anarchitectural* aphorism brings us back to his engagement with the forms of modernism; FORMS WITHOUT PLANS, or more precisely now forms without *disegno*, challenge the pure, static forms of modernism. The role of form in his projects does not simply replace these, but qualifies 'static' as momentarily stable rather than as presuming stasis. The dynamic co-existence of ORDERS AND DISORDERS is a result of the creative question's two types of clarity, which acknowledge that it is only by having a form that something can assume a position within a system of meaning, while also demonstrating that such systems are contingent rather than universal, and that they are sustained by the existence of disorder that is available to the mind but which exceeds the intelligence.

For Matta-Clark, form is an activity, an operation, in contrast to modernism's assumption that form is a static principle of a thing. FORMS WITHOUT PLANS upset the priority of static form, both in the sense that this was *temporally* prior to a thing's existence and that it was the location from which the *authority* of form and meaning were issued, and to which judgement would have to be referred. Although this proposal raises many issues that are beyond the scope of this thesis,

the particular questions it prompts regarding creative method and judgement need to be taken up: they are explicitly addressed in Chapters 6 and 7, although their presence runs throughout the text. Additionally, forms without *disegno* challenge theories of artistic production that treat matter as a 'transparent' medium by attempting to establish artistic form as an unobstructed conduit that an observer can traverse back to the mind of the artist (either artist-genius, or artist as a relay to a divine creator). As Matta-Clark's approach demonstrates, the activity of creative questioning can cut through matter without respecting nature's forms: this energetic, clumsy butchery calls for an artistic production that counters modernism's subordination of matter, while also supplementing the direction of its address by passing this on to the observer.

Broadening the remit of form in these directions can prevent it from being deployed solely by 'skilful practitioners,' and this consequently requires a fuller account of the relationships involved in artistic production and reception that were not (explicitly) part of the modernist formulation. The following chapter will approach this discussion tangentially by exploring the temporal and spatial dimensions that were involved in Matta-Clark's operations.

¹ Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, *op.cit.*, #1.

² *ibid.*, #4. Earlier in the interview, Wall asked Matta-Clark whether he'd cut a building by Le Corbusier, to which he replies 'No, I don't see why that would be desirable... It's always a disadvantage to be too reactive. It's like anger.' *ibid.*, #3.

³ According to Greenberg's definition of modernism, the particulars of painting were flat surface, shape of support, and properties of pigment, though 'flatness alone was unique and exclusive to that art' Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting,' [1961, 1965], in Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (eds.), *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, Paul Chapman in association with the Open University, London, 1988, p.6.

Henri Lefebvre criticises pure surface, especially in architecture; see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, [1974], tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford UK & Cambridge MA, 1991, Ch.2, §XII.

⁴ For an overview of the cultural changes that occurred around the conception and perception of 'form,' see Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1983, Ch.7. Adrian Forty concludes his 'Form' entry by suggesting that 'form' has become dormant as a term within architectural discourse, but that to ask questions about the term and the purposes it serves would perhaps force it to 'lose some of its seeming naturalness and neutrality.' Forty, *Words and Buildings*, *op.cit.*, p.172.

⁵ '... Asher and Nauman have done strictly sculptural impingements on architecture: that is, the space as a whole is never altered to its roots... they always dealt with aspects of interior space, but I don't think they penetrated the surface, which would seem to be the logical next step. Of course, this kind of treatment has been given to canvas, to conventional art materials.' Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Bear, 'Splitting,' *op.cit.*, pp.34-7. Lucio Fontana was producing cut canvases during the 1940s. Anthony Vidler discusses the complexity of what Matta-Clark might have meant by surface formalism by exploring the context of Colin Rowe's lectures that Matta-Clark attended at Cornell: see Vidler, 'Architecture-to-Be,' *op.cit.*, pp.68-9.

⁶ Gordon Matta-Clark, EGMC, uncatalogued *Anarchitecture* Notecard, c.1972.

- 7 Gordon Matta-Clark, interviewed by Bear, 'Splitting,' *op.cit.* Matta-Clark's cutting occurred across almost all his œuvre (even prior to his own career as an artist if we consider his involvement with Dennis Oppenheim's *Beebe Lake Ice Cut*, part of the 'Earth Art' exhibition at Cornell early in 1969).
- 8 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript, op.cit.*, #6, which appears in somewhat edited form in the published version; see Donald Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' in *Arts Magazine*, 50, 9 (May 1976), p.77.
- 9 In another instance, Matta-Clark actually described the spatial complexity experienced within a dissected building as a surface: '...when you were in [*Conical Intersect*] as you move from floor to floor that had been cut out, your normal sense of gravity was subverted by the experience. In fact, when you got to the top floor and you looked down through an elliptical section in the floor that was cut out, you would look down through the fragments of a normal apartment space, but I had never seen anything like it. It looked like – almost as though it were a pool. That is, it has a reflective quality to it and a surface – but the surface was just the accumulation of images of the spaces below it.' Gordon Matta-Clark interviewed by Liza Béar, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Dilemmas* WBAI-FM (NY) March 1976, in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.177.
- 10 On *The Method of Dialectic*: 'Socrates' returns to 'a pair of procedures,' namely Collection and Division, and sets out to 'seize their significance in a scientific fashion.' Plato, *Phædrus* 265D. In *Republic* VI and VII, Plato suggests that the dialectical method can lead to the cognition of the Form of the Good conceived of as the source of all being and all knowledge,' although the method in *Phædrus* and later dialogues 'is directed to something less tremendous...there is not now any notion of deriving all the truths of philosophy and science from a single first principle...[but rather] a more piecemeal approach to knowledge.' R. Hackforth's commentary to *Phædrus* XXI, in his translation of the same, Cambridge University Press, 1952.
- 11 Plato, *Phædrus*, 265E. Interestingly, the speech continues: 'The single general form which they postulated was irrationality; next, on the analogy of a single natural body with its pairs of like-named members, right arm or leg, as we say and left, they conceived of madness as a single objective form existing in human beings: wherefore the first speech divided off a part of the left, and continued to make divisions, never desisting until it discovered one particular part bearing the name of 'sinister' love, on which it very properly poured its abuse. The other speech conducted us to the forms of madness which lay on the right-hand side, and upon discovering a type of love that shared its name with the other but was divine, displayed it to our view and extolled it as the source of the greatest good that can befall us.' *Phædrus* 266. The inscription of madness in Plato's method is often overlooked, or more deliberately written out, particularly by neo-platonic thought that prepared the ground for the aspects of modernism under examination here: we will return to the issue in later chapters.
- 12 *Timæus*, 28. (§3: Prelude). Reiterating what makes speech-writing (and other related activities) an art, Plato states that to be a skillful practitioner '...you must know the truth about the subject that you speak or write about: that is to say, you must be able to isolate it in definition, and having so defined it you must next understand how to divide it into kinds, until you reach the limit of division; secondly, you must have a corresponding discernment of the nature of the soul, discover the type of speech appropriate to each nature, and order and arrange your discourse accordingly... All this must be done if you are to become competent, within human limits, as a scientific practitioner of speech, whether you propose to expound or persuade.' *Phædrus*, 277 B,C.
- 13 Tom Schumacher, one of Rowe's students, notes: 'It is precisely the ways in which idealized forms can be adjusted to a context or used as "collage" that contextualism seeks to explain, and it is the systems of geometric organization which can be abstracted from any given context that contextualism seeks to divine as design tools.' Thomas Schumacher, 'Contextualism: Urban Ideals + Deformations,' in *Casabella*, #359/60, 1971, p.84. Although this offered an alternative to the rational and systematic approach of the International Style, promoting close attention to the historical aspects of city planning, Schumacher's conclusion highlights the (self-imposed) price of this design process when he warns that it 'can function only if the designer is willing to recognise the ultimate flexibility of any programme...' For Rowe's own account, see for example Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1978. For a brief overview, see Grahame Shane, *Contextualism*, in *AD* vol.46, November 1976, pp.676-679.
- 14 On the transposition of Rowe's 'signature motif' (nine-square) from analysis onto the façade of the building, see Thomas Crow, 'Survey,' in Corinne Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, Phaidon, 2003 *op.cit.*, p.86, 92.) Although these building dissections can be grouped together because of this similarity in the approach used to generate the cut, this should not be taken to distinguish them from Matta-Clark's broader explorations of cutting. Buildings available for cutting were in short supply, as he intimated in a letter sent from Paris to Jerald 'Jerry' Ordovery, 4th December 1975, where he states that 'If anything emerges to cut up, I'll go

anywhere anytime.' EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942-78*. Briony Fer has discussed Matta-Clark's own description of his cuts as 'Spatial Drawing;' see Fer, 'Networks,' *op.cit.*

15 Bergson, *Creative Evolution, op.cit.*, p.332.

16 Giorgio Vasari, *On Technique: Being the Introduction to the Three Arts of Design, Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting, Prefixed to the Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, [1550, second edition 1568, when §§74-5 were added], tr. Louisa S. Macle hose [1907], Dover Publications, New York 1960, §74 'The Nature and Materials of Design or Drawing.'

Vasari is taken here to speak more broadly for the situation during the Renaissance; there is a direct parallel between Vasari's *disegno* and Alberti's *lineaments*, for example. Alberti: 'It is quite possible to project whole forms in the mind without any recourse to the material, by designating and determining a fixed orientation and conjunction for the various lines and angles. Since that is the case, let lineaments be the precise and correct outline, conceived in the mind, made up of lines and angles, and perfected in the learned intellect and imagination.' Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, tr. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor, MIT Press, 1988, p.7. Indeed, Rykwert makes this connection in the glossary (p.423): '*lineamenta* has been translated variously as *disegni* (Bartoli), meaning drawings and designs; *Risse* (Theuer); 'form' (Panofsky, *Idea*); and by Krautheimer as 'definitions,' 'plan,' and 'schematic outlines.'

17 They also differ regarding role of the artist, their status in society, and the location of (artistic) authority. Although Vasari agreed that the creative act involves the reproduction of an Idea, a perfect form-*disegno* that exists in the artist's mind, and that a corollary of *disegno* was nature (*natura*), again linked to Platonic conceptions of art imitating nature (or more precisely the correct version of nature that was available to the intellect rather than the senses), where the *authority* for this process was established is ambiguous in Vasari: God, nature or genius. 'Design...is the foundation of both these arts [sculpture and painting], or rather the animating principle of all creative processes; and surely design existed in absolute perfection before the Creation...' Vasari, *Preface to the Lives*, tr. George Bull, Penguin Books, 1965, p.25.

18 Rupert C. Lodge, *Plato's Theory of Art*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1953, n.53, pp.73-4. Lodge suggests that Plato's position depends upon distinguishing four stages or levels of artistic insight, from the lowest *eikasi*, then *pistisa*, *dianoia*, to the highest philosopher-artist. See also p.128 on the arts and the 'idea of the good.'

19 Vasari, *On Technique, op.cit.*, §74 *The Nature and Materials of Design or Drawing*.

20 Vasari, *On Technique, op.cit.*, §75 *Use of Design (or Drawing) [disegno] in the Various Arts*, emphasis added. Vasari insists that '[a]ll these [kinds of *disegno*], whether we call them profiles or otherwise, are as useful to architecture and sculpture as to painting.' There is a contrast between Plato's *eidos* and that *disegno-eidos* Vasari describes: however dismissive of the mundane world, Plato acknowledged the importance of art's role as a mediator between it and the ideal world of Forms. In contrast, Vasari's forms lodge a direct appeal to other intellects. This is one instance of of a general laundering of the complexity that can be found in Plato's schema.

21 Gordon Matta-Clark. The full comment is as follows: 'A simple cut or series of cuts, act as a powerful drawing device able to redefine spatial situations and structural components. What is invisible at play behind a wall or floor, once exposed, becomes an active participant in a spatial drawing of the building's inner life.' #5, cited in Bex (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.8ff. On this more expansive notion of drawing 'not reserved for making marks on paper,' see Fer, 'Networks,' *op.cit.*

22 Gordon Matta-Clark, in Bear, 'Splitting,' *op.cit.*, p.35.

23 Pamela M. Lee, *Drawing In Between, op.cit.*, p.28, 29.

24 Gordon Matta-Clark, sketchbook, EGMC, 1975.

25 Gordon Matta-Clark, in Bear, 'Splitting,' *op.cit.*, p.35.

26 Georges Bataille, 'Formless,' in Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, tr. Allan Stoekl, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985, p.31 (translation modified).

27 see *Phædrus* 266. Plato's treatment of form, which allowed some ambiguity within these forms of madnesses and love, and the broad classical treatment of matter (which was posed as a question), both received similar treatment at the hands of post-Cartesian philosophy and science, which inexorably removed the possibilities of ambiguity from both these classical principles.

28 Bergson, *Creative Evolution, op.cit.*, p.332. Original emphases.

29 Bergson is explicitly critical of classical philosophy on this count: '...at the base of ancient philosophy lies necessarily this postulate: that there is more in the motionless than in the moving, and that we pass from immutability to becoming by way of diminution or attenuation.' *ibid.*, p.334.

- 30 This domain of form would approach Bataille's notion of *Informe* or Formless, an active principle that operates to prevent the domination of scientific or 'mathematical' systems of form. For a fuller discussion of Bataille's *Informe* in the context of architectural production, see Walker, 'Animate Form,' *op.cit.*
- 31 For discussions of his relationship with Matta, his father, there are three pointers: Jane Crawford, 'Crossover references in the Work of Roberto Matta and Gordon Matta-Clark,' conference address, 'Matta in America,' Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, October 2002, partly reproduced in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, pp.214-217; Pamela M. Lee's first chapter, 'The First Place' in particular 'Homeliness and Absenteeism: Matta's Place for Matta-Clark,' in Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed*, *op.cit.*, pp.3-11; and the catalogue to the 2006 exhibition at the San Diego Museum of Art on the subject of this relationship: Betti-Sue Hertz (ed.), *Transmission: The Art of Matta and Gordon Matta-Clark*, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, 2006.
- 32 Eslick stresses that 'Plato's matter...combines both the roles of existential actuation and differentiation, and achieves the former by means of the latter. The "creative" function of matter is its negation of essential reality.' Leonard J. Eslick 'The Material Substrate in Plato,' in Ernan McMullin (ed.), *The Concept of Matter in Greek and Mediaeval Philosophy*, University of Notre-Dame Press, Notre-Dame, Indiana, 1963, p.53.
- 33 Ernan McMullin (ed.), *The Concept of Matter in Modern Philosophy*, University of Notre-Dame Press, Notre-Dame, Indiana, [1963] 1978, p.12, p.14.
- 34 *ibid.*, p.17.
- 35 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, *op.cit.*, p.205ff.
- 36 Matta-Clark's *Photo-Fry* was part of a group exhibition *Documentations* at the John Gibson gallery in New York, where he spent time cooking up photographs of a christmas tree. John Gibson recalled 'it smelled terrible. After he finished his *Photo-Fry*, he just left it there. I stayed open all summer with all that in place and the awful smell.' Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.23.
- 37 A longer list is given in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.368: 'yeast, sugar, corn oil, dextrose, tryptone agar, sperm oil, NaCl, Pet concentrated milk, V-8, cranberry juice, Pet chocolate flavoured Yoohoo, chicken broth, metal ingredients (gold leaf, local vines, galvanized pans, screw hooks, thumb tacks, Black Magic Plastic Steel) and known strains (*Mucor Racemosus*, *Rhizopus Apophysis*, *Aspergillus Niger*, *Penicillium Notatum*, *Streptomyces Griseur*). First appeared in *Avalanche*, Fall 1970.
- 38 Gordon Matta-Clark, 'Cannibalism, Suburbia and Defoliation,' Sketchbook EGMC, #828, c.1969-71, pp.11-12.
- 39 According to Gloria Moure, Matta-Clark's work 'redefined landscape as an interactive idea in which the social, historical, ideological and natural cohabit together, a landscape in which the artist is included as an essential ingredient. This shifting landscape in which the relationship between nature and artifice becomes tense, in which the dialectic of power, language and convention become matter and form, and collective history is stratified and conglomerated, can only be the urban landscape... Matta-Clark shows us that it is in the urban landscape that the old artistic ideal of fusing matter, form, perception and idea without resorting to reductionisms is possible.' Moure, 'Short Term Eternity,' *op.cit.*, pp.10-11.
- 40 According to Jane Crawford, Matta-Clark realised four garbage walls, including those produced as part of *Homesteading: An Exercise in Curbside Survival* (1970) and *Fire Boy* (1971). Gordon Matta-Clark published *Jacks*, in *Avalanche*, No.3, Autumn 1971, pp.24-9.
- 41 Dan Graham, *Gordon Matta-Clark*, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.378. James Wines makes a similar point: 'The most important aspect of Matta-Clark's work was his constant awareness of narrative in architecture and the need for a social/political conscience when working in the public domain. As Derrida has pointed out, there is no purpose in Deconstruction's reading unless the results inform and enhance our knowledge of the human condition.' James Wines, 'The Slippery Floor,' in Andreas Papadykos, Catherine Cooke & Andrew Benjamin (eds.) *Deconstruction AD Omnibus Volume*, Architectural Design, London, 1989, [originally published in *Stroll* magazine, June 1988, pp.15-23], pp.137-8.
- 42 Matta-Clark had a broader interest in waste, demonstrated in his notebooks, his film '*Fresh Kill*' (1972) situated at the land-fill site on the periphery of New York City, and '*Reality Properties: Fake Estates*,' which operated with a more culturally and politically determined 'waste' within the real estate system. For a discussion of the latter, see Stephen Walker, 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Drawing on Architecture,' in *Grey Room*, 18, (Winter 2005).
- 43 During 1971, he approached the New York Department of Real Estate concerning 'the many condemned buildings in the city that are awaiting demolition,' proposing 'to put these buildings to use during this waiting period.' He reiterated his interest in waste areas, but finished off emphasising the possible didactic element of such work: '...My interests lie in several areas. As an artist I make sculpture using the natural by-products of

the land and people. I am interested in turning waste areas such as blocks of rubble, empty lots, dumps, etc., into beautiful and useful areas... This [has] not only aroused the interest of the artists in learning of the abandoned areas of New York but was also very beneficial to [those] neighborhood[s]. The children were fascinated by the works, by the people, and by the ideas and were making all kinds of comments referring to the kinds of works they might like to do.' Matta-Clark, Letter to Harlod Stern (Assistant Commissioner, Department of Real Estate, NY), EGMC, *Letters 1970-74*, July 10th, 1971.

44 Gordon Matta-Clark, 'RECIPIES,' Sketchbook, EGMC, #828, c.1969-71, p.7. On the adjacent page of his sketchbook he noted down tips for working with Agar gleaned from an article in *The Better Homes and Gardens* magazine.

45 Matta-Clark, cited in Judith Russi Kirshner, 'Non-Uments,' in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.391, my emphasis. Thomas Crow suggested an approach to Matta-Clark's work via a parallel with the mythographic exercises of Claude Levi-Strauss, exemplified in his *The Raw and the Cooked*, would be able to trace a consistency through his work without laundering it of these complex contradictions. Thomas Crow, address to the *San Fransisco Art Institute*, 'The Splitting Series of Gordon Matta-Clark,' given on 27th November 2001: see also Crow, 'Survey,' *op.cit.*

46 Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' *op.cit.*, p.77.

47 Cindy Nemser, "The Alchemist and the Phenomenologist," *Art in America* March/April 1971, p.102. (The phenomenologist of the title refers to another artist, Alan Sonfist.) Matta-Clark added his mother's surname to his own during 1971, in order to distinguish himself from his father.

48 Interestingly, Robert Smithson suggested that the 'New Monuments' of minimalism cause 'us' to forget the future rather than remember the past by enacting a 'destruction of classical time and space...based on an entirely new notion of the structure of matter.' Smithson, *Entropy and the New Monuments*, [Artforum, June 1966], in Robert Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996, p.11. By this entirely new notion he means entropy. Interestingly with regard to the foregoing discussion of Matta-Clark's revelation of the strata hidden behind uniform surfaces, he describes the 'concealed surfaces' in Judd's work as 'hideouts for time.' Although Smithson's interest in entropy is well known, his own work did not extend to simply repeating it. Similarly, his interest in the abstractions of Minimalism were not uncritical, and he expressed his concern regarding the atemporality of abstraction to Alison Sky: 'Pure science, like pure art tends to view abstraction as independent of nature, there's no accounting for change or the temporality of the mundane world. *Abstraction rules in a void, pretending to be free of time.*' *Entropy Made Visible* (1973) in Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, *op.cit.*, p.302. Emphasis in the original.

49 Gloria Moure makes a similar general point about Matta-Clark's work, arguing that 'he makes shapes out of the shapeless, from the residue generated by entropy with the purpose of channeling the loss of energy.' Moure, 'Short Term Eternity,' *op.cit.*, p.15.

51 Lee is dismissive of alchemical explanations: 'Frequently, [Matta-Clark's] gestures were described as relating to the processes of alchemy; and the gold leaf involved in *Photo-Fry* confirms that model on a superficial level. But the particularly disintegrative character of the early work shares more with an entropic tendency to fall apart than an alchemical transmutation of base metals into gold...' Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed*, *op.cit.*, p.43. For a more sympathetic and thorough discussion of Matta-Clark and alchemy, see Tina Kukielski, 'In the Spirit of the Vegetable: The Early Work of Gordon Matta-Clark [1969-71],' in Elisabeth Sussman (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure*, Whitney Museum of American Art with Yale University Press, New York, 2007, although her reading is structured around a similarity between alchemical motifs and Matta-Clark's use of fire, trees, and so on. See also Stephen Walker, 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Matter, Materiality, Entropy, Alchemy,' in Katie Lloyd-Thomas (ed.), *Material Matters: Architecture and Material Practice*, Routledge, London, 2007.

52 This approach comes through in several interviews. For example, he told Judith Russi-Kirshner that 'what I would love to do is to actually...extend the building above—I mean extend it below as much as above, like an alchemical motif where there is that definite dichotomy— or balance between the — above and below. ... Somehow I think that a building could be— in addition to a micro-archaeology— a kind of micro-evolution, or some kind of wholly internalised expression of a total genetic or evolutionary development.' in Judith Russi Kirshner, 'Non-Uments,' in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.391. Jane Crawford has suggested that Matta-Clark's 'living archaeology' represented for him another manifestation of alchemical transmutation, which further emphasises the complexity of the temporal dimensions of his works' reception through the expansive 'fine memory device.' Jane Crawford, in correspondence with the author, 22nd August 2002.

- 53 Titus Burckhardt, *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, [1960], tr. William Stoddart, Stuart & Watkins, London, 1967 *op.cit.*, p.123. This was in Matta-Clark's library, along with other well known texts on Alchemy such as Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible* and Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy*.
- 54 Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy*, [1956], tr. Stephen Corrin, Chicago University Press, 1978, p.173.
- 55 Vincent of Beauvais, cited in Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, *The Architecture of Matter*, Hutchinson, London, 1962, *op.cit.*, p.125. Toulmin and Goodfield trace the temporal underpinnings of alchemy: 'The first starting point for Alchemical theory was Aristotle's *principle of development*: the conception that all material things, unless interfered with, will naturally change and develop—turning, when properly fed and nurtured, from an immature to a ripe or adult form. Rather than treating elementary matter as naturally inert or static, they thought of all things equally in a fundamentally *physiological* way. Every material part of the world was developing— animal, vegetable and mineral, too— while the cosmos in its entirety was like a gigantic organism in course of perfecting itself.' see their chapter on Alchemy, 'The Redemption of Matter,' in *ibid.*, Ch.6; here p.124.
- 56 Robert Smithson argued that many Minimalist works celebrated entropy by eliminating time in this way; Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, *op.cit.*, p.11.
- 57 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, *op.cit.*, p.259ff. Rorty argues that Bergson's 'insistence that taking time seriously—the substitution of process for stasis as the inclusive category—permits one to demolish Aristotelian substances in the *right* way, whereas everyone else...has been demolishing them in the *wrong* way.' Richard Rorty, *Matter and Event*, in McMullin (ed.), *The Concept of Matter in Modern Philosophy*, *op.cit.*, pp.222.
- 58 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, [1908], tr. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer, Zone Books, New York, 1988, p.219.
- 59 '... post-Cartesian everyday usage of the term 'matter' no longer responded to a question; it was no longer the case that matter was postulated to explain some general feature of the world...' McMullin (ed.), *The Concept of Matter in Modern Philosophy*, *op.cit.*, p.19. Returned in this way, it appears at first sight to fall somewhere between Aristotelian and Platonic versions: Aristotle's demand for matter's potency is taken up as a possible and real indetermination within concrete objects themselves, a kind of general economy behind things which permits their ongoing mutability; see McMullin (ed.), *The Concept of Matter in Greek and Mediaeval Philosophy*, *op.cit.*, esp. Norbert Luyten, 'Matter as Potency,' pp.102-123. In the same collection, Leonard Eslick states that 'Plato's matter...combines both the roles of existential actuation and differentiation, and achieves the former by means of the latter. The "creative" function of matter is its negation of essential reality.' Leonard J. Eslick, 'The Material Substrate in Plato,' in *ibid.*, p.53.
- 60 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #829, 1970.
- 61 see Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, *op.cit.*, p.164. Elsewhere, he stresses the point: 'All division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determined outlines is an artificial division...the rough-and-ready operation, which consists in decomposing the body into parts of the same nature as itself, leads us down a blind alley...' Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, *op.cit.*, p.196, 199.
- 62 Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, *op.cit.*, p.75.
- 63 *ibid.*, p.108. See also Deleuze, *The Fold*, *op.cit.*, Ch.3 which pursues a parallel claim, undertaken with reference to Leibniz's reformulation of the Camera Obscura that was introduced above. Bergson criticises empiricism for holding too much to matter, in contrast to dogmatism, which holds too much to form; see Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, *op.cit.*, p.183.
- 64 Gordon Matta-Clark, two sheets detail paper, EGMC, #502, Anarchitecture period, c.1972.

Chapter 2: Space & Time

WHEN A MEASUREMENT DOESN'T WORK ... A MORE INTIMATE
NOTION OF SPACE BEGININGS...

— Gordon Matta-Clark¹

I don't know what the word "space" means... I
keep using it. But I'm not quite sure what it means.

— Gordon Matta-Clark²

Matta-Clark's uncertainty about space reflects various complexities; of the experience of space, of accounting for such experience (that is, of determining *where* space is), and of the different definitions that the word 'space' has enjoyed over its history. Although space and time clearly played an important role in Matta-Clark's work, his principal concern was with human experience, with the possibility of an expanded or enhanced human experience. The very fact that he kept on using these words without being quite sure what they meant is characteristic of the realm in which such expanded experience might occur, spilling out beyond the range of scientific measure. According to Henri Lefebvre's well-known analysis, space is a product of human activity, but it is also the setting where such activity takes place: as with the renovated understanding of 'form' suggested in the previous chapter, space is polyvalent and available to both the mind and the senses.³ Lefebvre emphasises this complexity: 'All productive activity is defined less by invariable or constant factors than by the incessant to-and-fro between temporality (succession, concatenation) and spatiality (simultaneity, synchronicity).'⁴

Matta-Clark's explicit interest in 'more intimate' space can be discussed more successfully in terms of its relationships to this incessant to-and-fro. This interest forced his measure of experience to move beyond the received axes of space and time, the invariable or constant factors of scientific measure, and his oeuvre worked to supplement modernism's demand for spatial purity with something of the 'opaque clarity' already discussed. Some of the principal issues involved in this interest are announced in Matta-Clark's account of the experience associated with the building dissections:

Obviously the mere cutting through from one space to another produces a certain complexity involving depth perception and viewpoint. Yet what interests me more than the unexpected views that were being generated by removals is the element of stratification... which reveals... how a uniform surface gets established. All of this is present to sight. There is another complexity,

covert and durational rather than overt and immediate, which comes in taking an otherwise completely normal, albeit anonymous situation and redefining it, retranslating it, into overlapping multiple readings of situations past and present.⁵

This approach to the experience of space that is not just visual, that involves different registers of complexity, and indeed the notion that it can exceed invariable measure, takes issue with the purist demands of modernism, according to which space was associated with legibility.⁶ Modern architecture in particular allied itself to a notion of space that ignored the *covert and durational* in favour of spatial purity and universality, and that consequently enjoyed '[t]he illusion of transparency [that] goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps or secret places.'⁷ Bergson suggests that the temptation to accept space as innocent and legible is deeply rooted in the Kantian tradition, thoroughly upheld by modernism, whereby '[i]ntelligence...is bathed in an atmosphere of spatiality.'⁸ On Kant's view, space is not based on or produced by direct human experience, nor is it a property of objects or relations between objects, but exists in the mind *a priori*. 'With Kant, space is given as a ready-made form of our perceptive faculty,—a veritable *deus ex machina*, of which we see neither how it arises, nor why it is what it is rather than anything else.'⁹

Matta-Clark's work did not set out to overcome this legibility, but rather to supplement it with another complexity and thus demonstrate that space could be something else. In the terms introduced in Chapter Two, his projects offered the visitor a creative question that opened onto two types of clarity; pursuing these two would ally the overt and immediate complexity with the clarity provided by the intellect, which was relatively easy to attain and which could be sustained at will. (This is the kind of space valorised by architecture.) In contrast, the covert and durational complexity would offer a difficult clarity, one which would be hard to sustain and which could not last for long. These two clarities work together, allowing spaces to be comprehended and navigated while preventing a once-and-for-all account, a balance that echoes Lefebvre's analysis: 'This pre-existence of space conditions the subject's presence, action and discourse, his competence and performance; yet the subject's presence, action and discourse, at the same time as they presuppose this space, also negate it.'¹⁰

Although Matta-Clark's projects have frequently been read as a negation pure and simple, it is important to repeat that his work was primarily constructive, and that the negation they involved was similar to Lefebvre's positive negation, encouraging the individual's broader experience beyond narrowly sanctioned responses. For Lefebvre as for Matta-Clark, to acknowledge this relationship between human activity and the production of space was to acknowledge not only the

general contingency of space in contrast to modernism's idealist *a priori* version, but also to address its inherently social and political dimensions.

Matta-Clark championed the importance of moving through the building dissections: 'You have to walk,' he told Judith Russi Kirshner. He related the importance of moving to the way in which these projects '...have a kind of internal complexity which doesn't allow for a single and overall view, ...defy[ing] that category of a sort of snapshot scenic work and that whole object quality that is with all sculpture.'¹¹ It is important to examine the kind of complexity Matta-Clark's building dissections enjoyed, in order to clarify the role that movement assumed there, and the impact this could have on experience and understanding. On Matta-Clark's account, this complexity did not simply delay the attainment of an overview until the observer or visitor has walked around enough to understand the piece (bodily movement is thus not sufficient to attain complexity), it *doesn't allow* an overall view, it *defies* the whole object.

This complexity again resonates with the discussions of form in the previous chapter, where Matta-Clark's notion of forms-without-plans were examined, such that objects never gave themselves up entirely to the intellect, merely established a contingent agreement between matter and memory (or more precisely, non-chronological recollection) that can occur in perception. Although maintaining the importance of form in the establishment of meaning, this contingent agreement overcame the traditional, transcendental 'good-form' of modernist idealism. Bodily movement *per se* does not guarantee that the whole object is defied in this way, and it thus becomes important to distinguish between the kinds of spatiality that can be associated with movement. The philosopher John Rajchman distinguishes between 'intensive' and 'extensive' spatiality, which can be strongly related to Matta-Clark's two complexities.

The overt and immediate can be associated with Rajchman's 'extensive' spatiality; however complex, these qualities are present to sight, they could be mapped out and understood mathematically. In contrast, Matta-Clark's covert and durational complexity chimes well with Rajchman's 'intensive' spatiality: the latter is based on and establishes a kinaesthetic relationship between a space and our movements in and through it, it is experiential, partial, experimental, and cannot be mapped out either in advance or after the event: the closest we can get is an 'informal diagram' that, like covert complexity, does not completely organize space.¹² Intensive space involves those aspects of the body and the mind that operate outside of the intellect, a configuration that permits and sustains 'extensive' space, allowing contingent understanding (form-moment) while defying the whole object.

Rajchman's account does nothing to dismiss 'extensive' spatiality; his concern is to overturn its dominance and priority, in order that the understanding it brings about might be balanced with that of 'intensive' spatiality.¹³ Matta-Clark's valorisation of works with 'internal complexity' can be positioned around this interplay, which conditions his demand 'you have to walk' such that this bodily movement must enjoy intensive as well as extensive spatiality.

Rajchman appears confident that such kinaesthetic relations do occur, and his interest lies in the possibilities this opens up for artworks; he implicitly makes a distinction between modernist work on the one hand, which is limited to and by 'extensive' spatiality, and what he refers to as fully 'modern' work on the other; this enjoys an 'experimental' spatiality by overcoming modernism's requirement for experience to be underwritten by intellectual accountability.¹⁴ In contrast, Matta-Clark identified the possible co-presence of intensive and extensive spatiality as desirable but by no means certain or easily attained, and his *œuvre* explored how such relations might be brought about by artworks, and the relationship between these two modes of experience occurs in a subtly different way in Matta-Clark's *œuvre*.

Intensive, Experimental Spatiality: *Open House* and labyrinth

WORKING BEYOND INSIDE OUTSIDE BY SEEING
WITHIN

Gordon Matta-Clark¹⁵

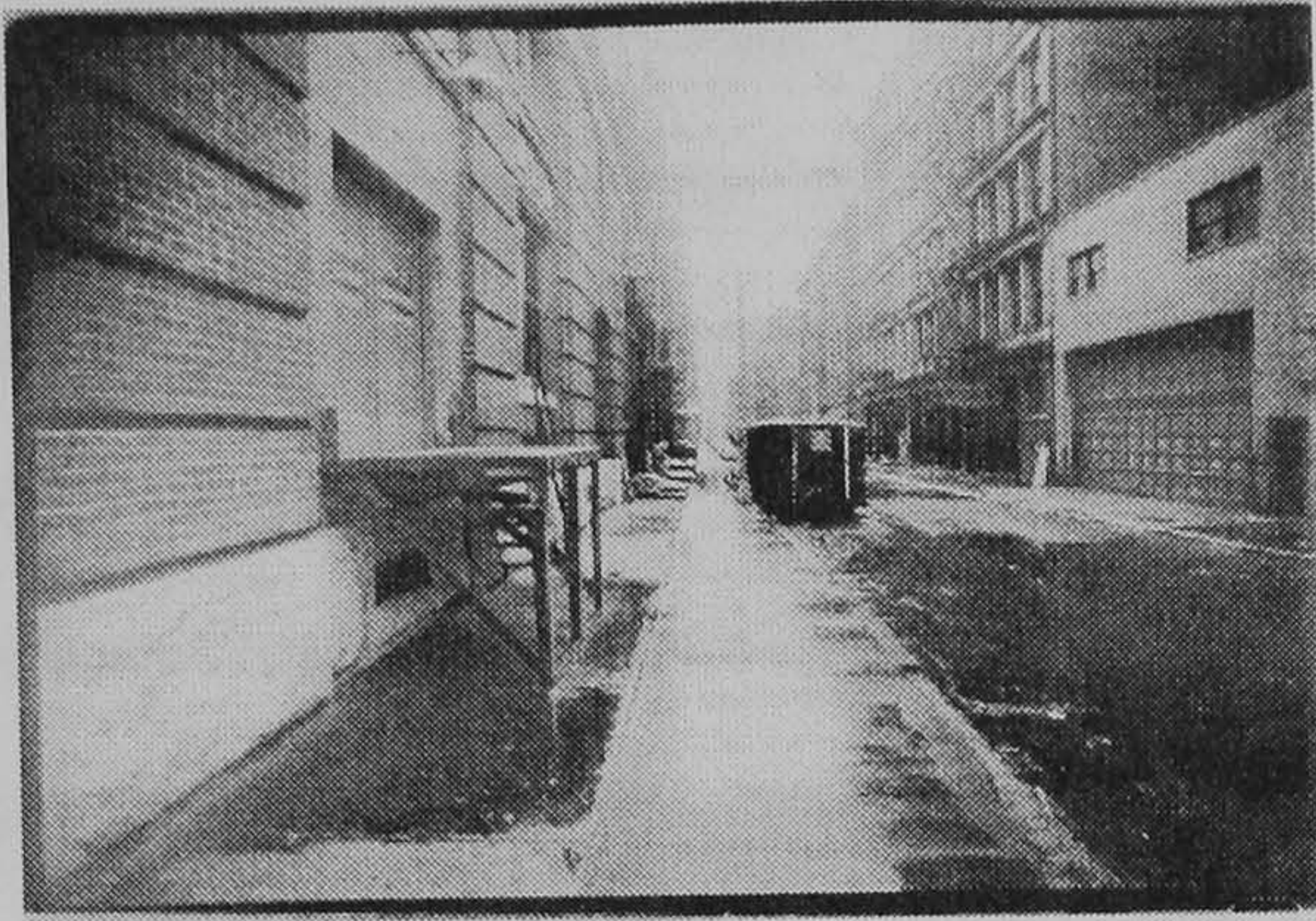
...the indistinction of inside and outside leads to
the discovery of another dimension.

Deleuze & Guattari¹⁶

One of Matta-Clark's projects that directly engaged with the various possibilities of spatial complexity was *Open House* or *Dumpster* [1972], illustrated in Figure 4.1. Here, Matta-Clark used salvaged doors and timber to build an architectural environment in a dumpster (a skip) parked on Greene Street in New York. The space of the dumpster was subdivided into three parallel corridors, further subdivided lengthways, a play on Cartesian spaces which used conventional architectural techniques (cellular rooms, conventional doors) to bring about a very different spatial experience. Although it appeared to lack an explicit architectural programme, approaching what Lefebvre terms the space of pleasure, this also reflects on the expectations of 'usefulness' that predicate any definition of architectural programme. *Open House* also had an acoustic element, provided by an audio-tape made by Ted Greenwald, which relayed 'a day of delivering newspapers from a truck. The dumpster, which was immobile, now had a motor and the sound of a crew working on it.'¹⁷

dumpster was subdivided into three parallel corridors, further subdivided lengthways, a play on Cartesian spaces which used conventional architectural techniques (cellular rooms, conventional doors) to bring about a very different spatial experience. Visitors were able to pass from 'room' to 'room' without any predetermined path or goal, and encounter other visitors wandering in different directions. Although it appeared to lack an explicit architectural programme, approaching what Lefebvre terms the space of pleasure, this also reflects on the expectations of 'usefulness' that predicate any definition of architectural programme.

Open House had an acoustic element, provided by an audio-tape made by Ted Greenwald, which relayed 'a day of delivering newspapers from a truck. The dumpster, which was immobile, now had a motor and the sound of a crew working on it.' There was a performance which took place in *Open House* at the opening, and also a film of *Open House* made by Matta-Clark (super 8; colour, silent, 41mins, 1972)



At first glance, the cellular, rectilinear spaces of *Open House* contrast starkly with the dynamic superposition of existing and cut space characteristic of the various building dissections. Despite their obvious differences, these projects shared a number of important operational tactics—discrete violations—that developed around and can clarify Matta-Clark's interest in spatial complexity. *Open House* both enacted and parodied conventional approaches to architectural space, playing off rectilinear geometric planning and familiar architectural elements against the expectations of architectural programme or of the complete account provided by the static good form of architecture.

It is around the latter issue in particular that *Open House* exposes the insufficiency of architecture's conventional association between legible space and traditional geometry: in terms of the different modes of clarity available to a visitor, the overt and immediate spatial complexity of the piece was limited, it was clear and legible and prosaic as an object. In contrast, the covert and durational complexity of a visitor's experience was more or less limitless and in constant change as they moved around, passing from 'room' to 'room' without any predetermined path or goal, encountering other visitors wandering in different

directions. The mis-match between these two complexities is quite remarkable given the small size of the piece, and highlights the shortcomings of architecture's reliance on the former. It also reiterates that intensive and extensive movements are different in kind, and that one cannot lead to the other: movement within *Open House* cannot be mapped simply by extension, and while experience there would be comprehensible, such spatial understanding would be based on informal or non-quantifiable distances and proximities of 'intensive' spatiality that do not organise experience once and for all.¹⁸

These non-quantifiable distances and proximities open onto a related interest of Matta-Clark's, namely the more intimate space that conventional measure fails to grasp, and help to position these particular spatial aspects of *Open House* in the broader context of his oeuvre. He discussed the possibilities of this interest with Donald Wall:

Most architecture seems, to me, absolutely repressive. In Cordova a person can walk through those columned hallways in spaces that are open and also very secret in a funny way...the standing in the middle of a space which has not so much barriers as measures. So one thing I am interested in is measure employed simply as a unit of articulation without repressive connotations of any kind.¹⁹

Open House, which at first glance appears to epitomise the absolutely repressive in architecture through its regimented, closed cells, can equally be taken to encourage intensive spatial experience by enacting his comments to Wall fairly literally; indeed the 'cells' within *Open House* were not carcereal, their boundaries were as much door as wall. This interplay between enclosure and articulated spatial measure was also an important aspect of the experience associated with the building dissections and other projects, and also came through in his more general interest in the notion of the labyrinth.²⁰ Matta-Clark discussed some of his building dissections in terms that made a direct link between the possibilities of open spatial measure and particular aspects of labyrinthine experience:

In [*Splitting*] what the cutting's done is to make the space more articulated, but the identity of the building as a place, as an object, is strongly preserved, enhanced. I've often thought that a more interesting approach to the labyrinth is as a kind of ritualistic procession, rather than as a formal contortion, which at this point seems very simplistic. The labyrinth as a path must have been very understandable; it was almost like a calendar, a way of measuring.²¹

In his attempts to increase the spatial 'articulation' of his projects, Matta-Clark in fact drew on two kinds of labyrinth whose modalities were different; these pulled experience in different directions while attempting to maintain their interplay, and echo Leibniz's argument for a balance to be struck between the 'two famous labyrinths' of necessity and liberty.²² In the terms used here, these would approximate to the necessity of understanding (overt and immediate complexity,

extensive spatiality) and the liberty provided by that which escapes the intellect (covert and durational, intensive spatiality).

Matta-Clark argued that in the traditional account of the labyrinth, spatial complexity was derived from the extensive deployment of geometry, and that this really provided a model for domination that excluded the uninitiated, those without access to knowledge of the geometry underlying the labyrinth's layout. Instead, he proposed a labyrinth *without walls*, a labyrinth without any one route hidden within false paths, without any 'right' answer; a labyrinth within which one would have to struggle, admittedly, but this was a struggle that would permit a fuller experience:

There is an endless history of the psychological fascination of the labyrinth, as really a model for domination by imposing a mindboggling procession, originally in the form of a Mycenaean dungeon. But the thing is, I don't see the labyrinth as an interesting spatial problem. I would make a labyrinth without walls. I would create a complexity which is not about a geometry, not about a simple enclosure or confinement, and also not about barriers, but about creating alternatives which aren't self-defeating...²³

A similar criticism of the traditional labyrinth was voiced by Bataille: for him, the constancy of measure provided only one path within a labyrinthine trope that he used to represent 'being.' On his account, science was just one of the many aspects of human life, and it had to be balanced with alternative, more Dionysian, pursuits.

'Being' increases in the tumultuous agitation of a life that knows no limits; it wastes away and disappears if he who is at the same time 'being' and knowledge mutilates himself by reducing himself to knowledge.²⁴

The possibility of an omnipresent view, such as that enjoyed by Daedalus, architect of the first labyrinth, or indeed that which predicates the whole convention of architectural drawing and *disegno*, occurs when scientific measure denies this dynamic interplay of labyrinthine alternatives. In this situation, the labyrinth closes down, its edges become impermeable and it imprisons, it becomes a static labyrinth about *simple enclosure, confinement and barriers*, rather than about the ongoing possibilities of unexpected connections constitutive of intensive spatiality.

According to the traditional expectations of such a labyrinth, those entrapped within this dungeon will desire to escape. But paradoxically, the energy devoted to escaping the labyrinth contributes to its maintenance; it is the desire to get out that both helps to perpetuate the understanding of the labyrinth as a singular and self-contained spatial system, and that produces the feeling of incarceration in the first place. Trying to escape any labyrinth so conceived will merely ensure that its domination can continue unchecked, because the escape strategy furthers the

belief in a definable, hard border that clearly separates the labyrinth from the spatial system for which it serves as other. This strategy denies the possible struggle that would involve constant give and take between different spatial complexities, and is instead based on a desire to be situated beyond the 'whole' system of the labyrinth that effectively replaces it with another (the outside, or full knowledge of the labyrinth), playing into the trap of *self-defeating alternatives* that Matta-Clark noted, *either here or there*.²⁵

Rather than adopting this strategy of replacement, a life that *knows no limits* (Bataille) can be lived as a trajectory within a dynamic labyrinth, where one is neither inside nor outside, but rather moving between and contingent. If *Open House* can be considered as a labyrinth, it can only be so as a playful version of this dynamic model, where the openness refers less to the fact that it was open to the sky, and more to the open exploration of space that it encouraged. There was no 'goal' or escape involved, and the project's limited overall size did nothing to dilute the labyrinthine experience;²⁶ rather it emphasised the point that 'getting out' was not the point, a visitor would have known that the outside was not far away. Once inside, one could stay there, exploring over and over,²⁷ without the thread of knowledge to structure this experience, all the while encountering different people who together animated the spaces: as with much of his work, it expected this social dimension, the 'open house' as open invitation, a social event, a social space. Rajchman reiterates the difference between extensive and intensive spatiality around a similar theme: 'social space can never be fully drawn from "Cartesian coordinates," since it always "envelops" many "infraspaces" that introduce distances and proximities of another, nonquantifiable sort.'²⁸

The ease with which *Open House* exceeds its physical size highlights how the two different notions of labyrinth bear on the same project. Matta-Clark expressed this particular approach was taken up more generally across his oeuvre; he was 'WORKING BEYOND INSIDE OUTSIDE BY SEEING WITHIN.'²⁹ For the overt and immediate labyrinth model of Daedalus, identification of an outside is brought about through the valorisation of knowledge following its separation from desire or 'being.' In contrast, the covert and durational labyrinth possesses no outside in this sense, for the outside that can really provide an escape is already contained within, further than the furthest spatial distance, its attainment requiring instead a switch from extensive spatiality to intensive spatiality.³⁰ These terms have a further resonance here: any knowledge of *Open House* gained from an overview (an extensive spatiality of geometry and measure, 'visual knowledge') would have been of marginal bearing on the 'intensive' or experimental experience of visitors, which was

underwritten by a spatiality reliant less on vision than on other modes of navigating (or involving non-optical vision at most, because the spaces themselves were generally so small that most visual experience was reduced to the same range as that of touch, providing no reassuring warning of what was coming up while exploring).

While *Open House* could offer a manifest demonstration of this difference between intensive and extensive spatiality, the promise of such spatial experimentation-exploration was championed more generally by the *Anarchitecture* group, of whom Matta-Clark was part: *Anarchitecture* emphasised that their interest was not in the attainment of knowledge (not in escape) nor in changing human faculties, but rather involved exercising them all:

anarchitecture attempts to solve no problem but to rejoice in an informed well intended celebration of conditions that best describe and locate a place... the way of this celebration is not as much changing ones life as exercising ones life.³¹

Exercising one's life demanded an active and mobile involvement with the conditions of experience, one that would operate by maintaining a balance between labyrinthine alternatives of intensive and extensive spatiality. While this recalls Lefebvre's account of the active production of space, it also suggests that his explanation of the 'incessant to-and-fro' between temporality and spatiality needs to be explored with more care. It has just been argued that kinaesthetic involvement was not necessarily sufficient to bring about an experience enjoying the covert and durational complexity that interested Matta-Clark so much (movement can maintain and strengthen the traditional labyrinth). If the full, active production of space involves an incessant to-and-fro, then it is not enough to just get more time in (a simple addition of kinaesthetics, an addition of movement) or to try to make constructed space more complex (confusing spatial with tectonic, geometric complexity). While intensive spatiality, and Matta-Clark's concomitant interest in complexity, does involve movement, this movement is 'BEYOND INSIDE OUTSIDE' and requires that we consider experience beyond the conventional axes of space and time. Bergson offered a similar response to the same problem: '[it] is not a question of getting outside of time (we are already there); on the contrary, one must get back into duration and recapture reality in the very mobility which is its essence.'³²

Matta-Clark, both on his own terms and as a part of the *Anarchitecture* group, stressed a need to recapture reality, not so much by changing or escaping existing conditions, but by actually exercising what is already available. In addition to making more of the other spatialities just discussed, he was also interested in emphasizing the role that could be played by other kinds of time, other temporalities.

Strange contradiction: time, scale and the “fine memory device”

In an interview with Liza Bear concerning *Splitting*, Matta-Clark discussed the complexity of the experience it engendered. He described how the contrast between the constituent parts of the work affected and sustained the complexity of experience by refusing to be easily synthesised:

The contrast [in *Splitting*, between the whole and the detail—sw]... I think of it in terms of time as well as scale, because there's obviously a kind of detailed concern with the event... It's a kind of strange contradiction, something that doesn't fit into performance as such because there has been no specially isolated activity, so the whole place and its constituent actions form the record. I suppose in that sense it's very clear that the activity and the detailed time are part of the piece.³³

Of particular interest here is how Matta-Clark identifies the importance of the ‘contrast’ or ‘strange contradiction’ to the experience of the project and the intensive spatiality it offered, with all the implications for covert and durational complexity discussed above. As he acknowledged, this strange contradiction involved both time and scale, although it is important here to investigate if and how they helped to sustain the strange contradiction. The contradiction is brought about through a combination of the site, the inscription of Matta-Clark's activities within it, and the experience of that work by a visitor or observer. As he suggested, the work has an imprecise temporal location; it proves difficult to identify exactly when the activity of *Splitting* took place—there was ‘no specially isolated activity’—as it extended over several ‘moments’ including the cutting, visitors attending the piece, and in subsequent photocollages he made from documentary photographs of the project. Across these various moments, the contrasts were brought together, activated and ‘measured,’ by the body of the observer.

For Matta-Clark, the body was able to support an inter-play between time and scale, where memory had a central role: however, he was clear that such a role could not be aligned simply with ‘time’ (just as much as space could not be aligned with scale). He emphasised the importance of bodily memory over and above the kind of memory usually associated with the mind, if experience was to be made richer.

I think that romance, or poetry, whatever it might be—I think of it more as memory. Trying to encourage the inclusion of some sort of expanded being—I think, in fact, that that's what memory is. I think that we are physically a very fine memory device. Things that include that, enhance that reality are, in fact, infinitely more accurate than all of the machine vocabulary or the modernity vocabulary.³⁴

His acknowledgement of the role of bodily memory and his attempts to explore and enhance this through his projects were part of his broader concern to encourage ‘expanded being’ or expanded experience. Rather than taking the body for granted or trying to replace its allegedly

clumsy measure with a more accurate scientific version, he championed the importance of the ordinary body, emphasising its central role predicating measure within experience, experience that acknowledged and enjoyed the strange contradiction. Here, the confrontation with time was primarily physical before it could become rationalised, and there were dimensions of this principal confrontation that would always exceed the grasp of the intellect. Attempts at rationalising the ordinary have led the intellect into difficulties, and consequently it has been either explicitly abandoned or implicitly ignored by most disciplines.³⁵

Lefebvre, a notable exception to this tendency, approached this interplay between the realm of the intellect and lived experience more broadly, in ways that are helpful in clarifying the roles of time and scale that Matta-Clark alluded to. Lefebvre writes: 'The body does not fall under the sway of analytic thought and its separation of the cyclical from the linear. The unity which that reflection is at pains to decode finds its refuge in the cryptic opacity which is the great secret of the body.'³⁶ Rather than attempting this separation, Matta-Clark's strange contradiction offers to maintain both body and thought. The consequences of this possibility are far-reaching, though the ways in which time is confronted, even measured, remains ambiguous. There are two aspects to Matta-Clark's approach that bear on this interplay: the first involves the importance accorded to bodily movement and which runs through the earlier discussion of intensive spatiality, the second involves the possibility of a bodily memory and its role in sustaining contradiction as a motor for Matta-Clark's notion of experience.

The role of bodily memory has been examined more directly by sociologist Paul Connerton, whose work substantiates the importance Matta-Clark invested in our 'fine memory device.' Connerton distinguishes between bodily or 'incorporated' memory and 'inscribed' memory: the latter is more tangible, durable and apparently more valued by societies, and his concern is to prevent either gaining the upper hand and thence being used to interpret the other.³⁷ That said, his own focus is to register the importance of incorporated memory. He acknowledges that while this is more or less traceless, it is charged with important tasks: 'Every group... will entrust to bodily automatisms the values and categories which they are most anxious to conserve. They will know how well the past can be kept in mind by a habitual memory sedimented in the body.'³⁸

Similarly, Matta-Clark felt such habitual or bodily memory to be 'infinitely more accurate than all of the machine vocabulary,' as it could never be given up to the intellect. He stressed the resistance that this could offer, where the confrontation with time could occur beyond understanding.

When confronted with time, with the real mysteries of time, there's a kind of central nervous spasm that takes place when you really get into it, which just amounts to a sort of all-consuming gag, all consuming quake of some sort which you really don't understand.³⁹

This preoccupation with the real mysteries of time, the resistance to the machine vocabulary, and so on, indicate Matta-Clark's concern with the broad treatment or rather the erasure, of time during the modern period. At an everyday level, the intensification of experience that characterises modernism, where modern inventions are typically taken to have reduced the experience of time and distance, has frequently been made out to be approaching simultaneity.⁴⁰ Lefebvre suggests that this is symptomatic of a general tendency to conflate time and space, which has become chronic as a consequence of the ever-increasing domination of scientific thought that he associates with modernity: 'With the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space. It is recorded solely on measuring-instruments... This manifest expulsion of time is arguably one of the hallmarks of modernity.'⁴¹

Matta-Clark's firm advocacy of the 'fine memory device' can be grasped in this context. To recognise and maintain the bodily aspect of memory could prevent its co-option and ultimate erasure by modernism's purifying drive, by encouraging a different kind of measure, not tied to the generality and repeatability of measuring-instruments but associated instead with the individual human being. To put this another way, individual memory contested the immanence required by modernist art and architecture, it could disrupt their portrayal as static object.⁴²

Matta-Clark's motivations are echoed in Connerton's analysis, where the habitual memory of the body operates in the gap between knowledge and action; mere knowledge of something gives only imperfect mastery.⁴³ In Matta-Clark's register, mere knowledge would dull the accuracy of experience. His projects can be understood to enact this by attempting to establish and maintain such a gap (encountered in various locations: between whole and part, duration and scale, intensive and extensive spatiality, and so on). In so doing, they reveal that there is more potential here than Connerton's work covers: while directed at an examination of *How Societies Remember*, the possibilities of Connerton's analysis need not be restricted to the contestation of official histories or inscribed memories of past events. Although Connerton is critical of Bergson's valorisation of pure memory, it is to Bergson once again that we can turn in order to clarify how the role of incorporated memory in Matta-Clark's projects operates not only to bridge between knowledge and action, but to permit accuracy and, crucially, an action that exceeds mere repetition (for repetition is the paradigm for the accuracy of machine vocabulary).⁴⁴

According to Bergson, ‘...memory is something other than a function of the brain, and there is not merely a difference of degree, but of kind, between perception and recollection.’⁴⁵ For him, incorporated memory (habits) and present perception were different, ‘theoretically independent,’ though both could play a part in recognition and both operated in a gap within the process of experience. The modality of this gap must be distinguished from that identified by Connerton; its importance for Bergson was that it would allow time to enter experience by splitting in two; the time of recollection was different in kind to that of perception, and it is around this gap that his demand that ‘Time is invention or it is nothing at all’⁴⁶ can be fully understood. He warned that passive present perception could reduce to an instant, because it involved chronological time, effectively time spatialised, extended, and given up in advance to the intellect; in contrast, the inventive time of memory was non-chronological, and the body’s role as locus of the interplay between different kinds of time, rational and irrational, maintains the intellect while always exceeding it (Lefebvre’s cryptic opacity). Indeed, Deleuze’s reading of Bergson insists that ‘it is therefore memory that makes the body something other than instantaneous and gives it a duration in time.’⁴⁷ In conversation with Donald Wall, Matta-Clark explained his understanding of the role that memory plays in experience in uncannily similar terms, where recollections enter space perception:

[T]he kinds of space we all, all of us, have stored in our memory...spaces that are detailed and precise, or very general, at all levels of reminiscing. And of course once you get into reminiscence an infinite number of associations ~~surface~~-emerge concerning real space, desired space, imagined space, ~~false~~ amorphous space, grotesque space, nostalgia enters space perception, sentimentality... the interior space of memory seems, at least it seems that way to me, to create a theatre-like setting but at a very about-to-be-disintegrated level.⁴⁸

Matta-Clark’s last point regarding the fragility of such recollections approaches a consensus with much work on memory: Connerton suggests that all three types of memory that he reviews (personal, cognitive, and habit) are studied around the nature of their failure; Deleuze also highlights the importance of ‘disturbances of memory and the failures of recognition.’⁴⁹ Be that as it may, Matta-Clark’s work did not set out to study memory nor to enact this failure directly, but to explore ways in which fuller human experience could be brought about, and if it was previously suggested that projects such as the building dissections operated in the gap just discussed, this claim must now be made more precisely. Adrian Forty’s work also expresses an interest in the failures of memory, but importantly for the present reading of Matta-Clark, Forty goes on to discuss work that struck a balance between memory and forgetting. The importance of attaining a balance, for Forty as for Gordon Matta-Clark, lay in the ‘recognition of the fundamental

unlikeness and discontinuity between the physical world of objects, and architecture, and the mental world of memory.⁵⁰ In its strongest, Bergsonian, sense, this discontinuity arises between tendencies that are different in kind, though these occur, can only occur, within experience. Notwithstanding these differences, the body was the locus where these two were played out. Matta-Clark's simultaneity (strange contradiction) attempted to enhance both perception and recollection by holding their discontinuity together.

DESIGNING FOR COLLAPSE

DESIGNING FOR FAILURE

DESIGNING FOR ABSENCE

“ “ MEMORY

ETC...⁵¹

Projects such as *Open House* and the building dissections attempted to bring about productive discontinuity by encouraging the role of bodily memory in experience, with the expectation that this would enable the 'EXERCISE OF ONE'S LIFE' rather than its atrophy. In addition to the earlier account of the spatial complexity of these projects, the experience available there can now be discussed around different axes of perception and recollection. Returning to the trope of the labyrinth, it can be suggested that the tension between the traditional (geometric) labyrinth of Daedalus and Matta-Clark's labyrinth without walls, both of which were played out within these projects, was driven by the failures of perception, and encouraged the involvement of the 'more accurate' bodily memory or recollection.

It will be recalled that for Bataille, to exercise one's life fully was to balance 'being' and knowledge, and that any attempt to attain complete knowledge of this balance would result in self-mutilation. Denis Hollier takes up the consequences of Bataille's demand: 'The labyrinth we discuss cannot be described. Mapping is out of the question. Or, if it is described, it will be like the trajectory described by a mobile; not described as an object but as a traversal.'⁵² To distinguish between experience and a description of space, between intensive and extensive spatiality, is not to find fault within a descriptive system such as the orthographic drawing techniques associated with the generation of built objects (or mis-used to generate many of Matta-Clark's building dissections).⁵³ Rather, it is to reassert the possibilities of experience on its own terms, to acknowledge that the modality of experience includes both overt and immediate, *and* covert and durational complexities.

To attempt an alternate description of these projects around *traversal* instead of the static axes of either Cartesian or 'extensive' space, requires an acknowledgement of the difference in kind between recollection and perception. The trope of the labyrinth can operate in both modes; moreover these can be superimposed, a move demonstrated in the work of Walter Benjamin, who held both memory and the space of the city as labyrinthine figures each of which could be explored in two fundamentally different ways, either by passing through like a traveller, or by making 'endless interpolations' like a flâneur.⁵⁴ The role of the labyrinth in Benjamin's own theory of experience anticipates both Matta-Clark's understanding and his proposals in the balance it struck between such different methods of exploration. Moreover, Benjamin's methods themselves were developed through an interest in archaeology as Gilloch notes: it was '[i]n the metaphor of the archaeological excavation, [that] the labyrinth (excavation plan, continual return to the same spot), conscious recollection (cautious probing, fruitless searching) and *Mémoire involontaire* (unexpected discovery) are revealed as complementary rather than contradictory moments.'⁵⁵ Matta-Clark's own take on archaeology will be discussed in detail in the final section of this chapter; before that, these broader relationships between conscious recollection and unexpected discovery will be explored in the context of his attempts to describe the labyrinthine experience of the building dissections.

Mapping the labyrinth

Matta-Clark described various stages of evolution that culminated in the kind of photo-collages reproduced in Figure 2.2: these stages moved from '...snapshot documentation to a real preoccupation with this sort of documentation/time evolution of the piece, and now, more recently, to a kind of time and movement that it takes to experience the piece, and then beyond that to what happens to people in the piece.'⁵⁶

The results of these experiments in representation can not only be read back over, and clarify, the kind of kinaesthetic experience available within the buildings, they can arguably extend and complicate it. Brian O'Doherty discusses this relationship between 'performance' and representation in his well known essays *Inside the White Cube*, where he observes that '...avant-garde gestures have two audiences: one which was there and one—most of us—which wasn't.'⁵⁷ He contests approaches that relegate any (photographic) image to being a pale substitute for 'reality,' suggesting that the later, non-present audience might actually be able to get *more* from

re-presentations of the 'original' artwork. Moreover, if we recall that Matta-Clark sustained the process of drawing, or more precisely *disegno*, beyond its 'proper' phase as animating principle of artistic production by inscribing directly within the stuff of matter itself, these extensions evidence another aspect of the complex temporal relationship between representation and experience which runs across much of his oeuvre, where it is no longer possible, or at least no longer straightforward, to discuss projects in terms of before, during, and after, or conception, execution, and documentation.

Despite O'Doherty's general encouragement, Matta-Clark's attempt to communicate the time and movement involved in experiences of the dissections, and the consequent impact this had on visitors, clearly raises questions. Is there any way in which his demand 'you have to walk' to experience the building dissections fully can be reconciled with a photo-collaged representation? There are (at least) two possible responses to save this from simple paradox: the first concerns Matta-Clark's attempts to exceed the snapshot, the second involves the suggestion that the experience of the space itself already involved representational techniques akin to those of the photo-collages.

Matta-Clark clarified what he understood to be the differences between photographic representation and experience when he discussed how his photo-collages manipulated the relationships between them:

I started out with an attempt to use multiple images to try and capture the "all-around" experience of the piece. It is an approximation of this kind of ambulatory "getting-to-know" what the space is about. Basically it is a way of passing through the space. *One passes through in a number of ways*; one can pass through by just moving your head; or [by] simple eye movements which defy the camera. You know it's very easy to trick a camera, to outdo a camera. With the eye's peripheral field of vision, any slight movement of the head would give us more information than the camera ever had.⁵⁸

Matta-Clark's interest in outdoing the camera was allied to ways of passing through space other than by walking, such as moving the head or peripheral vision. The photo-collages address these other modes of passage, frequently taking them as a compositional principle: they operate by establishing a coherent motif such as a recognisable perspectival or photographic space, a cut, or a progression of cuts, according to which the constituent photographs are arranged; the remaining content of these constituent photographs clearly contest the coherence of this central armature.⁵⁹

Beyond providing a number of viewpoints simultaneously, the arrangement of individually recognisable constituents with reference to an equally recognisable armature actively prevents their simple combination or reconciliation into a final whole; they are polyvalent and pull against

each other. The photo-collages clearly give the viewer more information than a photograph, but more importantly, they give more modes of visual experience, inscribing both the clear account associated however erroneously with the snapshot, and the obfuscation of this clarity that stems from the various devices that 'defy the camera.' In the terms introduced earlier, we might say that the constituent photographs, when considered individually, operate principally within an extensive spatiality; but when Matta-Clark combines them in these collages their operation opens in addition onto an intensive spatiality that approximates to experiencing the piece itself. The *other ways of passing through* (beyond the here-there of a photograph) call upon intensive space.

The difficulties reconciling a composition of photographs with the corporeal dimensions of intensive spatiality can be eased to some extent by considering the latter's similarity to 'haptic space,' a term Deleuze and Guattari introduced (and Rajchman embraced) by emphasising that this can spring from non-optical qualities of vision.⁶⁰ The visual experience of the photocollages can inscribe such incorporated vision, even incorporated memory, while also opening onto the familiarity of everyday spaces. Important in the context of the broader argument of this thesis, haptic spatiality is not tied to an oppositional or hierarchical sensuality, but operates from within and in addition: as with the opaque clarity associated with the operation of Matta-Clark's discrete violation, the particular obfuscation of the photo-collages stems from a similar non-optical quality of incorporated vision that defies the clarity expected by the mind's eye. To put this another way by quoting Matta-Clark out of context, the collages do not 'allow for a single and overall view, [thus]...defy[ing] that category of a sort of snapshot scenic work and that whole object quality.'⁶¹

The suggestion that the photo-collages offer a polyvalence of visual experiences highlights a similarity between them and the operation of the building dissections themselves. It also emphasises the way in which the different modes of visual experience within the dissections operated to complement and contest the kinaesthetic experience of the spaces (you might have had to walk, but you also had to look).⁶² The architectural theorist Jonathan Hill has argued more generally for the benefits of considering the experience within buildings as a montage, where 'the sense of something missing, ... ensure[s] that the viewer or occupant has a constructive role in the formulation of a work... A montage of gaps and absences would not be shocking and then acceptable, but remain unresolved, to be continually re-made by each user.'⁶³ The productive awkwardness involved in attempting to associate images with kinaesthetic experience is worth pursuing further, because it helps both to further the analysis of Matta-Clark's photocollages

themselves, and to identify the links between these pieces, the dissections they developed from and his oeuvre more broadly.

Several of these issues concerning movement and vision have been rehearsed by Yve-Alain Bois in his article on Richard Serra's sculpture, 'A Picturesque Stroll around *Clara-Clara*.' Bois' concerns which bear on the present discussion extend outward from eighteenth century theories of Picturesque landscaping (or more particularly, those aspects that concerned the design of movement with respect to particular composed views) to involve the broader role of parallax in both architecture and sculpture, where the movement of an observer with respect to a space or an arrangement of objects is registered in their changing experience of that space or arrangement. Bois suggests that this experience cannot be reconciled with the *a priori* logic underlying that arrangement, (in the terms introduced in the previous chapter, one cannot pass from form-moment to static-form), and he expresses this impossibility in visual terms: '...the multiplicity of views is the question opened up by the picturesque, its knot of contradiction.'⁶⁴

It is around the contradiction brought about by this multiplicity of views that Bois' analysis can be brought to bear on the aspects of Matta-Clark's projects that are currently under consideration. Bois unravels this knot by pulling the strands of static vision and peripatetic vision in different directions, leading him toward two conclusions regarding Serra's work that connect it to montage and to theories of the Sublime respectively. Regarding montage, it appears that Bois' conclusion could be applied *a fortiori* to Matta-Clark's work: '[Serra's work] is an art of montage, an art that is not satisfied to interrupt continuity temporarily, but produces continuity by a double negation, by destroying the pictorial recovery of continuity through discontinuity, dissociation, and the loss of identity within the fragment.'⁶⁵ Following an excursion through the Kantian sublime, Bois argues that any stroll around Serra's sculpture will frustrate an observer's attempts to reconcile their successive experiences of it with an overall view, and that Serra's work consequently must fall within the category of the sublime picturesque.⁶⁶

Bois' analyses are not an attempt to undo the knot, but to understand better the factors involved: the multiplicity of views instils movement on the part of the observer, whether this view is static or peripatetic, motivated by an attempt (which will be fruitless) to complete the object viewed. If we re-read this alongside an imagined stroll around and through Matta-Clark's dissections, similar factors are involved, although the knot itself will need adjusting, as views there would have both whole and fragment available. It is thus more difficult to argue that the experience of Matta-Clark's work must remain without access to an overall plan.⁶⁷ Instead of

attempting to do this directly, is it more instructive to examine other possibilities dormant within Bois' analysis itself, particularly the possibility that the picturesque's combination of movement and image can also result in a category of the beautiful picturesque.

Bois acknowledges the picturesque as a category halfway between the sublime and the beautiful: the dispute between these competing aesthetic theories took place over the *form of content*, over the categorisation of the effects of particular forms. As John Macarthur stresses, '[t]he picturesque is not a theory of composition, a theory of the form of visual experience, but rather, a theory of the form of content: it is not a 'way of seeing' but a 'way of seeing X'.⁶⁸ This reminder can broaden Bois' specific reading of Serra, broaden it in two directions that bear directly on Matta-Clark's work: by re-asserting the picturesque as a middle term between the beautiful and the sublime, (the bounded and the boundless), experience of a picturesque work could encounter both the possible co-presence of an organising plan and the disruption of that plan. The X factor in this experience, the role of particular objects that an observer would recognise reinforces the roles of memory as part of that experience: recall that Matta-Clark frequently stressed the importance that any discrete violation of an observer's sense of value could only operate by being related back to something that is familiar.⁶⁹

This expansion of the picturesque's possibilities requires a revision to the earlier suggestion that Matta-Clark's work is an art of montage, and Bois' reading of Serra can be adjusted accordingly: the building dissections, indeed Matta-Clark's whole operation of discrete violation, is an art of montage that produces continuity by double movement of *maintenance and negation*, overlaying the visual recovery of coherence with an inscription of an experimental or 'extensive' movement. As with Serra, Matta-Clark's art of montage no longer offers an experience of linear narrative; however, this double movement of Matta-Clark's montage plays a different game with the multiplicity of views, such that there appears less a contradiction than a polyvalence, offering two different modalities of vision within an experience that can consequently expand to include both chronological and non-chronological time.⁷⁰

Matta-Clark emphasized this complex polyvalent temporality when he reflected on the dissection projects, 'where the whole looking at the piece being made and having been finished becomes a narrative which is subject to all kinds of variations.'⁷¹ The photo-collages that I have been discussing can be understood to echo this kind of narrative variation, but again it must be emphasized that they, along with the building dissections they re-present, do so not simply by offering more of the same, but by varying the modes of narrative involved. Instead of linear

narrative, Matta-Clark's *œuvre* operates a different model predicated on this complex polyvalence. Deleuze's thoughts on the relationships between non-conventional (non-kinaesthetic) movement and narrative are helpful at this point, such that: 'Narration is no longer a truthful narration which is linked to real (sensory-motor) descriptions.' As with Matta-Clark's *œuvre*, his interest is in supplementing here-there movement of extensive spatiality by including intensive or haptic spatiality. 'Movement which is fundamentally decentred becomes false movement, and time which is fundamentally liberated becomes power of the false which is now brought into effect in false movement...'⁷²

To acknowledge and incorporate the creative power of 'false' movements, involved in the actual experience of the dissections, and the re-presentation of this experience through the photo-collages, is to alter the way in which such experience can be accounted for. This can have far-reaching consequences. In place of linear narrative, where systematic exploration produces increasing clarity on its way to 'truth,' the inscription of false movement not only accepts that an overall account of these projects cannot be arrived at, it upsets the priority of the centred world of Cartesian co-ordinates and rationality and all that this traditionally supports.

The traditional expectations of space, time and memory, and the role they play in sustaining such a world view, were also raised by Matta-Clark in the context of a number of different projects, which developed through his interest in archaeological exploration. These develop questions about 'truth,' narrative and movement, as well as expanding on his response to modernist conceptions of space and time, as he attempted to use —and alter— the latter to extend beyond commonly accepted limits.

ARCHAEOLOGY

...BEGINNING NEW YEAR'S MORNING '71 A 4'X 8'X 6' SUBCITY NON-STRUCTURAL DIG WAS MADE BELOW 112 GREENE ST....WORKING WITH THE FACTS AND FABRIC OF BUILDING SPACE *TIME WELL* USES ARCHITECTURAL COMPONENTS TO EXTEND A ROOM BEYOND ITS COMMON LIMITS AND IMPLIED PERSPECTIVES BENEATH THE FLOOR.⁷³

This early subcity dig announced Matta-Clark's interest in exploration: the *extension beyond common limits* and the complex dimensionality of the revelations foreshadowed the operative method of discrete violation. As the scale of his ambition increased, the aim of his work broadened beyond the revelation of more complex spatiality, and his emphasis shifted towards the *act of search and discovery* itself. In an interview with Donald Wall early in 1976, he remarked

...the next area that interests me is an expedition into the underground: a search for the forgotten spaces left buried under the city either as a historical reserve or as surviving reminders of lost projects and fantasies, such as the famed Phantom Railroad. This activity would include mapping and breaking or digging into these lost foundations: working back into society from beneath. Although the original idea involved possible subversive acts, I am now more interested in the act of search and discovery. This activity should bring art out of the gallery and into the sewers.⁷⁴

This hope that art would relocate to the sewers repeats the challenge to the traditional relationship between art object and impassive observer that was issued by *Time Well*, *Open House* and later works. In his subsequent expeditions there was an increasing interest in both the form of the act of searching, and in the role of memory as an aspect of the quest and the discoveries made. These can be drawn out with reference to Matta-Clark's interest in archaeology: in contrast to what he perceived as the systematizing methods of traditional archaeology, his approach echoed that of Benjamin, whose 'archaeological practice is concerned to show that the past is not complete and unalterable...[his] 'spatialisation' of time rejects any notion of history as continuity, and instead reveals the past as broken and fragmentary, as labyrinthine not linear.'⁷⁵

Matta-Clark's interest in archaeology cannot be explained as simply riding the growing wave of interest in history. Admittedly, following its long eclipse by modernism, history was visibly back in architecture by the early 1970s, though this occurred mostly through the application of certain recognisable motifs, and there was no consistency within architecture or artistic practice regarding what history meant. Although Dan Graham could comment that 'a Matta-Clark "deconstruction," unlike "minimal," "pop" or "conceptual" art, allows an historical time to enter,'⁷⁶ the nature of this 'historical time' must be further distinguished from the models

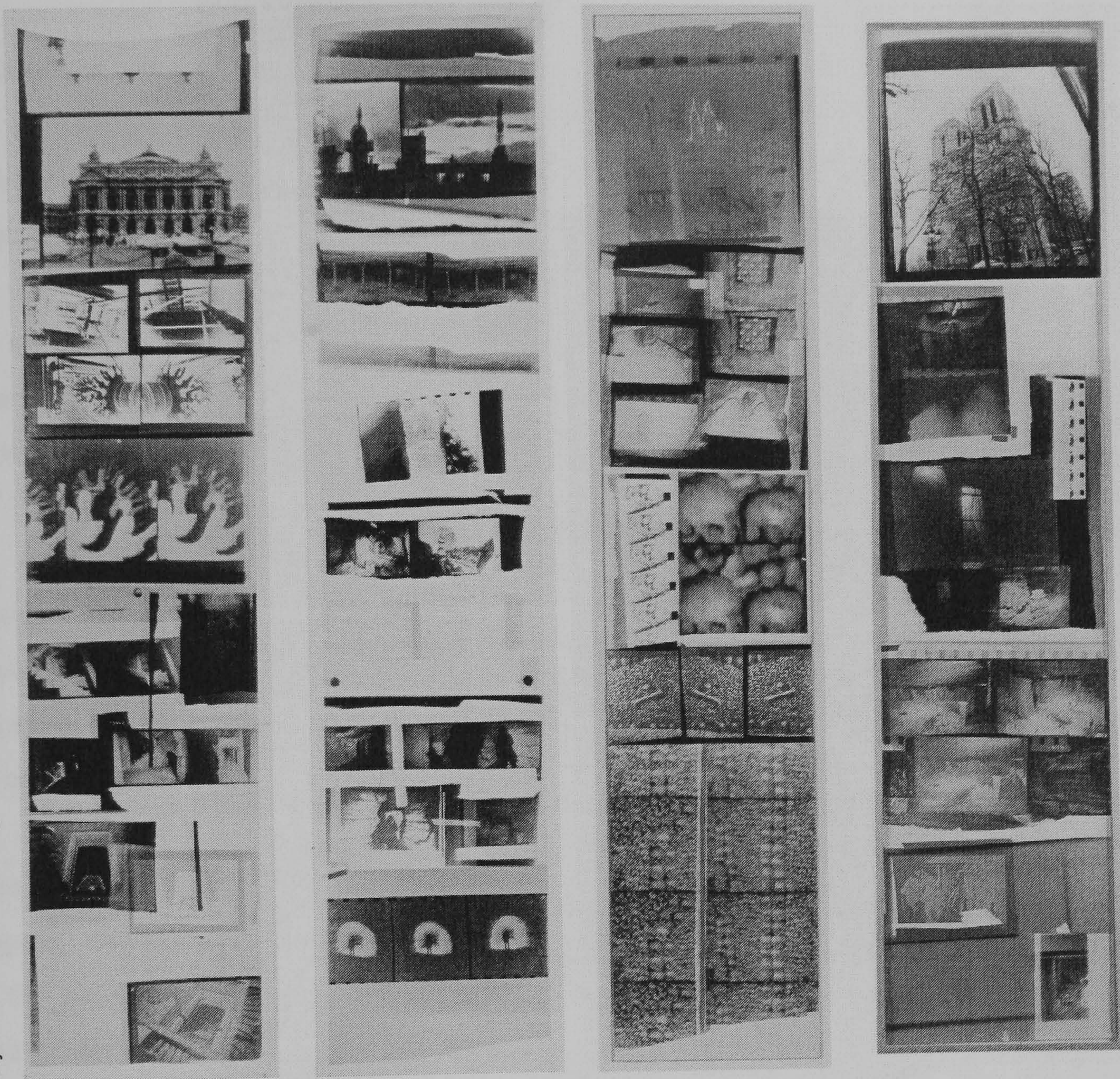
emerging within contemporary architectural debate. Matta-Clark's *search for forgotten spaces* uncovered a different and more complex kind of space and (historical) time than that associated with architectural remains.

The kind of discovery that Matta-Clark hoped to make expressly exceeded the prosaic concerns of traditional archaeology; 'I find archaeology baffling, impossible' he stated.⁷⁷ In contrast, he linked his belief in human beings as a 'fine memory device' to an archaeology of a different kind, which he referred to as 'living archaeology.'⁷⁸ Traditional, baffling archaeology employed the methods of classical science, amassing evidence to substantiate an objective version of events in the past, promoting anonymity around such work in order to ease subsequent liaisons with the discipline of History *the way it really was*. Living archaeology, rather than attempting the recovery of forgotten spaces or objects by recording them according to 'accurate' objective description, operated according to a different kind of spatiality. Matta-Clark developed his interest in exploration through projects such as *Underground Paris* (1977), *Substrait* (1978) and *Sous-sols de Paris* (1977), which were attempts to enact possible methods of this 'living archaeology.'⁷⁹

Underground Paris comprises a set of four photcollages, each of which documents a particular investigation undertaken by Matta-Clark at Les Halles, the Ópera, St. Michel, and Notre Dame respectively. (see Figure 4.2) Each collage gives up a small amount of space towards the top of the composition for a photograph of the particular site, below which are collaged images taken from the particular exploration that took place in that location. These vertical axes run through three horizontal zones that are quietly legible in the strata of the collages: the horizontal extension of the city's spaces takes its place as a middle zone of everyday familiarity, between the sky and the subterranean. The overall verticality of each of the four collages is emblematic of the process of excavation itself, although the arrangement taken up by the fragments of information within each collage, the varying legibility of these pieces (from absolutely clear to almost totally indecipherable), and the mixture of whole views, fragmented and repeated views, and gaps demonstrates that a straightforward reading of the spaces encountered cannot be sustained for long. Instead, connections are offered that exceed the strictly physical relationships between the spaces visited, or the temporal unfolding of 'discoveries' made during these explorations, providing an inventive aspect to this archaeological recovery.

Analogous devices were deployed in Matta-Clark's related filmic works, *Substrait* and *Sous Sols de Paris* (illustrated in Figures 4.3 and 4.4). When *Substrait* takes the viewer under the ground of New York, the expedition is for the most part described within a documentary format.

Halles, the Opera, St. Michel, and Notre Dame respectively. *Underground Paris* was not the only record of his subterranean explorations in this city: in the same year, he produced a filmic work *Sous-sols de Paris*, and a durational piece, *Descending Steps for Batan* (Yvon Lambert Gallery, Paris, 21st April to early May, 1977). Within the *Underground Paris* collages, images are included that in some cases replicate certain shots or sequences from the film, while in others actually include short lengths of film as part of the pasted up negative. The collages themselves were hung upstairs in the Yvon Lambert gallery while Matta-Clark dug down into the earth below the basement.



Cinematic movement in both time and space is 'conventionally' structured, with a clear temporal progression and a consistent, directional space to the film. However, this clear overall progression is on occasion interrupted when the cinematic image works to unsettle the viewer's reliance on conventional orientation devices. The various techniques that provide this interruption are more dominant in *Sous Sols*, where the majority of camera movement is unconventional, and the various dimensions that contribute to the point of view are not maintained in a stable relationship, serving to disrupt the establishment of any narrative. Many of the images themselves are hard to discern, as is the direct sound. In addition to their discrete obscurities, sound and image are frequently asynchronous, providing another source of disruption.

Matta-Clark explicitly linked his experiments in these films with his interest in mapping the act of search and discovery: 'This Spring I have been getting back to making films which,

although very different, owes some small adherence to Anthony McCall—at least in the use of the total projection space for its experience-optics... seems to be part of my search to chart and reoccupy space.⁸⁰ As his notion of living archaeology made clear, though, the act of mapping itself would not produce charts in any traditional cartographic sense; rather, the mapping produced through these exploration projects drew attention once again to the difficulty of charting space or the past in any definitive way.

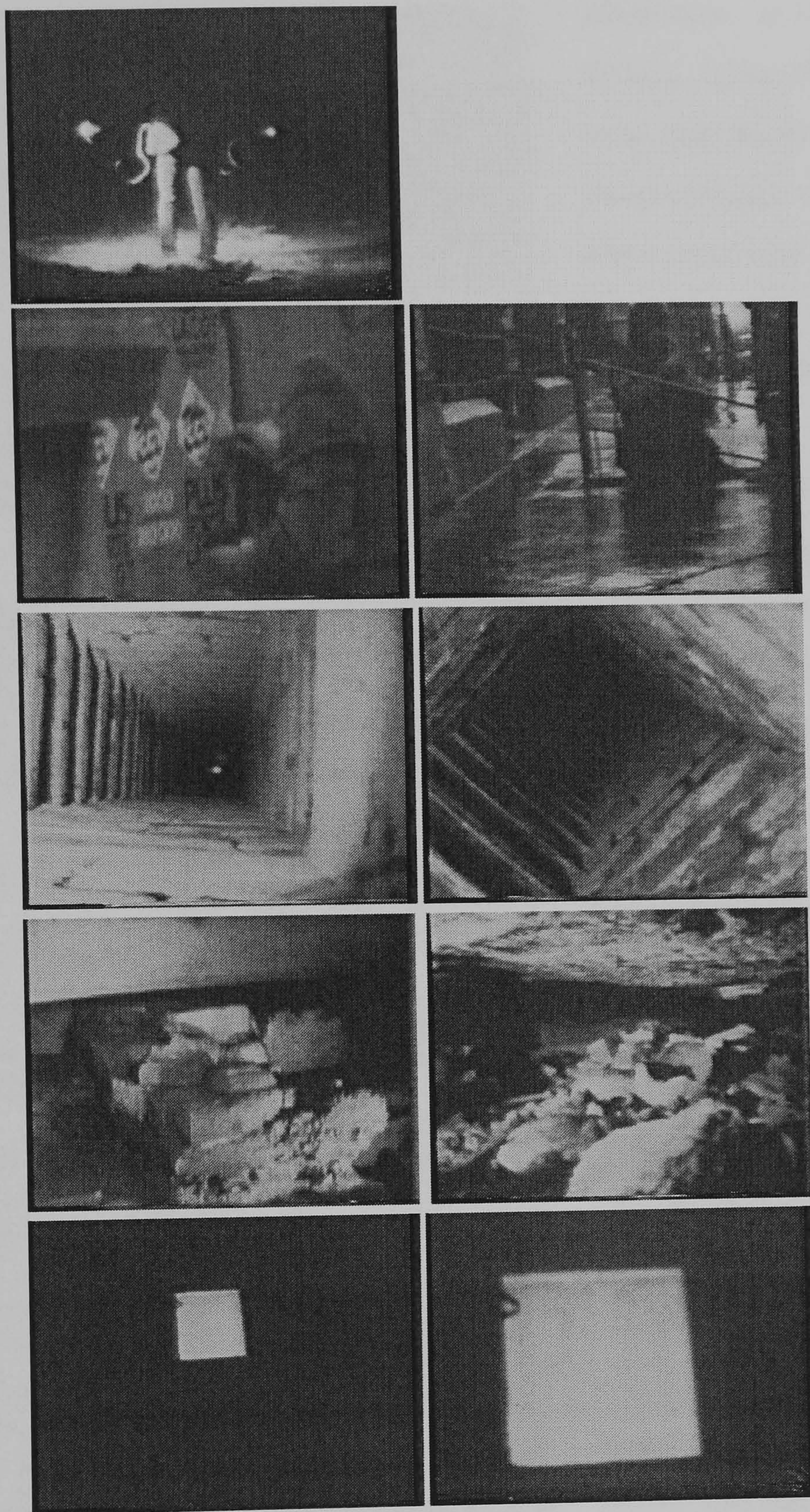
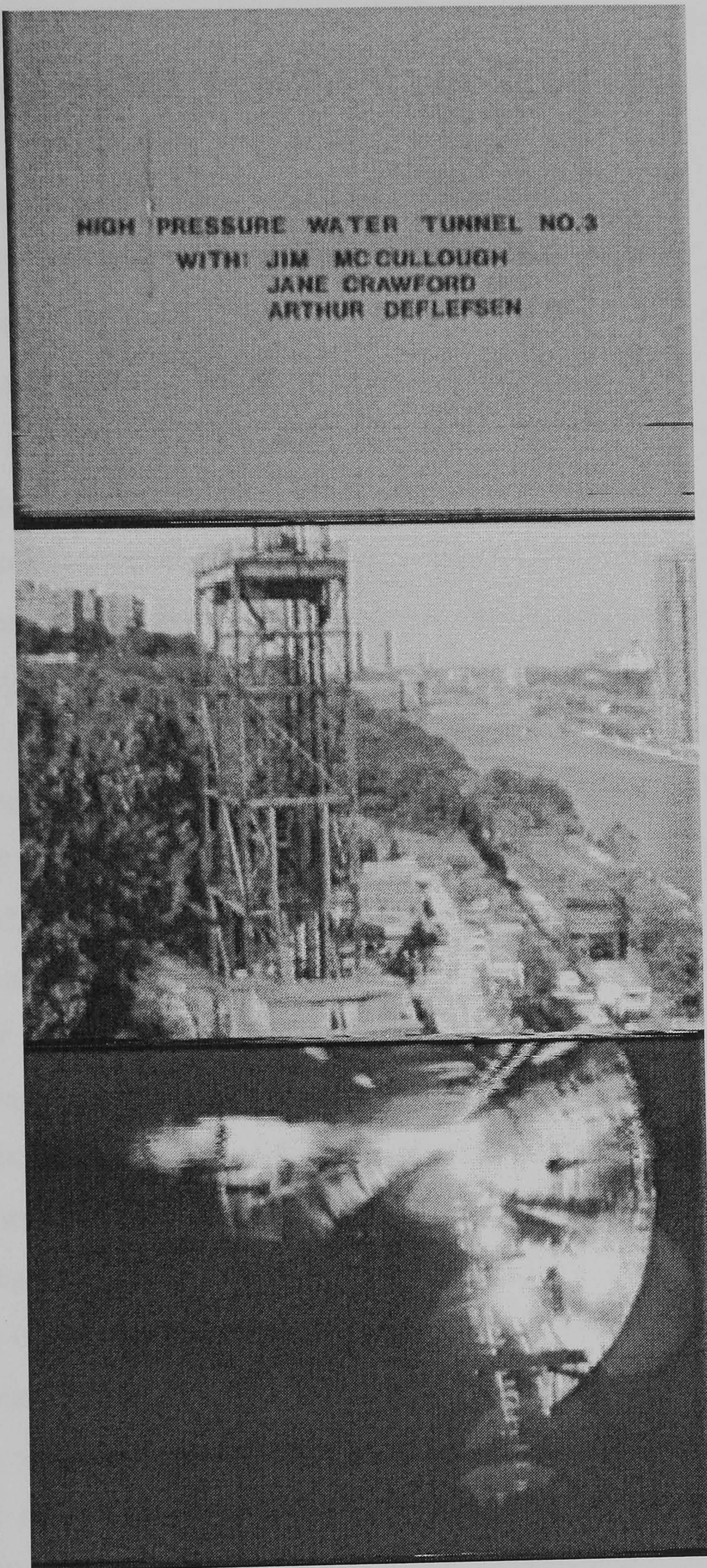


Fig. 4.3 Stills from Gordon Matta-Clark *Sous Sols de Paris* (Super 8 and 16mm, B&W, sound, 18:40 min) 1977. In *Sous Sols de Paris* there occur many repetitions and juxtapositions of both visual and 'narrative' motifs in the film language and events. Also, there is a gestural stammering, with same camera movement run over different terrain. The movement suggested by the cinematic image is frequently contrary to the actual movement of camera. Matta-Clark's ongoing working processes are in evidence here, and disrupt any straightforward designation of these works as films. The stills from the film shown here and in following figures were just one phase of work. The particular circumstances surrounding each 'film' compound the awkwardness. For example, *City Slivers* was planned for projection onto the facades of buildings: it was first shown outdoors as part of the *Arcades* exhibition during 1976, before being screened more conventionally at the Holly Solomon Gallery in New York.

In this regard, these films, and the photo-collages of *Underground Paris*, can be related to Matta-Clark's attempts to map the experience of the building dissections using photo-collages, as both operate by offering an intensive spatiality through the haptic (non-optical) aspects of vision, whose role could open onto the non-chronological time of recollection. However, there are also

Fig. 4.4 Stills from Gordon Matta-Clark *Substrait* (*Underground Dailies*) (16mm, colour and B&W, sound, 30 mins) 1976. *Substrait* was first exhibited as 'Film Projects and Underground Dailies' at the Holly Solomon Gallery over the course of a week; each day Matta-Clark would undertake an expedition, the 'mapping' of which would then be shown as a film in the gallery the following day: *Underground Dailies*, the subtitle of the piece, refers to this process. The current version of the film *Substrait* collages these *Dailies* together. Although the original screenings warrant description as a durational or performative art-piece, rather than expanded cinema, their consolidation highlights the problem of describing such projects as 'films' in any conventional sense.

Substrait is more consistently and rigidly structured and edited than *Sous-sols de Paris*. Each of its six sections is clearly identified and self-contained, each is introduced by a clear caption, and each follows the same pattern, with an 'introductory' sequence, shot in colour, that quickly changes to black and white as the particular subterranean location is entered.



differences in the particular devices Matta-Clark used to bring this about. Whereas the photo-collages of the building dissections operate the art of montage by super-posing photographs according to two (or more) conflicting organisational frameworks, the exploration pieces under discussion here rely more on the use of juxtapositions to reproduce spatial and temporal complexities.

Underground Paris and *Sous-sols de Paris* in particular are both works where the frequent occurrence of repetition and juxtaposition produces a stammering effect. The technique evident within the frames of *Underground Paris* is redeployed and expanded in the filmic work, where the repetition of both visual and narrative motifs is supplemented by the empty

pauses inscribed by lengthy black leaders. There is also a gestural stammering, with same camera movement run over different terrain: by removing the expected site of vision from the head/eye/camera to the hand at the end of an arm swinging by the side of the body as it moves along, a cinematic synaesthesia is forced. This enacts intensive spatiality, it magnifies haptic space by very literally providing a non-optical visual image, one that cannot be comprehended by the

intellect. This incomprehension is also brought about by other movements set in train by the cinematic image, implied movements that are frequently contrary to the actual movement of camera.

In addition to the way in which these stammerings open onto intensive-experimental spatiality, they also offer to interrupt the linear passage of time. Lindsay Smith has argued that photography and stammering enjoy a connection that can open out beyond their particular present: 'The act of stammering, like that of photography, is then to anticipate in the present, future hesitation as having always already occurred.'⁸¹ Although Smith draws on the 'similar temporal dimension [that] resonates both in photography and stammering,'⁸² and opens these acts out across time, her work maintains the observer, and the stammerer, along a linear temporal axis. However, her introductory analysis stresses the enabling aspects of stammering, how it works without strict adherence to the rules of 'good speech:' this bears more on the stammering within Matta-Clark's photo-collages and filmic work, which is less interesting when read along lines of anticipated hesitation than when it remains open and inventive. Matta-Clark's representations were neither about getting stuck in one place, nor recovering one place, nor about escaping entirely, but about exceeding any experience that occurs along a single temporal axis (however complex the anticipation and retrieval of time along that axis might be). His concern was to chart the search and discovery of these expeditions in order to encourage an inventive non-chronological, non-linear time within experience. In this context, stammering is enjoyed as a form-moment of representation that accommodates 'error' by failing to follow entirely the expectations of 'good' speech, allowing access to non-sanctioned modes of representation and experience, experience beyond systems of rules, a living archaeology.

Matta-Clark acknowledged the influence of Anthony McCall's expanded cinema projects on his own attempts to record and represent his explorations.⁸³ The work of both artists attempted to involve the spectator in ways that would unsettle their normal orientation by challenging their relationship to 'the real,' which as Malcolm Le Grice has argued, could no longer simply be equated with the direct experience of things: 'Some works of Expanded Cinema made it evident that if the concept of "the real" is to retain any currency it cannot be based on the unproblematic tactile physicality of objects—their evident presence.'⁸⁴ Whereas McCall's work enacts this literally, evacuating external content from the projection space in favour of a direct experience of the formal manipulation of beams of light, Matta-Clark's projects attempt to open gaps in the unproblematic tactile physicality and 'history' of objects through these stammering and collaging

techniques which offer unusual contact with external content: moments of unsettling occur when an observer's normal orientation devices associated with 'the real' begin to fail, inviting a contribution to their re-establishment through which individual circumstances and possibilities can be inscribed.

McCall expanded the traditional cinema screen, which became co-extensive with the total projection space explored by a spectator: Matta-Clark represented his own explorations by attempting to develop an 'experience-optics' that reconfigured the screen differently. This kind of reconfiguration was itself prefigured in Matta-Clark's *Camera Obscura* project in Santiago, illustrated in Figure 2.3 and discussed earlier. In that project, the observer's involvement was expanded away from the traditional, passive model of the understanding based on the camera obscura, to encourage their active participation: the screen provided there was also complex, organised around a series of mirrors whose faltering path to the sky would have presented any observer with a difficulty making a clear distinction between inside and out. Matta-Clark's screen configurations, both at Santiago and in the exploration projects, exceed both the traditional passive two-dimensional model and McCall's expanded three dimensional version, through their essential non-uniformity: it will be recalled that for Leibniz, such non-uniformity was important if any screen was to successfully represent experience, and that this screen should be sufficiently flexible, active and diverse so as to inscribe innate knowledge, past and new impressions.⁸⁵

The contingency highlighted by the various devices in Matta-Clark's exploration projects rattles various 'givens' allied to the role of the screen in the traditional *camera obscura* metaphor. These include not only the alleged universality of the space within which architecture and archaeology were traditionally expected to operate, but also the relationship that an observer might expect to have enjoyed with this space. If we consider archaeology in its broadest terms as a discipline that attempts to locate us, locate us in space and in time, then it can be appreciated that the task of locating will call on dimensions that are different in kind in the two cases of baffling and living archaeology: 'normal' movement in oriented space, if not a guarantor of truth, would certainly be taken as a prerequisite for the former.

At these moments when spaces open up beyond their common limits, Matta-Clark's living archaeology becomes impossible to 'comprehend' according to the up/down directionality of normal architectural space and the classically embodied movements that are taken for granted in such space. Living archaeology offers to locate us differently, to change the convention of both this 'us' and the coordinates 'we' are obliged to use as part of this exercise. These moments offer

an obscure clarity, which as Bergson noted, involve an effort and cannot be sustained for long on their own terms, but which pass their discoveries on to an expanded experience. Just as the inventive questioning of discrete violation does not neglect reason, the necessary co-existence of these two archaeologies must be emphasised. Methods of locating that pertain to both operate concurrently in Matta-Clark's projects, and although the balance is different in each case, neither is mutually exclusive.

When Matta-Clark's living archaeology is returned to this broader interplay with the intellect, its fuller impact becomes apparent. Instead of filling up the 'gaps' in the history (The History) of humanity, this interplay would both open gaps in the past beyond the range of official history, and permit the inventive inscription of other, non-chronological times into present experience. These and other instances of discrete violation involve moments of irrationality that nevertheless operate to link different rationalities together, and illustrate the broad claim of this work, that Matta-Clark's oeuvre remains within modernism as much as it escapes. The consequences of this suggestion can only be taken so far while the discussion remains within the key categories of modernism. Having examined 'Form' and 'Space' (and their subservient others 'Matter' and 'Time') there remain many aspects of Matta-Clark's work that cannot be adequately explored using only these categories as a guide. The remaining chapters set out to pursue a number of equally significant issues that his oeuvre raises, but that bear more obliquely on the paradigmatic concerns or terminology of modernism. These might be considered as explorations without modernism, providing an opportunity to pick up issues concerning the user, the process, and the disciplinary impact of Matta-Clark's work.

¹ Gordon Matta-Clark, *MEASUREMENT AND THE PLAN*, c.1972, EGMC, Articles & Documents 1942-76.

² Gordon Matta-Clark, cited by Judith Russi Kirshner, 'Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark,' in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.394.

³ 'Is space a social relationship? Certainly...here we see the polyvalence of social space, its 'reality' at once formal and material.' Lefebvre, *The Production of Space, op.cit.*, p.85.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.71.

⁵ Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript, op.cit.*, #6

⁶ Clearly, such associations are problematic, though the guardians of the International Style such as Giedion used purism, or the absence of it, as a criteria on which to exclude 'modern' architects such as Aalto and other 'expressionists.'

⁷ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space, op.cit.* p.28.

⁸ Bergson, *Creative Evolution, op.cit.*, p.215.

⁹ *ibid.*, p.216. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 'Space is not an empirical concept which has been derived from outer experiences.' p.68; and 'Space does not represent any property of things in themselves, nor does it represent them in their relation to one another.' p.71. Instead, space exists 'in the mind a priori... as a pure intuition, in which all objects must be determined...'

- 10 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, *op.cit.*, p.57. For Lefebvre, this inscribes individual and social dimensions: 'Every space is already in place before the appearance in it of actors; these actors are collective as well as individual subjects inasmuch as the individuals are always members of groups or classes seeking to appropriate the space in question.'
- 11 Gordon Matta-Clark, interviewed by Judith Russi-Kirshner, 'Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark', Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.390. Bergson uses the analogy of the snapshot to make a broadly similar criticism: 'Intuition starts from movement, posits it, or rather perceives it as reality itself, and sees in immobility only an abstract moment, a snapshot taken by our mind, of a mobility. Intelligence ordinarily concerns itself with things, meaning by that, with the static, and makes of change an accident which is supposedly superadded.' Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, *op.cit.*, pp.38-9.
- 12 '...we have very different bodily or kinaesthetic relations with "intensive" than we do with "extensive" spatiality. We *move* in space in ways that cannot be mapped by any "extension;" we "fill it out" according to informal diagrams that do not completely organise it, such that the space and our movements in and through it become inseparable from one another... and we must ask what our body and our brains or minds must be if we are capable of such an "intensive" or "experimental" spatiality. "Intensive space" takes us beyond the forms of the "lived body" described by phenomenology.' John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections*, MIT Press, 2000, pp.130-1.
- 13 These two spatialities can also be associated with the splitting between chronological and non-chronological tendencies of time that occurs in perception: the previous section suggested that the body's role as locus of the interplay between these different kinds of time precipitate considerations of experience that question the priority of consciousness, and intensive spatiality renews this demand. That is to say, phenomenology continues to uphold the priority of consciousness, and furthermore continues to want an aesthetics based on quasi-Kantian judgement rather than experimentation. Such issues on judgement will be examined in more detail in Chapter Six.
- 14 Rajchman argues that by extracting sensation from representation, fully 'modern' work is able to discover something mad and impersonal about it: *Rajchman, The Deleuze Connections*, p.128. (But it has already been suggested that Matta-Clark discovers a madness, or madneses elsewhere, and that rather than extracting the right (Platonic) madness of divine love, he maintains all possible wrong madneses. see Ch.2 above.)
- 15 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #829, 1970.
- 16 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, *op.cit.*, p.8
- 17 Greenwald to Simon, in Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.43.
- 18 Compare: 'Koolhaas' "Bigness" is not Promethean, then; it is quite unheroic, even indifferent or impersonal. It is not "colossal" or "sublime," it is labyrinthine, and the point is not to find a way out but rather to find new ways of moving about within its complexities and specificities, reinventing and reassembling its paths.' Rajchmann, 'Thinking Big', *op.cit.*, p.49. This notion ties in to Koolhaas's own assertion that Bigness results in the separation of façade from interior, that they become separate projects, the former applying a veneer of 'stability' over an unstable programme. (see p.53.)
- 19 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, *op.cit.*, #18-19.
- 20 There exists a labyrinthine aspect even to Matta-Clark's first work, produced while still a student at Cornell in 1968, a kind of labyrinth in negative (where the outsized 'thread' of knowledge expelled the occupants from the home of one of his instructors, LeGrace Benson: see Crow, 'Survey,' *op.cit.*, p.22.
- 21 Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Bear, 'Splitting,' *op.cit.* (It should be stressed as a point of clarity that Matta-Clark's reference to a calendar positions the latter as an 'overt and immediate' measure, a measure of spatialised time, rather than as a bearer of duration. On the Labyrinth without walls, and labyrinths more generally, see Cristina Grau, *Borges y la Arquitectura*, [1989] Ediciones Cátedra, Madrid, Third Edition 1997. Also contains illustrations of the Mezquita at Cordoba. Matta-Clark had Borges' *Ficciones* in his library.
- 22 On labyrinths and Leibniz (the 'two famous labyrinths' of necessity and liberty), and the baroque perfect labyrinth, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity*, [1984], tr. Patrick Camiller, Sage, 1994, p.24. Her project, an archaeology of the modern from within, based on Baroque culture, has influenced the present work in numerous other ways.
- 23 Gordon Matta-Clark cited in Bear, 'Splitting,' *op.cit.*
- 24 Georges Bataille, *The Labyrinth*, in Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, *op.cit.*, p.172.
- 25 Such a formulation is, of course, the traditional perception from within the labyrinth, and reverses the convention of 'whole' and 'outside' that underlies the principal or 'Normal' spatial system. There is no space

here to develop either Bataille's or, more obviously, Foucault's discussions of the dynamics of this relationship, nor to discuss the differences between them.

26 It is around these aspects that Matta-Clark's work can be distinguished from other labyrinthine projects such as Robert Morris's ongoing series, which Matta-Clark 'wasn't interested' in: (see Bear, 'Splitting,' *op.cit.*). For Morris' own ruminations of labyrinths, see his 'Threading the Labyrinth,' in *October* #96, Spring 2001, pp.61-70.) Or Le Corbusier's everlasting museum project [c.1931], on which Matta-Clark's father Roberto Matta was a collaborator. These two could be crudely positioned as beautiful and sublime labyrinths respectively, with Matta-Clark's own projects operating an interplay between both tendencies.

27 Richard Nonas stated the three sets of three doors were to provide the visitor with options. Richard Nonas, in conversation with the author, 10th January 2002, David Zwimmer Gallery, Greene Street. Nonas helped Matta-Clark construct *Open House*, and has staged several reconstructions since, (which he believed to have been reasonably successful) including those at the exhibitions *Alternatives in Retrospect, an historical overview, 1969-1975* (New Museum, New York, 1981); *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective*, (Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1985); ACE Gallery, Los Angeles, 1989; and *Gordon Matta-Clark* (IVAM Centre Julio Gonzalez, Valencia, 1993).

28 Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections, op.cit.*, p.100.

29 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #829, 1970.

30 Many of these games are also played out Matta-Clark's contemporaneous film project *Automation House* (Half-Inch and 16mm film, Black and White, with soundtrack, 32mins. 1972), where there is some similarity in disruptive, repetitive experience, brought about through the cinematic medium and language rather than by the physical movement of a visitor.

31 Gordon Matta-Clark, Undated Notecard, EGMC, c.1974. It will be recalled that for Bataille, to exercise one's life fully was to balance 'being' and knowledge, and that any attempt to attain complete knowledge at the expense of this balance would result in self-mutilation.

32 Bergson, *The Creative Mind, op.cit.*, p.34.

33 Gordon Matta-Clark, to Liza Bear, 'Splitting,' *op.cit.* Briony Fer discusses the complexity and simultaneity of scale through her analysis of Matta-Clark's photocollages; see Briony Fer, 'Celluloid Circus: Gordon Matta-Clark's Color Cibachromes,' in Elisabeth Sussman (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure*, Whitney Museum of American Art with Yale University Press, New York, 2007.

34 Judith Russi Kirshner, *Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark*, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.391.

35 There are of course exceptions: Lefebvre's interest in the 'cryptic opacity' of the body recurred in his notion of the 'everyday,' where various different kinds of time intersected and maintained an irrational and comfortable co-existence. 'The everyday is situated at the intersection of two modes of repetition: the cyclical, which dominated in nature, and the linear, which dominated in processes known as 'rational'... Some people cry out against the acceleration of time, others cry out against stagnation. They're both right.' Henri Lefebvre, "The Everyday and Everydayness," in *Yale French Studies* #73, 1987, p.10.

36 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space, op.cit.*, p.203.

37 'Incorporating practices ... provide a particularly effective system of mnemonics. In this there is an element of paradox. For it is true that whatever is written, and more generally whatever is inscribed, demonstrates, by the fact of being inscribed, a will to be remembered and reaches as it were the fulfilment in the formation of a canon. It is equally true that incorporating practices, by contrast, are largely traceless and that, as such, they are incapable of providing a means by which any evidence of a will to be remembered can be 'left behind' ... Yet it would be misleading, on this account, to underestimate the mnemonic importance and persistence of what is incorporated. Incorporating practices depend for their particular mnemonic effect on two distinctive features: their mode of existence and their mode of acquisition. They do not exist 'objectively,' independently of their being performed.' Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.102.

38 *ibid.*, p.103. Connerton's project explicitly treats memory as a cultural rather than an individual faculty; the interrelationship between individual and society. (For an article that goes some way to complement Connerton's own discussion of individual and collective memory, see Mark Wigley, 'The Architectural cult of Synchronisation' in *October* #94, Fall 2000, pp.31-61.)

39 Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Judith Russi Kirshner, 'Non-Uments,' in *Artforum*, 24, 2 (October 1985), p.108.

40 Stephen Kern has surveyed the European and North-American experiences of the changes that occurred during the early years of modernism, noting the 'affirmation of a plurality of times and spaces.' Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, p.8. Among these changes, Kern lists psychoanalysis, Cubism, World Standard

Time, Einstein's Theory of Relativity, the wireless, telephone, X-ray, cinema, the bicycle, car and aeroplane. His conclusion draws on the possibilities of the new times and spaces emerging then, and states that it was the present that was most acutely felt, most 'distinctively new, thickened temporally with retentents and pro-tensions of past and future, and, most important, expanded spatially to create the vast, shared experience of simultaneity.' Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, p.314.

41 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, *op.cit.*, p.95-6. Although 'modernity' and 'modernism' are clearly not co-extensive, Lefebvre's observation can be brought to bear on Kern's period of analysis without difficulty.

42 Mark Wigley approaches a similar criticism, but broadens architecture's erasure of time to all periods: 'The folding of the linear sense of time made possible by an institutionalized forgetting is what produces the architectural effect of a suspension of time. This twist that positions a building at once within and outside of time is not unique to the historical avant-garde. It is congenital to the discipline. The gesture is endlessly repeated.' Mark Wigley, 'The Architectural cult of Synchronisation' in *October* #94, Fall 2000, pp.59-60.

43 'There is, as it were... a gap between rule and application, and a gap between code and execution. This gap must, I shall suggest, be reclaimed by a theory of habitual practice, and, therefore, of habit-memory.' Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, *op.cit.*, p.34.

44 This is only a source of light criticism from Connerton, brought on by Bergson's comments along these lines: '...pure memory...interests no part of my body.' Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, *op.cit.*, p.139. i.e. non-localisable. That Connerton's own work enjoys a good dose of Bergsonism should be no surprise: he acknowledges the importance of Halbwachs' work on *Collective Memory*, remarking that individual memory detached from social memory 'is an abstraction almost devoid of meaning.' Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, *op.cit.*, p.37.: Halbwachs was a student of Bergson, but criticised the individualism of Bergson's philosophy. Perhaps more surprising is the Bergsonian aspect of Lefebvre's work referred to in the previous few paragraphs: Lefebvre's early career in the *jeune philosophes* group is often posited as explicitly one of revolt against establishment philosophers, typically Bergson, while later reprochement with certain aspects of Bergson is frequently overlooked.

45 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, *op.cit.*, p.236. Italics in the original. Bergson's incorporated memory (habits) and recollection were different, 'theoretically independent'; one available through the body (Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p.81-2) the other immediately pictured in the mind ('To picture is not to remember.' Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p.135. see also pp.152-3.

46 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, *op.cit.*, p.361, emphasis in original.

47 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, *op.cit.*, p.26.

48 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, *op.cit.*, #11a

49 'Bergson constantly circles around the following conclusion...: attentive recognition informs us to a much greater degree when it fails than when it succeeds.' Giles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, [1985], tr. Hugh Tomlinson & Robert Galeta, The Athlone Press, London, 1989, pp.54-5. Bergson discusses 'localised disorders of memory' throughout Bergson, *Matter and Memory*.

50 Forty, *Words and Buildings*, *op.cit.*, p.215. Forty goes on to suggest 'that 'memory' on its own is not interesting; what matters is the tension between memory and forgetting.' *ibid.*, p.218. It is in Proust's concept of *mémoire involontaire* that Benjamin finds a model for his 'dialectical image,' weaving remembrance (as opposed to 'memory') and forgetting in a sudden, spontaneous recollection: 'Concerning the *mémoire involontaire*: not only do its images not come when we try to call them up: rather, they are images which we have never seen before we remember them... Yet these images, developed in the darkroom of the lived moment, are the most important we will ever see.' Walter Benjamin, *A Short Speech on Proust*, cited in Miriam Hansen, 'Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology",' in *New German Critique* 40, Winter 1987, p.174. Benjamin introduces Proust's concept of *mémoire involontaire* via remarks by Theodor Reik (Freud's pupil): ' "The function of remembrance..." Reik writes, "is the protection of impressions; memory...aims at their disintegration. Remembrance is essentially conservative, memory is destructive."' Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,' in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn, London, Fontana Press, 1992, p.157. These terms could roughly correspond to the incorporated memory and inscribed memory analysed by Connerton.

51 Gordon Matta-Clark, looseleaf notes, EGMC, *Articles and Documents 1942-78*, Anarchitecture period, c.1972.

52 Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1989, p.58.

53 Lefebvre frequently asserts the difference between the 'generation' of space (architecture) and its 'production;' see for example *The Production of Space*, *op.cit.*, pp104, 200, 285, 355-361. 'Indeed, he asserts the importance of reinscribing labyrinthine spaces as the domination of knowledge is overcome: 'The way for

physical space, for the practico-sensory realm, to restore or reconstitute itself is ... by struggling against the *ex post facto* projections of an accomplished intellect, against the reductionism to which knowledge is prone. Successfully waged, this struggle would overturn the Absolute Truth and the Realm of Sovereign Transparency and rehabilitate underground, lateral, labyrinthine...relations. An uprising of the body, in short, against the signs of non-body.' Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, *op.cit.*, pp.200-1.

54 Walter Benjamin, 'A Berlin Chronicle,' in Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, tr. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, Verso, London, 1979, p.305. According to Gilloch, 'Benjamin links time and space in two ways: the journey into the past is a voyage into the distance, and movement in memory is like that in a labyrinth. These may initially be seen as complementary images, but they are actually antithetical...[traditionally], [t]o journey into the distance is to be a traveller; to journey within a labyrinth is to be a flâneur, one who wanders without destination. For Benjamin, time is not a linear progression. The past is not left behind as one moves on, but, like spaces in a labyrinth, is continually encountered again, returned to, though approached from different directions. Motion in the city and in memory is a persistent going nowhere in particular that constitutes a perpetual rediscovery.' Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996, p.68.

55 Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis*, *op.cit.*, p.77, reading Benjamin, *One Way Street*, *op.cit.*, p.314. Matta-Clark expressed his interest in Benjamin's work.

56 Gordon Matta-Clark, Kirshner Interview, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.393.

57 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, *op.cit.*, p.88.

58 Gordon Matta-Clark, Kirshner Interview, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.393. Emphasis added.

59 Briony Fer discusses 'the space of the bodily encounter with the image' produced and sustained by the photocollages, and that they operate at two scales simultaneously; big and small. see Fer, 'Celluloid Circus,' *op.cit.*, p.140.

60 Deleuze and Guattari introduce the term 'haptic' carefully: "'Haptic" is a better word than "tactile" since it does not establish an opposition between two sense organs but rather invites the assumption that the eye itself may fulfill this non-optical function.' Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, [1980], tr. Brian Massumi, The Athlone Press, 1987; see Chapter 14 '1440: The Smooth and the Striated,' esp. pp.492-500.

61 Gordon Matta-Clark, interviewed by Judith Russi-Kirshner, 'Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark', in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.390. He is here referring to the dissections themselves.

62 Peter de Bolla's discussion of the slight of hand involved in theories of perspective addresses the continuing existence of the 'polyvalent point of sight.' in a way that signals the broader importance of this aspect of Matta-Clark's oeuvre: see Peter de Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics and the Subject*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, (in particular chapter 8, 'Of the Distance of the Picture: the Viewing Subject' pp.186-222). For him, the promise of this polyvalence is such that it signals a moment when 'practice fractures the authority of theory.' p.198. His argument that submission to the legislative view 'restricts the viewer's own creative potential.' p.204 mirrors Bergson's demand that time is invention.

63 Jonathan Hill, *The Illegal Architect*, Black Dog Publishing, London, 1998, p.46. He tees this up by arguing 'Montage deploys all the techniques of allegory: the depletion of meaning, the fragmentation and dialectical juxtaposition of parts and their dissemination through a new context. The uneasy resolution of montage indicates that meaning is historically contingent, open to revision, and cultural rather than natural.' Hill points to the way in which montage can operate beyond disciplinary sanction by involving images and procedures 'taken from the world as a whole.' He makes similar points again, and at length, in *Jonathan Hill, Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users*, Routledge, 2003.

64 Yve-Alain Bois, 'A Picturesque Stroll Around Clara-Clara,' in *October*, 29, (Summer 1984), p.34. Appropriately in our present context, Bois begins with Richard Serra's assertion that 'if you reduce sculpture to the flat plane of the photograph, you're passing on only a residue of your concerns. You're denying the temporal experience of the work.' Richard Serra and Douglas Crimp, 'Richard Serra's Urban Sculpture: An Interview,' [1980] in *Richard Serra: Interviews etc.*, The Hudson River Museum, 1980, p.170, cited (partly) in Bois p.33.

This is not the first occasion when Bois' text has been run alongside Matta-Clark's work: Judith Russi Kirshner makes reference to Bois' piece, and makes links between Serra and Matta-Clark regarding the need for moving spectator; see her 'Non-Uments,' in *Artforum* (October 1985) p.108, (reprinted in Diserens and

Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.367.). Lee takes Bois up more specifically within her discussion of the dynamic sublime; see Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed, op.cit.*, pp.145, 154.

65 Bois, 'A Picturesque Stroll Around Clara-Clara,' *op.cit.*, p.54.

66 Serra's sculptures enact a 'separation between the *idea* of totality and the perceived impossibility of understanding that totality.' *ibid.*, p.60.

67 Serra's approach is to discuss his work in terms of exceeding the good form of Gestalt psychology. The differences in technique between the work of the two artists further complicates this comparison; Matta-Clark's dissections were produced by inscribing negative spaces within the existing fabric of buildings, where the presence of Cartesian geometry remains strong thanks to the rectilinearity of the cellular spaces that makeup the buildings dissected in this way. Moreover, the cuts themselves have strongly identifiable geometric forms (flat planes, cones, spheres, circles); Bois' own reading of Piranesi's *Carceri* suggests that such forms can be completed by the observer, whether or not they fully exist or are seen in full.

68 John Macarthur, 'The Butcher's Shop: Disgust in Picturesque Aesthetics and Architecture,' in *Assemblage*, 30, August 1996), p.34.

69 Perhaps appropriately, Uvedale Price's *Essays on the Picturesque* [1810], which Bois' cites in his work on Serra, seems closer to Matta-Clark's intention to encourage curiosity through creative questioning; Price argued that a Picturesque quality of 'intricacy in landscape might be defined, [as] that disposition of objects which, by a partial and uncertain concealment, excites and nourishes curiosity.' see Bois, 'A Picturesque Stroll Around Clara-Clara,' *op.cit.*, p.43.

70 Peter de Bolla discusses anamorphosis, perspective, and the struggle between theories and embodied sight. Of particular interest to the present discussion is 'the problematic situation in which the object is viewed from more than one position' de Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime, op.cit.*, p.197. de Bolla goes on to discuss the sequential viewing of fragmented images (the ceiling of the Banqueting House), 'this fracturing of the time of sight and the distance of the subject naturally leads to a corresponding fracturing of the subject: the self is not unique and produced all at once, it is not even the product of each point of view. Rather, it has a persistence, a residue which is carried over from point of sight to point of sight, one moment of production to the next; it not only has spatial location, but also a temporal persistence.' p.209. Clearly, this resonates with the present discussion around Bergson's duration and Matta-Clark's time and scale, and so on. De Bolla's discussion also develops into a comparison between the experience of (sublime, or picturesque) landscape and a representation of that landscape. He cites J. H. Pott's *An Essay on Landscape Painting* which is interesting in that it separates out spectatorial responses as involving, separately, appreciation of virtuosity and verisimilitude; for de Bolla, this necessarily inscribes a creative temporal dimension to the experience of viewing: 'The operation of separation...introduces time into the viewing experience, since the image, in itself, includes both ...qualities...[or genres—SW]: it is the viewer who must untangle them both.' p.210. Moreover, the presence of these two genres within the same image conflict with one another, 'one keeps interfering.'

71 Gordon Matta-Clark, Kirshner Interview, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.393.

72 Deleuze, *Cinema 2, op.cit.*, p.132.

73 Gordon Matta-Clark, Loose notes, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942-76*, #1340. Contains plans and sections of the area of the dig. The digging here initially operated as a process of revelation by exposing the stuff that usually remained unseen below the basement; the experience of this juxtaposition would unsettle the usual expectations regarding enclosed, architectural space; although the result of the dig—a hole below the building and a pile of earth within it—could be reasoned through, the initial experience would not be able to simply account for it. As with many projects, the dig itself was worked over on several occasions; it was first developed as *Cherry Tree*, where Matta-Clark planted a tree in the hole and grassed the mound of earth, and provided artificial light for the plants to grow. *Time Well* was done six months later, following the death of the tree, and involved burrying a glass jar containing seeds from the tree in the original hole. In all cases, the gestures introduce elements into the original site that exceeded the logic or expectations of that particular place. Other similar sketches can be found (Jeffrey's basement, 'BREAK INS/ HIT SPOTS/ WAYS OF BREAKING AND ENTERING/ TAKING A SPACE AND PROVIDING ALL THE WAYS OF BREAKING IN) —Gordon Matta-Clark, Loose notes, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942-76*, c.1974. and MOS. OF MOD. ART BASEMENT (Camera obscura sketch from —Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #828, c.1969-71, p.55.)

74 Gordon Matta-Clark to Donald Wall, in Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' *op.cit.*, p.79.

- 75 Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis, op.cit.*, p.70. Gilloch emphasises that ‘Benjamin’s archaeology ...is an archaeology of the experience of the modern city dweller and of modernity itself, an act of discovery which embraces both personal and collective history.’ p.70.
- 76 Dan Graham, ‘Gordon Matta-Clark,’ in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.201.
- 77 Judith Russi Kirshner, *Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark*, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.391.
- 78 Matta-Clark refers to ‘living archaeology’ in documentation associated with *Substrait*: for example, a letter to Dennis Wendling (EGMC, *Letters* 1976, April 20th, 1976) and again in a *Substrait* flier. (EGMC, *Letters* 1976). More broadly, the extant working documentation on the project reveals that Matta-Clark’s stated aims regarding *Substrait* were somewhat ambiguous, shifting strategically, and understandably, according to his audience.
- 79 At this time, Matta-Clark’s renewed interest in film-making provided the principal technique for mapping his explorations; of interest here are his filmic works *City Slivers* and in particular *Substrait (Underground Dalies)*, both shot in New York in 1976, and *Soul-sols de Paris* from the following year. For a fuller discussion of his late use of film as a medium, which covers *Substrait* and *Soul-sols de Paris*, see Stephen Walker, ‘*Baffling Archaeology: The Strange Gravity of Gordon Matta-Clark’s Experience-Optics*,’ in *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2, 2 (August 2003), pp.161-185, which explores in more detail the question of orientation and its relationship to Matta-Clark’s development of what he termed *experience-optics*.
- 80 Gordon Matta-Clark, letter to Wolfgang Becker (Aachen), EGMC, *Letters*, 1976, June 10th 1976.
- 81 Lindsay Smith, ‘Lewis Carroll: Stammering, Photography and the Voice of Infancy,’ in *Journal of Visual Culture*, 3, 1 (April 2004), p.105.
- 82 *ibid.*, p.104.
- 83 For McCall, it was important to draw attention to the conditions of cinematic projection in order to emphasise the extent of a spectator’s interaction in the cinematic experience: works such as *Line Describing a Cone*, which directly influenced Matta-Clark’s dissection *Conical Intersect*, was not projected in traditional cinema auditorium but in an empty (well, smoke filled) room with no screen. The audience simply faced the projector, and was ‘expected to move up and down, in and out of the beam—this film [*Line Describing a Cone*] cannot be fully experienced by a stationary spectator. This means that the film demands a multi-perspectival viewing situation... The shift of image as a function of shift of perspective is the operative principle of the film. *External content is eliminated...*’ Deke Dusinberre, ‘On Expanding Cinema,’ in *Studio International*, 190, 978 (November-December 1975), p.224. (Emphasis added.) Clearly these demands on the spectator echo Matta-Clark’s assertion that ‘you have to walk’ around his building dissections, and his attempts to transpose this experience through the photo-collages of the building dissections have been explored.
- 84 Malcolm Le Grice, ‘Mapping in Multi-Space, Expanded Cinema to Virtuality,’ in S. Breitwieser (ed.), *White Cube/Black Box*, EA-Generali Foundation, Vienna, 1996, p.279.
- 85 Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, (Book II, Ch.xi) p.144.

Part II: Minor Architecture

The expanded notions of time, space, matter and form that Matta-Clark's œuvre offers cannot be sustained without the work of the observer, a situation that contrasts with the passivity expected of Modernism's viewer. Matta-Clark's œuvre developed a number of strategies to contest the expectations of the relationship between this viewer and a work, and moved instead towards more contingent relationships where the observer's body became significant in the establishment and maintenance of the various complexities introduced in previous chapters.

If we return to Matta-Clark's conversation with Donald Wall that introduced the earlier discussion of archaeology, we can begin to get a better understanding of his priorities regarding the relationships between work and gallery. The intention to use his artistic activities as a way of 'working back into society from beneath' clarifies that his principal concern was not just to address the gallery-going public, but to have a broader impact on people generally. He continued: 'Although the original idea involved possible subversive acts, I am now more interested in the act of search and discovery. This activity should bring art out of the gallery and into the sewers.'¹

While Matta-Clark's interest in bringing art 'out of the gallery' echoed growing contemporary criticism of the gallery system that culminated in the institutional critique of the 1970s and 80s, his projects were not a simple subversion of that system. It must be emphasised that his central concern was to expand human experience by encouraging participation (the act of search and discovery), and that for him, simply working in non-gallery spaces would not necessarily overcome the reductive situation of modernist aesthetics, as he emphasised to Judith Russi-Kirshner: 'even...the people who have escaped the so-called "sculpture habit" by going into some sort of landscape, or extra-gallery, extra-museum type of territorial situation [repeat the whole object quality that is with all sculpture.]'²

A number of his projects operated to contest the simplistic understanding of gallery/extra-gallery polarity, such as his early work *Pipes* (1971),³ which revealed the hidden gas pipework servicing the Boston School of the Museum of Fine Arts building, or one aspect of his Galleria Salvatore Ala project (1975, illustrated in Figure 7.3) where he installed a wire that ran through the whole building, connecting the main gallery spaces with external courtyards, offices, cupboards,

toilets, and establishing a physical link between all the spaces that usually remain hidden but that allow the gallery to run. These small projects recall Matta-Clark's assertion that beyond considering his work around either inside or outside, he was working *within*. This in turn emphasises his determination not simply to play around inside or outside the gallery system, but to have an impact on the spatial systematization that was epitomized by the gallery, but manifest much more oppressively in the carcereal state of, for example, social housing he observed:

PRISON CELLS—LIVING CELLS

ENCLOSURE—CONTAINMENT—CONFINE-

MENT MIND CELL \angle BODY CELL⁴

The expanded experience of space discussed during in the previous chapter was symptomatic of a broader interest shared by many avant-garde artists in this period. Motivated to contest the restrictions of modernism's dominant purism, this avant-garde targeted not only the accepted forms of art, but also the broader conditions for experiencing an artwork, including the institutional museum and gallery system, the space of the gallery itself, and the assumptions surrounding the notion of the viewer.⁵ Announced initially through the symbolic removal of sculpture's plinth or painting's frame, new positions for 'viewing' were offered in an attempt to challenge the universalism, disinterest and passivity assumed in the modernist model of the reception of art. This increased politicisation among many avant-garde artists reflected a more general cultural shift running through the 1960s in both Europe and North America. Although this increasing artistic reaction against viewer passivity was arguably superficial and had little political effect, a substitute for fully participatory democratic politics, it is frequently taken as the point of coherence amongst the avant-garde in the face of rapidly diverging kinds of artistic output.

In her survey of the emergence and development of installation art, of one of the many 'new' art 'forms' to emerge during the 1960s and 1970s, Julie Reiss traces this reassessment and increasing valorisation of the viewer. In the face of the non-specificity of 'installation art,' and other emergents such as performance art, site-specific work, and so on, she suggests installation work can cohere around the notion of spectator participation: 'The essence of Installation art is spectator participation... In each [Installation project], the viewer is required to complete the piece; the meaning evolves from the interaction between the two.'⁶ Despite various caveats, she maintains that both the coherence and promise of installation work resides in this notion of participation.⁷

To offer the spectator a participatory role in producing an evolving and contingent meaning was counter to the position sought by modernism, where the unalterable meaning of a work (whether in painting, sculpture, or architecture) was to be apprehended by the mind free from any worldly distraction or eventuality.⁸ Although this general privilege borne by the mind's eye over the dubious stuff of sense perception demonstrated modernism's continuing allegiance to traditional aesthetic priorities, this position came to be epitomised by the sanctity of the 'White Cube' gallery space, where any such extraneous interference was removed from the viewing environment. The construction of this environment was far from innocent, and can be read literally and metaphorically for modernism's attempts to overcome sense-perception and duration. In the introduction to Brian O'Doherty's well known essays on the *White Cube*, Thomas McEvilley argues that '[t]his specially segregated space is a kind of non-space, ultra-space, or ideal space where the surrounding matrix of space-time is symbolically annulled.'⁹

Read in this way, the modernist gallery can take its position alongside other significant examples where particular spaces have been deployed metaphorically or allegorically to stand for the nature of the relationship between human beings and the world, to explain the role of the mind and the senses, and the location of 'truth.' To establish the gallery as 'ideal space' was to attempt the establishment of what Lefebvre criticises as 'transparency,' where a path is cleared between the object of contemplation and the mind of the observer. As such, this gallery attempts to set itself up in opposition to the space of opacity and falsity allegorised in Plato's cave, as Lefebvre intimates:

The illusion of transparency goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps or secret places. Anything hidden or dissimulated—and hence dangerous—is antagonistic to transparency, under whose reign everything can be taken in by a single glance from that mental eye which illuminates whatever it contemplates. Comprehension is thus supposed, without meeting any insurmountable obstacles, to conduct what is perceived, i.e. its object, from the shadows into the light.¹⁰

While Matta-Clark's stated interest in bringing art 'out of the gallery and into the sewers'¹¹ implicitly echoes McEvilley's criticism of the gallery as an 'ideal space,' his projects were not a simple reversal of Plato's schema. His real target was the system that these spaces stood in for. The allegory of the cave from Plato onwards (*Republic VII*) has accumulated a number of interpretations; it is frequently taken to emphasise the Western tradition's privileging of the *eidos* or Idea over the sensual and the material, and the notion of 'progress' or 'civilization' linked to its accomplishment.¹² Within the hierarchy of the senses that is established and sustained by Plato's cave, vision occupies an ambiguous position, as it is apparently privileged over the other bodily

senses, only to be undermined, along with these, as the mind's eye achieved truth. Le Corbusier stressed this Platonic undercurrent in modern architecture: 'Architecture is a conception of the mind. It must be conceived in your head, with your eyes shut.'¹³

Relying on the eye is not simply to use fewer of the available bodily senses, it is a move that is complicit with the whole structure of judgement that prioritises the intellect and defers to pre-existing truths: 'THE SENSES DEFINE SPACES WHICH ARE IN OCCUPIABLE'¹⁴ Matta-Clark quips in one of his awkward and pithy aphorisms. In contrast to Le Corbusier, he expressed his interest in experience that was not reliant on the eye or mind's eye, suggesting that this could open onto other possibilities: 'THE CLOSE COMFORT OF BLINDNESS: NOT AS MUCH A LOSS AS SHARPENING OF THE OTHER SENSES.'¹⁵ 'Blindness' here must be qualified as the loss of a particular kind of sight, namely that which is allied to the maintenance of rules: '...ANARCHITECTURE IS A SEARCH FOR QUALITIES BEYOND THE RULE. A CLOSER AWARENESS OF ALL THE SENSES...'¹⁶

ARCHITECTURE IS PERCEIVED NOT
BY THE EYE BUT BY THE MIND
THE MIND IS THE GREATEST DOMESTIC
ORBIT + MEASURE ARE IN THE MIND
THESE ARE AVAILABLE QUALITIES IN AN
ORDER - BUT ANARCHITECTURE IS A SEARCH FOR
QUALITIES BEYOND THE RULE A CLOSER
AWARENESS OF ALL THE SENSES WITH LITTLE
WITH IN THE ~~FRAME~~ OF PROBLEMS
SOLVED - PROBLEMS SOLVED WITH FEELING

The important consequences of these assertions lie more in the desire to exceed the rule, particularly the rules governing the role of the senses, than in an expanded awareness of all the senses *per se*. This raises the possibility that the senses can continue to function without the sanction of the intellect, and suggests a

change to the way in which sensual experience is described. Matta-Clark set out to operate beyond opposition or the replacement of one system with another: 'I do not want to create a totally new supportive field of vision, of cognition. I want to re-use the old one, the existing framework of thought and sight.'¹⁷ The previous chapter demonstrated various ways in which this could be read through the complex spatiality of his projects (where extensive and intensive modes of experience were available). Examining his thinking on the observer or user more generally, it can be said that for Matta-Clark, to question Plato's cave was not just to involve *more* senses, it was to open up new possibilities by inviting both 'a way of thought and a system of play:'

PLATO - SHADOWS IN THE WALL OF
A CAVE... DEPTH OF
MEANING AND DEFINITIONS
OF LAYERED REALITY.
A WAY OF ~~THOUGHT~~ A SYSTEM
OF PLAY.

PLATO—SHADOWS IN THE WALL OF A CAVE... DEPTH OF MEANING AND DEFINITIONS OF LAYERED REALITY. A WAY OF THOUGHT A SYSTEM OF PLAY.¹⁸

Matta-Clark's discrete violation of the equally significant camera obscura model discussed earlier can stand for many of his projects, in that it remained within and exceeded the spaces of

modernist reception, both literally and programmatically, with the intention of exercising the participant and making their faculties *more elastic*. Similar intentions motivated projects such as *Open House* or the exploration projects *Underground Paris* and *Sous-sols de Paris*. Rather than reinforcing the Platonic temporal and epistemological relationship between the cave and the outside (before/after and matter/mind), Matta-Clark's take on Plato's cave holds these in a more complex relationship of mutual support, which has consequences both on the 'viewer's' experience, and on their process of making judgements regarding that experience. Rather than moving from one to the other, from falsity to truth, cave to outside, Matta-Clark oeuvre suggests that experience has the capacity to bring both together, to be inside and outside in the same experience.

As previous chapters have argued, Matta-Clark's discrete violations alter the Platonic relationship between matter and form (*eidos*). O'Doherty suggests that although mainstream modernism faithfully repeats the Platonic distinction between impure and pure, the more interesting art of the 1960s and 1970s renegotiated the relationships that bore on the audience of artworks in such a way as to establish a dialogue between these two principles of experience, such that the '...Eye and Spectator were not fused but co-operated for the occasion. The finely tuned Eye was impressed with some of residual data from its abandoned body (the kinaesthetics of gravity, tracking, etc.) The Spectator's other senses, always there in the raw, were infused with some of the Eye's fine discriminations.'¹⁹

On Matta-Clark's account, to locate shadows *in* the wall of the cave is to emphasise the more thoroughgoing involvement of matter in experience, and to suggest that any attempt to disentangle light and matter would be more complex than previously acknowledged. This would alter the strict coincidence between sense experience and the material world on the one hand, and between thought and truth on the other, pursuing implications of Plato's schema that traditionally are played down. Eslick notes that for Plato, 'Matter is neither sensible nor intelligible...but in the strict sense irrational... The "creative" function of [Plato's] matter is its negation of essential reality.'²⁰ To accept both the 'irrationality' of matter and the role of the intelligence would have significant consequences for experience: participation would then involve the possibilities of invention, rather than being tied to repeating what has gone before. As already established, Bergson's work championed invention, and his hope was to establish the relativity of intelligence by 'reabsorbing it into the Whole,' which would 'end by expanding the humanity in us and making

us even transcend it.’²¹ Indeed, he roundly attacks Plato’s allegory: ‘Human intelligence, as we represent it, is not at all what Plato taught in the allegory of the cave.’²²

So rather than leaving the cave behind, Matta-Clark’s projects demonstrate an approach to participatory experience that operates by addition; inside plus outside, matter plus mind. They do not overturn the Platonic schema by reversing it, but work through and recombine the moments and categories that Plato wished to hold apart. While some important aspects of the viewer’s experience have already been discussed in terms of the kinaesthetic consequences of his demand ‘you have to walk,’ Matta-Clark’s understanding of participation sketched out here can be more fully appreciated with reference to the work of philosopher William James (1842–1910), who similarly held that human experience moves by addition rather than attenuation.

More precisely James argued that the *separation* of experience into content and consciousness could occur only by means of *addition*, by adding other sets of experience to the present one, and thus producing either thought or thing: experience could figure in both thought and in content, it could be ‘both subjective and objective at once.’²³ While the temporal aspects of James’ account are clearly commensurate with Matta-Clark’s interest in covert and durational complexity discussed earlier, a further consequence of this additive approach to experience is that it reinvigorates not only the role played by the body as a measure of experience, but more importantly the ways in which the user’s body might itself be *separated* from the physical and social rules that conventionally govern its positioning, issues clearly manifest in Matta-Clark’s oeuvre.²⁴

body

BEING WITHOUT A PLACE TO LIVE
NOT BEING COMFORTABLE IN YOUR OWN SKIN
HAVING NOWHERE TO GO
STANDING PERFECTLY STILL...

—Gordon Matta-Clark²⁵

The Platonic distinction between the material world and the metaphysical, ideal realm was reinforced by the emergence in modern science in the seventeenth century, with particular consequences for the body, which was objectified and split from the mind in a move epitomised by Cartesian Dualism and widely repeated elsewhere. As Connerton remarks, ‘[t]he ground was

prepared for this backgrounding of our bodily practices by modern natural science. The mechanisation of physical reality in the exact natural sciences meant that the body was conceptualised as one object among others in an object-domain made up of moving bodies which obey lawful processes. The body was regarded as a material thing: it was materialised. Bodily practices as such are here lost from view...²⁶ The particular laws of nature governing the movement of bodies per se were progressively applied to the behaviour and interaction of human bodies. Natural laws quietly governed social norms, where the behaviour of the materialized human body became increasingly predicated on ‘the propriety of gravity and the upright viewer. This is the etiquette of normal social discourse.’²⁷

These laws were not only applied to the body, but extrapolated to predicate many of the spatial frameworks introduced earlier. Considering ‘the act of search and discovery’ that Matta-Clark linked to *Underground Paris*, for example, the illustrations in figure 4.2 demonstrate how these acts are traditionally linked to implied notions of going-down, going-under, going-back, phrases which rely on the cardinal directionality of the body that is established through its relationship to gravity, and which grants primacy to the vertical axis. Along this axis in turn, primacy is traditionally granted to the *going up*, with the head qua location of thought being privileged over base stuff found *down there*. Moreover, the notion that going down is to go back, to uncover the foundations, and so on, relies on a naturalised temporality (naturalised by being spatialised, it might be added) and epistemology that echo the consequences of Plato’s invocation to leave the Cave. Needless to say, this same framework of cardinal directionality has traditionally predicated the language of Architecture. This framework’s axes of space and of time, and the assumptions made by the laws that deploy them, are implicitly called into question by Matta-Clark’s projects and his proposals for living archaeology, in order to allow other locational possibilities to be enjoyed.

IN THE HISTORY OF MODERN NEAR MODERN BUILDING WHY SHOULD THE ROOF BE AS DELICATE AS LACE WHEN AN ORGANIC CAPSULE IS AS THICK IN THE HEAD AS IN ITS SOLES

MAKE A BUILDING START FROM BOTH ENDS AND USEABLE FROM EVERY SIDE²⁸

To start from both ends and every side is to exceed the framework of cardinal directionality, a process of discrete violation where that which is taken for granted, here gravity and verticality, is maintained and supplemented with other experiences. In the process of discussing his interest in the additive nature of human experience, William James argued the importance of areas which are

not subjected to Newtonian gravity, and clarifies the kind of relationship that they might enjoy with our normal (in the full sense) experience of the world:

real experiences...get...precipitated together as the stable part of the whole experience-chaos, under the name of the physical world. Of this our perceptual experiences are the nucleus, they being the originally *strong* experiences. We add a lot of conceptual experiences to them, making these strong also in imagination, and building out the remoter parts of the physical world by their means; and around this core of reality the world of laxly connected fancies and mere rhapsodical objects floats like a bank of clouds. In the clouds, all sorts of rules are violated which in the core are kept. Extensions there can be indefinitely located; motion there obeys no Newton's laws.²⁹

The possibilities and the demands that this can bring to the spectator may be explored initially through the invitation to overcome traditional expectations of static disinterest: instead movement, exploration and invention are encouraged.

The spectatorial experience of watching Matta-Clark's filmic exploration projects *Substrait* and *Sous-sols de Paris* can be discussed further in light of James's account of experience, particularly the relationships that might be established between the 'core of reality' and the 'remoter parts of the physical world.' The underground expeditions in New York, for instance, generally maintain a clear overall progression that relies on cardinal directionality and permits spectatorial misrecognition. In contrast, the cinematic image intermittently works to unsettle the spectator's reliance on conventional orientation devices, to pose cardinal directionality as a question rather than take it for granted or reinforce it. (Figures 4.3, 4.4)

In *Sous sols* the form of content is generally more awkward: in addition to both the visual and narrative stammering discussed earlier, the movement suggested by the cinematic image is frequently contrary to the real movement of camera, such as a vertical pan up during the actual descent into basement of the Paris *Opera*. Similarly, zooms (either in or out) produce a non-kinetic movement; horizons speeded-towards are actually approached through lens not body. In both these cases an embodied spectator watching the images from the comfort of a static seat experiences a discomfiting inability to follow such sequences, literally and metaphorically: inability to follow the point of view results from the apparent disparity between its optic and somatic dimensions, and relates to the inability to understand what is going on, to follow the action by understanding where it is going.

James's account of experience can in principle deal comfortably with the violation of 'all sorts of rules,' particularly with the indeterminacy of physical things and their location, and with motion that disobeys Newton, although this doesn't help explain the discomfort of spectatorial experience brought about by Matta-Clark's works. While James intends to broaden the

possibilities for human experience by acknowledging the instances of creative insubordination that occur on its outer reaches, his explanation doesn't accommodate such lawlessness at the core of reality: although such instances may be a relatively common dimension of human experience, on James's account at least they are conceptual.³⁰ Within these sequences of *Substrait* and *Sous-sols de Paris* though, they clearly figure, as here Matta-Clark's filmic work inscribe instances of lawlessness into 'real' experience; the interruption of 'core' expectations by the peripheral modality of experience results in the discomfort these moments of film bring about.

Such experiences are neither reliant on nor restricted to the filmic medium: the discussion of Matta-Clark's photo-collages in the previous chapter drew related conclusions regarding the different modes of visual experience they present. A number of these collages operate similarly, using a coherent motif (a recognisable perspectival or photographic space, a cut, a progression of cuts, and so on) around which the remaining content of the constituent photographs clearly contest the coherence of this central position or motif. (Around a nucleus of perceptual experience, other clouds drift.) The consequence is that viewers can no longer easily assume a single viewing position and remain 'outside the frame,' as they might with traditional painting, or 'within the building,' as they might with architecture. Instead, the passivity of traditional viewers is unsettled by effectively putting them not only in more than one viewing position (as with Cubism, for example), but offering them more than one mode of reception, a situation that appeals both to their reflective faculty (offering partial views to be synthesised) and to their body's scale and habit: as such, the projected whole reconstituted by the intellect runs alongside the habitual spaces inhabited by the body.

This situation returns us again to what Matta-Clark referred to as discrete violation, sustaining the traditional logic of space while also introducing a different expanded experience. His own account of the experience within the building dissections —here *Conical Intersect* (1975)— describes the effects of the cutting in similar terms:

...when you were in [*Conical Intersect*] as you move from floor to floor that had been cut out, your normal sense of gravity was subverted by the experience. In fact, when you got to the top floor and you looked down through an elliptical section in the floor that was cut out, you would look down through the fragments of a normal apartment space, but I had never seen anything like it. It looked like – almost as though it were a pool. That is, it has a reflective quality to it and a surface – but the surface was just the accumulation of images of the spaces below it. It had had this strange reversal.³¹

Across the various media that Matta-Clark used, whether film, photo-collages or dissected buildings, the complexity of spatial experience is brought about and maintained by this 'strange

reversal:’ surface and deep space, core expectation and peripheral lawlessness are forced together as dimensions of a single unsettling experience. Although such unsettling occurs in various ways that are specific to each project, it consistently rattles various ‘givens’ assumed by the locational framework of experience, which bear on the relationship that spectators were expected to have with this space through the normal perception of the embodied subject (and which moreover might be taken to include the various culturally conditioned responses that figure here). Notable assumptions here include the alleged universality of the space within which the disciplines of architecture and archaeology are expected to operate, and the universality of the gravity that links the human body to such a Cartesian space and quietly but effectively holds the whole system together.

gravity, movement and vertigo

The gravity that keeps our feet on the ground and that underscores the traditional cardinal directionality of architectural space also prescribes the movement that can be understood to occur within such space. ‘Normal’ movement in oriented space, if not a guarantor of truth, would certainly be taken as a prerequisite; historically, it would also have underwritten notions of (structured) knowledge, thought and certainty that drew on the various metaphorical uses to which ‘Architecture’ has been (and is continued to be) put, over and above the particular instances of Plato’s cave, the *camera obscura*, and the White Cube gallery being discussed at present.

This gravity also covertly underwrites the relationships between architecture and its occupants, usually considered as being a subject–object relationship, where architecture is an inert object. However, such a gravity also works to maintain the occupants as the ‘subjects’ of architecture, subjected to it, while Architecture maintains itself, as much as it might deny it, as Subject or discipline. Moreover this discipline of Architecture is not available to all, but only to those who can cast off this subjection and leave or deny the gravity that maintains bodies in this particular relationship, and who can instead locate it systematically, anti-gravitationally, mentally (recall for example Le Corbusier’s assertion that ‘Architecture is a conception of the mind. It must be conceived in your head, with your eyes shut.’). The possibility of such a movement, effectively a movement without the location system of cardinal directionality, is denied by the gravity handed out by Newton’s Law of Universal Gravitation, where movement is inscribed as a dimension of the constant (Newton’s Gravitational Constant), rather than as a variable in the equation.³²

Matta-Clark frequently experimented directly with the effects of gravity and suspension: early pieces such as *Tree Dance* (1st May, 1971) highlight the strong influence exerted on these projects by his association with choreography around this time, which included such groups as the *Natural History Improvisation Company* and the work of Trisha Brown.³³ In *Untitled Performance* (1971) Matta-Clark suspended himself upside-down above an assemblage at *Pier 18*, New York; curator Corinne Diserens emphasises the influence on this piece of Trisha Brown's performances, 'where questions were posed concerning the distribution of weight and its relation with the law of falling bodies, and the reorganisation [*trastocamiento*] of space.'³⁴ Trisha Brown, Matta-Clark's friend and occasional collaborator, explored notions of gravity, vertigo, fall, speed, and movement in her own choreographic work, which significantly exceeded the body of the dancer by carefully challenging the architectural surroundings of the performance, with notable consequences for the spectator. As Louppe observes: 'For *Planes* (1968) Trisha Brown came up with the idea of digging footholds in a wall so as to allow the dancers "to turn continually, spiral down and climb all over the place in slow-motion to suggest free fall. The audience's way of seeing was changed. The backdrop became the theatre floor."...[T]he *Equipment Pieces* (1971)... explore[d]...the basic elements of movement: weight and its distribution via the creation of subjective verticality. But at the same time these elements are being deliberately misused, imploded towards the extreme limits of the laws which, nonetheless, underpin them...'³⁵

Through the introduction of complex movement, either in the 'experience-optics' of the filmic works, or through the super-position of different modalities of spatial encounter in the building dissections and the related photo-collages, Matta-Clark gave the spectator or the visitor a problem. Trisha Brown's work anticipates Matta-Clark's projects, the latter effectively problematised the universal truths of Newtonian physics and ask that a contingent version be considered, demonstrating that other gravities can be involved in cinematic or architectural movement.

For example, during certain sequences in *Substrait*, and in *Sous-sols* particularly, on occasions when the camera looks up or down vertically (up or down vertical access chutes into square of light or into darkness) the point of view is undoubtedly moving, but traditional devices for discerning movement, whether bodily or cinematic, fail to reveal what can perhaps be best described as the quality of the movement. The spectator cannot tell whether this movement is upwards or downwards, whether a constant camera location effects movement through zooming or panning, or whether the camera itself is mobile.

Although it is hard for the spectator to reconcile the perceived movement with any expectations accorded by their own experiences of gravity, the movement itself can be understood as something that will be completed, the square of light is a goal that can be achieved, and the image appears at least to offer an outside from which the movement will ultimately 'make sense,' (with all the echoes of Platonic escape from the cave). The spaces experienced through such images, even though hard to orientate, can with an effort be located within a normal locational system.

However, there is another characteristic shot from *Sous-sols* which brings about a more thoroughgoing disruption: these are the sequences where no horizon can be seen, where there is no 'vanishing point' to the space or the image, because the flashlights used by the explorer(s) only pick up a rough circle of stuff in the middle distance. This produces an image that is all periphery and no focus, and which contrasts to the image with its central square of light just mentioned, where all the spectator could see is where they might be heading. However, this is more than a simple reversal, as these images not only disrupt spectatorial attempts to empathise with the camera movement, they also complicate their attempts to locate such space within a broader system.

In this respect these sequences operate in an analogous way to several of Matta-Clark's other projects, such as the Santiago camera obscura, *Open House*, and the building dissections. Moreover, Matta-Clark's reference to the image-like surface quality of spatial experience in *Conical Intersect* emphasises certain operational similarities to both the filmic works and the photo-collages, where possible bodily response to haptic space offered through visual experience exceeds 'normal' expectations. The composition of all these 'images' undermines their disembodied enjoyment or contemplation: the spectator's attempts to empathise with the 'actual' movement of the camera through their relationship with the point of view, or to orientate themselves within a dissected building, are potentially disrupted.

The a-normal movement that sequences of shots from *Sous-sols* makes apparent, or the subversion of the normal sense of gravity that the building dissections offer, become impossible to 'comprehend' according to the up/down directionality of normal architectural space and the classically embodied movement that such space demands. Here instead, another kind of relationship must pertain between the various dimensions of the encounter: although neither space, nor gravity, nor body can or should be discounted here, traditional formulations are unable to hold these dimensions together in the 'normal' way. The inscription of a gap or the production of

interference patterns in these images undermines straightforward spectatorial recourse to the normal locational framework. These situations enjoy a (non-terrestrial) gravitational system, in contrast to that which governs 'normal' spatiality. This particular gravity prevents thought from attaining exit velocity, prevents it leaving the system in order to take up a policing role beyond, and asks instead that it accompany the body as it falls. This fall is different in kind to that associated with normal gravity; rather than falling back, it instigates a fall literally without aim, undertaken without any intention to gain the outside; it is a wager, a modest fall, entered into without the promise of completion.

The fear of falling has frequently been associated with vertigo;³⁶ although both situations here could be equally said to instil vertigo, the vertiginous dizziness is of a different kind in each. Moreover, as Matta-Clark's projects frequently operated by combining different modalities of experience together to make up complex 'images' (to maintain this term for a moment) which can similarly be influenced by several different gravitational systems, these can be considered to bring on vertiginous experiences that differ internally from themselves, or bring about different kinds of fall.

Exploring the possibilities of falling, Virilio notes that the fall of a parachutist 'prefigures what could be a new perspective, he falls horizontally, he falls vertically, it's a fall towards the horizon and no longer towards the ground.'³⁷ In the context of *Sous-sols* Virilio's observations point to the distinction between the two kinds of sequence just noted. Of particular importance is how the confusion between horizontal and vertical bears on the bodily experience of space, which both shots disrupt. However, only the second—and the associated experiences of the building dissections and photo-collages—maintains its vertiginous fall as a fall towards the horizon, such that it upsets attempts to account for vertigo within the economy of an idealised experience of space that is imposed from without. The fall towards the horizon demands a relative rather than a universal gravitational system, one contingent upon the particular situation.³⁸ Moreover, this fall might not involve increasing speed, but rather be associated with a vertigo of slow down: '...in addition to the vertigo of acceleration, there is also a more subtle vertigo of deceleration, of slow motion, in the cinematic sense of the term.'³⁹

What is unsettled here is both the universal Cartesian system that traditionally provides the model for locational spatial frameworks (space with no centre, ideal space) and phenomenological accounts that draw upon a primordial horizon of the world, predicated on the embodied individual (centred space).⁴⁰ Importantly, both of these in their own way maintain various binaries associated

with the 'normal' spatial system of orientation, particularly those between mind and body, and between subject and object.

Convenient recourse to vertigo belongs to the 'normal' system, inasmuch as it provides an explanation for a sense of dizziness by announcing that usual orientation devices have failed. The pathological implication that lies behind this explanation is that the 'normal' sense of balance is in disorder, and that when order is restored, vertigo will cease and one's full subjectivity will be reinstated. In other words, it takes the traditional relationships between space, gravity, and body as being a given, and defines other relationships that might pertain between these as deviations from that norm.

But before pathology prevails over this situation, before vertigo is used as a tool to locate subject and object by overcoming 'disorder' and 'abnormality,' it might announce that the relationship should be examined elsewhere, in the nomination of subject and object themselves. If the conventional framework within which orientation occurs is itself opened up to examination, such as that undertaken by Matta-Clark, then the 'turning around' that vertigo involves might more properly refer to an ongoing turning around between subject and object, a process that would establish the grounds for orientation for any particular situation rather than universally, and that would begin from and maintain a different relation between subject and space. In addition to this vertiginous unsettling of the bounded subject, in Matta-Clark's *City Slivers* (1976) the use of related filmic devices to portray city spaces of New York similarly instil a kind of vertigo which here unsettles the more public notion of subject as being part of a societal system.

With the vertiginous turning occurring between subject and object, rather than between cardinally-oriented space and the thought-controlled ec-centric body, traditional centred and universal spatial systems are not rejected outright, but their claims to priority are contested. This turning can also unsettle the normally exclusive account of the subject as coherent self-knowledge allied to a whole-object body. Importantly here, Matta-Clark's projects operate a duality: rather than bringing about a collapse, they work to maintain an instability which is played out between differing selves, differing gravitational systems, different locational frames. Effectively, they offer the spectator or visitor a continuous state of fall, though what falls and towards where changes at every instant, in contrast to the realm of classical physics where universal Newtonian gravity delivers a predictable fall enshrined in the Gravitational Constant.

These projects operate with a locational framework whose spatiality offers the spectator something close to what Deleuze describes as elliptical space, where ellipsis is taken in its full

sense, possessing two centres *and* constituting a gap.⁴¹ The importance for the spectator of an ability to locate themselves is not denied in this work, but its ongoing contingency overturns the traditional demand that location be established according to the prior rules of a universal spatial system and the prior division of subjectivity and objectivity, opening instead onto an expanded being that Matta-Clark sought. His projects reveal the possibility of an experience where the spectator would neither just occupy the centre nor just gain the outside. This bicentric situation, to give it a name, contests the existence of any single location from which orientation must be established, and instead pushes the establishment of orientation onto the moment of experience itself. Bergson similarly asserts the fluidity of reality and the impossibility of attaining any kind of fixed point within it: centres of experience have to be formed and dissolved continually, perceptions have to be produced.⁴² This exceeds not only the Cartesian account, which grants mind primacy over matter, but also the primary phenomenological relationship between perceiving subject and the horizon of the world. Moreover, it runs *contra* Plato with regard to the direction of judgement, by establishing itself both inside and outside the cave.

The consequences of such an ongoing formation and dissolution return us to the main concern of this chapter, spectatorial participation, and indicate both what is at stake in Matta-Clark's oeuvre, and the price to be paid if this aim is to be achieved. For William James, whose own metaphor for accrued experience provided it with both a 'real' core and a cloudy periphery, experience occurs prior to the establishment of traditional binary categories, and the constitution of subject and object is contingent on that experience. This division of experience into thought or thing depended on the addition of other, previous experiences to it, a process that would involve the various models of memory that were rehearsed in the previous chapter. According to Rajchman, such an approach is '...a matter of pushing the question of belief beyond the assurance of knowledge, or of faith...'⁴³

To valorise this sort of experience is to push spectatorial involvement beyond the expectations of modernism's disinterested observer and the *White Cube* gallery space that both houses and stands as a metaphor for the paradigmatic experience that ought to occur there. Matta-Clark's express interest in bringing art *out of the gallery and into the sewers* must not then be understood as a strategy of replacement, a simple spatial switch or reversal that maintains the previous overarching ontological system intact while changing the terms (non-gallery for gallery, and so on), but rather a strategy that offers the observer an alternative that is different in kind. While William James' account of core and peripheral rules for experience is helpful in explaining

the impact of Matta-Clark's projects on the observer, Matta-Clark's discrete violation works more deliberately with the *misapplication* of rules, not simply to upset but to reposition the 'core' according to different frames. For Matta-Clark the additive production of division, whether in the filmic works that have been discussed in this chapter or found more broadly across his *œuvre*, repeats the strategic aspects of James' account, while providing for a spectatorial involvement that enjoys bringing together different modalities of experience that cannot be easily assimilated back into the expectations of 'core' rules.

While this chapter has focused on the experience of the observer and the ways in which Matta-Clark's projects offer to radically reconfigure their experience, these issues impact elsewhere. Indeed for Deleuze, in addition to its broad philosophical consequences this reconfiguration has an impact on the concern of art. As with Matta-Clark, he warns that art must not be a surrogate for experience, demanding that it must operate actively to bring about this reconfiguration: 'Only belief in the world can reconnect man to what he sees and hears. The cinema must film not the world, but belief in this world, our only link... What is certain is that believing is no longer believing in another world, or in a transformed world. It is only, it is simply believing in the body. It is giving discourse to the body, and, for this purpose, reaching the body before discourses, before words, before things are named... Artaud said the same thing, believe in the *flesh*: "I am the man who has lost his life and is searching by all means possible to make it regain its place."'44

While Deleuze's comments here can be run back over this chapter and emphasise the importance of thinking about the experience of such work, they also clearly raise questions for the creative process which is thereby charged with *giving discourse to the body*. As Artaud intimates, the impact of these deliberations extends beyond the user (viewer, observer) to the artist, and challenges assumptions regarding the production of the work of art in a variety of ways. Belief in the world, belief in the body, this belief calls the whole process of artistic and architectural production into question. Indeed, it acts as a reminder of the increasingly atrophied understanding of process itself, and points to the relationship between the processes of production and judgement, and their thoroughgoing role in the fuller spectatorial involvement that Matta-Clark sought. This contrasts with the model assumed by modernism, where the passive observer was expected to commune instantly with an autonomous art object, the judgement of which could be predicted and policed by clearly defined medium-specific disciplinary rules; these rules in turn clearly identified disciplinary boundaries and distinguished between them. In order to develop the issues raised

above, the following chapter will examine Matta-Clark's own particular approach to processes of production and judgement.

¹ Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' *op.cit.*, p.79.

² Matta-Clark, Kirshner interview in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.390. see also Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' *op.cit.*, p.77.

³ *Pipes* was part of the *Changing Terms* exhibition, Boston School of the Museum of Fine Arts, December 1971-January 1972. In his own words, 'I extended one of the gas lines from behind a wall out into the exhibition space and then returned it back into the wall, accompanied by a photographic documentation of the pipe's journey from the street into and through the building. The pipe led two lives: it had both physical as well as photographic extension, and dealt with the building as a mechanical system rather than as a series of discrete spaces.' in Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' *op.cit.*, p.74-9.

⁴ Gordon Matta-Clark 'ANARCHITECTURE 4,' EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942-76*, c.1972.

⁵ The terminology here remains difficult: 'Who is this Spectator, also called the Viewer, sometimes called the Observer, occasionally the Perceiver? It has no face, is mostly a back. It stoops and peers, is slightly clumsy. Its attitude is inquiring, its puzzlement discreet. He—I'm sure it is more male than female—arrived with modernism...The Spectator seems a little dumb; he is not you or me.' O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube, op.cit.*, p.39. see Ch.II. 'The Eye and the Spectator' for general discussion relevant to this chapter.

⁶ Reiss, *From Margin to Centre*, p.xiii.

⁷ Reiss, *ibid.*, adds several caveats regarding both the kind of participation involved: 'but the definition of participation varies greatly from one artist to another, and even from one work to another by the same artist. Participation can mean offering the viewer specific activities. It can also mean demanding that the viewer walk through the space and simply confront what is there. Objects may fall directly in the viewer's path or become evident only through exploration of a space.' (p.xiii.); and regarding the primacy granted to participation: 'The critical response to *Environments*, which depended almost solely on Kaprow, put a misleading emphasis on spectator participation..., giving the impression that it was a primary goal for all concerned.' (p.16). Her conclusion is that 'Installation art can and often still does offer a unique potential for viewer participation and interaction.' (p.156.)

⁸ 'Rowe, in 'Composition and Character,' confirmed 'a particular, high modernist view...that the meaning of architecture lay solely in the immanence of its perception, and that architecture could represent nothing beyond its own immediate presence.' Forty, *Words and Buildings, op.cit.*, p.120. (Forty earlier positions Colin Rowe as Architecture's Greenberg; pp.23-4.) Although modernism's constructions of the viewer were equally applicable to architecture, the impact of these avant-garde artistic developments on architecture's viewer was arguably non-existent, at least during this period.

⁹ Thomas McEvelley, 'Introduction,' in O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube, op.cit.*, p.8. McEvelley discusses the modernist gallery alongside the devotional space of middle ages, egyptian tombs, palaeolithic caves, etc., all attempting to eliminate contact with the temporal passage of the outside world, and all sustaining a particular social order: 'By suggesting eternal ratification of a certain sensibility, the white cube suggests the eternal ratification of the claims of the caste or group sharing that sensibility. As a ritual place of meeting for members of that caste or group, it censors out the world of social variation, promoting a sense of the sole reality of its own point of view and, consequently, its endurance or eternal rightness. Seen thus, the endurance of a certain power structure is the end for which the sympathetic magic of the white cube is devised.' p.9.

¹⁰ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space, op.cit.*, p.28. Interestingly in the context of the discussion of 'form' undertaken in Chapter Three above, Lefebvre links intelligible space to *disegno*. (And on this, see also p.313.) Thomas McEvelley also makes an explicit criticism of modernism's alleged innocence on the basis of Platonic legacy: 'It is little recognized how much this aspect of Platonism [the transcendental, metaphysical realm of pure form] has to do with modernist ways of thinking, and especially as a hidden controlling structure behind modernist aesthetics.' Thomas McEvelley, *Introduction*, in O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube, op.cit.*, p.11.

¹¹ Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' *op.cit.*, p.79.

¹² Cheetham and Harvey note the cave's mythic beginning point in the Western hegemony of the visual, in addition to the various other roles it has taken on through history, such as passageway between different worlds or systems of representation, as locus of prophetic utterances, as metaphor for the interior of the body,

as precursor of psychoanalysis, as womb, as mind, and as museum. Cheetham and Harvey, 'Obscure Imaginings: Visual Culture and the Anatomy of Caves,' *op.cit.* Their investigations take the cave as a trope, rather than as an archetype. '[Platonic] Imperative to leave the cave in turn guarantees the illusion of representation as truth.' p.120. In contrast, the cave becomes a metaphor for an intermediate or grey zone between sight (or consciousness) and darkness.

13 Le Corbusier, 'If I Had to Teach You Architecture,' in Nikolaus Pevsner, J. M. Richards and Dennis Sharp (eds.), *The Anti-Rationalists and the Rationalists*, [First published separately as *The Anti-Rationalist* (1973) and *The Rationalists* (1978)] The Architectural Press, London, 2000, p.83.

14 Gordon Matta-Clark, ANARCHITECTURE 4, EGMC, *Articles & Documents, 1942-76*.

15 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1158, Anarchitecture Period, c.1973.

16 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1208, Anarchitecture Period, c.1973.

17 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, *op.cit.*, #17. This appears in a somewhat edited form in Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' *op.cit.*, p.79.

18 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, c.1973. Ellipsis in the original.

19 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, p.52. His second essay, published as the second chapter in the book, is entitled *The Eye and the Spectator*, and rehearses these moves in some detail. He introduces these terms according to modernism's oppositional structure: 'The art the Eye is brought to bear on almost exclusively is that which preserves the picture plane—mainstream modernism. The Eye maintains the seamless gallery space... Everything else—all things impure, including collage—favours the Spectator.' p.42. He later traces evolutionary stages to this *raprochement*: 'These verifications [of seventies art] locate a body, mind, and place that can be *occupied*, or at least partly tenanted. If fifties man was a Vitruvian survivor and sixties man composed of alienated parts held together by systems, seventies man is a workable monad—figure and place, a transposition of figure and ground onto a quasi-social situation.' O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, *op.cit.*, p.78.

20 Leonard J. Eslick, *The Material Substrate in Plato*, in McMullin (ed.), *The Concept of Matter in Greek and Mediaeval Philosophy*, *op.cit.*, p.45, p.53.

21 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, *op.cit.*, p.202.

22 *ibid.*, p.201. He goes on, '...you may speculate as intelligently as you will on the mechanism of intelligence; you will never, by this method, succeed in going beyond it. You may get something more complex, but not something higher nor even different.' p.204.

23 William James, 'Essays in Radical Empiricism' in *The Works of William James*, [c.1907], Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1976, p.7. All references are to the *Works of William James*, not to 'Essays in Radical Empiricism' Longmans, Green New York, 1912; for a lengthy exposition of this confusing situation, see 'A Note on the Editorial Method,' pp.191-253. James, it should be noted, was an important influence on Bergson.

24 For an overview of the progressive bracketing of living bodies see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, University of California Press, Berkeley and LA, California, 1993, pp.54-56; this is a generally useful piece on the 'eternalised eye above temporal duration.'

25 Gordon Matta-Clark, Anarchitecture notes, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942-76*, c.1974.

26 Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, *op.cit.*, p.101. He continues, 'Inscribing practices have always formed the privileged story, incorporating practices the neglected story, in the history of hermeneutics... When the defining feature of the human species was seen as language, the body was 'readable' as a text or code, but the body is regarded as the arbitrary bearer of meanings; bodily practices are acknowledged, but in an etherealised form.' O'Doherty suggests this Cartesian dualism demonstrates the underlying logic of the gallery: 'The space [of the gallery] offers the thought that while eyes and minds are welcome, space-occupying bodies are not—or are tolerated only as kinaesthetic mannequins for further study. This Cartesian paradox is reinforced by one of the icons of our visual culture: the installation shot, *sans* figures. Here at last the spectator, oneself, is eliminated. You are there without being there... The installation shot is a metaphor for the gallery space.' O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, *op.cit.*, p.15.

27 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, *op.cit.*, p.36.

28 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1225, c.1973.

29 James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, *op.cit.*, pp.17-18.

30 In a footnote, James concedes that 'Of course, the mind's free play is restricted when it seeks to copy real things in real space.' William James, *Does 'Consciousness' Exist?* in *ibid.*, n15, p.16. This discussion is framed explicitly as an attack on Cartesian dualism.

- 31 Gordon Matta-Clark, Bear interview *Gordon Matta-Clark: Dilemmas* WBAI-FM (NY) March 1976, in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, p.177.
- 32 The only variables inscribed are mass and distance.
- 33 Matta-Clark's œuvre is run through with specific instances of this preoccupation, from his earliest projects such as *Rope Bridge* [1968, Ithaca Reservoir, NY], through to *Jacob's Ladder* [1977, Documenta 6, Kassel, Germany] (on which he remarked to his mother 'I can't wait to play with it once it has been installed' Gordon Matta-Clark, in a letter to his mother, EGMC, *Letters 1976*, 7th June 1976). His sketchbooks were similarly full of ideas regarding balloons, and Balloon Building. On this impulse in Matta-Clark's work, see James Attlee in Attlee and Le Feuvre, *The Space Between*, pp.62-67, and Peter Fend, 'New Architecture from Matta-Clark' in Breitwieser (ed.), *Reorganizing Structure*, pp.46-55. Briony Fer makes a related point regarding the removal of vertical and horizontal coordinates that Matta-Clark's work introduces in a variety of situations, and similarly makes links to Trisha Brown's own work in this context; see Fer, 'Celluloid Circus,' op.cit., p.140.
- 34 Corinne Diserens, 'Gordon Matta-Clark: The Reel World,' in Corbeira (ed.), *¿Construir.o deconstruir?* op.cit., pp.48-9. My translation. 'Al desafiar las leyes de la gravedad y cristalizar la proposición de una energía vertical, Matta-Clark...propuso...un acto próximo al de Trisha Brown, donde se planteaban las cuestiones de distribución del peso y relación con la ley de la caída de los cuerpos y del trastocamiento del espacio.'
- 35 Louppe, L. 'Trisha Brown: Chaos Made Tangible,' tr. John Tittensor, in Diserens, C. (Ed.) *Trisha Brown, danse, précis de liberté*. (Catalogue for an exhibition at the Centre de la Vieille Charité, Marseille, 20th July-27th September 1998) Marseille: Musées de Marseille/Réunion des musées nationaux, (Diffuson Seuil), p.114. See also *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*. [1970] Works in a similar vein, which Matta-Clark will have known, include Suzanne Harris's 'sculptures' at 112 Greene Street, *The Wheels and Flying Machine* [17th-29th March, 1973], which had to be activated by performance. Harris described *Flying Machine* as 'an attempt for two to defy gravity with minimum aid; visually sadistic until set in motion.' in *Avalanche*, Winter/Spring 1973, p.8. Also at Greene Street, Tina Girouard's *Air Space Stage* [1972].
- 36 Indeed, several anecdotal accounts of visiting Matta-Clark's projects describe the experience with reference to vertigo; for example, Yves-Alain Bois notes that 'to visit his final works was to be seized with vertigo, as one suddenly realised that one could not differentiate between the vertical section and the horizontal plan..., as if in order to learn "what space is," it was first necessary that we lose our grip as erect beings.' Bois, 'Threshold,' in Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide*, Zone Books, New York, 1997, op.cit., p.191. Pamela M Lee makes the connection much more forcefully, arguing that vertigo is integral to human experience: '[Matta-Clark's projects] reveal that our experience as contingent beings guarantees that we are always already subjected to a state of perpetual vertigo.' Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed*, op.cit., p.160.
- 37 Paul Virilio, *Gravitational Space*, (Interview with Laurence Louppe & Daniel Dobbels)' in Laurence Louppe (ed.), *Traces of Dance*, Editions Dis Voir, Paris, 1994, p.56.
- 38 see Bergson on falling: 'When we make ourselves self-conscious in the highest possible degree and then let ourselves fall back little by little, we get the feeling of extension: we have an extension of the self into recollections that are fixed and external to one another, in place of the tension it possessed as an indivisible active will. But this is only a beginning. Our consciousness, sketching the movement, shows us its direction and reveals to us the possibility of continuing it to the end; but consciousness itself does not go so far.' Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, op.cit. p.218ff.
- 39 Georges Teyssot, *The Mutant Body of Architecture*, in Elizabeth Diller & Ricardo Scofidio, *Flesh: Architectural Probes*, Princeton Architectural Press, 1994.
- 40 See for example, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, tr. Colin Smith, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1962:Pt.II, Ch.2. 'Space,' for a discussion involving form, content, experience of space, movement, orientation, and so on, and which begins to move towards the notion of 'spatial level' (beyond universal bodily orientation); however, the discussion remains centred on being in the world, phenomenological 'place.' 'The primordial level [of space] is on the horizon of all our perceptions, but it is a horizon which cannot in principle ever be reached and thematized in our express perception.' p.253.
- 41 see for example Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, op.cit., Ch.6. And compare; 'La peinture moderne commence quand l'homme lui-même ne se vit plus tout à fait comme une essence, mais plutôt comme un accident. Il y a toujours une chute, un risque de chute; la forme se met à dire l'accident, non plus l'essence.' (Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation*, Éditions de la Différence, Paris, 1996, I:80) Here, Deleuze goes on to distinguish between optic and haptic space (I:85), emphasizing their *coexistence* '...dans la vue même...'

- ⁴² Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, *op.cit.*, p.218ff.
⁴³ Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections*, *op.cit.*, p.75.
⁴⁴ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, *op.cit.*, pp.172-3.

Chapter Six: process

On a number of occasions Gordon Matta-Clark stated that his projects never reached completion; this was as much a statement of fact as an explicit intention. The consequences of this non-completion, both on projects themselves, and on attempts to account for his oeuvre as a whole, raise a number of questions. In terms of how these questions might affect an audience, he acknowledged, during a discussion of the building dissection *Office Baroque* (Antwerp, 1977), that the performative aspect of his working method announced a certain ambiguity regarding not only *what* the work was, but *who* might comprise its audience:

I can not separate how intimately linked the work [*Office Baroque*] is with the process as a form of theatre in which both the working activity and the structural changes to and within the building are the performance. I also include a free interpretation of movement as gesture, both metaphoric, sculptural, and social into my sense of theatre with only the most incidental audience— an ongoing act for the passer-by...¹

It was not only the spectator who was called into question by this working activity; there are a number of other significant factors that open out from this point. In contrast to the wholeness, autonomy and stasis expected of most modernist work, Matta-Clark's suggestion that his work was incomplete and perhaps best considered as a form of theatre calls into question not only the audience's relation to the work, but goes behind the expectations of stasis to question the relation of the artist, and of authority, to the creative process itself.

Much avant-garde art activity during the 1960s attempted to disrupt the assumptions that lay behind Modernism's autonomous object.² The results of this move away from object-based art cannot simply be read in the fragmentation of the object, the subversion of the frame, the pedestal, or the gallery. Writing in 1968, the curator and publisher Willoughby Sharp felt able to herald a new artistic paradigm: 'We have reached the end of disinterestedness, impartiality and contemplation. We are embarking now on a new phase of artistic awareness of which interest, partiality and participation are the chief characteristics.'³

Sharp was a significant champion of the new paradigm, whose effects he believed extended beyond the traditional spectatorial involvement discussed in the previous chapter by mounting a thoroughgoing challenge to the general framework associated with the autonomous work of High Modernist art. The disinterestedness, impartiality and contemplation that such autonomy

demanded had consequences not only for the viewing conditions expected for such work—the *White Cube* gallery space— but also for the artist’s relationship to the work, where their own subjectivity was arguably given up to the self-sufficiency of the object.

Anne Wagner provides a useful definition of autonomy in the sculptural object of modernism during her discussion of the work of Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore: ‘Autonomy here lays claim to a special self-sufficiency for the artwork: not only does it contain its own reined-in energies but it can make the artist’s own mental activity into something impersonal, in which individuality has ceded to wood or stone... sculpture needs little from anyone or anybody— this is what autonomy means.’⁴ As Wagner’s analysis suggests, challenges to autonomy had to exceed art’s reception by altering the artist’s own relationship to the creative process. Rather than ceding artistic subjectivity to the dictates of the self-sufficient art object, establishing what Nixon has described as the ‘expressive analogy between the imaginative space of art and the internal realm of self,’⁵ the (self-) identification between artist and object was no longer a defining moment of artistic production. Matta-Clark positioned his own working process in contrast to this kind of artistic epiphany associated with autonomous-object production.

‘...the distinction between what I’m doing and that [quasi-painterly approach] is not just the phenomenology, the isolated effect. It’s the whole series of things that are very complex. And I don’t feel totally in control of the situation. I just try to get in there and alter it.’⁶

The lack of control he expressed should not be taken as an instance when his own agency is suspended, where he is taken over and controlled by the ‘reined-in energies’ of the self-sufficient art object. It indicates instead an open-ended situation that anticipates an ongoing addition of energy, both from Matta-Clark and from those ‘reading’ the work.⁷

In addition to the energetic demand posed by his works separately, Matta-Clark actively took up his own advice and continued to invest energy in these pieces by becoming a ‘reader’ himself, treating his projects not as self-sufficient, as ends in themselves, but as stages in an ongoing process of production. As his close friend Richard Nonas has observed, ‘It was all art for Gordon, even the documentation. And it was not all equally strong. Gordon knew that too; admitted it. And he did not care. Each piece was *more*; all part of the same more. Each referred to the rest. Some were secondary. But Gordon did not care... They were all part of the same work.’⁸ The consequences of this situation become easy to overlook with hindsight, as projects tend to stabilise and become associated with particular, frequently reproduced, images. However, it is important to emphasise the difficulties that are involved in clearly identifying exactly what any one of Matta-Clark’s projects was: they are approached better as constellations than discrete objects, where

different projects can be positioned within his œuvre, but where the boundaries between projects remain ambiguous. As Attlee notes, his œuvre has a different focus: ‘For Matta-Clark, whose artistic practice often did not produce “work” in the art-historical sense, the work involved in the process of creating “the work” became the work itself. This process, usually collaborative, often playfully mimicked “real” working practices, whether in construction, refuse collection, catering or real estate.’⁹

When discussing *Splitting* with Liza Bear, for example, he expressed his interest in the repercussions of cutting, noting the project’s development from ‘...a very simple idea, ...it comes out of some line drawings that I’d been doing.’¹⁰ But the line drawings were developed by actually cutting into blocks of card and paper, producing works that are commonly referred to as his Cut Drawings, and which he began to produce from 1973.¹¹ This is not to suggest that the cut drawings were a simple precursor to the building dissections in terms of either status or sequence, in contrast to the way that an architectural project would traditionally progress from sketches to formal drawings to construction. For example, he made four cut drawings that referred to and developed from his building dissections *Intraform* and *A W-Hole House: Datum Cut* for the exhibition of these projects at Galleriaforma in Genoa, 1973.¹²

From cut drawings to cut building, the production of *Splitting* was photographed and filmed, with this ‘documentation’ subsequently worked over, edited, collaged and re-worked, producing a little book, a short film, and a number of photo-collages. In addition to his aim of approximating the ‘all-around’ experience of space discussed in Chapter Four, the process of producing the collages was related to the cutting that took place earlier in the project. In this context, Matta-Clark discussed ‘...collaging and montaging...,’ saying

I like very much the idea of breaking—the same way I cut up buildings. I like the idea that the sacred photo framing process is equally “violatable.” And I think that’s partly a carry over from the way I deal with structures to the way I deal with photography. That kind of rigid, very academic, literary convention about photography which doesn’t interest me.¹³

Similarly, the films such as *Substrait: Underground Dailies* and *Sous-sols de Paris* were subjected to a process of cutting and reworking that treated them as raw material, as matter rather than ‘film,’ such that they were literally cut up and pasted together: different formats (Super 8 and 16mm, magnetic and optical sound strips) were combined together in such a way as to render the resulting reels ‘useless’ as films, calling into question the common presuppositions regarding the reproducibility of this medium. Moreover, the particular circumstances surrounding the production of each ‘film’ compound this awkwardness. For example, *City Slivers* (1976) was planned for

projection onto the facades of buildings: it was first shown outdoors as part of the *Arcades* exhibition during 1976, before being screened more conventionally at the Holly Solomon Gallery in New York. *Sous-sols de Paris* was not the only record of his subterranean explorations in Paris: contemporaneously he produced the series of photo-collages *Underground Paris* and a durational piece, *Descending Steps for Batan*. *Underground Paris* included shots and short lengths from the film, and hung upstairs in the Yvon Lambert Gallery while Matta-Clark dug *Descending Steps* down into the earth below the basement. *Substrait* was first exhibited as 'Film Projects and Underground Dailies' at the Holly Solomon Gallery over the course of a week; each day Matta-Clark would undertake an expedition, the 'mapping' of which would then be shown as a film in the gallery the following day: *Underground Dailies*, the subtitle of the piece, refers to this process.

The original screenings of these films warrant description as a durational or performative artworks, rather than convention or even expanded cinema, and their subsequent 'repair' and consolidation highlights the problem of describing such projects as 'films' in any conventional sense. This difficulty regarding the status of the filmic work cannot be resolved: how Matta-Clark intended them to be shown, even whether he intended them to be shown, or more precisely *projected* (given the literal overworking they received), is ambiguous.¹⁴

Matta-Clark frequently combined durational or performance pieces and events with constructions he was producing: these, along with bus trips, dance pieces, or pig roasts open onto his involvement in more 'conventional' collaborations such as *Food* restaurant or the *Anarchitecture* group.¹⁵ Moreover, Matta-Clark's obsessive word play meant that he was in the habit of referring to projects by a variety of highly significant, mischievous, and inter-connected names; few schemes possessed a simple title, most were known by two at the very least. Their subsequent exhibition and reproduction over the years has here again resulted in a certain stabilisation of denomination; nevertheless, their wordplaynames rehearse the broader awkwardness in identifying precisely what any project was.

But this was in fact the point: for him, art was not to be directed towards the production of autonomous objects, and any attempt to 'read' Matta-Clark's work according to the received wisdom and categories of traditional art history would be frustrated by the *œuvre* he produced. Indeed, he was happy to accept frustration as a consequence of his working method, acknowledging that this would lead to as many failures as it did to successes. In an interview with Donald Wall, Matta-Clark likened this method to the way a pig searches for truffles. 'I work the way gourmets hunt for truffles. I mean, a truffle is a fantastic thing buried in the ground. Very

fleshy, esteemed as a prize food. So what I try to find is the subterranean kernel. Sometimes I find it. Sometimes I don't.¹⁶

Whether or not he found a truffle, any one process provided Matta-Clark with potential raw-material for another stage of working: 'He would see another piece after completion of the first, then second, then third.'¹⁷ Matta-Clark's appetite for almost breathless overworking was put forward in conjunction with the *Anarchitecture* group as something of a manifesto:

ANARCHITECTURE ——— WORKING IN SEVERAL DIMENSIONS
 MAKING THE DISCUSSIONS THE SHOW AND THE WORK. — KEEPING IT AN
 ONGOING OPEN PROCESS NOT FINISHING JUST KEEPING GOING AND
 STARTING OVER & OVER¹⁸

ANARCHITECTURE ——— WORKING IN SEVERAL DIMENSIONS
 MAKING THE DISCUSSIONS THE SHOW AND THE WORK. — KEEPING IT AN
 ONGOING OPEN PROCESS NOT FINISHING JUST KEEPING GOING AND
 STARTING OVER & OVER¹⁸

This reworking poses a difficulty for establishing the location and judgement of his work, in a fuller aesthetic sense. Although it fails to

fit into the expectations of traditional art history, the OVER & OVER operation of Matta-Clark's oeuvre can be approached through Georges Bataille's own anarchitectural attempts to renovate art history, which he sketched with reference to the term *altération*, and whose operation anticipated Matta-Clark's in many respects.

Altération

Bataille introduced the term *altération* in a review-cum-essay of a book by G. H. Lucquet: *L'art primitif* (Primitive Art), published in 1930.¹⁹ In countering Lucquet's evolutionary hypothesis, Bataille advocated a different model of art history, which could be 'simply characterised by the alteration [*l'altération*] of the forms presented.'²⁰ Without Lucquet's recourse to traditional oppositions, primitive-civilized, child-adult, and low-high, Bataille's *altération* involved change rather than teleological development or implied improvement, similar to Matta-Clark/*Anarchitecture*'s intention to keep art and architecture as AN ONGOING OPEN PROCESS NOT FINISHING JUST KEEPING GOING AND STARTING OVER & OVER.

Rather than replacing one state with something more 'developed,' Bataille charged *altération* with accounting for change in two different but complementary senses, material and metaphysical: 'The term *altération* has the double importance of expressing a partial decomposition analogous to that of a corpse, and at the same time the passage to a perfectly heterogeneous state that corresponds to what the protestant professor Otto called the totally other (*tout autre*), that is to say the sacred, which is found for example in a ghost.'²¹ Moreover, the

ongoing rhythm of *altération* involved artworks undergoing change that was both physically destructive *and* productive. 'This art, as art it unquestionably is, proceeds in this way (*sens*) through successive destructions.'²²

On this account, Matta-Clark's working process appears to accord with both the particular instances of *altération* and its ongoing movement from one state to another. However, alongside this ongoing movement where one *altération* provides raw material for another, for example from cut drawing to cut building to photograph or film to collage and beyond, another more important sequence of *altérations* can be progressing. Bataille warns against simply restricting this process to its involvement with material destruction:

It's true that the principal *altération* is not that undergone by the support of the drawing. Drawing itself develops and becomes richer in diverse ways, by accentuating the deformation of the object in all senses (*sens*).²³

Addressing the object 'in all its senses,' Matta-Clark's oeuvre undertook an ongoing *alteration* that ran comfortably across a variety of media and disciplinary expectations. The full potential of *altération* exceeds the partial decomposition of any particular work, by opening onto the heterogeneous support involved in the various artistic and architectural rules, and social mores, governing the production, positioning and maintenance of that object in its 'proper' place. Understood in this context, Matta-Clark's *altération* is not a simple attack on the autonomous art-object or its architectural equivalent, it is an approach that demonstrated the assumptions complicit in the broader support required for such autonomy. Lefebvre makes a related criticism when he suggests that the blank sheet of paper on which an architect may make their first sketch is no more innocent than the plot of land they are given to build on, or indeed the way they imagine space during the design process;²⁴ to attack the paper may well get to the 'support' of their drawing, but it would leave their disciplinary support unaffected.

Within the various *altérations* that were involved in Matta-Clark's building dissections, for example, the cutting stage was not simply a low blow against building fabric: the principal *altération* occurred beyond the buildings' physical changes, in order to deform Architecture's broader support, which usually remained hidden from the everyday, sanctioned experience of architecture. As such, Matta-Clark's operations here demonstrated the richness and diversity that Bataille hoped for, by not simply abandoning architectural principles, but by using them as part of a broader technique of rule breaking. The particular issues thrown up by this stage of his dissection projects have already been rehearsed in detail, where it was argued that by deliberately using architectural drawing techniques (*disegno*) out of step with 'proper' architectural procedure,

Matta-Clark altered the relationship between form and matter (and spectator). Similar strategies can be read in other moments of *altération* associated with these projects: rules are not simply broken, but deformed by being applied beyond their sanctioned sphere, or out of step with their usual sequence of operation, such as the cut of *Splitting*, which deliberately mis-applied the imaginary ‘sectioning’ of a building through its physical fabric, it inscribed a view usually only available to the architect or design team during the design phase of a project after the design itself had been realized, making this ‘view’ available for a different audience.

As Lefebvre’s blank sheet of paper demonstrates, the apparent innocence of that which is taken for granted is sustained through the careful complicity of various contributory aspects or stages. For Lefebvre, as for Matta-Clark and Bataille, the complaint against this situation was that it narrows the possibilities for human involvement and experience by narrowing the possible range of responses offered to an audience (in the broadest sense). In contrast, *altération* encouraged the development and enrichment of this experience. Using the ‘right’ method out of synch is just one possibility for its ongoing productive operation, one possibility of proceeding through successive destructions whose broader consequences impact not only our involvements with any art or architectural object, which is our main concern here (though the easy objectification is unsettled precisely at this point), but also on the disciplinary organisation and expectations of both architecture and art-history.

In this respect, Matta-Clark’s work explores and develops Bataille’s notion: while *altération* offers to go in two different directions, contesting ‘good form’ and clear ‘evolution’ by involving both maintenance and excess, Bataille’s particular targets and examples restricted his explorations of its broader applicability. Indeed, Bataille’s own discussions are patchy; they are set up to counter art-historical models which treat the development of art as something akin to ‘vegetable growth,’²⁵ operating at what Bataille believed to be moments of particular epochal shift (‘The Birth of Art,’ ‘Primitive Art,’ and the announcement of Modernism in the work of Manet, to which Matta-Clark could be added as an example of the end of high modernism)

But rather than just adding another instance to Bataille’s non-vegetable art-history, Matta-Clark’s own projects enjoy a more involved temporality: *altération* was enacted within his own oeuvre, and operated there not just as successive destructions, but as continuous, successive and overlapping movement. It is important to stress that in this context, the ‘material’ substrate was not his principle target: reading *altération* within Matta-Clark’s oeuvre involves running it over a wide variety of terrain, accommodating the shifts that occur between the various supporting frameworks

his projects addressed, even holding different supports together. Consequently, several modes of stuff or expectation were brought together and made available for an audience within one experience. This affected all the parties involved, bearing on the artist's working method, the audience's modes of reception (both of which now encouraged a more active participation), and the 'work' itself, where any lingering whole object 'autonomy' was undermined through an acknowledgement of that work's contingency.

The difficulties sketched out earlier regarding attempts to locate 'the work' are readdressed in this account: locating the work is not the point, it doesn't depend exclusively on the adherence to the rules of one discipline. In this regard, Matta-Clark echoes the broader avant-garde situation at that time, which while sharing certain concerns, cannot be made to cohere around objects. In common with many artists reacting against the high modernist valorisation of autonomy, there was a growing interest in developing kinds of work that encouraged the potential of participatory involvement: one broad tranche of this new work was concerned with performance.

Altération and performance

However worried high modernist artists and critics were by the 'perverting' character of traditional theatre, by the early 1970s there were well-established artistic attempts to sidestep its negative associations, particularly those due to its alleged repeatability, by developing 'performance,' which emphasised contingency and uniqueness.²⁶ This situation was presaged by the emergence of 'Happenings' in the previous decade, where a related change of emphasis regarding spectatorial experience was brought about as a consequence of the juxtaposition they set up between different 'genres' of art. Although the closest Matta-Clark got to 'Happenings' was as part of the collaborative project *Food*, Brian O'Doherty's spatialised account of this earlier spectatorial experience can be redirected more metaphorically towards the operative *altération* of Matta-Clark's œuvre, where both 'conceived the spectator as a king of collage in that he was spread out over the interior—his attentions split by simultaneous events, his senses disorganised and redistributed by firmly transgressed logic.'²⁷

Two other aspects of Happenings, at least on O'Doherty's account, are relevant here; that they were 'first enacted in indeterminate, nontheatrical spaces—warehouses, deserted factories, old stores;' and that they 'mediated a careful stand-off between avant-garde theatre and collage.' As already suggested, Matta-Clark himself frequently approached discussions of his working

process in similar terms, emphasising its theatrical aspect. Indeed, he wrote of one of his early projects, *Homesteading: An Exercise in Curbside Survival*, which took place over three days between April 20-23rd 1970, adjacent to St. Mark's Church, 2nd Avenue and 10th Street, Manhattan, that it would be '...a project in which I hope to combine a sculptural process with theatre.'²⁸ This tendency to situate his work using the terms of contemporary performance art continued in interviews throughout his life, though the following two extracts demonstrate an almost interchangeable approach to the terms 'theatre,' 'performance,' and 'event.' Here, the 'strange contradiction' he acknowledges points more fruitfully beyond the particularities of performance *per se* to the more important opportunities Matta-Clark believed were available to this particular way of working.

[In *Splitting*]...there's obviously a kind of detailed concern with the event. I mean, it's not a performance for people to watch, but it's obviously an event, the result of an activity which is peripheral to performance. It's a kind of strange contradiction, something that doesn't fit into performance as such because there has been no specially isolated activity, so the whole place and the constituent actions form the record. I suppose in that sense it's very clear that the activity and the detailed time are part of the piece.²⁹

I can not separate how intimately linked the work [*Office Baroque*] is with the process as a form of theatre in which both the working activity and the structural changes to and within the building are the performance. I also include a free interpretation of movement as gesture, both metaphoric, sculptural, and social into my sense of theatre with only the most incidental audience— an ongoing act for the passer-by...³⁰

Matta-Clark's discussion of the various aspects that formed part of his artistic activity in these building dissections combine as one stage of *altération*, raising a temporal complexity that Bataille's writings do not address: the 'contradiction' that Matta-Clark felt made these projects associated with, and yet peripheral to, performance occurred as a result of the lack of spatial and temporal contiguity between apparently 'essential' dimensions— environmental context (building), event (cutting activity), and audience. Indeed, the spatio-temporal position of the audience (and the ambiguity of its constitution, present or absent, large or small, attentive art-goer or casual passer-by) strikes a better relationship with filmic work than with 'theatre' or 'performance.' The structure of these *altération* events is similar to his durational projects such as *Underground Dailies* or *City Slivers* introduced earlier. In both situations, the legibility of Matta-Clark's activity, its 'detailed time,' was mediated through a particular record —filmic work or object-space, even photocollage— rather than the latter being an end in itself.

To consider this cutting stage of the dissection projects as durational or filmic rather than as performance *per se* is not to anticipate the later stages of *altération* that these projects enjoyed.

The structure of this initial stage did not have any limiting effects on the ongoing process of *altération*. Rather, it is one instance of Matta-Clark's broader strategy of deforming rules, and a comparison can be made here with the photo-collages which, as suggested earlier, can be read back over the spatial experience available within the dissected building and extend it as a distinct *altération*, while an aspect of collage was already present within this spatial experience, albeit it in a different, strategic mode.

This double inscription, where different approaches occur both in their own right as distinct stages (media) and also as strategic operations within other stages, parallels the distinction Bataille made between direct physical *altérations* and the principal *altération* addressed to more significant, intangible conventions of support. Indeed, the role of 'performance' itself takes up such a dual role in Matta-Clark's oeuvre, and it can be now argued more precisely that it is this capacity which brings about the 'kind of strange contradiction' he voiced regarding his work's peripheral relationship or lack of good fit regarding performance. This is also partly productive of the ambiguity associated with the audience of these projects. The 'incidental' audience he referred to is not to be taken as unimportant, but reflects the changes this audience's involvement must make as the operations of *altération* extend beyond any clearly defined 'performance' event.

Although the emphasis on contingency and uniqueness associated with the emergence of performance could itself be played out in different and problematic ways, a principal motivation behind performance was the attempt to overcome the passivity, or suspension, traditionally expected of a theatre audience, and instead to engage a particular public whose involvement with the performance would highlight their shared interests and mutual obligations. Matta-Clark stressed this distinction to Donald Wall:

My work can be regarded as a performance ~~in a much more profound way than a theatre event~~. in a way other than a theatre event. I didn't mention this to Liza [Bear] I should have, but space, to me, should be in perpetual metamorphosis by virtue of people continually acting on the space that surrounds them. A house, for instance, is definitely a fixed entity in the minds of most people. It ~~shouldn't~~ needn't be. So one of the effects of my work is to dramatize the ways, or stage ways in altering that sense of stasis.³¹

Beyond theatrical event or performance, Matta-Clark hoped that the heuristic role of his projects would itself continue over and over. Although large audiences were never an end in themselves, a particular low-point was the fate of his project *Day's End*, 1975. After Matta-Clark spent months covertly cutting up the abandoned Pier 52 on New York's waterfront during the summer of that year, the City Port Authorities reclaimed the site the day before it was due to open, and subsequently filed a lawsuit against him for a million dollars, forcing him to flee to Europe.

As he wrote in correspondence from the time: ‘...what I had hoped would be my first easily accessible alteration in New York turns out to be also my first confiscated work.’³² There was an opening of sorts before he fled, but his hope that the *easily accessible* location would allow large numbers of people to visit went unrealised. Although its geographical proximity to downtown Manhattan could have made the project easily accessible to an audience, the role of relative location should not be overplayed, especially considering the difficulty Matta-Clark experienced getting sites to work with.³³ As the foregoing discussion around the dual inscription of participation highlights, ‘ease of access’ can extend beyond geography to emphasise other factors in the audience’s relationship to his work that were of at least equal significance.

public/private, or “uniquely cultural complexes in a given social fabric”

On completion of *Conical Intersect* in Paris (1975), Matta-Clark suggested that the motivation behind the cuts began with and returned to the social fabric in which he was working. In contrast to *Day’s End*, this work had enjoyed a large (though not always appreciative) audience during the process of its making; however, he stressed the extent of the continuity between them:

ALL EARLIER WORKS USED BUILDINGS NEITHER AS OBJECTS NOR AS ART MATERIAL BUT AS UNIQUELY CULTURAL COMPLEXES IN A GIVEN SOCIAL FABRIC. THESE WORKS THAT CONSISTED OF QUESTIONING THE INTERNAL DEPENDANCIES OF A STRUCTURAL SYSTEM ALSO ~~IMPLIED A NECESSARY EXTENTION INTO AN URBAN~~ HARBOURED THE NECESSITY OF AN URBAN DIALOGUE. SUCH A DIALOGUE BEGINNING ILLEGALLY AND IN SOLITUDE AT NEW YORK’S PIER 52 ON THE HUDSON BECAME BOTH CLEARER AND MORE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC ON THE PARIS STREETS... [IN THE REALISATION OF] A FORM THAT HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH ANY ‘ONE’ THING.³⁴

This account of his working method emphasises that the principal *altération* of his work attempted to target not simply the built fabric but the internal dependencies of its underlying structural system. This opens onto the central concerns of Matta-Clark’s œuvre, namely the attempt to develop art’s heuristic and broader socio-political roles. Projects such as *Conical Intersect* as much as *Homesteading*, rather than being art-‘objects’ or forms that had ‘LITTLE TO DO WITH ANY ONE THING,’ worked to develop a relationship with the passer-by that echoed the tensions being played out more broadly between a theatrical audience and those present at a performance. Matta-Clark discussed the forces pulling this relationship in different directions during a radio interview with Liza Bear: ‘...there’s a kind of schizophrenia: [on the one hand] there’s work that’s related to conventional gallery exhibition space. And then there’s what interests

me more, how to extend a real environmental situation into something that's more accessible for people.'³⁵

Different projects brought together these schizophrenic aspects in different ways: alongside projects that were located in the 'real,' non-gallery environment, other work was located firmly in the gallery itself. In both, his overarching concern with location was as a 'uniquely cultural complex in a given social fabric,' where the schizophrenia harboured by the 'internal dependencies' underlying that location were revealed through the processes of *altération*.

Matta-Clark's project in the *Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes* in Santiago, for example, installed a *camera obscura* mechanism in a public museum building. The *camera's* traditional sphere of operation, in both actual and metaphorical usage, was at most a domestic space, and the experience to be had there was to be enjoyed by a private, isolated individual. Matta-Clark's potential renovation of this model of the private individual has already been examined; beyond this, by mocking up a *camera* through the spaces of the museum, the project also highlighted how these particular assumptions also predicated the traditional role of the art gallery or museum, which accommodated the essentially private moments of communion between this disinterested individual with the bounded work of art. The Santiago piece unsettled this rather cosy model of aesthetic judgement by playing out the extent to which the public art institution and the private individual were intertwined: instead of the (allegedly) unmediated image available within the traditional *dark room*, visitors to this project would encounter the path of mirrors running through the museum. Although there was a notional viewing position (basement urinal), the transmission could be picked up *en route* in various other spaces within the building, as can be seen in Figure 2.3. These other spaces were also partially reflected in the 'final' image, and would combine, along with the potential presence of other observers, as an interference pattern.

Although the Santiago piece was disruptive of the art institution, literally and metaphorically de-architecting it along with the spectatorial conditions of aesthetic judgement and the 'proper' behaviour associated with this, the fact that it took place through a public building is not sufficient to substantiate the claim that it was accessible to or engaged the public. Away from any simple conflation of 'public space' and public involvement (and equally away from any simple retort that because the *Museo* was closed awaiting refurbishment would mean it was no longer a public space) the importance of this project was that it rehearsed the complex cultural aspects of this relationship as they occurred in a social fabric.

Matta-Clark's interest in these relationships between public and private motivated a number of projects where they were explored through the complication of the (apparently) clearly demarcated 'domestic' realm, which again must not be conflated to numerous projects within his oeuvre which occurred in domestic settings. It was the process of the work that mattered, not the building type he was working on; late in 1975, he would still stress to his lawyer, Jerald Ordover, '[i]f anything emerges to cut up, I'll go anywhere anytime.'³⁶ Any motivation to work on 'dwellings' *per se* was an aspect of his broader interest in the social fabric, and must be taken as political rather than typological, a stance epitomised by his *Window Blow Out*.³⁷ More instructive of his approach to the domestic were projects such as *Homesteading*, or his 1973 performance-film *Clockshower*, where recognisably domestic activities were transposed to very public sites. (Figure 6.1) Writing to the authorities at St. Mark's church, the proposed site for *Homesteading*, Matta-Clark outlined his intentions:

The activity will involve building a wall out of urban junk... once I have built a wall it will provide a setting for some very simple "domestic" activities. I will work, eat, and clean ~~around~~ ~~this~~-maintaining this area around the wall... ~~Since I consider the whole process my performance~~ ~~Other people will come in~~...the audience, pedestrian and actors...are all naturally combined by the character and location of the activity...The total effect will be a home-street cycle...growing from and returning to the garbage bin.³⁸

Similarly, the film of *Clockshower* nods to a Buster Keaton burlesque, as Matta-Clark proceeds to shave and shower himself while clinging to the clock hands of The Clocktower building, high above Broadway.³⁹ Although the physical location of its performance clearly established these activities in a different relationship with its initial audience of office-workers than did *Homesteading*, both projects put the domestic to work in such a way as to prevent the

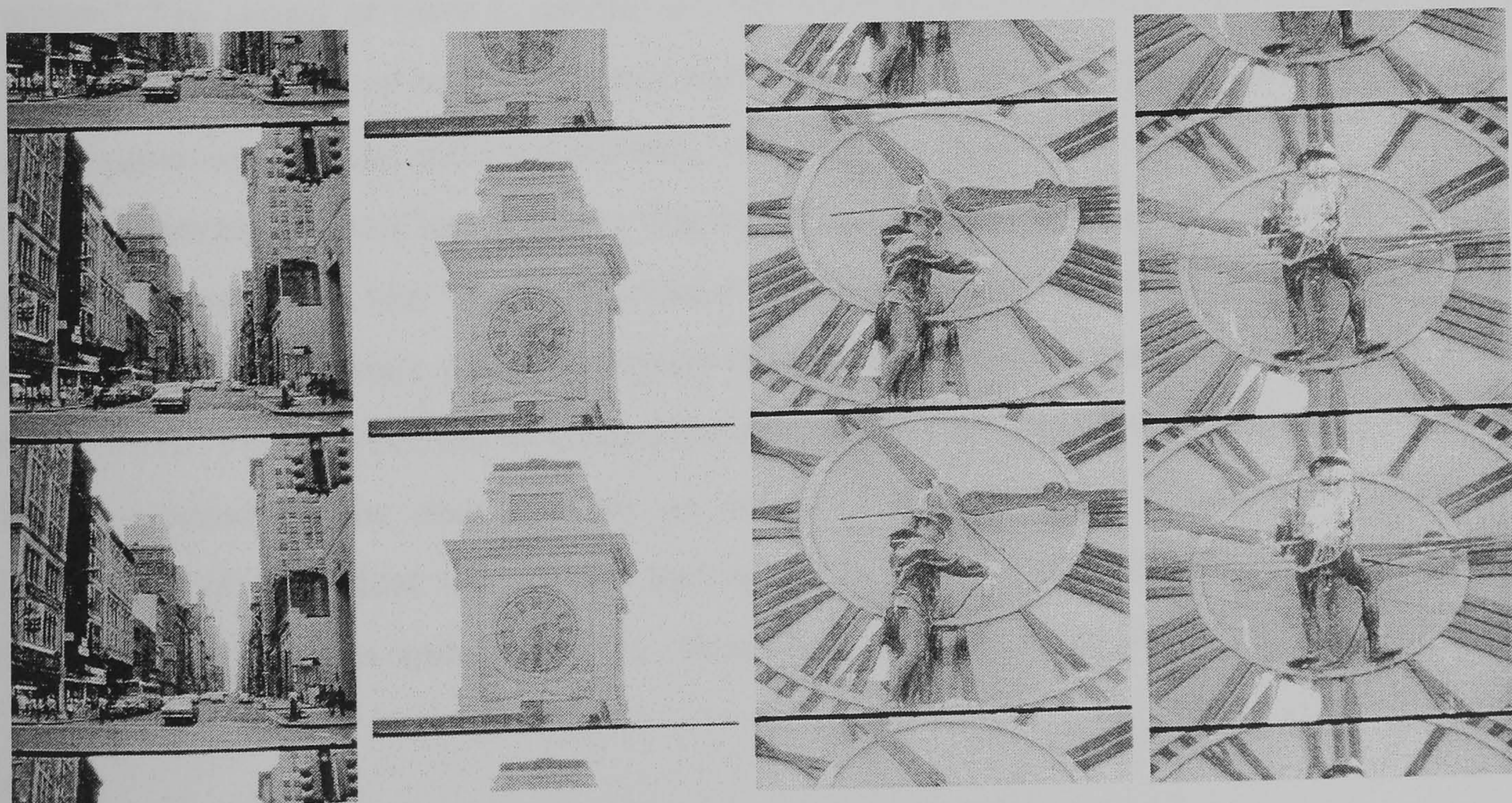


Fig. 6.1 stills from Gordon Matta-Clark, *Clockshower* (16mm, colour, no sound, 13:50min) 1974

usual acceptance of an easy distinction between home and work, private and public, individual and society, urban and sub-urban, and so on. In *Homesteading* particularly, this transposition intended to draw in people from the surrounding area and include them in the work itself: *Other people will come in and be naturally combined in the activity*. More importantly, the usually clear distinction between those involved —actors, audience, pedestrians— becomes ambiguous in Matta-Clark's account.

This combination of the character and location of the activity returns us to Matta-Clark's identification of schizophrenia introduced earlier: behind the burlesque domesticity of these pieces and the anger of *Window Blow-out*, and behind the alterations to Santiago's *Museo*, lies the same motivation; in their own ways, all pull at the apparent evenness of the social fabric, dramatising ways of overcoming stasis and pointing to other conceptions which would figure society more as a dynamic process than a static thing. Of course, certain parties have an interest in maintaining this evenness, the price for which is the reduction of society's complexity, ironed out to provide a smooth surface. The intention of such ironing is to contain every 'thing' in its proper place: public, private, actors, audience, pedestrians, and so on. Society is reduced to a more easily spatialised schema, with each term occupying clearly defined zones. This schema in turn reduces the remit of buildings and architects.

Indeed, Adrian Forty notes the popularity of various dichotomous terms such as those just listed, and argues this popularity lies in the ease with which they can be instrumentalised. 'Within architectural discourse,' he writes, 'the two most regularly occurring conceptions of 'society' have been those contained in the notion of 'community,' and in the dichotomy between 'public' and 'private.' The appeal of these to architects over other models of society can be explained by the ease with which they can be given spatial equivalents, thus holding out the prospect for architects and urbanists to evaluate, and even quantify, buildings and spaces in social terms.'⁴⁰

In contrast, Matta-Clark's works that had 'little to do with any one thing' —whether these things were categories like 'matter' discussed earlier, or public and private— operated to illustrate and explore the occurrence of things beyond their sanctioned realms and the complex relationships they enjoyed. Frazer Ward has examined the complexity that notions of public and private carry in the constitution of the audience for an artwork, and explored the broader importance to conceptions of individual subjectivity and social fabric brought about by the ambiguity found there. Referring to this ambiguity as a 'Grey Zone,' his essay of the same name discusses the

performance and particularly the subsequent reaction to Chris Burden's now infamous performance *Shoot* (1971), when Burden was shot in the arm in front of an invited audience.⁴¹

Ward argues that this event raised the normal aesthetic problems of how to account for a work to a legal level, for both audience and protagonists. Although the detail of his analysis is beyond the scope of the present discussion, his account demonstrates how *Shoot* revealed what Matta-Clark termed the 'internal dependencies of a structural system' within a given social fabric. The response to this very particular performance brought to light some of the relationships that quietly exist and sustain the smoothness of the social fabric: demands from the legal sphere were interwoven with those of the mass media, with ethics (particularly those underlying collective responsibility) and aesthetics (the expectations regarding audience behaviour). Ward suggests that one of the most interesting outcomes of *Shoot* was the way in which it exposed the instability of legal definitions of public and private, and how this instability in turn had an impact upon the organization of behaviour. In particular, he argues that it put members of the audience, and the public more broadly, in a position where their own subjectivity vacillated between that of an idealized, autonomous self, on one hand, and of being a relay within a broader system, on the other.

One implicit after-effect of *Shoot*, then, was to reveal the instability of the legal definitions or limits to [the] categories [of public and private]. Given the importance of the private/public distinction to the organisation of behaviour, then subjectivity, by extension, must also have legal limits... *Shoot*... cast the public in a role that poses a series of questions pressing the distinction between the self as the idea of an essential self-knowledge bound to an interior, and the self as a position in a system ... *Shoot*'s own nagging empiricism in the end revealed the public, not as an empirical category, but as a grey zone, defined by the suspension of judgement and choice.⁴²

It is not the intention here to equate the situation of an observer watching Burden get shot with that of someone watching Matta-Clark's *Clockshower* burlesque, or *Homesteading*'s public repetition of private chores: failure to intervene in a shooting brings with it greater ethical concerns than helping Matta-Clark pick up garbage. However, what is important is the way in which both artists' projects posed questions that implicated the audience by revealing the inherent ambiguity of their (categorical) location: society, even in the restricted version represented by an art audience, enjoys a conflicting make up. Ward's final analysis closely echoes the questions raised for the audience or visitor to Matta-Clark's Santiago project, which vacillated between an enactment of a *camera obscura* model of the private individual observing the world at some remove, and a demonstration of the complex involvement in a socio-cultural fabric. As with many of Matta-Clark's projects, this offered more than one mode of experience within the same piece, demonstrating in this

instance that 'the public' as much as 'the audience' can only ever partially exist, the 'member of the public' being an ideal category to which an individual may belong more or less but never wholly, always being 'private' at the same time.

Ward's 'grey zone' highlights the thoroughgoing ambiguity regarding who or what is addressed by works such as these. As much as this ideal 'public' category cannot be wholly occupied, neither can the complete suspension of judgement that Ward alludes be attained: to make judgement is not to escape the grey zone (and achieve judgement *in camera*), but to achieve it differently. It is no coincidence that Matta-Clark frequently related his interests in these relationships between public and private to issues of law, and discussed the aesthetic demands of accounting for his work in legal terms. In a letter sent from 'exile' in Paris to his lawyer, Matta-Clark asked after the legal situation regarding *Pier 52*; as the letter goes on, Matta-Clark anticipates that his working process will continue to land him in trouble: 'My real problem is that my ongoing challenge to the 9/10 legal property structure (peoples [*sic*] sense of privacy and prudery as well) may continue to make me a somewhat criminal type.'⁴³

Rather than the clear-cut legal distinctions, spatial demarcation and codes of behaviour associated with the conventional, quantifiable use of the terms public and private, Matta-Clark's projects demonstrated the ambiguity and contingency of their relationships. As much as his over-and-over working process (*altération*) exceeded the autonomous art object, so the judgement of his oeuvre exceeded the rules presumed by modernism, falling instead under a jurisdiction that was different in kind, and which he referred to as *Directional Law*:

UNDEFINED PRIVACY IN THE OPEN PUBLIC WAY THUROUGFARES CAPTIVATING MOMENTS IN SPACE...

LEGAL FARE ———DIRECTIONAL LAW⁴⁴

Matta-Clark's concern that he would remain a somewhat criminal type stemmed from the challenge his *Directional Law* would make to received jurisprudence and aesthetics, and to the various interested parties or institutions that supported these. Upsetting the dictum that possession is nine-tenths of the law, his oeuvre operated with a different process, one that enjoyed an ambiguity, or a grey zone, around both the thing possessed, the possessing subject, and the propriety underlying traditional conceptions of this relationship.

“Directional Law”

‘Justice is desire and not law... Desire is not form, but a procedure, a process.’ — Deleuze & Guattari⁴⁵

Matta-Clark’s directional law, allied to his working process, countered various approaches that attempt to establish judgement against pre-existing criteria, and that are typical of the idealism associated with Modernist art and architecture. The architectural historian Peter Collins has discussed ‘pure’ law and compromise, arguing that the solipsism implied in (jurisprudential) idealism must be reconciled with the everyday situation of the world. Of interest in the present context, Collins links the implicit political aspect of this negotiation with the emergence and ongoing involvement of the professions in the judgement process. Matta-Clark’s directional law also involves these various aspects, while offering an alternative to the situation that Collins describes here:

The distinction between justice and public policy is... the political aspect of a dilemma... namely the problem of finding a just mean between ‘minimum’ and ‘optimum.’ ‘Justice’ is the optimum; but perfect justice is only attainable in law (just as perfect harmony is only attainable in architecture) when an individual’s right to pursue happiness is unlimited by any other individual’s right to pursue his own particular kind of happiness. This limitation is what brought the professions into being, and still dictates their essential task.⁴⁶

Pursuing the particular characteristics of different professions, Collins suggests similarities between the legal and architectural disciplines, and discusses the role, and phasing, of creativity during the legal process. While acknowledging that legal judgement can be creative, he concedes that the occurrence of creativity is restricted to a rare breed of exceptional, ‘creative judges:’ according to Collins, ‘[t]hey are... the “Pioneers” or “Form-Givers” of the law,’⁴⁷ and the majority of judges are obliged to follow the (creative) decisions of these few. Collins argues that the architectural design process is an amalgam of the whole juridical process, with its various players, judge and jury, prosecution and defence, being internalised within the figure of the (presumably form-giving) architect.

Despite the inclusion of these various interested and disinterested parties, which play out the architect’s obligations to the client and to society at large (in contract and in tort), Collins concludes by referring back to the ‘Pioneer’ or ‘Form-Giver’ within the architect, arguing that while ‘in both architectural competitions and litigation, justice must be manifestly seen to be done, architectural judgement, like legal judgement, is in the last resort a matter for experts. It is often as hard for a layman to interpret architectural draughtsmanship as it is for him to interpret legal draughtsmanship; but for this very reason he must accept the fact that real justice is often based on

technicalities which, though incomprehensible to him, are quite apparent to those of good faith trained in the profession.⁴⁸

This gulf between the profession and the everyday user of architecture is apparent in and maintained by the design process and by architectural criticism. In both areas, the expert approaches architecture through techniques that are inaccessible to the user, and is able to regard architecture from viewing positions unavailable to the uninitiated. Moreover, these techniques tend towards both textual and diagrammatic abstraction, indicative of an underlying desire to transcend the actual experience of architecture by discerning its ideal 'form.'⁴⁹ This tendency is underwritten by the general priority traditionally given to the 'form-giver' in various guises, with all the attendant privileges traditionally borne by the mind's eye over the dubious stuff of sense perception, (though here, this privilege is raised to another power, as judgement defers to the mind's eye of the expert), which has been rehearsed at length in previous chapters.

Within his oeuvre's broad contestation of this approach to form-giving, Matta-Clark's proposal for *Directional Law* was intended to ameliorate this particular system of judgement, challenging its deferral to archetypes or transcendental form *eidos*. Importantly, his proposal was not simply to reverse the direction of judgement, but to examine the relationships between the various parties involved, and to upset the assumptions that a profession coincides precisely with the discipline it oversees. As he stated to Donald Wall:

If you like the law, yet at the same time recognize that the ultimate law cannot possibly exist, then wouldn't it be better to talk about the impossibility of law than run around being a lawyer practising law? Better perhaps to discuss the impossibility of architecture than the possibility of being an architect.⁵⁰

To position Matta-Clark's discussion beyond paradox it is necessary for *Directional Law* to both uphold the law while demonstrating its lawlessness, a situation that Jacques Derrida approaches in his meditation on the possibility of justice: '...for a decision to be just and responsible, it must, in its proper moment if there is one, be both regulated and without regulation: it must conserve the law and also destroy it or suspend it enough to have to reinvent it in each case, rejustify it, at least reinvent it in the reaffirmation and the new and free confirmation of its principle.'⁵¹ Although Derrida's address here was to jurisprudence, his meditations on aesthetic judgement follow similar patterns.⁵² Moreover, Derrida's call clearly echoes the operation of Matta-Clark's *discrete violation*: both proceed by maintaining and exceeding an existing situation.

Matta-Clark's concern that he would remain a somewhat criminal type stems from the challenges his *Directional Law*, or *discrete violation*, would continue to make, acknowledging that

any judgement necessarily involves a certain violence either to confirm and conserve an established rule, or to make a new one. *Legal Fare (Fair)* That a judgement involves violence does not invalidate it *per se*, but this does require the notion of violence be approached carefully. Walter Benjamin (whose work prompted Derrida's considerations just cited) stressed the awkwardness of this situation: 'All violence as a means is either law-making or law-preserving. If it lays claim to neither of these predicates, it forfeits all validity. It follows, however, that all violence as a means, even in the most favourable case, is implicated in the problematic nature of law itself.'⁵³ Benjamin's examination can be brought to bear on the roles of violence within Matta-Clark's oeuvre and its critical reception.

Here particularly, this notion is found within Matta-Clark's oeuvre and its critical reception. Throughout his career and following his death, Matta-Clark faced accusations of violence from a variety of sources: although most were reported anecdotally and in the general pejorative sense associated with violence, Maud Lavin's 1984 article in *Artforum* remains the most thoroughgoing criticism of his work undertaken in terms that attempt to articulate the nature of violence involved. Discussing *Splitting*, she argues that 'Matta-Clark's dissected, abandoned building is a representational system of destruction... By an act of destruction, Matta-Clark possesses a home which is about to be demolished, and he substitutes his sign for ruin for the actual imminent destruction.'⁵⁴ She reads this sign as a pointer to 'the individualistic power of the artist'⁵⁵ that actually furthers the social systems he criticised. Lavin's argument is multi-faceted, though her own conclusion is itself violent to the extent that it is law-preserving; summing up, she suggests that Matta-Clark's artistic process enacts 'the ultimate freedom of private ownership, possession through destruction.'⁵⁶

Lavin's conclusion relies on a notion of possession allied to the system of private ownership that is motivated and governed by a logic of possession-as-accumulation: any acts of deliberate destruction would be fundamentally at odds with this logic, and the violence involved would be taken as precipitating a straightforward material ruin. Although her exploration points to the complex inter-relationships that projects such as *Splitting* reveal, in her final analysis these inter-relationships are casual, and her judgement defaults to the autonomous and prior logic of each of the systems involved. All through these systems, there is an underlying belief in prior wholeness and the priority of wholeness; Matta-Clark's violence is against this wholeness, and it occurs where Lavin identifies it—'possession through destruction.' However, to recall the over-and-over *altération* that Matta-Clark's projects enjoyed can highlight an important difference between them

and the underlying logic of Lavin's analysis, which emerges from the difference between actual material alteration and the principal alteration this effected on the underlying systems themselves.

Lavin's conclusion pits Matta-Clark's work against the legal or socially accepted norms of accumulative possession. He clearly recognized this situation when observing his 'ongoing challenge to the 9/10 legal property structure' that upsets the dictum possession is nine-tenths of the law. But positioned without the logic of accumulation, the observer is not pointed toward Matta-Clark's individual artistic authority but toward their own relationship with the work, and to their simultaneous involvement as individuals and as members of the public, having to wrest themselves from Ward's 'grey zone.' Deleuze approaches the complex constitution of this grey zone as a legal problem, and suggests that '[s]ociety is a set of conventions founded on utility, not a set of obligations founded on a contract.'⁵⁷ Instead of being bound by contract to one position, an individual's situation in society would be redrafted as an ongoing experiment that has significant consequences for 'normal' behaviour and judgement. It was suggested during earlier discussions of 'experimental' or intensive spatiality that Matta-Clark's oeuvre deployed a variety of techniques to present observers with the possibility of occupying more than one position simultaneously. Developing those suggestions in the present context, it can be argued that his oeuvre's directional law does violence to the idea of the binding contract in various guises, whether this contract acts against the legal body of society, the discrete, bounded human body traditionally adopted as a model by architectural theory, the 'bloodless phenomenological body of minimalism,'⁵⁸ or the body of architecture (and this latter taken both as object and as discipline, the legally-protected body of architecture). Objections to 'violence' against these neatly bounded bodies are not necessarily without foundation, but, as is the case with Lavin, such objections can distract attention away from the violence involved in the establishment, the bounding, of these traditional bodies.

While arguing against Matta-Clark's violent 'possession through destruction,' Lavin quietly sanctions these other violences already at play in maintaining the retrogressive movements of traditional judgement, which relay back to an already-established truth. Picking up Benjamin's concern, violence is involved on both these occasions, and what needs to be acknowledged more clearly is the mode and intention of violence involved. Beyond physical violence, the impossible demand to attain the ideal realm can be every bit as harmful. Matta-Clark's projects offered an experimentation which in itself constituted violence, but a productive violence against contractual, systematic judgement, a violence emerging out of what Derrida calls the 'ordeal of the

undecidable:’ ‘A decision that didn’t go through the ordeal of the undecidable would not be a free decision, it would only be the programmable application or unfolding of a calculable process. It might be legal; it would not be just.’⁵⁹

The distinction between *legal* and *just* decisions extends beyond Lavin’s particular response to Matta-Clark’s building dissections, and begins to highlight a number of other issues that bear on the processes involved in both the production and evaluation of artistic and architectural work. To recall the exploration projects *Underground Paris*, *Substrait*, or *Sous-sols de Paris* and suggest that these involve ‘the ordeal of the undecidable’ for the various reasons already rehearsed, this prevents Matta-Clark’s gesture of ‘going underground’ from being read as simply subversive, as undermining, as retrogressive, and so on, which provide comfortable and ultimately dismissive readings of Matta-Clark’s activities as constituting simply ‘illegal’ violence against the accepted model. But to explore archaeologically was for Matta-Clark not just to dig down searching for origins, it provided him with a substantial and constructive counter to Plato’s allegory of the cave. Rather than trying to get out of the cave into the sunlight, to essence or unchanging truth, Matta-Clark’s projects offered the user the ‘ordeal of the undecidable’ and thereby proposed a different, contingent truth, one which re-organised assumptions regarding the restricted coincidence of truth with the intellect. In Matta-Clark’s oeuvre, the truth grasped by the intellect became only one of several possible truths: SHADOWS IN THE WALL could be equally revealing.

PLATO—SHADOWS IN THE WALL OF A CAVE... DEPTH OF MEANING AND DEFINITIONS OF LAYERED REALITY. A WAY OF THOUGHT A SYSTEM OF PLAY.⁶⁰

In contrast to many subsequent occasions when Plato’s allegory has been borrowed to underwrite structures of judgement that range from jurisprudence to aesthetics, Plato’s own work does acknowledge the ordeal: his account of the ‘good dialectic’ involved the systematic exploration of the ‘irrational’ and the success his method guaranteed its user’s quest to distinguish the right from other (literally ‘left’ or sinister) madnesses encountered there. Plato privileged the ‘right’ madness, arguing it was sanctioned from without by divine love. Plato’s madness was about getting to the correct position, about (re)assuming the correct place from which judgement could be issued, namely that of divine love. To broaden the earlier argument concerning *clumsy butchery*, Matta-Clark’s process of exploration involved the ordeal of the undecidable by maintaining a range of madnesses, by re-orientating the direction of the search and removing its teleological status, and by altering the status of judgement; for Matta-Clark, this no longer involved re-claiming transcendental truth, but producing contingent truth.

Similarly, his Santiago project can be considered in the present context to emphasise his desire to instigate an ongoing creative questioning. The difference between the ‘judgement’ that Matta-Clark’s reconfiguration encouraged and the quasi-Platonic schema it overturned is important, for it points to their fundamentally different ways of grounding judgement. In its traditional role the camera obscura was not simply a metaphor for human understanding, but one that provided itself with the authority for making judgements. Effectively, it was both judge and jury (indeed, Cray repeats the common seventeenth century reference to the juridical process as being *in camera*).⁶¹ While this model apparently humanized the understanding by secularizing judgement, it again established and policed the absolute separation between the mundane sensory world and the realm of transcendental form-ideas or *eidōs*.

As with many of his projects, the Santiago piece operated in part by framing different modalities of vision, bringing together modes of experience usually held apart, which would thereby resist easy synthesis. Many of Matta-Clark’s projects operated by demonstrating that the undecidable ingredients of experience do not go away, but that they are just repressed and lurk behind that which is taken for granted. His *œuvre* brings these undecidables, the ordeal of undecidability back into relief. Many aspects of his *œuvre* explored in previous chapters are clearly involved in the issues of evaluation or judgement, whether these be the stuff that could be involved (Form and Matter), the framework within which the process was expected to take place (Space and Time), or the agency of those involved (User, Observer, Viewer). In addition to these issues, Matta-Clark’s Santiago project serves as a reminder of the impact his *œuvre* can have on the underlying relationship assumed between subject and object; their clear separation, epitomised by the traditional camera obscura metaphor, is called into question. Not only does the ‘viewer’ become more flexible (if we recall the discussion around Leibniz and the *flexible screen*), not only does their ‘view’ become a momentary stable view of a changing situation (if we recall Bergson’s re-translation of *eidōs*),⁶² they themselves are caught up in this changing situation and are part of its ambiguity, or more strongly, its undecidability. Process for Matta-Clark involved the undecidability both of the work and its evaluation; just as process continues over and over, neither is there a singular private audience position removed from this process; to accept the ordeal of undecidability is also to negotiate the individual and social dimensions of audience position.

This fuller notion of process has further implications. In his exploration of systems to establish viewing position and judgement, architectural writer Robin Evans suggests that ‘All acts of violence are illegible during performance [qua process—sw].’⁶³ On Evans’s account, this is

because one cannot tell which phase of a process such acts belong to, nor what their outcome might be, nor what their motivations were. While his assertions are commensurate with the present account of Matta-Clark's process, they also point beyond the present discussion. If we were to reconsider Lavin's criticisms of Matta-Clark's work in light of Evans' position, it would involve asking whether, and if so how, Matta-Clark's is legible. Lavin's argument is based on an assumption that the act of violence has stopped, and that it is thus legible as a violence manifest through destruction. But if we consider that the 'performance' has not ended, and that as part of any involvement as 'audience' it is necessary to determine how we might view the work, then legibility cannot be attained until we have gone through the ordeal of the undecidable. What Lavin's criticisms begin to reveal is a broader discomfort regarding the authorization of legibility and the suggestion that all acts of interpretation are inherently violent. While the discomfort associated with the fear of the undecidable has produced untold versions where this ordeal is somehow sidelined and looked after by higher authority (god, the legal profession, the disciplines of art history, architecture, and so on), this tendency arguably increases during the modern period. Indeed it is this tendency to restrict the use of violence to some prior or outside control, to sanction that violence and accept its outcome, which Lavin ultimately defends.

Disciplinary authority operates, among other strategies, by maintaining audience constitution and viewing position. The framing of views and positioning of spectators attempted by various systems of aesthetics, for example, already involves the whole judgement process and prior (executive) violence that sustains it, hiding both aspects of process as they have been discussed here (the ongoing process of making, and the process of judgement), and presenting only the final work. Matta-Clark's oeuvre challenged this position by revealing these aspects of process in everyday situations. An interesting similarity is explored by Peter de Bolla in his examination of perspective theory. He notes how early theories attempted to govern both the artist's production of perspective painting, and the positioning and reception of the viewer, but records how difficult these were to reconcile, and how the codes were gradually relaxed as the eighteenth century progressed. de Bolla links this relaxation to the realization that legislative discourse is unable to control all forms of practice,⁶⁴ and that in fact 'each viewer has his own 'propriety' of view'⁶⁵ Broadening de Bolla's argument, it could be suggested that the executive legislative theory of architecture (which attempts to control how architecture is viewed and therefore how it can be understood) is similarly faced with the excess of practice (how in fact different people view and understand architecture in different ways in the social space of use). Thanks to what he terms the

‘polyvalent point of sight..., practice fractures the authority of theory.’⁶⁶ His projects encouraged different people to view and understand their situation in different ways, but by inscribing motifs from the ruling discourse (the section and other ‘imaginary’ architectural drawings, ‘good’ form, and so on) they also demonstrated that in practice, people’s contingent experiences far exceed the ‘proper’ understanding sanctioned by the theory of that discourse. In this respect, his work might be ‘illegible,’ although this is only within the narrow terms of legibility accepted by disciplinary authority. The OVER & OVER of *altération* rendered his work productively ‘illegible’ by actively disrupting attempts to judge or explain his projects once and for all, and marking the resistance of practice to theory.

Matta-Clark’s œuvre undoubtedly set out to precipitate such an excess of practice; while some of the implications for the audience have been considered here, the following chapter will take up this excess and explore issues this raises for legislative discourse, particularly that of art and architecture. High Modernist art and architecture worked hard to maintain their authority over audience response, carefully policing their respective disciplinary boundaries, promoting medium-specificity and self-critique to underwrite disciplinary purity. de Bolla’s reading of aesthetic theory holds for Matta-Clark’s challenges to such disciplinary purity, which operated from within disciplinary borders, by exposing a certain polyvalence of sight that undermined authority. These challenges will be explored, as will the various difficulties encountered when the disciplines of art, architecture, aesthetics, jurisprudence and so on are lumped together, a frequent consequence of the tendency to generalize and systematize all judgement.

¹ Gordon Matta-Clark, Interviewed by Florent Bex, in Bex (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.8ff.

² Minimalism’s project, for instance, has far more in common with Matta-Clark’s work than might be immediately apparent: Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed*, includes contemporary accounts that make such a link, (such as his designation as a second generation Minimalist) and explores the implications of possible terms of Matta-Clark’s relationship to Minimalism: see ‘On Scale, the Cut and the Minimalist Body,’ p.131.ff. As Matta-Clark was working at the same time and in the same geographical location as many ‘Minimalist’ artists, it is somewhat disingenuous to suggest exactly how ‘it’ related to his work. He was in direct contact with many Minimalist artists, some of whom he admired, some of whom he didn’t; he was working in the melting pot that was the 1970s New York SoHo art scene, where the notion of a particular ‘style’ failed to hold. Matta-Clark ‘admired’ LeWitt’s *wonderful line* and ‘wasn’t interested’ in Morris’ *Labyrinth*, for example. (see Russi Kirshner, ‘Non-Uments,’ and Bear, ‘Splitting,’ Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.366 and p.376 respectively.)

³ Willoughby Sharp, ‘Air Art,’ in *Studio International*, May 1968, vol.175, no.900, pp. 262-3. Sharp was the prime mover in significant events such as the ‘Land Art’ show at Cornell, and publications such as *Avalanche*. The previous sentence positions this broad claim more precisely with these events: ‘Kinetic sculpture is beginning to establish a subject-system dialectic capable of integrating us with the environment.’ The changes that Sharp notes were gradually institutionalised in initiatives such as the Art-in-Architecture programme, established in 1963 by the General Services Administration (GSA), the Art-in-Public-Places Program (National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), 1967) and local & state sponsored ‘percent for art’

programmes throughout the 1960s, although the registration of site-specific art within the guidelines of any of these first appeared in 1974 (NEA).

4 Anne Wagner, 'Aesthetics: Forms and Meanings 1925-1950,' in Penelope Curtis, Denise Raine, Matthew Withey, Jon Wood and Victoria Worsley (eds.), *Sculpture in 20th-Century Britain*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2004 op cit., p.103. Wagner's overarching claim in her essay is that autonomy is impossible—'relation... is the sculptural principle'— and that these artists knew it. In the related essay from the same collection, Gillian Whiteley emphasises the connection between the autonomous art object and the conditions of its display in the gallery: 'There is a general consensus that, in these postwar years, modernist aesthetics—underpinned by Greenbergian ideas—directly shaped the gallery context, including the curation and display of sculpture. Of course, there were anomalies...' Whiteley, *Conditions of Display, 1950-75*, p.186.

5 Mignon Nixon, 'Ringaround arosie: 2 in 1' in Nixon (ed.) *Eva Hesse*, MIT Press, 2002, p.211.

6 Gordon Matta-Clark, Bear interview *Gordon Matta-Clark: Dilemmas* WBAI-FM (NY) March 1976, in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.176.

7 For example, '...the edge is what I work through, try to preserve, spend this energy to complete, and at the same time what is read...' Matta-Clark, cited in Kirshner, 'Non-Uments,' in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.391. This statement, and the ongoing addition of energy it assumes, was discussed in Chapter Three above.

8 Richard Nonas, 'Gordon's Now, Now,' in *ibid.*, p.400. David Cohn expands the consequences of Matta-Clark's working process: 'No existe diferencia esencial entre el producto de la obra del artista y su entorno circundante; ambos forman parte de un único y permanente entorno de acción.' 'Blow-out...' in Corbeira (ed.), *¿Construir.o deconstruir?* op.cit., p.82. ('There's no essential difference between the product of the artist's work and his surroundings; both form part of a single and permanent sphere of action.')

9 Atlee and Le Feuvre, *The Space Between*, op.cit., p.29.

10 Gordon Matta-Clark, interviewed by Liza Bear: Bear, 'Splitting,' reproduced in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.375.

11 For a full catalogue and reproductions of Matta-Clark's 'Cut Drawings,' see Sabine Breitwieser (ed.), *Reorganizing Structure by Drawing Through It: Zeichnung Bei Gordon Matta-Clark*, Generali Foundation, Vienna, 1997 op.cit., pp.158-186. Pamela M. Lee's essay for this catalogue, 'Drawing In Between,' discusses the cut drawings, particularly the later, more geometrically complex ones, in the context of his extensive drawn work; pp.26-32, particularly p.27.

12 see catalogue raisonné, *ibid.*, p.162-5.

13 Gordon Matta-Clark interviewed by Kirshner; see Kirshner 'Non-Uments,' in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.393. O'Doherty emphasises the role of documentation in the age of performance, suggesting the 'second' audience, not present at the actual performance, might get more from the documented performance, but that they get it individually through the accommodating nature of the media involved: 'They are certificates that purchase the past easily and on our terms.' Matta-Clark's comments to Kirshner can be taken as a strategy to counter this 'easy' purchase and the domestication it offers, and can be read equally as the motivation behind the filmic work he produced.

14 Their restoration, undertaken by Jane Crawford, Bob Fiore, and Corinne Diserens, required this 'useless' raw material be separated out and recombined in a format that would permit projection and distribution.

15 Early rope sculptures in treetops were the site of choreographed pieces such as *Tree Dance*, he played an active part in the Greene Street events, through to *Doors Through and Through* or *Doors, Floors Doors* (1976, PS1 Long Island, NY), which was part of the inaugural exhibition *Room P. S. 1*, where Matta-Clark's cuts were supplemented by a durational digging piece during the show. The PS1 piece has been subsequently re-created in a different part of the PS1 building, though is (somewhat appropriately) inaccessible because of Health and Safety regulations. Near the end of its construction, *Circus* was the site of *Spread*, a performance by Tina Girouard, and so on. On *Food*, see Klauss Bussmann and Markus Müller (eds.), *Food*, Walter König, Köln, 1999.

16 Gordon Matta-Clark in an interview with Donald Wall: see Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' op.cit., p.79. Richard Nonas makes something of the same point regarding *Spitting*, arguing that Matta-Clark shouldn't have removed the corners of the building, but was unable to stop himself because he was a compulsive over-worker... 'He never knew when to stop, only in the later work. All the earlier work was flawed because he would go too far... The corner removals of *Spitting* were definitely not part of the same piece... [but] you can't stop, the building is going to be torn down, so you've got to hurry and do it while you can.' Richard Nonas, interviewed by Richard Armstrong NYC, October 14th 1980, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.399.

- 17 ibid., p.399.
- 18 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC. #1218, Anarchitecture Period, c.1973. As Elisabeth Sussman remarks, this openendedness had ramifications on the efficacy of their work: 'The hard fact is that the subtle ideas of Anarchitecture grew out of process, discussion, and association, not from analysis or known functions. Anarchitecture ideas, socially and psychologically oriented, did not develop into a program of political action.' Elisabeth Sussman, 'The Mind is Vast and Ever Present,' in Elisabeth Sussman (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure*, Whitney Museum of American Art with Yale University Press, New York, 2007, p.24.
- 19 Georges Bataille, *L'art primitif*, first published in Documents, N°7, Deuxième Année, 1930, pp.389-397. (Reviewing G. H. Lucquet, *L'Art primitif*, G. Doin, Paris, 1930.) Reprinted in *Œuvres complètes de G. Bataille*, Volume I: Premiers écrits, 1922-1940 (Gallimard, Paris, 1970) pp.247-254. Further references to this essay will be to the *Œuvres complètes*. Although Bataille was on the whole receptive to Luquet's ideas, he took issue with some aspects and consequences of Luquet's central hypothesis, an evolutionary argument in which *l'art primitif* was opposed to and ultimately replaced by *l'art classique des civilisés adultes*. This essay itself could be reasonably considered as a forerunner to Bataille's own books *Manet* and *Lascaux*, where his notion of *altération* was deployed and developed; see Georges Bataille, *Manet*, translated by Austryn Wainhouse and James Emmons *Manet: Biographical and Critical Survey* (Lausanne: Skira, 1955), and Georges Bataille, *Lascaux ou la naissance de l'art*, in *Œuvres complètes de G. Bataille* Volume IX (Paris: Gallimard, 1993).
- 20 'simplement caractérisé par l'altération des formes présentées,' *L'art primitif*, op.cit., vol. I, p.251.
- 21 'Le terme d'altération a le double intérêt d'exprimer une décomposition partielle analogue à celle des cadavres et en même temps le passage à un état parfaitement hétérogène correspondant à ce que le professeur protestant Otto appelle le tout autre, c'est-à-dire le sacré, réalise par exemple dans un spectre.' Bataille, *L'art primitif*, op.cit., footnote to vol. I, p.251.
- 22 'L'art, puisque art il y a incontestablement, procède dans ce sens par destructions successives.' Bataille, *L'art primitif*, op.cit., vol. I, p. 253.
- 23 'Il est vrai que l'altération principale n'est pas celle que subit le support du dessin. Le dessin lui-même se développe et s'enrichit en variétés, en accentuant dans tous les sens la déformation de l'objet représenté.' Bataille, *L'art primitif*, op.cit., vol. I, p. 252-253.
- 24 'As for the eye of the architect, it is no more innocent than the lot he is given to build on or the blank sheet of paper on which he makes his first sketch. His 'subjective' space is freighted with all-too-objective meanings. It is a visual space, a space reduced to blueprints, to mere images—to that 'world of the image' which is the enemy of the imagination... The tendency to make reductions of this kind— reductions to parcels, to images, to facades that are made to be seen and to be seen from (thus reinforcing 'pure' visual space)— is a tendency that degrades space.' Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, op.cit., p.361.
- 25 See in particular Georges Bataille, *Manet: Biographical and Critical Survey*, tr. Austryn Wainhouse and James Emmons, Skira, Lausanne, 1955, p.63, where he criticises the 'gradual, regular evolution comparable to vegetable growth' that Gautier used to describe the development of art over time.
- 26 The issues of theatricality were intimately linked to the disputes between Minimalism and orthodox High Modernism. Indeed, Fried's principal worry about *Objecthood* extended logically from his concern over Minimalism's violation of framing conventions to its 'already theatrical' sensibility, explaining its *corrupting* or *perverting* characteristic: because Minimalism had shifted attention to the process of perceiving an artwork, involving the conditions of its situation or staging, Fried feared a distance would emerge separating viewer from work, threatening the latter's special categorisation (and presumably the former's status). see Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood,' in Harrison and Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory*, [1967] op.cit.
- On 'performance' as the distinctive mode of anti-formalist modern, or post-modern, avant-garde art, see Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970*, University of Chicago Press, 1989 op.cit. Sayre is at pains to distinguish (bad) pluralism from the more radical contingency he draws on as defining the radical avant-garde.
- 27 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, op.cit, p.47.
- 28 Matta-Clark, draft letter, addressed *Dear Steve*, and regarding a conversation with Larry Fagin, 'Compositions #1' in Notebook, EGMC, #829, c.1970.
- 29 Matta-Clark to Bear, in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.168. Significantly, the interview originally appeared in *Avalanche*, a magazine started in 1968 by Willoughby Sharp and Liza Bear to cover the emerging conceptual and performance art scene.
- 30 Gordon Matta-Clark, Interviewed by Florent Bex, in Bex (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit, p.8ff.

31 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #11b.

32 Gordon Matta-Clark, letter to Helga Retzer (Berlin), EGMC, *Letters 1975*.

33 'I have had the greatest personal satisfaction in my more renegade efforts but find it extremely hard to execute or sustain in truly public or even easily accessible places except once miraculously in Paris where it was truly visible to the public.' Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard #5, EGMC, accessioned in *Letters '78-80*.

34 Gordon Matta-Clark, from the more extensive hand-written draft accompanied type-written notes: *ETANT D'ART POUR LOCATAIRE) OR/ CONICAL INTERSECT, PARIS, '75*, EGMC, *Articles & Documents, 1942-76*.

Lee's discussion of *Conical Intersect* explores several hostile reactions it provoked. Her interpretation of the work's relationship heads in a different direction to that suggested here: 'Because the work's condition of possibility is the very impermanence of the built environment, Matta-Clark overturns the conventional relationship between art and its viewing public. Challenging any claims to an essentialised community of spectators, his work produces a viewership founded on loss, not the fullness of productive or performative experience.' Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed*, op.cit., pp.207-9.

35 Gordon Matta-Clark, Bear interview, transcribed as *Gordon Matta-Clark: Dilemmas* WBAI-FM (NY) March 1976, in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.175.

36 Gordon Matta-Clark, letter from Paris to Jerald 'Jerry' Ordoover, EGMC, *Letters 1975*, dated by hand 12/4/75 that is, 4th December.

Although several observers take this as sufficient justification for claiming his interest in the domestic, it is a position that can only be maintained by ignoring everything about the pieces themselves and the most pragmatic explanations of why he was cutting up dwellings. Having quickly exhausted legitimate channels in his attempts to source buildings for his work, he resorted to breaking into abandoned structures; some of these were domestic buildings, and some were public. In short, Matta-Clark's work did not focus on dwellings, he worked wherever he managed to locate a site where he wasn't likely to be disturbed. When his work became more established and buildings came his way legitimately, his interests continued to lie beyond simple geographical location or building typology.

Lee argues something to the contrary. Discussing *Splitting*, she holds that '...within the suburban environs of *Splitting*, Matta-Clark had collapsed a very public activity—the collective viewing of art—onto a space conventionally regarded as private; and the categories of urban and suburban, centre and periphery were likewise "defunctionalized" by the artist's intervention.' Pamela M. Lee, *Object to be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, MIT Press, 2000, op.cit., p.28. Interviews with those who saw *Splitting* carry the camaraderie of group enterprise, but it might be suggested that it was the event of the viewing itself that brought this about, rather than the various collapses that Lee mentions. The collective viewing of art is hard to instigate in even the most urbane Gallery, and that it occurred at *Splitting* was perhaps less to do with the 'domestic' setting, or its peripheral location in the Englewood suburb, than the fact that a bus load of art-types had made the trip together for the opening of the work. Although they did not witness the process of its production, they became an audience at a particular event in this way.

Early projects such as *Bronx Floors* (1972-3) took place in derelict buildings from the ghetto areas in the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn, many of which 'had suffered heavy arson and were the epitome of urban neglect.' *Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark*, in *Matta-Clark*, Bex (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.8. (Interviewer unknown). They were 'selected' only because they were effectively beyond any policing; Matta-Clark described the working conditions as 'always the most adverse I can remember. We were not only stopped by the police on several occasions, but also by roving gangs from the neighborhood. There was always an acute sense of paranoia that accompanied this work.' Bex (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, p.8. Manfred Hecht, who helped on this project, emphasised their concern for their own safety: 'We were afraid to be found there...I was also afraid we'd get clubbed to death by the construction and demolition guys.' Manfred Hecht in conversation with Joan Simon, in *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective*, exhibition catalogue, Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, p.73. *Pier In/Out* (1973) and *Days End* (1975) also involved Matta-Clark in breaking and entering, but this time into abandoned warehouses near the piers in Manhattan, then equally a no-go area. His later building dissections took place legitimately, whether in domestic, industrial or public buildings. For example *Splitting* (1974) was produced with a house given to him by Holly and Horace Solomon; *Conical Intersect* was produced for the Paris Biennial in September 1975 with a twin town house procured and sanctioned by Georges Boudaille, the General Delegate of the Biennial; *Doors Through and Through* was done for the opening exhibition in the new PS1 building, a former school in Brooklyn, New York; *Office Baroque* was produced in the offices of the bankrupt MP-Omega N.V. company in Antwerp (*Office Went Broke*, on Matta-Clark's wordplay), sponsored by the ICC in Antwerp; *Circus-Caribbean*

Orange was commissioned by the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art in houses adjacent to the museum which were being taken over as part of the its expansion.

37 *Window Blow-Out* was a straightforward installation with a complex story to it: a response to various manifestations of institutional and corporate might, it was directed most immediately against the Architecture profession, manifest in the *Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies*, but also against the City Authority's complicity with business and real estate interests, which extended beyond simple failure to deal with lack of decent working class housing, but actively precipitated this lack. See David Cohn, 'Blow-out...', in Corbeira (ed.), *¿Construir.o deconstruir? op.cit.*, pp.77-90.

38 Matta-Clark, Draft letter, addressed *Dear Steve*, and regarding a conversation with Larry Fagin, 'Compositions #1' in Notebook, EGMC, #829, c.1970.

39 Although *Clockshower* can be isolated more than most of Matta-Clark's works, according to Jane Crawford it did involve an earlier attempt at a take with Matta-Clark appearing naked; this initial performance was curtailed following a complaint from a worker in a local office. Jane Crawford, in conversation with the author, Weston, Connecticut, 7th January 2002.

40 Forty, *Words and Buildings*, op.cit., p.105. David J. T. Vandeburgh and W. Russell Ellis, 'A Dialectics of Determination: Social Truth-Claims in Architectural Writing, 1970-1995,' in Piotrowski and Robinson (eds.), *The Discipline of Architecture*, pp.103-126, discuss the fluctuating definitions of 'social,' and the positivist intentions of early applications of 'social' research methods in architectural discourse, where the intention of this application was to uncover some universal truth or pattern to architecture.

41 See Frazer Ward, 'Grey Zone: Watching Shoot,' in *October*, 95, Winter 2001). Burden and Matta-Clark were good friends: however little Burden's piece shares with Matta-Clark's work by way of passing similarity, Burden stressed that their working processes were 'very similar': 'We differed in the details—in the finished work—but the process was very similar. In some ways, we shared a sensibility, a spirit of adventure, a dreaming the impossible and doing it.' Chris Burden, interviewed by Joan Simon, in Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.91.

(When the legality of *Shoot* came to questioned, because Burden needed to account for his gunshot wound in order to receive officially sanctioned medical treatment, private *and* public explanations were offered to the doctors attending to Burden—according to which he was variously shot by his wife during a domestic argument, or shot by accident while hunting.)

42 Ward, 'Grey Zone,' op.cit., p.124, and pp.129-130.

43 Gordon Matta-Clark, letter from Paris to Jerald 'Jerry' Ordovery, EGMC, *Letters 1975*, dated by hand 12/4/75 that is, 4th December. He goes on to raise the issue of the theatricality of courtrooms: 'But taking one crime at a time [...] I am sure we could raise some major interesting issues...Proceeding on the valid premise that the best relevant pop-theatre takes place in court rooms—we could make a meaty script...'

44 Matta-Clark, 'RESERVED SPACE,' EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942-76*, c.1972. Continues 'THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD— THE ABSENCE OF FORM AND FUNCTION—THE USE LEAVES IT VOID— SECRET PLACES BREAKS IN THE ORDERED TEXTURE HIDE/OUTS.'

45 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, op.cit., p.49, p.8.

46 Peter Collins, *Architectural Judgement*, Faber & Faber, London, 1971, p.76.

47 *ibid.*, pp.34-5. Collins draws on the work of American lawyer and Supreme Court judge Benjamin Cardozo (1870–1938) in this respect, citing Benjamin Cardozo, *The Growth of the Law*, Yale University Press, 1924, pp.89-92. Collins suggests by analogy that '... architectural judgements will only be truly professional when we learn not only to distinguish Form-Givers from lesser mortals, but to distinguish clearly, among every Form-Giver's *œuvre complète*, those designs which are below the standards which the Form-Giver himself has given the public the right to expect.' Sympathetic to the broad parallel, Ingraham argues 'architecture and legal systems both use precedent as a way of historicizing mutable events.' Catherine Ingraham, *Architecture and the Burdens of Linearity*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1998 op.cit, p.14. For Collins, these two systems use, or rather change, precedent at very different rates.

Bergson makes some related observations on the relationships between Nature, Philosophy, Law and Justice, criticising philosophers for leaving to positive science any investigation of matter, and then only working on the facts of matter as a *fait accompli*: 'the *matter* of philosophy [the philosopher] regards as the affair of science and not of philosophy.' Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, op.cit. p.205. Bergson distinguishes between this founding move of philosophy (*viz.* the facts) and the mechanisms of justice (or the judiciary, more precisely, where the description of fact is very different from the judgement of those facts against the law which overlays them). Bergson argues that in the situation of (bad) philosophy, the law is internal to the facts, and needs must fall back in line with the original decision to segregate matter into certain 'distinct facts.'

- 48 Collins, *Architectural Judgement*, *op.cit.*, p.170.
- 49 Adrian Forty's examination of the systems of Modernist criticism could here be expanded to bear on the design process: Forty observes a tendency towards abstraction (both textual and diagrammatic) that signals, for him, an overall desire to transcend the actual experience of architecture. 'Much as Auguste Choisy's analytical drawings in his *Histoire de l'Architecture* (1899) showed buildings as the eye could never see them—sliced open and from below—modernist writing fastens itself on an abstract world, invisible except as 'idea'.' Forty, *Words and Buildings*, *op.cit.*, p.23.
- 50 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, *op.cit.*, #8. Jonathan Hill explores the situation between 'architecture' and the architect, underpinned by the state's granting a monopoly for the legal term 'architect' in return for management of 'unsafe knowledge:' 'The architect is enshrined in law but architecture has no legal protection. Architects see this as a contradiction, but it merely recognises that architecture is much more than just the work of architects.' Hill, *The Illegal Architect*, *op.cit.*, p.34. 'The knowledge that architecture is... not just the work of architects, increases the desire of the profession to claim architecture as its 'private property.' Consequently, architects attempt to prevent two intrusions, one into the body of their profession, the other into the body of their architecture.' Hill, *The Illegal Architect*, *op.cit.*, p.16.
- 51 Jacques Derrida, 'Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority",' in Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Grey Carlson (eds.), *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, Routledge, 1992, p.23. Derrida's essay is itself a meditation on Walter Benjamin's *Critique of Violence*, to which we will turn in due course.
- 52 This structure of judgement can be compared to Derrida's discussion of Kantian aesthetics, in particular his account of parergonality (see Jacques Derrida, 'Economimesis,' in *Diacritics*, 11, 1981) and Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, [1978], tr. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, University of Chicago Press, 1987), where he accounts for the divine authority that underwrites aesthetic judgement. Economimesis operates by analogy rather than imitation, each judgement can be taken as an original repetition of meaning. Judgement is taken to be a human act, and as such it denies the relation to nature or to God; nevertheless, the analogous working of economimesis inscribes natural time into the 'centre' of this judgement as part of its parergon. The deferral announced by this complex temporal structure of the parergon resists the potential collapse of the Kantian scheme, it provides the grounds (the *proper*) for aesthetic judgement within the continual construction of subjectivity. At each moment of judgement, this parergon is drawn up anew, framing that particular judgement and (re)constituting the subject; inscribing natural time within historical time, economimesis 'grounds' each judgement as specific and unique, while historical time provides an underlying continuity within which the marks or traces of all previous judgements can accumulate: 'That which always forms itself anew—economimesis—only to close up again, nonetheless leaves an embouchure each time.' Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, *op.cit.*, p.119. The importance of the notion of parergonality is emphasised when Derrida makes a case for its transportation into other fields: 'The *parergon*, this supplement outside the work, must, if it is to have the status of a philosophical quasi-concept, designate a formal and general predicative structure, which one can transport *intact* or deformed and *reformed according to certain rules*, into other fields, to submit new contents to it.' Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p.55. So no sooner than genius exceeds the restricted economy of mechanical arts than it is reinscribed (subordinated) within a divine economy, in a relationship Derrida labels an *anthropo-theological mimesis*. The annular (concentric) relationship of restricted economies to a general economy, general economy to divine economy, of art to nature and nature to God, demonstrates the parerga of the Kantian analysis, simultaneously revealing its 'lack' and holding it together.
- 53 Walter Benjamin, *Critique of Violence*, [1921] in Benjamin, *One Way Street*, *op.cit.*, p.142. See Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason*, *op.cit.*, p.64 on the differences between natural and positive law, and a kind of general economy of violence prior to both. Her chapter 2, 'Baroque Space,' discusses Benjamin's articles on violence.
- 54 Maud Lavin, 'Gordon Matta-Clark and Individualism,' in *Arts Magazine*, 58, 5 (January 1984), p.140. Lavin's argument is, coincidentally, based on many of the factors that have formed the basis for the sections above: the artistic process and its relationship to the art-object, notions of theatricality, public and private codings for space, the establishment of the individual, and violence.
- 55 *ibid.*, p.139. Lavin suggests that Matta-Clark was simply another self-serving avant-garde artist: '...his rebellion against normative architecture can be seen as a continuation of a modernist avant-garde stance in which the expression through a new means of production of an artist's sensibility, in itself, is believed or desired to be subversive of societal norms.' Lavin, 'Gordon Matta-Clark and Individualism,' *op.cit.*, p.139.
- 56 Lavin, 'Gordon Matta-Clark and Individualism,' p.141.

- 57 Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, *op.cit.*, p.46. Elsewhere, Deleuze extends Benjamin's work on Kafka in ways that take up these issues of the differences between law and justice and emphasise the need for everyone to become a 'functionary of justice' rather than being subjected to law. ('No one knows the law's interior.' Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, p.43.) '*where one believed there was the law, there is in fact desire and desire alone. Justice is desire and not law. Everyone in fact is a functionary of justice...*' p.49 (original emphasis).
- 58 '... what remains compelling in *Shoot* is not its physical violence, but its violently negative inference of an ideal public realm.' Ward, 'Grey Zone,' *op.cit.*, p.117. '*...Shoot* offered a comment on the bloodlessness of Minimalism's phenomenological investigations, introducing instead questions of consequences, and both artists' and viewers' participation and responsibility.' p.118.
- 59 Derrida, 'Force of Law,' *op.cit.*, p.24.
- 60 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, c.1973. Original ellipsis.
- 61 see Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, *op.cit.*, pp.42-3.
- 62 In the context of Lavin's criticisms of Matta-Clark's 'violence' discussed earlier in this chapter, it is perhaps worth reiterating that Bergson's violent philosophy was intended to make human beings more flexible, to broaden their experience, not reduce it.
- 63 Evans, *The Projective Cast*, *op.cit.*, p.62.
- 64 de Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime*, *op.cit.*, p.191.
- 65 *ibid.*, p.198.
- 66 *ibid.*, p.198.

Chapter Seven: discipline

Studying not the field but its limits, and defining these limits for the purpose of extending them, is a twentieth century habit.—Brian O’Doherty¹

System: *Hair*, or, Here Be Monsters!

the most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system —The Earl of Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy or Advice to an Author*²

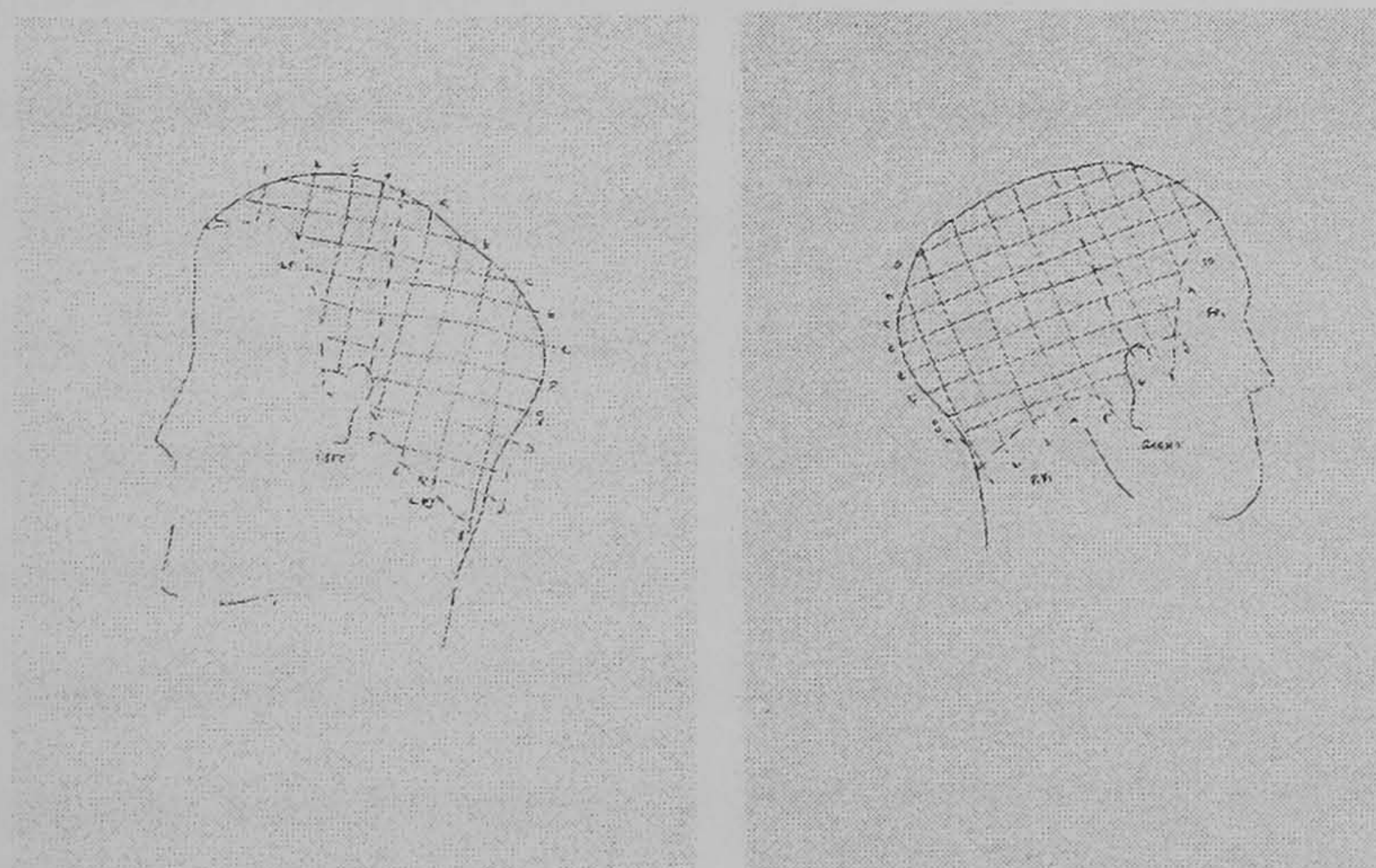
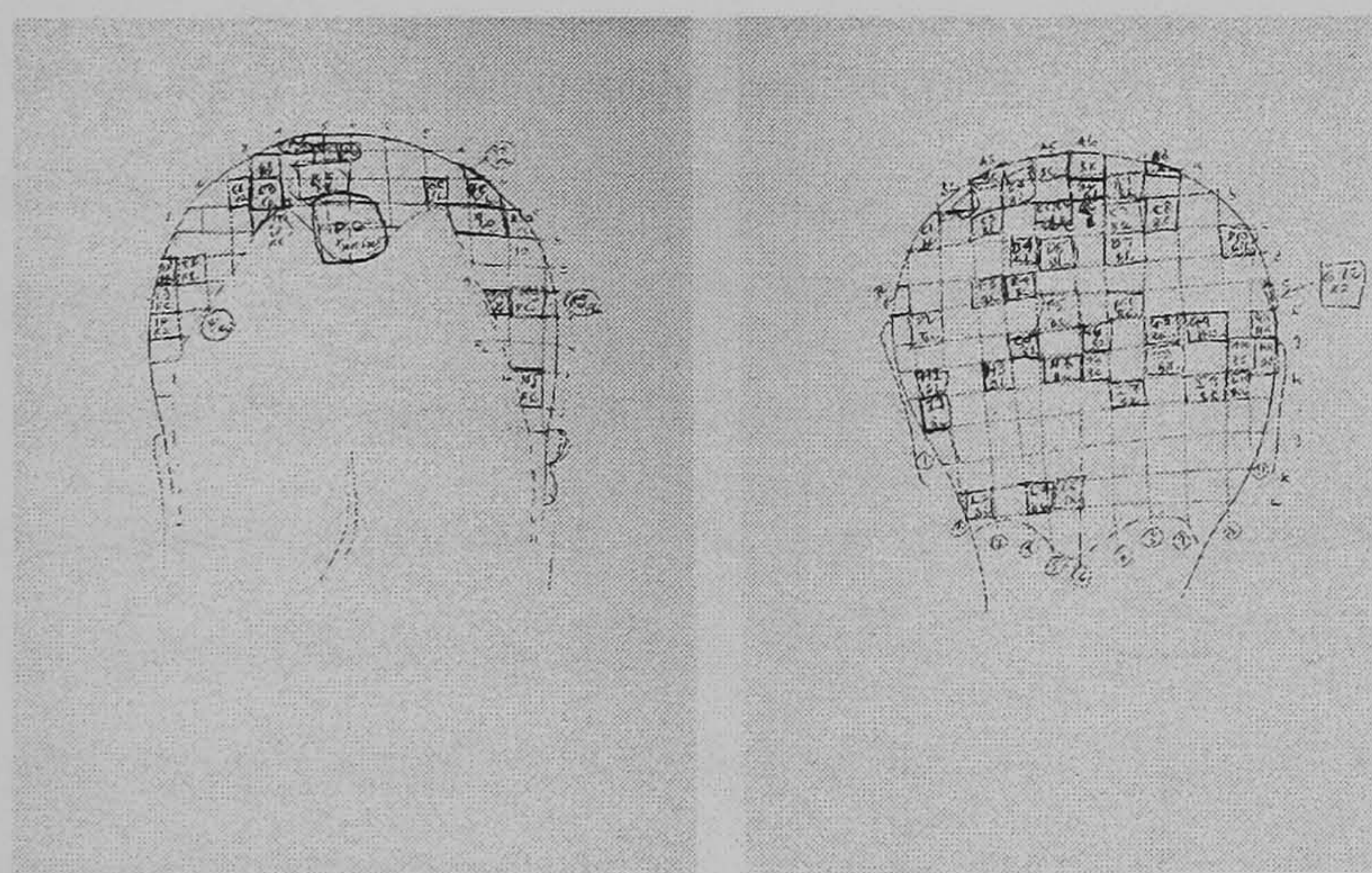
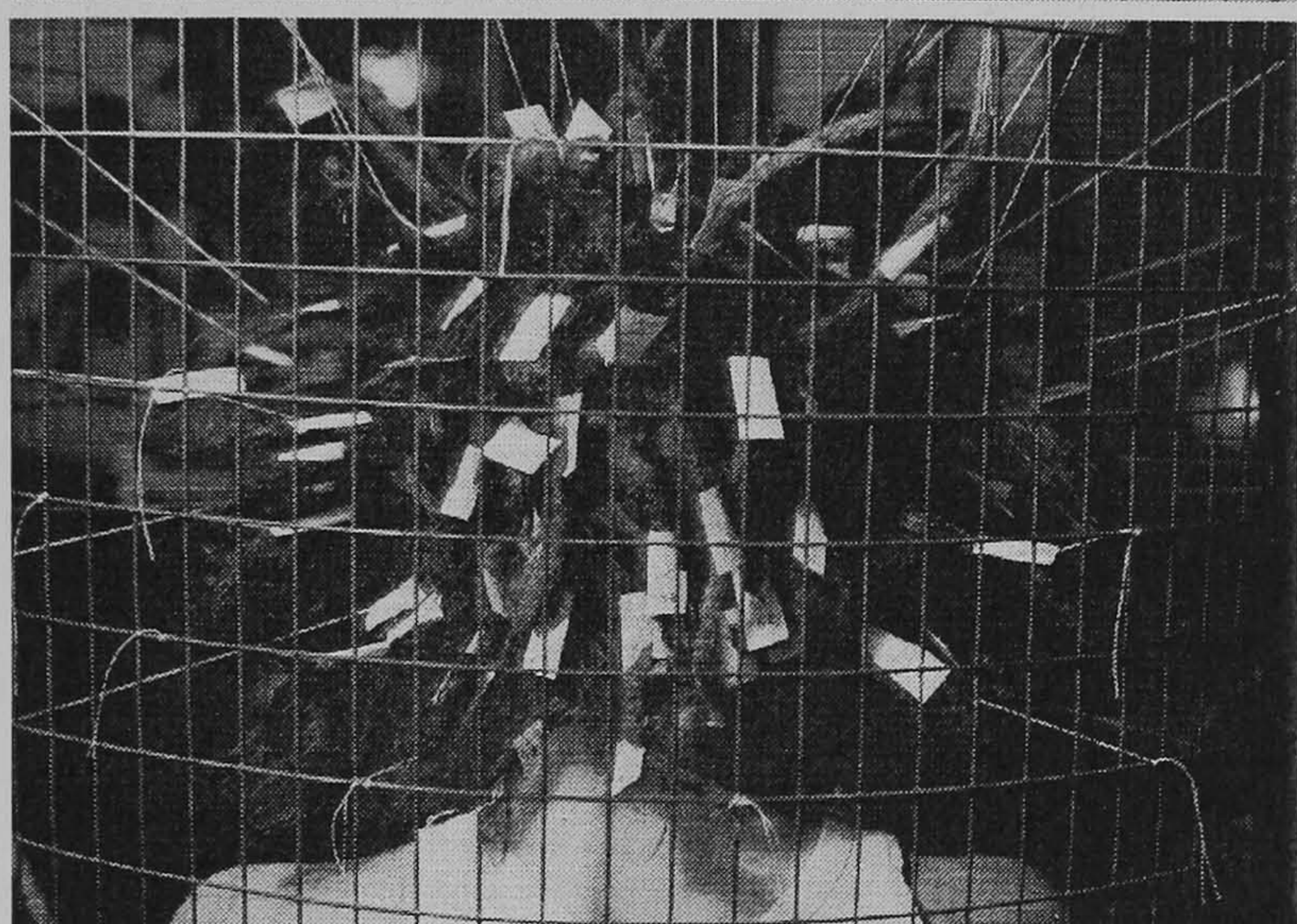
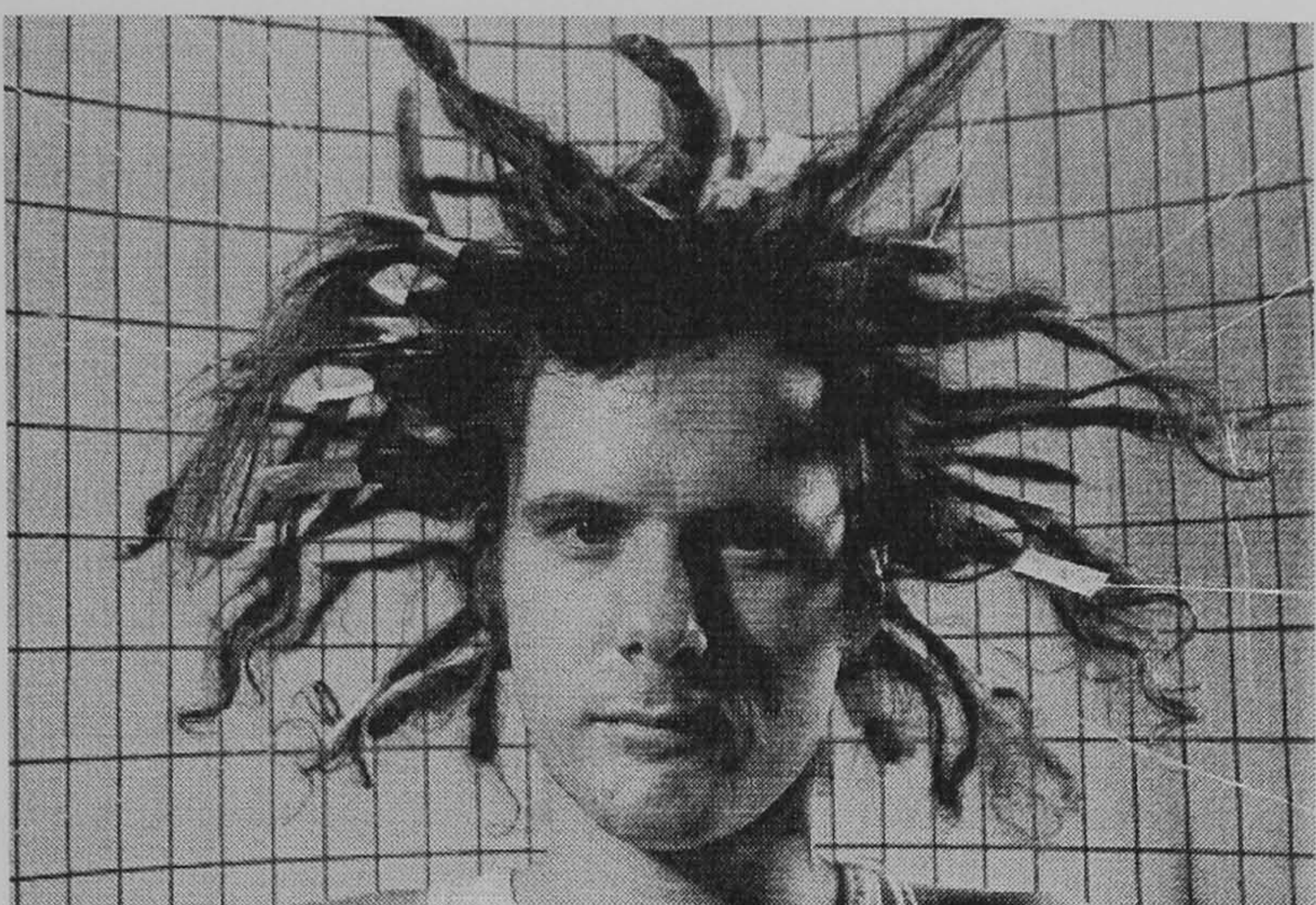
A PRIMARY ARCHITECTURAL FAILING A SYSTEMATIZED CONSISTANT APPROACH TO A WORLD OF TOTAL “WONDERFUL” CHAOS. —Gordon Matta-Clark³

Matta-Clark’s oeuvre demonstrates a variety of responses to system. Although he criticized the consequences of any unswerving belief in the ability of a ‘systematized consistent approach’ to measure or grasp the ‘wonderful chaos’ of the world, his own projects frequently operated with these systems themselves in order to reveal their inherent inconsistencies and limitations. The culmination of his 1972 project *Hair*, illustrated in Figure 7.1, adopted this approach, and despite its low-key position in his oeuvre illustrates the broader implications at play elsewhere. Matta-Clark had let his hair grow for a year, before agreeing to have it cut off at New Year. The process of cutting was a performance in itself, and various accounts allude to the systematic way in which preparations were made for this haircut:

A schematic plan [of Matta-Clark’s head] was drawn, like a complex phrenological map, dividing the cranium into quadrants (front, back, left, right), and then subdividing each into a grid system. The coordinates of the numerical and alphabetical plottings corresponded to the labels that tagged each clump of hair. These were then tied in a radiating pattern to a wire screen surrounding the artist in a semicircle, producing a Medusa-like effect.⁴

Carol Goodden, who actually did the cutting, recounts how she ‘carefully tagged each clump [of hair], like an archaeological dig, and then tied each piece (this was his idea) to a wire cage so that I could photograph it for identification purposes to make a wig.’⁵ Whether phrenological or archaeological, the broader implications of their approach occur in this deployment of systematic measurement, exemplified particularly in the identification of clumps of hair via the geometric mapping of Matta-Clark’s cranium. More than a simple hair cut, the project begins to articulate the

According to Caroline Yorke Goodden "In 1972 he decided to make his hair a sculpture. He wanted to grow [his hair] and have a wig made out of it so that he could always have it when he wanted it. He grew his hair for over a year, never combing it so that it matted and snarled...and ended up looking like he was wearing one of his agar pieces...Finally on New Year's I talked him into cutting his hair off. I carefully tagged each clump, like an archaeological dig, and then tied each piece (this was his idea) to a wire cage so that I could photograph it for identification purposes to make a wig."
 'A schematic plan was drawn, like a complex phrenological map, dividing the cranium into quadrants (front, back, left, right), and then subdividing each into a grid system. The coordinates of the numerical and alphabetical plottings corresponded to the labels that tagged each clump of hair. These were then tied in a radiating pattern to wire screen surrounding the artist in a semicircle, producing a Medusa-like effect.' - From Jacobs (ed.) GMC, Chicago cat, Chronology, more or less reprinted in IVAM p.372



relative successes and failures of such systematic measure, and the gap between the clear diagrammatic approach and the hairy reality. The unexpected 'Medusa-like effect' of the systematic process is significant, for it opens the process up to a scrutiny it is normally saved from.

In Goodden's photographs, Matta-Clark appears both humane and monstrous at once; they are both composed portrait and caged beast or gothic horror shot, and play out in miniature the struggle between human rationality (traditionally associated with the mind and located inside the skull, which Matta-Clark's calm facial expression does nothing to upset) and animal unpredictability, a collision between ideality and reality. Georges Bataille's work on systems shares many affinities with that of Matta-Clark; he observed that any attempt to establish a system

of common measure for human beings was an attempt to ‘give a kind of reality to the necessarily beautiful Platonic idea.’⁶ But these photographs of Matta-Clark illustrate Bataille’s broader point that ‘... each individual form escapes this common measure and is, to a certain degree, a monster.’⁷

Bataille’s discussions of these monstrous *Deviations of Nature* take place more or less on idealism’s own terms, and remain above the passage of ‘natural time’ (he discusses the human face and pebbles almost inter-changeably). To this analysis, Matta-Clark’s *Hair* adds other roles frequently thrust upon ‘nature,’ and provides a reminder of other modes that this escape from the common-measure can adopt. On nature’s own terms, it is beyond human control; however close to ‘ideal’ beauty an individual might come, that proximity is only fleeting: *memento mori*. In spite of this reminder, idealism enlists system and approaches nature as controllable, understandable, and it is this encounter in particular that *Hair* plays out.

The process of tagging tangles up the systematically ordered archaeology of a year in the life of Matta-Clark’s hair: this attempt to discipline the scalp involves an interesting conflict between lawful and lawless hair, where its predictable growth rate produced untidy results. This, of course, was due to Matta-Clark’s actions during the preceding year, ‘never combing [his hair] so that it matted and snarled,...[he] ended up looking like he was wearing one of his agar pieces...’⁸ Effectively, he granted his hair a quasi-independence, demonstrating that it had a life of its own (despite being dead), one that was resistant to the mores of social acceptability, resistant to the (Western) discipline of short-back-and-sides where human beings demonstrate their ‘civilizing’ power over nature. This aspect of *Hair*, where social mores are acknowledged and refused, is celebrated in a different context by Paul Connerton as a possible site of resistance to the complete subjugation to systematised discipline: ‘There is... a gap,’ writes Connerton, ‘between rule and application, and a gap between code and execution. This gap must... be reclaimed by a theory of habitual practice, and, therefore, of habit-memory.’⁹

For Connerton, there is not only a gap between what a system claims as its own and that thing itself (which is more or less Bataille’s point), but also between what a system claims to do and how it does it. This latter tendency can be read in another aspect of *Hair*, in the drawing up of the phrenological map of Matta-Clark’s head (see Figure 7.1); the former becomes evident in the combination of these ‘maps’ with the photographic ‘records’ that accompany them. In this project, Matta-Clark and Goodden enacted some of the archetypal moves of architectural system: how this involves Connerton’s habit-memory will be encountered in due course. For the time being, I want

to examine how *Hair*'s documentation combines different modes of description, the systems these belong to, what they purport to include, what they actually include, and what escapes.

The composite documentation can in the first instance be divided between the photographs and maps, between contingent description and objective measurement. On closer inspection, though, these phrenological maps are merely imitations of the systematic mapping process, as none of the four 'elevations' reconcile the grid with the rough sphere of Matta-Clark's cranium, nor do they work together consistently; instead they lay a two-dimensional grid over the two-dimensional outline of Matta-Clark's head. Although *Hair* plays out the phrenological or cartographical treatment of the head as globe, it ends up flattening the sphere. On the two-dimensional surface of these drawings, two different systems are collapsed together: two different kinds of grid, with two viewpoints that are different in kind. Within each of the drawings, these two systems are unstable, for both the gridded phrenological subdivision and the outline of the head can both belong to both systems, though not simultaneously. This provides the viewer with an experience that combines both a view from somewhere with a view from nowhere, collapsing Albertian window and Mercator grid, and that thus already contains a similar contingent mode of viewing associated with the photographs.

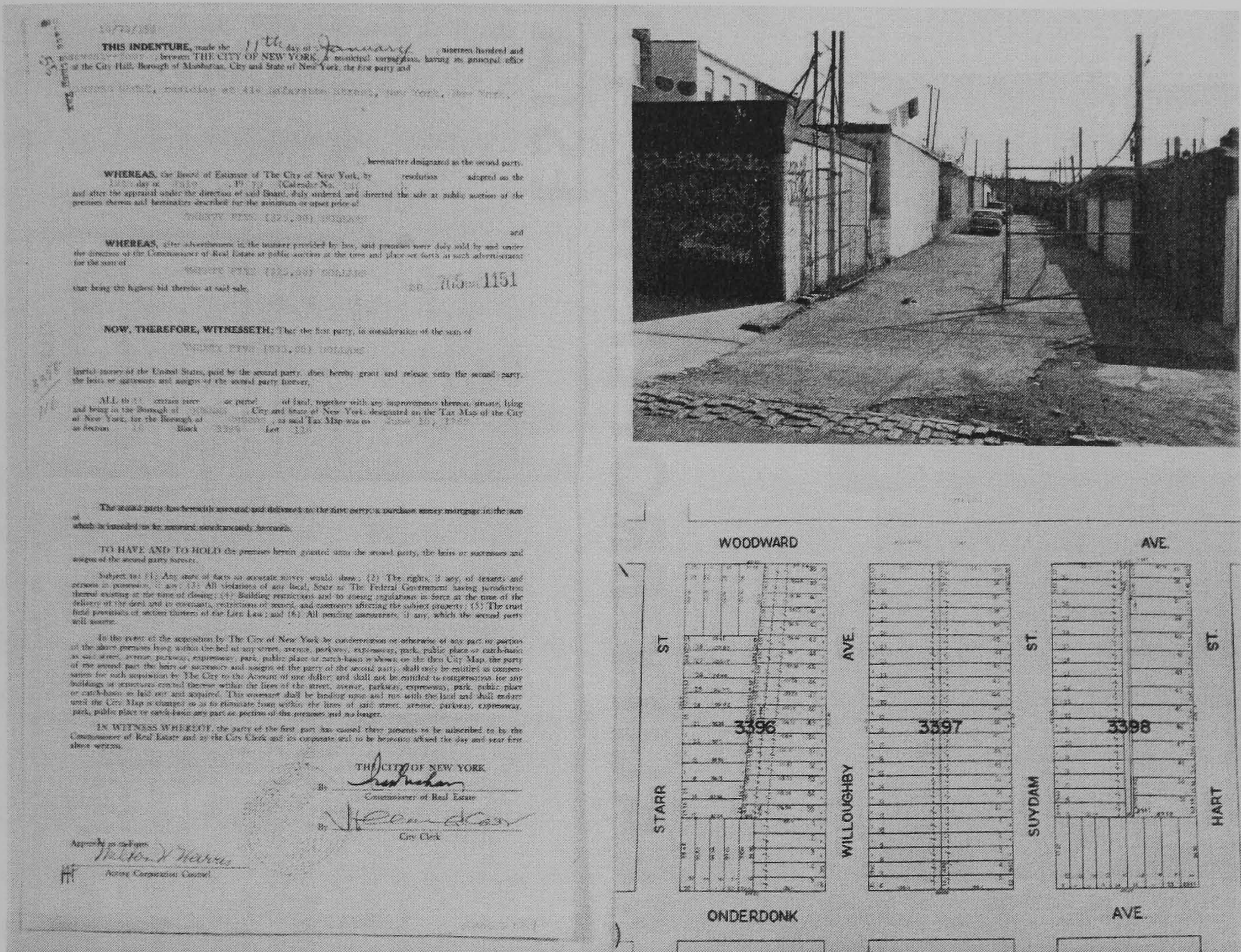
This equivocal situation clearly undermines the claim for consistency that any system would want to make. However, as art historian Svetlana Alpers' examination of these issues makes apparent, certain systems can comfortably deal with such equivocation. The principal model for her analysis is the cartographical Ptolemaic-Mercator grid system, whose 'flat' working surface is important in that it allows 'a potential flexibility in assembling different kinds of information about or knowledge of the world which are not offered by the Albertian picture [which characterizes the production and viewing of Renaissance perspective—sw].'¹⁰ Although her discussion of cartography has direct relevance to the 'maps' of *Hair*, it can more importantly open up the issues of architectural system that *Hair* raises. While alluding to the uses to which cartography was put in the projects of colonisation, where the 'drawing' of maps accompanied the 'civilizing' of wild nature, territories and peoples,¹¹ (from tragedy to farce, this process is repeated by *Hair*'s use of mapping in the process of asserting discipline on Matta-Clark's unruly hair), Alpers' main focus is on the breadth of the cartographic system, which in its early phases was available for both measuring *and* describing, and which demanded moreover that the cartographer be equally adept in mathematical *and* artistic skills.¹²

Proceeding carefully, Alpers' analysis can provide an analogy for architecture's techniques, such that we might liken these to a disciplinary surface onto which different measurements or systems can be collected together and arranged without contradiction. Pursuing the analogy can help to explore the relationships around this surface, relationships between authority, technique, and the experience of the architectural 'object' that the disciplined process of architecture usually glosses over in order to present apparent uniformity in the architectural object. One of Matta-Clark's principal motivations was to expand the experience of architecture beyond the traditionally sanctioned limits of this object: his attempts to provide or demonstrate this expansion — such as those brought about by the 'map' of *Hair*, or the photo-collages of the building dissections discussed earlier — are similar inasmuch as they operate by presenting the viewer with different modes of description that the more complex modality of working surface (architectural technique) collects, offering these for experience to enjoy without contradiction.

It is perhaps worth emphasising that to offer this analogy of a working surface for architectural technique is not to reduce architecture to drawing. On the contrary, by acknowledging the various relationships across and around this surface, the broader assumptions made by the architectural system can become more apparent, and the complexity and variety of interests that might coexist on this surface demonstrated. According to Lefebvre, these assumptions are not innocent, they determine the way in which the systematic treatment of space, for example, underwrites a particular kind of usefulness that benefits and is watched over by a pre-existing authority. Alongside a broad tendency for any systematic approach to reduce space to homogeneous, abstract space, one of Lefebvre's many worries is that for architects, space is always already reduced to 'architectural space,' which is the same whether it is found on a drawing, on a building plot, on or in a building.¹³ Matta-Clark's *Hair* gestures towards this kind of reduction; as its various moments are untangled, the project not only enjoys tangling up polite ideality and hairy reality (marked by the contrast between the well-ordered planning drawings and the medusa-like photos), but the drawings themselves enjoy two different ways of describing the same object (quasi-perspective and cartographic projections), acknowledging the relationship of point of view to working surface. The latter, even with its caricature of a grid system, operates by comfortably holding together a variety of different kinds of information, different ways of looking at the same object — here, Matta-Clark's head.

Superficially different, Matta-Clark's 1973 project *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* (partly illustrated in Figure 7.2) played out more explicitly many of the issues rehearsed in *Hair*. At

photographic work. In this version, it was (re)presented in frames plot by plot through a juxtaposition of the architectural drawing of the city block plan, the title deed, and a documentary photograph of the plot. Broadly, each plot received this same treatment: fourteen plots, fourteen frames. (The fifteenth Estate has never been exhibited, as it is impossible to photograph.)



auction in 1973, Matta-Clark bought some small pieces of land in Queens and Staten Island, New York City, which had reverted to the ownership of the City due to non-payment of taxes by previous owners. Each property was a small, irregularly-shaped plot between buildings, known as ‘curb property’ or ‘gutterspace.’ These were aberrations within the property system, for which Matta-Clark paid between \$25 and \$75 each. He described how he was drawn to the auctions by the description of the properties as ‘inaccessible:’

When I bought those properties at the New York City Auction, the description of them that always excited me the most was ‘inaccessible.’ They were a group of fifteen micro-parcels of land in Queens, left over properties from an architect’s drawing. One or two of the prize ones were a foot [wide] strip down somebody’s driveway and a square foot of sidewalk. And the others were kerbstone and gutterspace that wouldn’t be seen and certainly not occupied. Buying them was my own take on the strangeness of existing property demarcation lines. Property is so all-pervasive. Everyone’s notion of ownership is determined by the use factor.¹⁴

Not only did *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* respond to the 'strangeness of existing property demarcation lines' and explore particular, related systems of abstract spatialisation and their relationships to drawing and the world, this project demonstrated various ways in which the roles of drawing and viewing position are caught up in the wider socio-political establishment and maintenance of authority. Not only did this project operate within such systems, it also deployed something like a disciplinary working surface, which can help to clarify how this analogy for architectural technique is caught up in a wider network of relationships.

Like *Hair*, *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* involved both a performative and a documentary phase; like *Hair*, the relationship between these two moments is not clear-cut.¹⁵ Like *Hair*, *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* operated according to the rules of a particular system: in this case, Matta-Clark became a buyer and played the spaces and processes of real-estate at their own game. His intention was not to make commercial gain from his 'investment,' but to demonstrate the mechanics of partition that predicate the real-estate market. His investment opportunity came about as a result of the operations of systematic partition undertaken in the drawing of an architect's plans. The initial phase of *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* operated by revealing the presence of 'useless' plots within the apparently logical system of real estate itself. The mechanics of this process stem from the representation of the properties on the architectural drawing of the city block plan, which ignores a very real distinction between these 'useless' plots and their 'useful' neighbours. The partition of space indicated on the city plans does not necessarily map the location in an entirely logical way.

Matta-Clark's suggestions for (re)presenting the project demonstrate this further. Although an early version of the project was exhibited while the initial (buying) stage was still in progress, in what has accidentally become the definitive version the project is generally (re)presented in frames plot by plot, mostly juxtaposing the architectural drawing of the city block plan, the title deed, and a documentary photograph of the plot: it is these frames that can pick up the analogy of architecture's working surface.¹⁶ Beyond the differences immediately apparent between the media favoured by each of these three discourses, a more thoroughgoing disparity exists between the various modes of description that are brought together within each frame, each mode 'accounting for' the plot in a different language, or according to the rules of a different system. Architectural, legal, and documentary (photographic) claims for the same property are juxtaposed: as a consequence, three purportedly definitive systems are played off against one another, though none gains the upper hand. Photographic 'evidence' (the camera never lies), architectural (geometric,

orthographic) definition, and legal ownership fail to coincide completely with the plots themselves, an inconsistency stemming from the differing interests held by each account. Following this failure to add up, it becomes apparent that there are gaps between the parameters of the discourses that constitute each frame.

Just as the framed (re)presentations can clearly cope with this disparity, so can the working surface of the real-estate system. What Matta-Clark's project illustrates is that such systems do not usually hand over evidence of disagreement to those consuming their products. The initial target of this project was the system of real estate, where the 'lot,' exemplar of private property, appears at the intersection of the bureaucratic, legal and economic systems identified by Lefebvre's abstract space.¹⁷ In common with most systems, this one works according to its own logic, developed in this case to follow the economic system of exchange, which allows the market to determine 'value' on its own terms by narrowing the definition of space towards a specific understanding intended to further the exchangeability of property. Matta-Clark hoped to expand the notions usually allied to the 'value' of space, pushing them to include qualities less easily determined by the market. According to Shields, Lefebvre made a parallel observation regarding the spaces of the city: 'The city was an *œuvre*, much like the work of art, and this was only barely covered over by the commodification of its spaces along property lines into 'lots.''¹⁸ For Lefebvre as for Matta-Clark, to acknowledge this relationship between human activity and the production of space was to acknowledge not only the general contingency of space in contrast to systematic approaches such as modernism's idealist version, but also to address its inherently social and political dimensions.

In differing ways, Matta-Clark's initial purchases and subsequent (re)presentations call into question the illusory space of the drawing that predicates the real estate system. Within the spatial complexity that is real-estate, recognition that the authority of this system is self imposed and self-installed would reveal its claims of total revelation to be illusory. Although real-estate is partially reliant on the space of the architectural drawing, *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* demonstrates that other systems can also lay claim to these locations, changing the properties of these properties in the process. The juxtaposition of conflicting accounts in Matta-Clark's (re)presentations upsets presuppositions of general equivalence that underwrite the valuation and movement of real-estate, and thus the system of real-estate is contested, as other claims to spatial definition are witnessed alongside it, a move that denies the establishment of a single, 'correct' account. This self-reflexivity within the (re)presentations demands a constructive reading that is based on a non-commercial interaction between the spaces, and which reveals an economy of non-functional use-

value, an issue which preoccupied Matta-Clark during much of his work. Drawing on a linguistic analogy in an interview with Liza Béar, he noted that this level of non-functionality was explored through a process like ‘juggling with syntax:’

Most of the things that I have done that have ‘architectural’ implications are really about non-architecture... anarchitecture... We were thinking about metaphoric voids, gaps, left-over spaces, places that were not developed... metaphoric in the sense that their interest or value wasn’t in their possible use...

You mean you were interested in these spaces on some non-functional level?

Or on a functional level that was so absurd as to ridicule the idea of function... It’s like juggling with syntax or disintegrating some kind of established sequence of parts.¹⁹

The (re)presentation of *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* can be understood to perform such a juggling operation. The contingency of the syntax proper to each of the systems brought together within each frame is demonstrated by their lack of agreement about the spaces described. These spaces are prevented from assuming their usual associations, and forced instead to acknowledge a different relationship that the (re)presentation sets up, which exposes both the composition of the working surface or technique, and the presence of an authority upon which each system is quietly reliant. Rather than defaulting to evaluation according to the ‘established sequence’ or ‘usual’ expectations of function or use-value, Matta-Clark believed that by making such a move, the possibilities for experiencing space would be increased.

Writing about the project in his sketchbook, Matta-Clark’s more immediate syntax juggling echoes the operation of the framed up (re)presentations by listing a number of different ‘properties’ of the lots, while pointing to other aspects of the proprietorial system, such as the rights and expectations of ownership, that are equally interested in the broader establishment of disciplinary evaluation:

~~THE PIECE IS TO BUY~~ A SMALL PIECE OF NEW YORK REAL

SELL THE AIR RIGHT_ MINERAL- AND ~~WATER~~ TO YOUR TRUCK-

~~AIR-RH~~

EXERCISE YOUR AIR RIGHTS

COMB YOUR HEIR RIGHTS.

A COMFORTABLE PLACE TO LIVE BETWEEN THE BRICKS.

ASH-TRACK

AN ABSTRACT * (THE HISTORY OF A PROPERTY.)

WILLS !!

WILL ON YOUR ABSTRACT²⁰

Beyond the particular machinations of the real estate market, the project also implicates certain accepted codes of behaviour: it operates in the gap that Connerton observed between 'code and execution' where individual habit-memory can flourish and open experience out beyond systematic judgement. Here in particular, these codes implicate both the rights and expectations that ownership bestows upon the legal proprietor: just as *Hair* brushed aside certain expectations regarding appearance, *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* called into question how we might behave in these and other spaces (though here he operated strictly according to the rules of the game). Behind the particularities of legal ownership or hirsute appearance, what is more interesting is that Matta-Clark's projects address and enlist the apparent will to abstraction that is involved in the workings and behaviour of the discipline of architecture, however much it might attempt to abstract or absent itself.²¹ Architectural theorist Catherine Ingraham has demonstrated the close inter-relationships between the techniques of drawing and mapping, the property system and 'proper,' socially acceptable behaviour, arguing that one of the most powerful forces architecture exerts on culture lies in 'the maintenance of certain ideas of property, ownership, real estate, and exchange value.'²² Important in the present context, and central to Ingraham's analysis of these inter-relationships, is the particular behaviour of the discipline, which extends beyond the practical realm of construction and building in order to provide 'the technique and artistry of division in places other than its proper precinct.'²³ While it undertakes this extension, architecture simultaneously moves to deny the hybridity of its own make up; indeed for Ingraham, this is the very nature of Architecture, operating 'beyond' its own borders while denying that it is doing so, importing and arranging stuff from other disciplines while passing these off as its own.

Approached in this way, *Hair*, *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* and the building dissections are projects that in their own ways and amongst other things, chase these issues of sanctioned, systematic division in order to reveal the possibility of other, improper relations. In the 'archaeological' or 'phrenological' abstraction and reality of *Hair*, in the frames of *Reality Properties: Fake Estates*, and in the multi-modal collages of the dissections, these projects are both governed by and redeploy the discipline of architecture, operating to demonstrate aspects of indiscipline that can be observed on architecture's working surface. The implications of these moves not only expose aspects of architectural operation that are not usually revealed to the uninitiated, they also raise questions regarding the authority of the discipline and the ways in which it expects its products to be received and judged. As Ingraham emphasises, there is more to architecture than technique:

Proper architecture and proper building, then, reside not merely in technique but in the entire engagement of architecture with its own disciplinary history and proprietorial structure. Proper architecture is about having the authority to build as well as the knowledge to build... Implicit [here] is the intimation that there is something outside or beyond the conventional boundaries of architecture. What, for example, would an improper architecture be?²⁴

Clearly, much of Matta-Clark's work anticipates Ingraham's question, and he repeatedly expressed his interest in improper architecture, or in his own words, 'non-architecture' or 'Anarchitecture.' Importantly, though, Matta-Clark's projects were not about the simple collapse of any particular discipline. His response to architecture would demand the continuing—though altered—role of propriety, operating with many different levels and modes of disciplinary activity (both covert and overt), in order to challenge the location from which authoritative judgement concerning architecture might be issued. The projects just mentioned operate by drawing attention to architecture's attempts at total revelation (the establishment of a position from which architecture can be produced and evaluated, but which only architects can occupy), and they counter this by pointing to the existence of various contingent (spatial) readings, thus allowing for an experience neither foreclosed by one pre-established definition of space nor self-defeating in its complexity.

system and evaluation

Discussing *Reality Properties: Fake Estates*, Matta-Clark criticised the tendency to systematically predicate judgement on usefulness; 'Buying [these properties] was my own take on the strangeness of existing property demarcation lines. Property is so all-pervasive. Everyone's notion of ownership is determined by the use factor.'²⁵ Through his purchase, Matta-Clark began to erode the authoritative definition of space established according to the 'use factor' by revealing the gaps in the apparent logic of the exchange system. Discussing the issue of evaluation more broadly, he stressed the distinction between two possible approaches, and argued that what was at stake in their difference was the quality of architectural experience:

...architectural politics reduces down to the issue of evaluation. Evaluating what kinds of things need to be clarified in order to make the distinction between what is made available in terms of usable space...that's one issue...and what is needed for an extended experience of architecture...which is an entirely different issue. There are so many things not in the common interpretation of use that are necessities, needs that have no explicit determining factor. If you can just get away from the conventional conception of what is useful or necessary, then, and only then, can you start probing the issue.²⁶

Matta-Clark's determination to exceed the conventional conception of usefulness can be understood as a response to the general developments in twentieth century architecture and his architectural education, but it can also point beyond that particular context to the enduring propriety of the discipline of architecture. The narrowing definition of use was part and parcel of architecture's valorisation of functional use-value, and was accompanied by a growing moral imperative articulated by groups such as the CIAM, according to whom architecture ought to be a rational response to measurable practical or technical problems. This move encouraged a displacement of the locus of evaluation away from any individual or contingent response, in order that it might be enshrined within the systematic approach of architecture itself. The architectural historian David Watkin has traced the rise of this moral dimension of evaluation. One of the developments that he examines 'is the consequence of the belief that modern man should build a new collectivistic society based on a universally accepted moral and social consensus in which architecture would be an unassailably "genuine" and "universal" truth no longer marred by the "individual" and "inventive" traits of the old world in which individual taste and imagination were regarded as important.'²⁷ Watkin's reading of this 'modern' approach suggests that it aimed to universalise architecture (for the collective good) through its systematic design technique. Although he suggests that this marked an entirely new development that shifted the very foundations of architecture, he locates this shift not within the early twentieth century avant-garde but earlier, with the work of Viollet-le-Duc and Pugin in the mid nineteenth century. Watkin suggests that all earlier theorists argued from within the classical architectural tradition (which he retains a strong belief in), and that consequently any earlier discussions of technical or rational issues were always already subordinate to a presupposition regarding what a building would look like. The consequence of the 'new' approach was that architecture was expected to be a truthful expression of a particular society, and that failure to be so was immoral.

Matta-Clark was thoroughly disgusted with architecture's continued moralising and its claims to truthful expression, although unlike Watkin's advocacy of classicism, he sought to contest modernism from within. While he frequently articulated his disgust in terms of the 'use-factor,' his argument was not with 'use' *per se* but with the way in which the discipline of architecture deployed a reductive definition of 'use' to support its claims to truthfulness. As we saw in the previous chapter, his more thoroughgoing argument was with the 'law' of architecture, and his aim was to extend the possibilities for experience by calling into question the locus, exclusivity, and certainty of architectural authority and judgement upheld by this law. Although

from Watkin's analysis the choice facing the architectural discipline seemed to be between an unquestioned end result (classical architecture) or a moral obligation (modern architecture), between a natural verisimilitude underlying all classical styles or a rational expression of the zeitgeist, these choices remained internal to the discipline. In both instances, the criteria for judging architecture seemed to lie outside of architecture itself, but in neither case were these criteria passed on to the user, the non-expert. That is to say, the structure of the law remained unchanged. Consequently, the enormity of the paradigm shift that Watkins observes in modern architecture appears to be overstated: 'usefulness' becomes the latest in a succession of attempts by architecture to provide itself with grounds to claim unshakeable authority. Read as such, it no longer carries an intrinsic moral imperative but becomes simply another manifestation of the architectural debate concerning the appropriate style in which to build. Richard Padovan makes a similar point, describing functionalism as simply 'nature in a new dress: a force outside architecture which determines what architecture shall be.'²⁸

This outside force can be identified in the natural authority underlying Vitruvian *firmitas*, *utilitas* and *venustas*, or repeated in Alberti's *concinnitas*, or explicitly written into Laugier's assertion that '[architecture's] principles are founded on nature itself, and in nature's processes are to be found clearly written the laws of architecture.'²⁹ However, the particular dynamics of this relationship are not so straightforward. In fact, the laws of architecture enjoy a sleight of hand at precisely the point where Laugier claims to find their foundation: rather than being controlled by the outside forces of nature, the discipline of architecture gathers up and assumes control over a variety of processes while passing this situation off as natural. Catherine Ingraham generalises this point, and goes on to suggest that in making this move, 'proper' architecture opens itself to being undone by the very forces it uses to cover its own foundation: 'In almost every architectural epoch, the proper has made some kind of claim to be natural, although nature, or the idea of nature, is simultaneously the enemy of propriety.'³⁰

In 'Point de Folie' Derrida similarly observes the pseudo-naturality that architecture has taken on over time; moreover, he suggests that the consequences of this move are not limited to the discipline of architecture itself, stressing the role that the historical 'nature' of architecture actually plays in our own constitution as subjects: 'This architecture of architecture has a history; it is historical through and through. Its heritage inaugurates the intimacy of our economy... It goes right through us [*nous transit*] to the point that we forget its very historicity: we take it for nature. It is common sense itself.'³¹ What architecture puts forward as common sense judgement is

carefully policed to ensure that ‘we,’ the users of architecture, continue to take it for granted and accept that its authority is underwritten by an outside force: but this state of affairs is in fact anything but natural. Architecture deliberately, ‘naturally,’ obfuscates the mechanisms of ‘proper’ judgement. While it insinuates itself into our own economy, a very different economy is operating behind the scenes, where the architectural profession attempts to retain control over the practice of architecture: the complex relationships between these two economies are identified by much of Matta-Clark’s oeuvre.

These two economies are charged with accounting for very different aspects of the architectural process: the covert, professional economy has rarely been acknowledged, even within the profession itself. One exception is Peter Collins, whose book *Architectural Judgement* was introduced in the previous chapter. Collins is an apologist for this two-tier system, who sees it as another natural phenomenon: ‘...the ‘aesthetics’ [*qua* economy—SW] of any profession are inseparably bound up with the nature of the profession itself.’³² Collins raises these issues as he attempts to account for the difficulties faced by non-experts when they have to evaluate the architectural process; he observes the difficulties they experience reconciling price and value, and goes on to argue that this situation is repeated whether they are faced with architectural drawings or completed buildings. In both situations, he claims the layman can’t appreciate the full value of architecture.³³

The dynamics of the situation Collins asserts are nothing new; the user’s contingent experience and subsequent evaluation of a building must defer to the architectural knowledge protected by the profession if it is to be ‘correct.’ However, as the two projects discussed at the beginning of this chapter demonstrate, other experiences are available within this apparently flawless disciplinary structure; *Hair* and *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* demonstrate the slippage that always exists between the disciplinary architectural ideal and the contingent reality that follows the application of these ideals: hair’s potential impropriety or the potential ‘uselessness’ of real-estate space. Matta-Clark used these projects (and many others) to lever open the internal economy of architectural judgement for others to see. What is similar—and unusual—about Collins is that he attempts to put the profession’s case and be explicit about the dynamics of architectural judgement; this is not only interesting in itself, but it also raises broader points that are relevant in the present context concerning aspects of architecture’s relationship to other disciplines. His discussion systematically holds architecture to be the same as other disciplines in the way it operates; his readiness to frame his discussion of the ‘aesthetics’ of any profession is

just one example. However, different disciplines clearly operate in different ways; the model that Collins flatly assumes to hold good is the traditional expectation that a discipline can ensure certainty and stability by referring judgement back to an established body of disciplinary knowledge. One of the principal mechanisms to provide such stability is to internalise any debate involving contingency or uncertainty: this is what Collins refers to as a discipline's *aesthetics*, which are handled by the elite 'form-givers' of the profession. The product of such debate is usually accompanied by an attempt on the part of the discipline concerned to distance itself from any apparent links with creative process, as the 'common sense' version is propagated (naturalised) for the 'benefit' of society at large: indeed at this point of use, Collins feels able to assert that 'society is cheated if architectural design is treated like painting and sculpture...'³⁴

This tendency is common to a number of disciplines—particularly those guarding a professional status—and allows them to ignore their real differences by uniting against a common enemy, contingency. For instance, witness the following attempt by legal theory to inscribe the language of aesthetic evaluation (goodness, beauty, truth) into its own internal economy while simultaneously intending to eliminate any suggestion of aesthetic judgement from the 'common sense' understanding of those subject to the legal system: 'The aesthetic phase of a legal system is cognate to architecture as it is not, for instance, to painting, and as it is rather rarely to music. Architecture and engineering strike most closely home—perhaps because both look so directly and so inescapably to use.'³⁵

It is in this 'aesthetic phase,' the covert internal economy, that we witness the awkward relationship that 'useful' disciplines enjoy with art and aesthetics: while they claim usefulness determines their moral and social obligation, and distance themselves from art (as that which is not useful), they admit and cover over a creative phase to their own internal structure. Here again, Collins voices the traditional assumption that architecture ought to be aligned with other learned professions; '...whatever the merits of Art for Art's sake, there is clearly no value in advocacy for the sake of advocacy, or surgery for the sake of surgery, except as academic exercises. If the practice of law and medicine are not in every respect social arts, they are not arts at all; and the same may be said of architecture.'³⁶ The paradox of this assumption appears to be lost on Collins: his assertion sloughs off the artistic (aesthetic) phase, which is retained by the profession; society then gets what the profession determines to be its truthful, moral expression, an architecture that is neither artful nor social.

During the period when Matta-Clark was working, the gulf this assumption attempted to cover over became increasingly difficult for the profession, and indeed for modernism as a whole, to ignore, and consequently it became increasingly difficult for these disciplines to maintain the moral high ground.³⁷ Although there were some vigorous challenges to disciplinary organisation and definition, the consequences of many such challenges were quickly re-appropriated by the existing disciplinary framework. Art historian Anne M. Wagner has examined the dynamics of these renovations through the lens of Matta-Clark's projects. As part of her work to situate the latter within the broader context of 1970s sculpture, she suggests that even the radical renovations to the disciplinary consideration of sculpture (her target is the seminal work of Rosalind Krauss, which Wagner approaches through her 1978 essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*)³⁸ continued to overlook the involvement of the observer, and the general contingency and messiness that they bring. However radical it was, Krauss' expanded field pertained only to the 'aesthetic phase' of the discipline, where rules and codes are disputed, while continuing to ignore the contingent phase of the observer's experience. In other words, these challenges pertained only to the 'aesthetic phase' of the discipline.

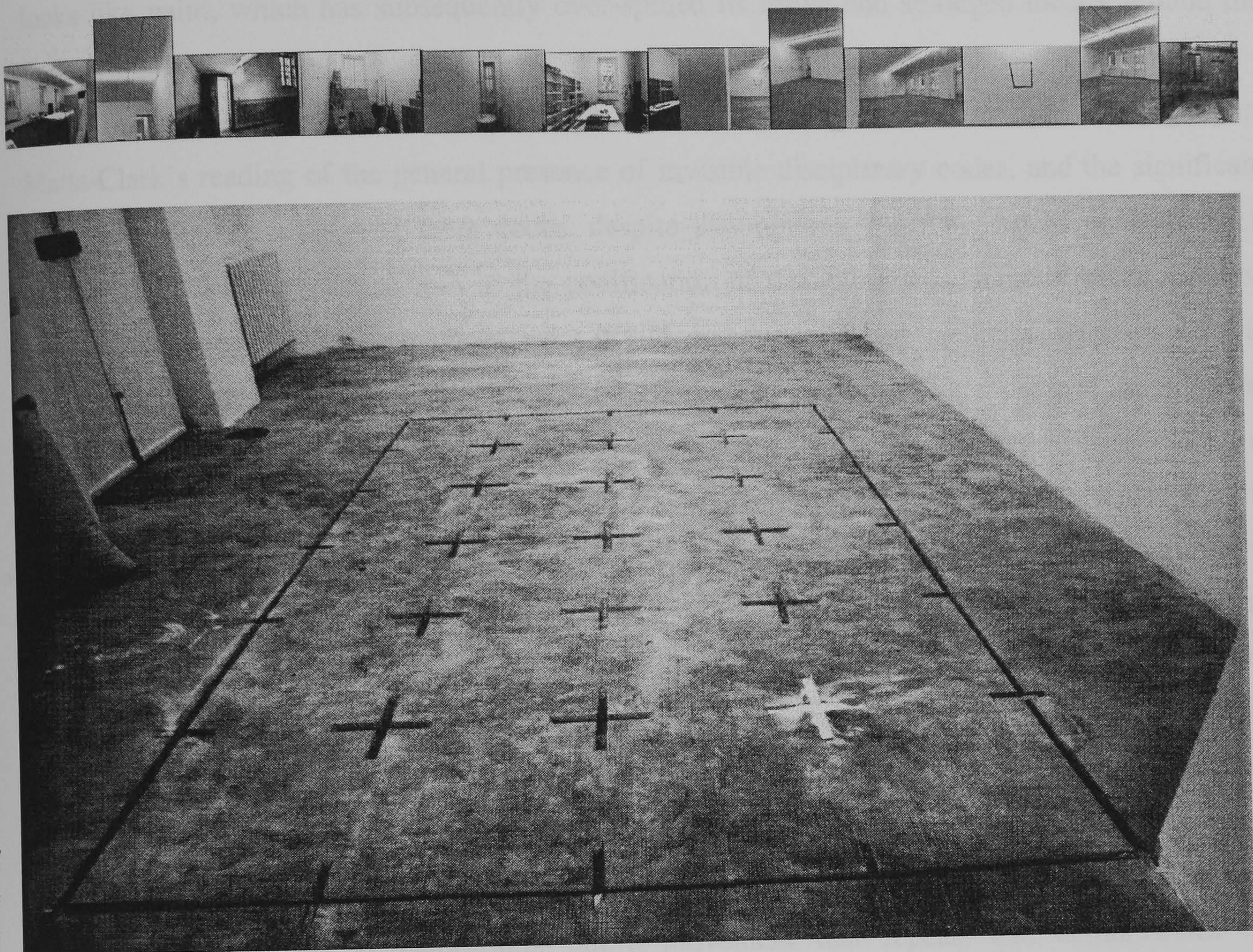
In contrast, Matta-Clark's projects proved resistant to re-appropriation (and indeed they continue to defy easy classification) by operating in both phases of disciplinary economy. Moreover, they operated with the tacit relationships between disciplines: as Wagner notes, although some 1970s sculpture undid architecture at the level of function, Matta-Clark's dissections were 'ready to sacrifice everything, including any claim on a single identity as a purely sculptural work.'³⁹ It is important to add, though, that he was equally ready *to include everything*.⁴⁰ His oeuvre may represent an all out challenge to the status quo, but it was not simply an all out attack on architecture, and to read it as such, the way some have received (and celebrated) his work a straightforward attack on form or function, opens it to the dangers of re-appropriation. To transpose an object from the realm of one discipline (architecture) to another (sculpture) by erasing its function or use was to miss the point: Matta-Clark's work was not against use, but rather it aimed to reorganise the grounds of authority. It was not against architectural judgement, but rather against the way in which the narrow and static definition of usefulness adopted by the architectural profession had become petrified as a 'visual vocabulary' and put to work in order to support that profession's exclusive claim to architectural authority. He reiterated his belief that his own projects were useful, and emphasised how these considerations opened onto moral and aesthetic aspects of judgement:

I do not think [that the building dissections are] useless since I am not talking about use in the utilitarian sense. There is an issue here, and a very important issue. It has to do with our responsibility for evaluation, a responsibility which, for the creative individual, assumes the pressure of a categorical imperative. The issue for modern architecture... "International Style," "Machine Age," "revolutionary architecture," however you want to call it... is this: all these various ideologies accept machine functionalism as a kind of visual vocabulary, about which they can moralize in terms of the inevitable needs. The morality that is rooted in such design mentality is valid. The functional issue was chosen because it seemed the most critical break from a lot of beaux-arts, historical garbage. It was valid for its time. But how long has it been? Seventy years since any kind of radical evaluation has gone-on. And I think that's the crux of the issue.⁴¹

On a number of different occasions, he went out of his way to refute suggestions that his work was simply anti-architectural. On each occasion, his response articulated a process of working that adopted and expanded the economy of architectural judgement, rather than discarding it, and mounted a challenge to the discipline that is set up on the reductive version: recall that in the context of *Reality Properties: Fake Estates*, he corrected Liza Bear's suggestion that his interest in the plots was non-functional, insisting that the work retained a functional level that was able to ridicule architecture's idea of function. Similarly, his oeuvre targeted the accepted values of institutional art: although his work would not as easily be considered 'anti-art,'⁴² the issues surrounding the accepted structures of disciplinary judgement and evaluation were taken on and expanded, rather than simply side-stepped. Reflecting on a rare gallery-based project, undertaken in 1975 at the Galleria Salvatore Ala, Milan (Figure 7.3), the extent to which—or more importantly, the mode in which—Matta-Clark operated both inside and outside the art institution is set out. Although he expresses his frustration at the restrictions imposed upon him by the gallery owner, the consequences of these are that the work's relationship to the gallery structure (as building and as institution) are uppermost in his mind;

THESE WORKS DONE AT GALLERIA ALA ARE SINGULARLY REDUCTIVE EXPRESSIONS OF MY PRESENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS ~~CHALLENGING MANIPULATING THE~~ CHALLENGING THE STATIC ELEMENTS OF STRUCTURED AND ENCLOSED SPACE. BUT BECAUSE OF THE MARKED DIFFERENCES IN CONTEXT AND COMPLEXITY BETWEEN THESE WORKS AND PROJECTS DONE IN ABBANDONED OR FREELY MANIPULATABLE BUILDINGS I HAVE TENTATIVELY CALLED THIS SERIES GESTURAL SIGNS-COSIGNS ~~WITH IN A~~ FOR AN INFRA-STRUCTURAL ALPHABET. EACH SIGN-COSIGN A (SCULPTURAL GESTURE) WITH IN THIS POTENTIAL ALPHABET (~~FRAMEWORK~~) OF THE BUILDING—EXTRA-BUILDING CONTEXTS HAS BOTH A FIXED AND A VARIABLE FUNCTION. EACH SIGN (SCULPTURAL GESTURE) ~~COSIGN~~ OPERATES ON A SPECIFIC ASPECT OF SPACE OR STRUCTURE (COSIGN) AND IS VARIABLE IN TERMS OF THE LIMITS SET UPON IT BY ITS IMPOSITION ON A SPECIFIC CONDITION.⁴³

Fig. 7.3 Gordon Matta-Clark, *Untitled Wall and Floor Cutting Galleria Salvatore Ala, Milan, Italy, 1975*



Matta-Clark's Galleria Ala project is instructive in the present context because its 'singularly reductive' expression, in common with *Hair and Reality Properties: Fake Estates* discussed earlier in this chapter, enacts very directly his own position with respect to the particular systems involved. Although he bemoaned the project's lack of spatial and experiential complexity, this situation as a whole can serve as something of a metaphor for his broad determination to draw attention to the consequences of the widespread adoption of systematic approaches, present yet invisible to the uninitiated. This work itself follows a similar operative method to *Hair and Reality Properties: Fake Estates*, inasmuch as it adopts and redeploys the systematic approach it wishes to criticise; here, the signs, the crosses in the floor, are set out following a regular grid. The incisions themselves articulate the presence not only of the physical boundaries of the gallery space, but also of the constraints overlaying any art activities that might take place there, where the codes of propriety are policed by the institution of art. Matta-Clark's attempts to juggle with this particular syntax, or the 'INFRA-STRUCTURAL ALPHABET' as he has it here, were restricted to the slight variation of each cross, accentuated by one in particular which was filled with something that

looks like paint, which has subsequently over-spilled its limits and splodged locally around the floor.

Taking on the metaphorical rather than the physical consequences of this piece, it highlights Matta-Clark's reading of the general presence of invisible disciplinary codes, and the significant differences that exist between these codes, despite assumptions that they can be equated. Such presumed equivalence occurs both in the codification of disciplinary judgement (recall Collins' frequent tendency to conflate the economies of judgement across law, medicine, engineering, and architecture), and also around the location where such judgements are deemed appropriate. O'Doherty suggests that the institutional authority assumed by religion, law, science and art is epitomized in the spaces of the church, the lab, the law court, and the museum or *a fortiori*, the gallery, respectively, all of which share a similar sanctified status in (polite) society at large.⁴⁴ It is precisely this metonymic tendency that Matta-Clark's projects and broader approach contest: as Jonathan Hill has argued, the codes underpinning a discipline and its (assumed) space of application are not the same, neither do the metonymic reductions operate in the same way for these various disciplines.⁴⁵ The consequences of these observations have two related aspects; as Matta-Clark's reflections on the Galleria Ala project suggest, a project must operate within a *building—extra-building context* to successfully challenge or renovate a discipline. This is not a physical displacement or relationship, but a movement that repeats and demonstrates the awkwardness of the metonymic disciplinary reduction which 'society' takes as natural. It is a movement that sits both inside and outside disciplinary codes simultaneously, both SIGN and CO-SIGN, BUILDING—EXTRA-BUILDING. As Matta-Clark suggests, to achieve this the project needed to assume both fixed and variable functions, though the broad implications of this reflect differently on the separate activities of art and architecture.

What is important to emphasise here is that Matta-Clark's oeuvre occupied both positions, and he attempted to address his work to both locations. His work did not operate an economy of replacement where 'utilitarian' function was swapped for an indeterminate function addressing emotional needs, but rather explored how these two might be maintained and brought together in a way that exceeded systematic evaluation.

Philosopher W. E. Kennick's examination of what he calls the 'traditional mistake' made by systematic approaches to aesthetic evaluation anticipates Matta-Clark's criticisms: both go behind positions that argue their corner by citing 'usefulness' or 'practical necessity,' in order to get to the covert, internal disciplinary economy where criteria are decided. Kennick's work is particularly

interesting here, as he attempts to take on both the 'moral imperative' and the social dimension of evaluation that Matta-Clark also addresses. He rehearses the logic behind those positions typified by Collins, which separate out disciplines in terms of their social usefulness, such that 'Moral appraisal like legal judgement, is a practical necessity; aesthetic appraisal is not.'⁴⁶ Kennick is dismissive of the clear separation upheld by such positions, where disciplines are categorised as either profession or art, either universally applicable or particular and subjective. He argues that while moral or legal appraisal need to be seen to be 'universal' for a society to cohere, the grounds for this 'universality' need to be overtly established and maintained by society, rather than covertly agreed and then positioned as some prior, universal outside force. In the terms used earlier, 'proper' behaviour is not a natural given.⁴⁷ For Kennick as for Matta-Clark, the exposure of that which is taken for granted, for common sense itself, collapses this clear separation between practical necessity and aesthetic appraisal. Kennick stresses the point: 'In this respect [where the codes of a particular discipline are established—SW] aesthetic criticism is very like moral appraisal. We either simply praise what is customarily praised and condemn what is customarily condemned or we *decide* what the criteria shall be.'⁴⁸

At this moment of decision, 'we' are caught up in a complex contextual, cultural, moral, ethical web, where evaluation can either repeat or alter previous grounds, but must avoid arbitrary criteria. There are many consequences of this move; at its broadest level as a model of judgement, it clearly repeats the demands of Matta-Clark's *directional law* which was examined in the previous chapter, altering the locus of authority by inscribing a contingent dimension, and switching the direction of evaluation to look forwards rather than backwards. Although care needs to be taken here to avoid conflating architectural theory and jurisprudence, the shared motivation for both Kennick and Matta-Clark was to challenge the systematic judgement adopted by traditional aesthetics, and by the architectural and legal professions. Their argument was that judgement should no longer be allowed to remain outside a discipline (naturalised), neither should it simply be internalised by 'history' nor mediated by the elite 'form givers' of either profession. To sidestep systematic evaluation is to challenge the widely adopted system of precedent, which is unable to acknowledge the 'exceptional;' indeed Kennick's *decision* demands in fact that every evaluation is exceptional to some extent.

Architecture (and *Anarchitecture*)

In addition to these broad issues, there are particular consequences for the relationship between disciplines and those 'subject' to them. These particularities are usually covered over by the tendency for each discipline to set itself up as both autonomous and authoritative, a position which becomes quickly undermined by their apparent inability to agree about stuff in the world, demonstrated for example by Matta-Clark's project *Reality Properties: Fake Estates*. This project was done while Matta-Clark was involved with the *Anarchitecture* group, which amongst other things wanted to highlight examples of this kind of 'cultural paradox.' As another *Anarchitecture* member Richard Nonas explained, their interest in paradox led them to the realisation that architecture was not simply one example of paradox, one discipline among many, but that in fact the discipline of architecture itself assumed a general condition:

The term *Anarchitecture* was more or less invented by Gordon. We knew we wanted to emphasize the way different familiar ideas were in conflict with each other, to search for physical examples of cultural paradox... Architecture did not start out being the main point for any of us, even for Gordon. But we soon realised that architecture could be used to symbolise all the hard-shelled cultural reality we meant to push against, not just building or 'architecture' itself.⁴⁹

There are two aspects of this observation that warrant further discussion, relating to architecture's provision of all hard-shells. Nonas' realisation should not really have come as much of a surprise; since antiquity, architecture has set itself up both as a collector of other disciplines,⁵⁰ and as a measure or regulator of these other fields. Indeed at the very beginning of Vitruvius's treatise, he asserts that '...it is by [the architect's] judgement that all work done by the other arts is put to the test.'⁵¹ Speaking for twentieth century modernism, Giedion renews architecture's claim for this overarching status: 'We have pointed out why architecture reflects the inner tendencies of the time and therefore may properly serve as a general index.'⁵² Pursuing this tendency, Padovan suggests that intrinsic to 'our' experience of architecture there is an aspect of collaging, of analogy, and it is this aspect that has proved so enduring in establishing and maintaining architecture as a measure of relationships between things of fundamentally different kinds: 'Thus the same process of dividing, ordering and relating that enables us to think *about* architecture is extended, *through* architecture, to all other fields.'⁵³

These various positions expose something assumed to be a truism regarding architecture, a truism that Nonas repeats, namely that architecture takes up its role as the enduring hard-shelled discipline *par excellence*; not only does the architect assume an Archimedean, quasi-divine viewpoint on the world when designing architecture, but the discipline of architecture sets itself up

in a similar unassailable extra-worldly location from where it can issue judgement and put all other disciplines to the test. But as Nonas hints, and as the *Anarchitecture* project endeavoured to demonstrate, this situation is only symbolic, and architecture's hard-shell is not all it seems.

The work of architectural theorist Mark Cousins' can help get behind these appearances: exploring the distinction between what he terms 'strong' and 'weak' disciplines, he emphasises that these terms are not valorised, but simply a reflection of the differences that exist between different fields. Strong disciplines are those such as the physical sciences, with their clear concern for objects (but notably, he also includes law here); weak disciplines would include such examples as architecture and psychoanalysis. One important consequence of Cousins' distinction concerns the disciplinary boundary: the boundaries of 'strong' disciplines are certain, their interior is precise and visible, and judgements are made only in reference to what is already inside the discipline. In contrast, 'weak' disciplines enjoy a confusing or uncertain boundary between inside and out, and there is no shared idea of precisely what constitutes them, as each person (or subject) enters the process regarding the object of knowledge.⁵⁴

Anarchitecture's preferred method of operation was to point this confusion out, to provide physical examples of the 'weakness' of architectural discipline, examples that demonstrated a lack of clarity occurring in the connection between architectural technique or knowledge, through the architectural process, to the architectural 'object.' Despite the assumption of the hard-shell, there are as many kinds of architecture as you want there to be, as their extensive listing of permutations and combinations approximating the word 'architecture' suggests.⁵⁵

AN ARK KIT PUNCTURE	A KNEECAP FRACTURE	ANACUPUNCTURE
AN ACHITECTURE	INARCHITECTURE	ANASTRALVECTOR
ANARCHYTORTURE	ONARCHITECTURE	AN AUSTRAL UNDER
AN ARCTIC LECTURE	AN ATTIC TORTURE	A NECTOR TASTER
ATLANTIS LECTURE	AN ARCTIC VECTOR	A NARCO TRADER
AN ORCHID TEXTURE	AN ART KIT TORTURE	AN ASSTRAL FACTOR
ANT LEGISLATOR	ANARCHY THUNDER	A fillibUSTER
ANARCHY LECTURE	A LETTUCE TEXTURE	A FULLER BRUSHMAN
AN ART COLLECTOR	AN ART DEFECTOR	AN AUSTRAL BUSHMAN
AUNT ARTIC TORTURE	AN ASS REFLECTOR	AN ARTIC TRACTOR
AN AIRKEY TACKLE	AN AIRKEY TACTILE	AN AIR KEY TICKLE

Their only exhibition, later published as a double page spread in *Flash Art*, (Figure 7.4) enacted this architectural gathering, working to undermine the hard-shell of architecture by demonstrating architecture's disciplinary make up, exemplified (still) by the Vitruvian shopping list of what an architect should be schooled in. Although the profession would clearly laugh this off as ridiculous, if we take *Anarchitecture* seriously and at face value, what their exhibition provides is an accurate account (or as accurate as any other) of the architectural process. It provides the elements (some elements), and it is then up to the subject, the audience, to get involved in sorting them out. This

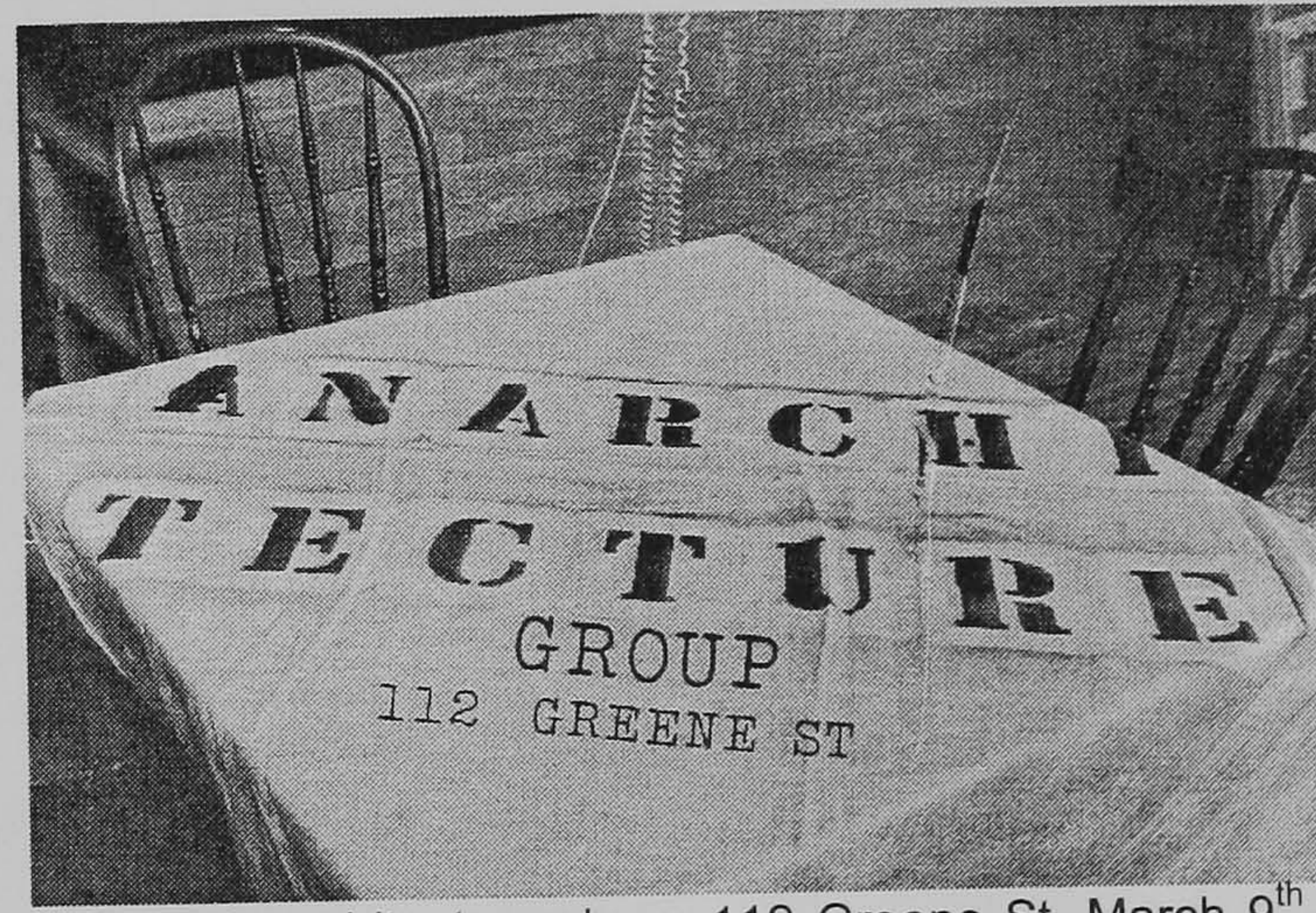
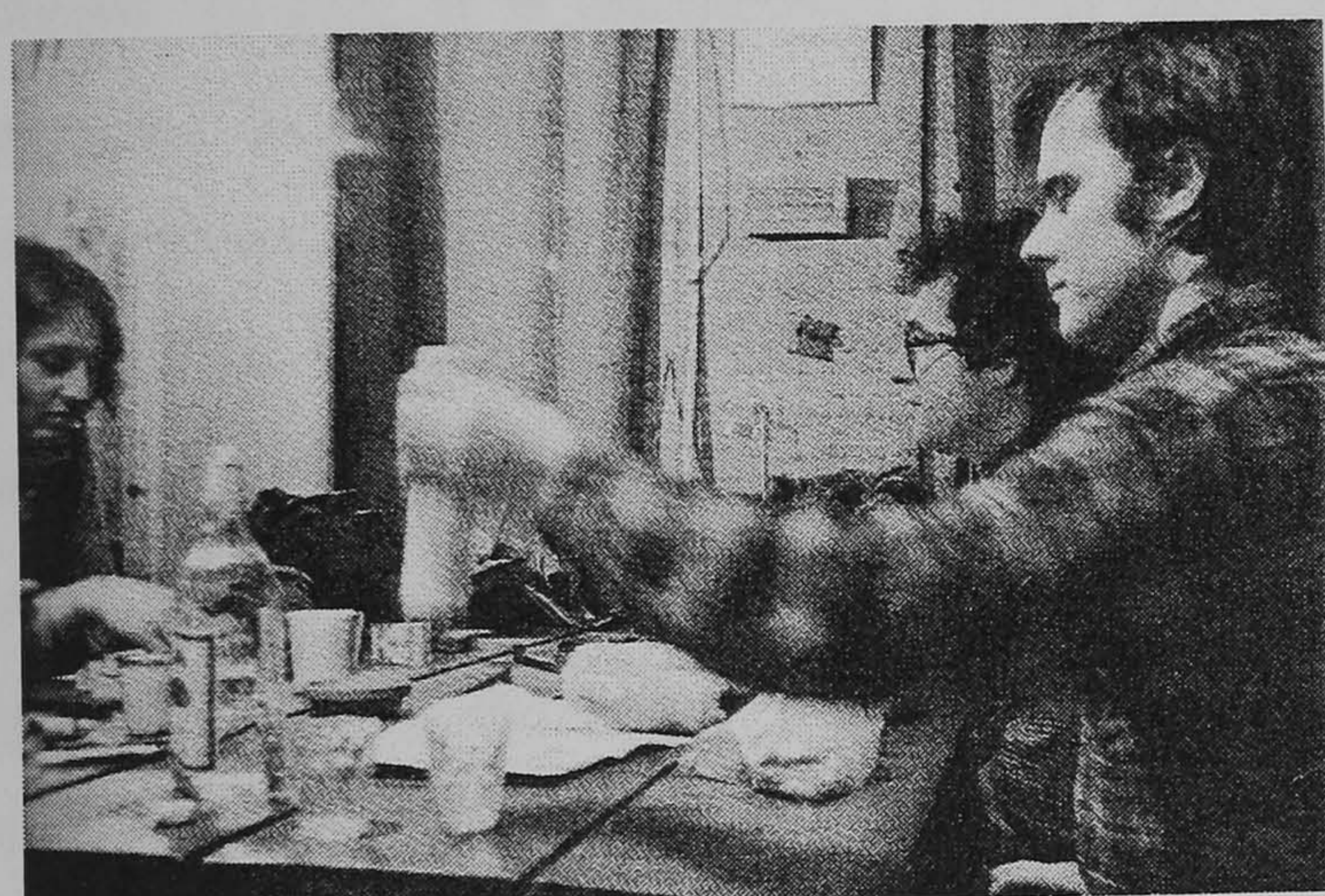
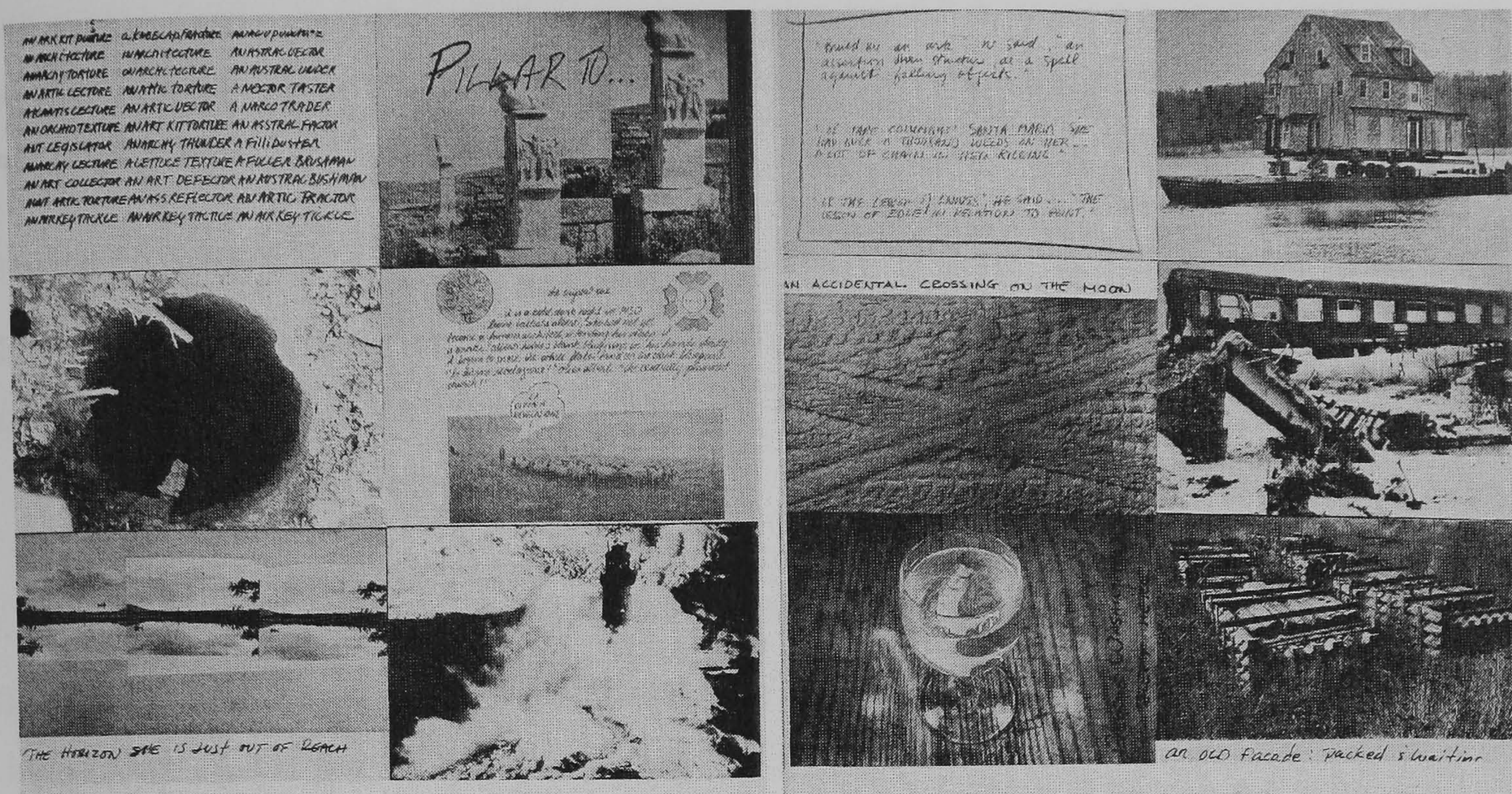


Fig.7.4 *Anarchitecture* (some group members, the invitation to the *Anarchitecture* show, 112 Greene St, March 9th — 22nd 1974, and the subsequent article in *Flash Art* (June 1974, pp.70–71.)

The (anonymous) contributions include here; variations and permutations of the name of the discipline; references to architecture's long history, *The Phallus of Delos*, (Choregic monument of the Karystios, c. 300BC; the tradition annular economy of architectural authority (genius—nature—god), with Leon Battista Alberti ('who had not yet become a famous architect') tending his sheep on a cold dark night in 1450 when he receives 'la divina rivelazione' (via a snow-flake) for the centrally planned church; holes (beyond the surface as limit); weather, decay, recycling of ideas, horizon and moon; and so on.

too is precisely Cousins' point: 'the elements of the [weak] practice neither authorise nor constitute the practice as such.'⁵⁶ *Anarchitecture*—itself constitutionally multiple and shifting, and equally applicable to the group, the exhibition and the magazine article—demonstrated and enacted the existence of a gap between the profession (guardians of knowledge, parodied by the elements displayed by *Anarchitecture*) and practice, and these gaps need to be filled (contingently) by the work of the subjects of architecture. *Anarchitecture* drives a wedge between the discipline and the profession: in Kennick's terms, we can either repeat the traditional mistake and laugh it

off, simply dismiss it as that which is conventionally dismissed, or we can *decide* how to put it together, and take up the moral, practical and aesthetic dimensions of this evaluation.

Passing through the Boundaries

Even prior to his involvement with *Anarchitecture*, Matta-Clark frequently discussed his working method or his motivation in terms that echoed these kinds of cross-boundary operations:

PASSING THROUGH THE BOUNDARIES

PASSING AWAY WITH A PIECE TO GO CHOOSING AND CLEARING OUT A CRITICAL POINT IN STRESS AND WORKING BETWEEN ~~FAILURE AND MINIMALISM~~ REDUCTION AND COLLAPSE.⁵⁷

In contrast to the prevailing situation that accepted boundaries as hard-shell or limit, Matta-Clark's interest was in the possibilities that emerge when particular boundaries are considered to be porous. In fact, it is architecture's own propensity for consummate cross-border juggling that provides the illusion, nothing more, of its hard shell: by *passing through the boundaries*, *Anarchitecture* and Matta-Clark offered to renovate the relationships that exist across these boundaries, working both literally and metaphorically between the reduction and collapse of architecture's shell by enacting and enjoying the actual 'weakness' of the discipline. *Anarchitecture*'s own working arrangement echoed this situation: the way they would meet, gathered around the table, repeated the role of architecture's disciplinary working surface, a surface around which a variety of different disciplines gather and are welcomed, a surface upon which a variety of differing contributions can be brought together without contradiction. *Anarchitecture*'s table, both its dynamic surface and edge, clearly neither 'natural' nor static, demonstrates that it is not quite clear to anyone where architecture's disciplinary boundaries ought to be drawn. This operation, working between reduction and collapse, can be identified not only in the projects discussed in this chapter, where the Galleria Ala *Signs-Cosigns*, *Hair* and *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* all play on the conventions of disciplinary working surface and code, but also in the labyrinth without walls that was *Open House*, altering the assumed relationships between inside and outside, or indeed across all of Matta-Clark's oeuvre.

Although *Anarchitecture*'s shifting group constitution and operative method can be read as being symptomatic of increasing interest in inter-disciplinary or trans-disciplinarity working in general,⁵⁸ it is also apparent that the discipline of architecture has maintained its age-old attachment to its hard-shell in the face of this increase. In the face of this resistance,

Anarchitecture and Matta-Clark pushed architecture—both as a discipline and a locus or object—to consider it as a porous field rather than rigid node, to enjoy its disciplinary weakness. The *Anarchitecture* table, such as this was, provides a metaphor for this reorganisation or realisation. *Anarchitecture*, acting it out OVER & OVER in an ongoing process of discipline formation, ‘THERE ARE NO SOLUTION BEC. TH. IS NOTHING BUT CHANGE.’⁵⁹ *Anarchitecture*, porous and in need of constant maintenance, undertaken not only by the discipline itself, but actively maintained by those subjected to it. Writing to Carol Goodden, another *Anarchitecture* member, Matta-Clark sketched out some new ideas for his own work that had emerged from the group’s developing interest:

I AM GETTING SOME NEW IDEAS ABOUT WORK ‘WITHROUGH’ WALLS SO THAT IT BECOMES MORE A SUPER-IMPOSITION OF DRAWINGS ON STRUCTURE. NOT JUST AN ISOLATED HOLE OR CUT BUT RELATED-CUTS UNIFYING THE SPACE AND DISSENGAGING POINTS OF SUPPORT. ALSO I WANT TO REINFORCE THE IDEA THAT THE AREA (BUILDING PARTS) BEYOND THE INTRUSION IS EFFECTED AND THAT EFFECT AS WELL AS CAUSE IS AN INGREDIENT.⁶⁰

Matta-Clark’s ruminations here repeat the need he perceived to reorganise architecture. He demanded its constitution must change, to involve more explicitly stuff from within and without—or *withrough*—and these both physically and non-physically. As he hints, this would involve a strange temporal reorganisation, according to which the cause would also become an ingredient of experience. Matta-Clark’s desire to disengage points of support is involved in this temporal complexity, but it is also part of a broader reorientation of the direction of architectural evaluation away from prior, external authority, and onto a contingent prospective experience. As he emphasised, this disengagement was not to cause wilful confusion, but rather to offer the opportunity for fuller experience that could be comprehensible. At this point, we need to return to the broader issues of *Discrete Violation*.

¹ O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, op.cit., p.20.

² The Earl of Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy or Advice to an Author*, pt.III, section 1, cited in Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1951, p.332.

³ Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1236, c.1973.

⁴ From Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., ‘Chronology,’ more or less reprinted in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.372.

⁵ Caroline Yorke Goodden, interviewed by Joan Simon, in Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.39.

⁶ Georges Bataille, ‘The Deviations of Nature,’ in Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, op.cit., p.55. He is referring to Galton’s experiments in composite photography of the human face. It must be emphasised again that, as with Matta-Clark, Bataille was not against science or systems *per se*, and he recognised the folly of ignoring the extent to which scientific methods had become a part of our lives: ‘In the first place, methodical knowledge can only be brushed aside to the extent that it has become an acquired faculty, since, at least in the present circumstances, without close contact with the homogeneous world of practical life, the free play of

intelligible images would lose itself and would dissolve fatally in a region where no thought and no word would have the slightest consequence.' Importantly he determined to use these very methods to highlight its dominance, arguing that 'it is possible to use [science] to limit its own movement and to situate beyond its own limits what it will never attain,' and advocating attempts to subjugate science 'through the use of weapons borrowed from it.' Georges Bataille, 'The Pineal Eye,' in Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, *op.cit.*, pp.80-1.

⁷ Georges Bataille, 'The Deviations of Nature,' in Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, *op.cit.*, p.55.

⁸ Caroline Yorke Goodden, interviewed by Joan Simon, in Jacob (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.39. Indeed, when Goodden compared Matta-Clark's hair to that of a Rastafarian, the role of the body, and here in particular the hair, as a locus of socio-cultural mores is reinforced.

⁹ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, *op.cit.*, p.34. See also pp.63-4, where he discusses modern ritual as possible palliative to capitalism's 'institutionalised innovation,' with the body as a possible site of resistance to such social mores and institutionalised discipline.

¹⁰ Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1983, p.139. Alpers explains the difference between these systems: 'Although the grid that Ptolemy proposed, and those that Mercator later imposed, share the mathematical uniformity of the Renaissance perspective grid, they do not share the positioned viewer, the frame, and the definition of the picture as window through which an external viewer looks. On these accounts the Ptolemaic grid, indeed cartographical grids in general, must be distinguished from, not confused with, the perspectival grid. The projection is, one might say, viewed from nowhere. Nor is it to be looked through. It assumes a flat working surface.' Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, *op.cit.*, p.138.

¹¹ Catherine Ingraham discusses these relationships in the first chapter of her book, 'Dividing the Land,' where she notes 'the "civilizing" of America by means of the grid ... whereby "civilization" becomes synonymous with "line."' Ingraham, *Architecture and the Burdens of Linearity*, *op.cit.*, pp.7-8. Regarding the gap that *Hair* points to, we could do worse than simply cite Ingraham: 'The breakdown of what is proper, wherever and however it may occur, is, before anything else, a crisis of form and structure. And architecture, as a discipline and a profession, controls the propriety of form and structure at both a physical and (therefore) a metaphysical level.' pp.8-10.

¹² See Alpers, Ch.4 'The Mapping Impulse in Dutch Art,' and esp. section III. For her analysis of the difference between Northern European and Italian perspective systems, see her Ch.2, "Ut pictura, ita visio" esp.section III). A sixteenth-century adaption of Ptolemy, Petrus Apianus' *Cosmographia* (Paris, 1551) illustrated Ptolemy's analogy by juxtaposing globe and head (as geography) and city-view and an ear or an eye (as chorography); 'geography is concerned with the depiction of the entire head, chorography with individual features such as an eye or an ear.' Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, *op.cit.*, p.134. (where fig.78 reproduces Apianus' illustration.) From the above discussion, the quasi-phrenological map of Matta-Clark's head would be situated in both modes.

¹³ 'Euclidean space is defined by its 'isotropy' (or homogeneity), a property which guarantees its social and political utility. The reduction to this homogeneous Euclidean space, first of nature's space, then of all social space, has conferred a redoubtable power upon it. All the more so since that initial reduction leads easily to another—namely, the reduction of three-dimensional realities to two-dimensions (for example, a 'plan,' a blank sheet of paper, something drawn on that paper, a map, or any kind of graphic representation or projection.)' Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, *op.cit.*, p.285. Lefebvre discusses what he calls the three 'formants' of abstract space, which in addition to the referential space of geometry, also pre-supposes the dominance of the sense of vision, and certain socio-political power relations. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, *op.cit.*, p.318. The three formants are introduced and discussed on pp.285. ff.

¹⁴ Gordon Matta-Clark, interviewed by Liza Bear. 'Splitting,' *op.cit.*, p.35. He made a related to observation to the journalist Dan Carlinsky; '[A] piece I bought I understand from the auction catalog I can't even get to. There's no access to it, which is fine with me. That's an interesting quality: something that can be owned but never experienced. That's an experience in itself.' Dan Carlinsky, "Sliver Buyers Have a Field Day at City Sales," in *New York Times* (October 14 1973), Real Estate Section, pp.1,12.

¹⁵ Although the relationship between these phases of *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* is different to the sequence in *Hair*, the issues it allows us to point towards are relevant to both, as the commonly accepted progression from drawings to 'reality' is complicated by both projects. For a fuller discussion of the first phase of *Reality Properties: Fake Estates*, which examines the relationship between space, economy, 'usefulness' and drawing, see Walker, 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Drawing on Architecture,' *op.cit.*

- 16 Carol Goodden has confirmed that Matta-Clark exhibited an early version of the project at 112 Greene Street, New York, which comprised the first batch of the properties that he had documented, though there is no record of how this documentation was arranged. Once the documentation process was more complete, Matta-Clark boxed up all the documents relating to *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* and gave them to Norman Fisher, a local art collector, with the instructions 'put them together however you want.' (From an interview between Jane Crawford and the author, 7th January 2002.) The impact of this fluid approach to representation on artistic authority has obvious relevance in our present context.
- 17 For an analysis of Lefebvre's discussion of the 'lot,' see Rob Shields, *Lefebvre, Love and Stuggle: Spatial Dialectics*, Routledge, 1999, pp.177-8.
- 18 *ibid.*, p.142.
- 19 Gordon Matta-Clark interviewed by Liza Bear. Bear, 'Splitting,' *op.cit.*, p.35. Matta-Clark repeated the crux of this assertion almost verbatim to Donald Wall: 'Real spaces especially fascinate me, the kinds of spaces people use all the time. In all probability such spaces are terrifically formalised as to use, and this triggers in me ways to set them up without any use. Or setting up the functional level so absurd so as to ridicule the very idea of function. A metaphorphosis of use automatically generates non-use, logistically. It's unavoidable.' Matta-Clark, Wall Draft, *op.cit.*, #14-15.
- 20 Gordon Matta-Clark, EGMC, *Articles and Documents 1942-76*, c.1974.
- 21 Ingraham considers the difference between building and real estate property, noting the disparity between different disciplinary treatments of the same location, which in broad terms echoes the constitution of Matta-Clark's (re)presentation of *Reality Properties: Fake Estates*. 'Owning land and owning buildings are the same from a legal standpoint but are entirely different from an identity standpoint.' Ingraham, *Architecture and the Burdens of Linearity*, *op.cit.*, pp.128-30. There are many sections in *Architecture and the Burdens of Linearity* that seem to be written for *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* (there weren't, of course).
- 22 'One of the most powerful forces that architecture exerts on culture is the maintenance of certain proprieties: how space is lived in and named' and so on. *ibid.*, p.30.
- 23 *ibid.*, p.10.
- 24 *ibid.*, pp.10-12.
- 25 Gordon Matta-Clark, interviewed by Liza Bear, see Bear, 'Splitting,' *op.cit.*, p.35.
- 26 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, *op.cit.*, #8.
- 27 David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture: The Development of a Theme in Architectural History and Theory from the Gothic Revival to the Modern Movement*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977 *op.cit.*, p.14. The 'theme' that Watkin pursues is the assertion, common to both Pugin and Pevsner, that to disagree with their advocacy of new architecture (Gothic and Modern respectively) would be immoral. 'In the present book...we shall outline the development in architectural writing since the eighteenth century of a tradition of ignoring the mysterious origins and the importance of 'style' and of explaining architecture away as a consequence or manifestation of something else.' p.1.
- 28 Richard Padovan, *Proportion: Science, Philosophy, Architecture*, E. & F. N. Spon, London, 1999, p.350.
- 29 Laugier, *Essai sur l'architecture*, p.8, cited in *ibid.*, p.348. This notion a survivor of the Renaissance, Alberti's *concinnitas*, despite Hume, Kant et al. Neither should we assume it died out with Laugier; witness Collins in Ch10, where he argues that the laws of architecture should not be considered as legislature, but laws and obligations 'imposed on architects by the nature of architecture itself.' Collins, *Architectural Judgement*, *op.cit.*, p.154, emphasis added.
- 30 Ingraham, *Architecture and the Burdens of Linearity*, *op.cit.*, p.45.
- 31 Jacques Derrida, *Point de Folie—Maintenant l'Architecture*, AA Files folio, London, 1985, §7.
- 32 Collins, *Architectural Judgement*, *op.cit.*, p.191.
- 33 There are several aspects to Collins' argument that need examined; although there's clearly some 'common sense' truth in his observation that architectural drawings can be hard for the non-expert to understand, the broader thrust of his argument plays back over the experience of that same audience when experiencing a building; that they still miss certain aspects of it. Although this too has some truth in it, Collins implies that their experience will always be less than that of an architect, rather than different. As his opening remarks suggest, he claims similarly that the layman will not be able to appreciate legal draughtsmanship, or law, etc. see *ibid.*, p.195ff.
- 34 *ibid.*, p.33.
- 35 Karl N. Llewellyn, 'On the Good, the True, the Beautiful in Law,' in *The University of Chicago Law Review*, vol.ix, 1942, p.230. It is also notable here that law is comfortable with the suggestion that their internal

working method (aesthetic phase) is similar to that of architecture, and happy to keep up the impression that architecture is as stable and as proper a discipline as law.

36 Collins, *Architectural Judgement*, op.cit., p.141.

37 In fact, this assumption was increasingly ignored by the society the architectural profession allegedly served, although it was vigorously sustained within the profession, where arguments over evaluation revolved around ideology and authority. Outside the profession, criticism and evaluation, where these were attempted, were contingent, specific, and actually addressed buildings. In *Terminal Architecture*, Martin Pawley discusses the changing role of criticism during the 1960s and 70s that is relevant here. At this juncture, for complex world political and economic reasons, it became much harder for modern architecture to perpetuate the 'proper' public response to architectural truth. Pawley draws on James Richards' work on architectural criticism of the 1930s, which highlights the difference between the profession's demand to base evaluation upon principle/intention, and the tendency of the public to evaluate ording to example/performance. Martin Pawley, *Terminal Architecture*, Reaktion Books, London, 1998, p.120-121.

38 Anne M. Wagner, 'Splitting and Doubling: Gordon Matta-Clark and the Body of Sculpture,' in *Grey Room*, 14, Winter 2004), op.cit., pp.26-45. Krauss' essay is reprinted; Rosalind E. Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field,' [1978], *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1985.

39 Wagner, 'Splitting and Doubling,' op.cit., p.42.

40 For a discussion of this important qualification of Matta-Clark's 'sacrifice,' see my 'Sacrificing Architecture? Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' in Andrew Ballantyne (ed.), *Architectures: Modernism and After*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, op.cit., pp. 118-141.

41 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #2-3.

42 One instance where this does occur was in the Communist Press (L'Humanité, 29th November 1975) in Paris, during the production of *Conical Intersect*; see Pamela M. Lee on 'Que d'Art?' in Lee, *Object to be Destroyed*, op.cit., Ch.4, esp. pp.185-187.

43 Gordon Matta-Clark, loose leaf notes, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942-76*, 1975. But compoare, contrariwise, Matta-Clark to Liza Bear, when he commented that his work was 'anything but illusionistic... It's all about a direct physical activity, and not about making associations with anything outside it.' Bear, 'Splitting,' op.cit., p.36.

44 O'Doherty argues that the power of the gallery is such that it can erase art from art (make some art secular, downgrade it) while promoting artistic status on secular objects, and in this context equates the gallery with church and law-court: 'The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is "art." The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself.' O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, op.cit., p.14. He then suggests that in this sense, the chamber of aesthetics is similar to 'the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of the experimental laboratory...' ibid, p.14.

45 Hill discusses at length the differences between the art institution (gallery) and the institution of art (all the codes, practices etc that constitute a discipline), a distinction he borrows from Peter Bürger, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, tr. Michael Shaw, University of Minnesota Press, 1984. He goes on to assert that although there is also a distinction between these two in architecture: 'the internal relations within the disciplines of art and architecture are quite different.' Hill, *The Illegal Architect*, op.cit., p.10. Hill suggests that unlike the architect, the artist can gain a degree of critical distance from the art institution. 'It is ... easier for the artist to avoid the art institution than the institution of art. In architecture, or at least that part of architecture recognised by the profession, criticism tends to come from outside more than inside, because the profession binds architects together in a manner unlikely in the art world.' p.10.

46 W. E. Kennick, 'Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?' in Cyril Barrett (ed.), *Collected Papers on Aesthetics*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1965, p.18. Kennick's essay contains several interesting parallels to the discussion here, stemming from his overall uneasiness with systematic approaches to art, aesthetic theory and criticism, his various criticisms of universality, and his arguments around the contingency of aesthetic judgement. His position attempts to stike a balance between various criteria within the same judgement. (He also discusses improper uses of art: see p.15.)

47 Kennick has less patience with the smokescreen of 'propriety' than commentators such as Ingraham, although his dismissal clearly shares similar motivations: "Art proper' is simply what is properly called 'art'. The 'correctly' and 'properly' here have nothing to do with any 'common nature' or 'common denominator' of all works of art; they have merely to do with the rules that govern the actual and commonly accepted usage of the word 'art.'" ibid., p.6.

- 48 *ibid.*, p.19. Original emphasis.
- 49 Richard Nonas, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark, op.cit.*, p.374.
- 50 This is also one of Ingraham's enduring complaints: 'The architect is a generalist, a collector of disciplines.'
- Ingraham, *Architecture and the Burdens of Linearity, op.cit.*, p.18.
- 51 Vitruvius, *The Ten Books of Architecture*, [c. C1st BC], tr. Morris Hicky Morgan [1914], Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1960, p.5. It should be noted here that for Vitruvius, these other arts include drawing, geometry, mathematics, history, philosophy, music, medicine, law, astronomy, and so on.
- 52 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: the Growth of a New Tradition*, [1941], Harvard University Press, London and Cambridge, MA, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.581.
- 53 Padovan, *Proportion, op.cit.*, p.358.
- 54 Mark Cousins, 'Building an Architect,' in Jonathan Hill (ed.), *Occupying Architecture: Between the Architect and the User*, Routledge, 1998, Ch.1, pp.14-21.
- 55 This was one of the panels in the *Anarchitecture* show, 112 Greene St, March 9th —22nd 1974, subsequently reproduced as an article in *Flash Art*, June 1974, pp.70–71.
- 56 Cousins, 'Occupying Architecture,' *op.cit.*, p.21.
- 57 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #829, 1970.
- 58 For recent explorations of interdisciplinarity, and Homi Bhabha's notion of transdisciplinarity that is more appropriate here, see for example Alex Coles and Alexia Defert (Eds.) *de-, dis-, ex* (Volume II), 'The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity,' BACKless Books/Black Dog Publishing, London, 1998, and Mark Linder, *Nothing Less than Literal: Architecture after Minimalism*, MIT Press, 2004 *op.cit.* Linder draws much from Bhabha's notion, in ways that are particularly pertinent to the present discussion.
- 59 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, c.1974, EGMC, *Articles & Documents, 1942-76*, *Anarchitecture* period, c.1973.
- 60 Gordon Matta-Clark, Letter to Carol Goodden from Amsterdam, EGMC, *Letters, 1973*, Monday Dec 3rd 1973.

PASSING THROUGH THE BOUNDARIES

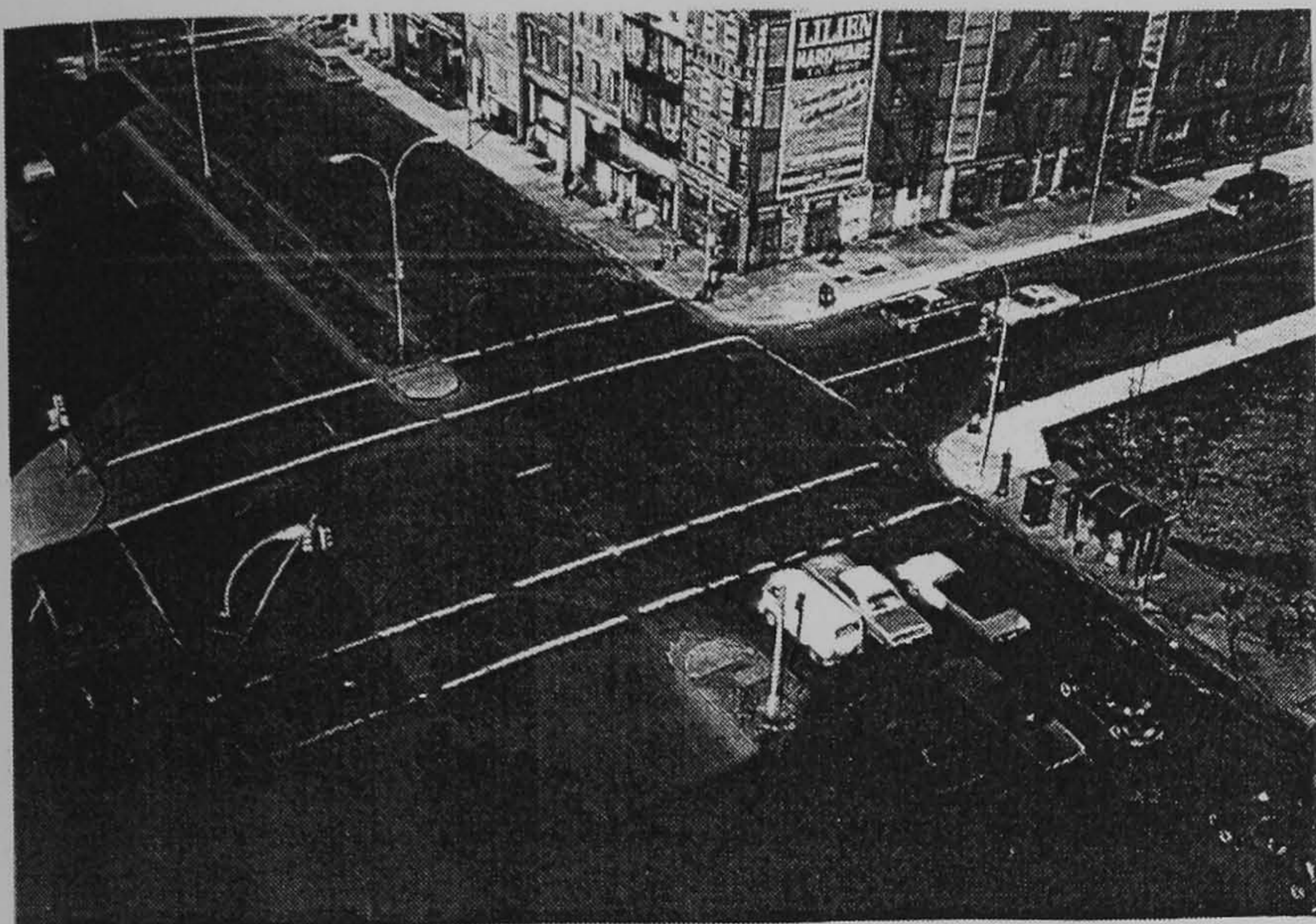
PASSING AWAY WITH A PIECE TO GO CHOOSING AND CLEARING OUT A
CRITICAL POINT IN STRESS AND WORKING BETWEEN ~~FAILURE AND~~
~~MINIMALISM~~ REDUCTION AND COLLAPSE.¹

Although Matta-Clark's work with *Anarchitecture*, and his oeuvre more broadly, called traditional disciplinary boundaries and propriety into question in ways already discussed, there is much more at stake in his enduring attention to boundaries and determination to go passing through them than a simple challenge to the architectural profession.

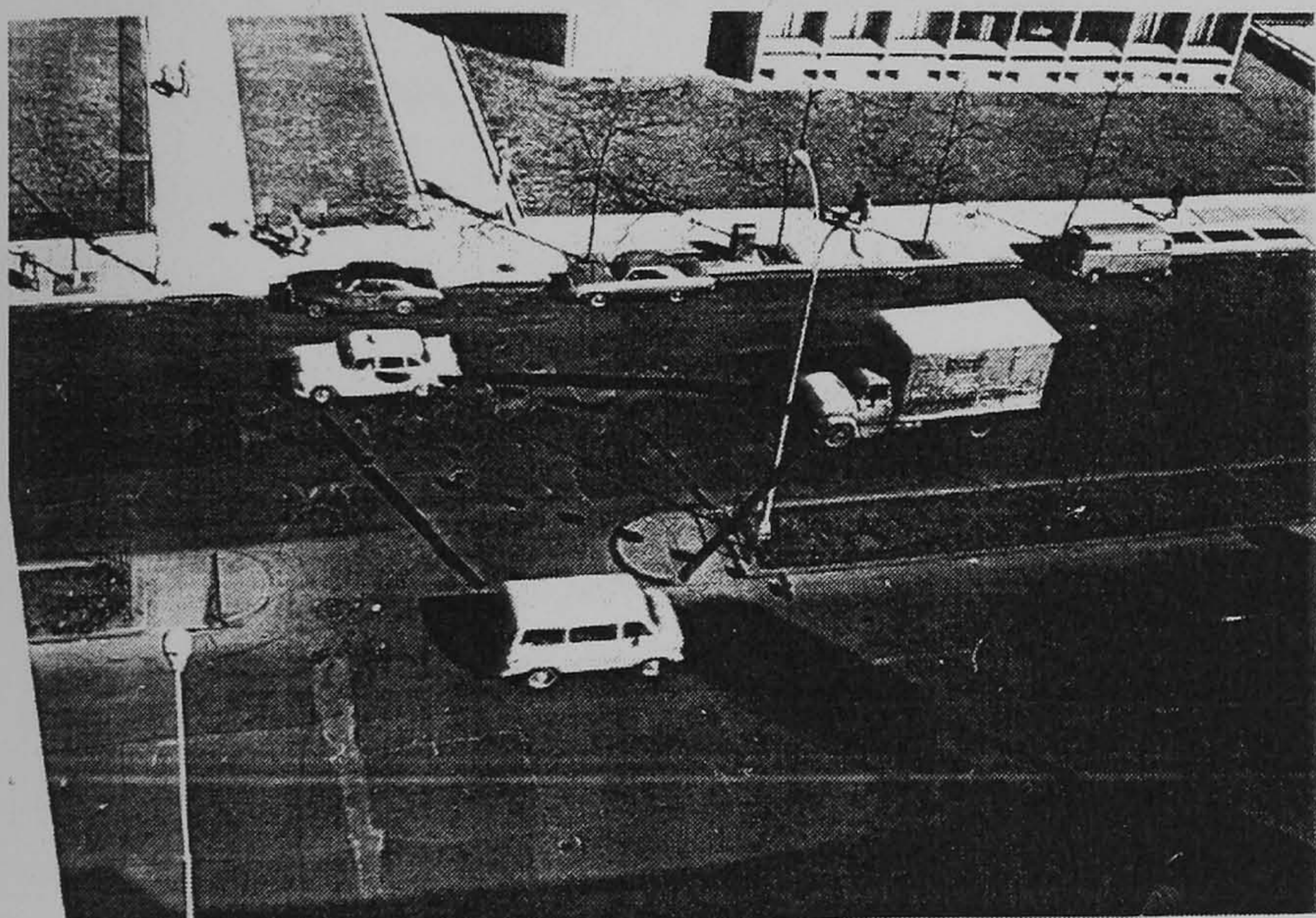
All of the works discussed already can be approached in terms of their impact on particular boundary or border relationships: those of the bounded object (*Hair*, the building dissections); of bounded space (*Reality Properties: Fake Estates*, *Open House*); of bounded disciplines or institutions (*Reality Properties: Fake Estates*, *Signs—Cosigns* at Galleria Ala), of the bounded subject (Santiago); the private or the public individual and the urban and domestic realms (*Homesteading*, *Clockshower*, *Garbage Wall*); the boundary between artifice and nature (*Agar Pieces*, *Museum*); also, the many boundaries that feature in the exploration projects (the collages of *Underground Paris*, or films such as *Sous-sols de Paris* and *Underground Dailies*, which play on the boundaries between above and below, but also between the archaeological, folkloric and bureaucratic boundaries, between official history and 'confronted' time, between narrative progression and the black-holes of 'holey' space); and so on.

In all these projects, Matta-Clark both acknowledged the need for boundaries, and the need for their alteration: BETWEEN REDUCTION AND COLLAPSE. He was uncomfortable with boundaries that were taken for granted, never acknowledged or challenged; for him, boundaries needed energy to be sustained, and his oeuvre can be considered to have opened up a series of more fluid boundaries operating across these kinds of relationships. As the discussion of *altération* in Chapter Six suggested, more significant than the dramatic edges produced in the building dissections was his intention behind these cuts, which aimed beyond the physical in order to point at the broader consequences of this interest. Indeed, a pair of photographs from the *Anarchitecture* period can

Fig. 8.1 Gordon Matta-Clark, Traffic Game Board Centres and Dynamic Boundaries 1974



TRAFFIC GAME BOARD CENTERS



DYNAMIC BOUNDARIES

figure for this more nimble relationship; the photographs, reproduced in Figure 8.1, are of vehicles waiting or passing at traffic intersections. One in particular is pertinent here, as Matta-Clark has drawn over the photograph with solid and dotted lines linking actual and projecting possible relationships between the passing vehicles, and added the title 'DYNAMIC BOUNDARIES,' something between dynamic borders or boundaries.

For Matta-Clark, this dynamism referred equally to physical and non-physical boundaries. His concern was to broaden the possibilities for human experience beyond that which is taken for granted, and to sustain this as an ongoing operation rather than allowing an altered situation to assume the position of stasis it had replaced. To put this another way, it

was not sufficient for him to replace one kind of object with another; his oeuvre was directed at the way in which people might forge new, dynamic relationships with their social and physical environment. He stressed this to Judith Russi-Kirshner: 'I see a building as something which exists and is passionately beautiful in itself, but also demands or excites a certain kind of extension.'²

There are certain similarities here with Henri Bergson's demand that thought exceed itself 'by an act of will.'³ If existing boundaries are taken for granted, experience will be restricted to, and determined by, only that which has gone before. The example Bergson gives is the difference

between walking and swimming. There is nothing in the common experience of walking that would suggest to humans how to swim; it is only by a leap of faith (perhaps literally), by an act of will, that human movement in water developed. His example may seem a little trite, apparently advocating any naïve pursuit of novelty, but behind it there lay his more thoroughgoing worry that if we fail to exceed ourselves, or if we refuse the demand for certain kinds of extension, we as subjects will quickly become objectified. Indeed if we recall the earlier discussion of discrete violation, *how* we ask questions was both central and problematic for Bergson. This lay behind his criticisms of both the Platonic and Cartesian legacies which (crudely) divided experience up in ways that simplified the complexity and composite nature of reality, reducing it to an exclusively spatialised account and allowing judgement to head off in the wrong direction (backwards now forwards) to be measured against prior authority.

Similarly to Matta-Clark, Bergson argued that full human experience must position the subject in a broader field of possibilities than traditionally: it is in this situation that the inventive or creative question was charged with exploring the conditions of existence beyond what is taken for granted, behind what we take for common sense itself (the architecture of our economy). The creative question works both to maintain the contradictions of pure experience, and also to recombine these in a subsequent viewpoint (previously called ‘truth’), it works to pass through the false categorical boundaries of Platonism and Cartesianism, inherited and sustained by modernism, in order to instigate new, dynamic boundaries to explain and support experience. Constantin Boundas argues the necessity of this renewed interest in experience, such that ‘...a definition of empiricism, which does not first problematize the nature and status of experience, is of little value.’⁴ Beginning with and returning to the real, this renovated, radical empiricism is, according to Deleuze’s analysis of Bergson, both ‘capable of stating problems and of going beyond experience toward concrete conditions...[and] capable of solving problems and of bringing the condition [of the real—SW] back to the conditioned [experience—SW] so that no distance remains between them.’⁵

More precisely then, Matta-Clark’s demand that the experience of architecture should involve a *certain kind of extension* can be understood as an extension-as-creative-questioning, one that disarticulates experience into the various differences of kind explored in the previous chapters, differences that can be pushed in different directions and subsequently recombined as realized experience ‘the real.’ Bergson refers to the different trajectories involved in this disarticulation as ‘lines of fact:’ whether or not these reach their end point is not vital. William James’s own radical

empiricism (itself something of a contemporary dialogue with Bergson's work) is helpful here. James explored a similar notion, which he referred to as 'knowledge in transit.' These lines of fact for him constituted an unverified knowing that is retroactively confirmed when its terminus is reached. While we are in this state, James refers to us as 'virtual knowers,' but importantly he goes on to argue that 'the immensely greater part of all our knowing never gets beyond this virtual stage... the experiences of tendency are sufficient to act upon.'⁶

These trajectories away from and returning to experience, these 'lines of fact,' include (while clearly separating) subjective and objective tendencies, qualities and quantities. Coincidentally, Matta-Clark mused on the dynamic relationships involved in spatial experience in similar terms; terms that echoed both the centrality of trajectory to such experience, and the both/and, active/passive, subjective/objective constitution of this experience. In a note from the *Anarchitecture* period, he stated:

TRANSMITTED	TRANSMITTED
TRANSMITTED	TRANSMITTER
FIXED POINT	FIXED POINT
BEYOND WHICH SPACE IS	BEYOND WHICH SPACE IS VARIABLE ACCORDING TO PRESENCE OF
VARIABLE ACCORDING TO	RECEIVERS ⁷
PRESENCE OF RECEIVERS	

In their essay on Matta-Clark, Marcelo Expósito & Gabriel Villota argue that all of his work revolves around ideas of identity and the centred subject, and that his work reveals how the urban environment currently produces subjectivity.⁸ Although their argument is thorough, and although many of his projects followed the *Anarchitectural* approach by staging or revealing how subjectivity is produced (and objectified) by contemporary environments, his œuvre also enjoyed an heuristic aspect, demonstrating not only the establishment of the centred subject but also offering an alternative understanding. As Matta-Clark himself stressed to Donald Wall, the maintenance of subjectivity can productively involve its undoing:

Many own homes, but don't do anything to maintain them. It's the same with their own lives. Maintenance. It's frightening. People should at least be aware of the possibility of undoing self, environment, and so forth.⁹

It is in regard to these possibilities that Matta-Clark's œuvre developed around his interest in transmission and reception, and the concomitant belief in the possibility of an ongoing production through undoing. Without conflating people and built environment, his demand was that neither should be taken simply as static whole objects, nor as subjects within an objective space. The possibility of undoing both self and environment was caught up in his broader celebration of the productive aspect of experience. In contrast to the Cartesian identification of the subject with the

intellect, Matta-Clark's demand was that experience overflow the intellect and involve other areas of the mind. Deleuze picks up certain consequences of this approach: 'The fact there is no theoretical subjectivity, and that there cannot be one, becomes the fundamental claim of empiricism. And, if we examine it closely, it is merely another way of saying that the subject is constituted within the given. If the subject is constituted within the given, then, in fact, there is only a practical subject.'¹⁰ This constitution of the subject within the given is a significant aspect of Matta-Clark's operation of *discrete violation*; the thinking around this approach can be pursued by addressing the renovated roles of (dynamic) boundaries and surfaces, such as these can be considered to provide some kind of support in this constitutive process, and accommodate the kinds of transit and transmission that might be involved. He addressed these interrelationships in a letter to Carol Goodden, where he expressed his interest in working 'WITHROUGH' boundaries:

I AM GETTING SOME NEW IDEAS ABOUT WORK 'WITHROUGH' WALLS SO THAT IT BECOMES MORE A SUPER-IMPOSITION OF DRAWINGS ON STRUCTURE. NOT JUST AN ISOLATED HOLE OR CUT BUT RELATED-CUTS UNIFYING THE SPACE AND DISSENGAGING POINTS OF SUPPORT. ALSO I WANT TO REINFORCE THE IDEA THAT THE AREA (BUILDING PARTS) BEYOND THE INTRUSION IS EFFECTED AND THAT EFFECT AS WELL AS CAUSE IS AN INGREDIENT.¹¹

The stress Matta-Clark placed on the super-positional aspect of his working, and the combination of effects from within and without as ingredients of experience, reinforce his interest in the operations of transmission. There are aspects to the traffic WITHROUGH this surface that echo the earlier discussion of process in Chapter Six, where Bataille's notion of *altération* similarly demanded that there be something—some 'support'—that can undergo destruction or deformation in this operation. But whereas Bataille suggested a range of possibilities that might constitute the material support destroyed in a first stage *altération*, and hinted that subsequent stages of the process be more far-reaching by including 'the imagination,'¹² Matta-Clark's approach no longer held the modalities of these various stages apart as Bataille did. Instead, he considered the material and mental 'objects' together, such that it becomes important to arrive at a more fluid understanding of the 'support,' one that is able to respond to Bergson's or James' account of the 'lines of fact' transmitted from and to experience, or in Matta-Clark's terms, a support that can respond to the operation of *discrete violation*.

The support and the *subjectile*

WORKING WITH BUILDINGS WITHOUT BUILDING WITHIN THE STRUCTURE

[...]

EMPHASIZING INTERNAL STRUCTURES THROUGH EXTRACTION,
DISPLACEMENT AND ALTERATION

—Gordon Matta-Clark¹³

In order to explore the contribution that such a renovated ‘support’ might provide for experience, it is helpful to refer to Jacques Derrida’s essay ‘To Unsense the Subjectile,’ in which he examines the artworks of Antonin Artaud. The ‘subjectile’ of the title can initially be approximated to the renovated ‘support’ variously demanded by Bataille, Bergson or James, and legible across Matta-Clark’s œuvre. Although Derrida addresses Artaud’s drawings, his discussion ranges across a variety of terrain, and approaches many of the issues that have been brought into the previous chapters.

Derrida addresses at length the complexities of the subjectile: of particular interest here is the way that the subjectile can be understood to be part of an operation of simultaneous maintenance and undoing: ‘...the subjectile subjects itself to the surgery...[which] resembles a manual demiurge *at once* aggressive *and* repairing, murderous *and* loving.’¹⁴ Linked to this duality is an account of the subjectile as some sort of membrane or skin, lying under an artwork, supporting it, *and* bearing the interrogation that the work is subjected to: ‘the trajectory of what is thrown upon it should dynamize this skin by perforating it, traversing it, passing through to the other side: “after having exploded the wall of the problem,” as [Artaud] says in “Suppôts et supplications”...’¹⁵ The trajectories begin on both sides, they come from under the work and from the interrogations thrown at it: there might even be two subjectiles,¹⁶ which are perforated, *altered*, in this act of traversal, yet are again impossible to locate physically, being constantly made, unmade and re-made in this process. Echoing Matta-Clark’s account of his work in the building dissections, where EFFECT BEYOND THE INTRUSION AS WELL AS CAUSE IS AN INGREDIENT, Derrida’s discussion suggests the subjectile(s) need not be physically located in the work, but could simply be associated with it, determined by it and yet determinant in the production of the work itself through its *altération*.

Indeed, these subjectiles can be understood to gather up the proprietorial architectural framework, involving the complexity of disciplinary boundary conditions and working surface already discussed in the previous chapter. As with the demand there, these boundaries and surfaces are not taken to be static; Derrida’s suggestion is that these subjectiles be dynamized by the trajectories brought to bear on them. As with Matta-Clark’s *discrete violation*, Derrida’s interest in the subjectile lies in the way in which it can be *unsensed*: he is clear that this does not aim for

no(n) sense, but rather that it acknowledges and shifts the modality of judgement in order to involve a 'good awkwardness' that inscribes while altering accepted disciplinary rules or principles. Referring to Artaud's drawings, Derrida describes a 'good awkwardness [which] would... consist of unlearning the "drawing principle," ridding oneself of a nature too tractable with respect to norms only in existence because of a default... If [Artaud] "abandoned" the "principle of drawing" like that, then he must once have had it at his disposition.'¹⁷

To this extent, the emergence of the subject and the environment, and the opening up of the principles of Architecture, are inextricably linked, a point again emphasised by Derrida: 'And as the drawing principle supposes the "taking possession," the subjection to malevolent forces, the only way to dispose of the drawing principle is to put oneself passively at its disposition—and this is the normal cleverness of the draughtsman... [The drawing principle] would have tampered with our body, our eyes, and the limits of our vision, the "principle of our cranial box" (which commands the "principle of drawing"), our organic constitution in its general architecture.'¹⁸ The thrust of Derrida's argument here clearly echoes his warnings against the 'naturalisation' of architecture (as it insinuates itself into our economy) that were introduced in the previous chapter's discussion of the common-sense judgement and its own insinuation into various disciplinary economies; however, when discussing Artaud's work here, he points more clearly to a way around this subjection, such that the production and 'reading' of these particular drawings involve both the artist and the observer in the contingent interrogation of the various boundaries involved.

Moreover, this involvement can gather Bergson's creative question, and can also open onto, and be expanded by considering it alongside, Matta-Clark's oeuvre. For example, rather than advocating a passive submission to the principles of Architecture, and to its attendant tampering with our organic constitution, Matta-Clark's building dissections can expose the general architecture of both, and suggest that they be taken up and used. These works are no longer architectural, and yet their *good awkwardness* cannot be considered without acknowledging the machinations of architectural discipline. In other words, and contrary to the line adopted by many commentators, Matta-Clark does not enact a straight destruction, as the particular 'collapse' involved works to sustain as well as to bring down architecture. More importantly, his projects also worked to sustain the subject, in contrast to architecture's usual subjugation. Following Derrida, we could say that however much Matta-Clark had abandoned the principles of architecture, he must once have had them at his disposition (or more strongly following Bataille,

we might say that he *takes liberties with the victim* —here, architecture—and *even kills it, but cannot be said to neglect it*).¹⁹

The building dissections were neither merely works of collapse nor merely works of spatial complexity, and their broader interest lies in the way that the consequences of the cutting move these pieces beyond a traditionally sanctioned architecture. Coincidentally perhaps, Matta-Clark framed his discussion of the spatially dynamic volumes encountered within, and associated with, the dissections in terms that echo traditionally sanctioned architectural drawing and design techniques: ‘As soon as you deal with lines, the whole progression of lines is a geometric progression—not geometric progression as in a logarithm, but a progression from line to plane, to various kinds of planes to volumes to something beyond the volume, which is a sort of “dynamic volume.” And that dynamic volume is probably one which interests me the most...’²⁰ These dynamic volumes operated by providing an alternative to the volumes conventionally associated with architectural space, although as his discussions of the spatial experience of the dissection *Circus* makes clear, this is an experience that must also inscribe the conventional. Moreover, the dissections did not simply provide two competing volumetric qualities for the visitor to make sense of or synthesise; Matta-Clark’s alteration to the building fabric and spatiality also alters the conventional alliance between geometry and the drawing principle. As Derrida emphasised, the drawing principle is so entrenched in our ‘organic constitution’ that we take it for granted and accept (as common sense) the limits it places on our vision and judgement: by attempting to open up dynamic volumes, dynamic boundaries, Matta-Clark’s work challenged this entrenchment, offering not only *more* to architecture and the experience of it, but also offering more to the experiencing subject.

Indeed the subjectile can be posited as a corollary to the disciplinary working surface introduced previously. Just as that surface was able to accommodate a variety of incompatible stuff in the production and judgement of architecture, so the subjectile supports the experience and interrogation of a work while moving both beyond the reach of system. Shifting from the building dissections to Matta-Clark’s oeuvre more broadly, the dynamic volumes that in the dissections called the drawing principle into question provide one particular example of his broader ‘syntax-juggling’ operations. Matta-Clark used this linguistic analogy to explain the relationship his work struck up with ‘proper’ architectural language, motivated in particular by his desire to expand the possibilities for experience by exceeding the ‘ORGANISED MONOPOLY’ enjoyed by conventional systematic approaches. For him, the language of architecture was more problematic in terms of

where and how it tried to operate than as a visual vocabulary. In an early sketchbook, he criticised this ‘oppressive mania’ symptomatic of the architectural profession’s ‘stage set mentality:’

the failing of the architectural stage set mentality is its homogenous accessibility to all and an oppressive mania for influencing the entire fabric in all its details over all its surfaces. nothing’s left alone the professional devotion to care and responsibility leaves no space untreated no surface uncovered whose final effect is a lifeless emptiness completely opposite to the emptiness at the end of the road or at the top of the stairs or at any point of non-use²¹

The contrast between this stage-set surface and the dynamic subjectile highlights issues that are key to Matta-Clark’s relationship with architecture. In a related criticism of the architectural profession’s mania for homogenous accessibility, Lefebvre discusses the “‘pure” and illusionary transparency’ resulting from attempts to make ‘legible’ space: ‘Someone who knows only how to see ends up... seeing badly. The reading of a space that has been manufactured with readability in mind amounts to a sort of pleonasm...’²² Lefebvre too blames the profession’s *devotion to care* for this obsession with transparent, legible space, which he believes had atrophied human capacity to explore and experiment, leaving room only for passive experience. ‘The illusion of transparency goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps or secret places.’²³

Lefebvre links these particular criticisms to what he regards as the more general subordination of space to texts or writing systems. In so doing, he anticipates Matta-Clark’s juggling, and in particular points to the kind of irreducible aspect of spatiality that Matta-Clark’s work attempts to valorise. According to Lefebvre, ‘Non-verbal sets [which include painting, sculpture and architecture] are... characterised by a spatiality which is in fact irreducible to the mental realm... To underestimate, ignore and diminish space amounts to the overestimation of texts, written matter, and writing systems, along with the readable and the visible, to the point of assigning to these a monopoly on intelligibility.’²⁴

It is the irreducibility that is important here. While Lefebvre was clearly concerned with contesting the ‘manufacture’ of space as this is conceived by the architectural profession, in order to encourage the involvement of those subjected to it in a more active production of space, his assertion retains the traditional positioning of the subject within architecture (architecture here as both space and discipline), and his project tends to reduce the irreducibility to a representation. Paradoxically, Matta-Clark’s *œuvre* is more able to sustain this spatial irreducibility, and to do so by means of using space itself, despite Lefebvre’s (almost) categorical assertion that this cannot be done because it is an ‘incriminated medium.’²⁵ Indeed, Matta-Clark’s dynamic volumes addressed the irreducible aspect of space in such a way as to bring about productive disruption to a visitor’s

spatial experience, and they did this by redeploying parts of 'readable and visible' spatial language in the 'wrong' place, while simultaneously providing for that which is legible according to system.

This discrete violation of the visitor's sense of value offered to shift their experience from traditional intelligibility to an altered version, an alternative clarity; this opening onto other modes of intelligibility is brought about through Matta-Clark's syntax juggling. Lindsay Smith, whose work has already been introduced in Chapter Four, has discussed the creative role of linguistic games, of 'stammering,' grammatical irregularities, evocative pauses, haunting repetitions, and so on, which she argues introduce a hesitancy of and in space, between gesture and meaning, that disrupts the assumed monopoly on intelligibility enjoyed by 'good speech.' Although her discussion takes place in the context of the production of photographs, her identification of the hesitancy produced by such alternative spaces and of the creative role played by disruptive or 'defective language'²⁶ is helpful in the present discussion. From Smith, we could suggest that much of Matta-Clark's oeuvre operates by actively precipitating such a defective language. His syntax juggling was not so much concerned with the revelation of hidden spaces as with the encouragement of searching, and the disruption of the intellect's monopoly in the production of meaning. As the various exploration projects or *Open House* demonstrate, the searching Matta-Clark advocated was not intended to recover something lost, but to create new possibilities; there was no end to what could be found. Matta-Clark's syntax juggling, and his continuous, almost obsessive play with language in his sketchbooks, notecards, project titles and conversation, demonstrate a similar maintenance and disruption of the establishment of meaning. It is easy to identify what is 'wrong' in both the building-based projects and in his wordplays, though when each alteration is taken in context, it provides a productive disruption of norms such that neither recover: both norm and alteration pre-suppose each other. This does not result in a situation that is unintelligible, but rather as Bergson's renovation of Platonic *eidos* asserted, insists on two types of clarity that are different in kind.

In so doing, Matta-Clark's oeuvre operates both according to intelligible systems (in various forms), and also with an aspect of understanding that exceeds the intellect. The consequences of this kind of alteration are multi-faceted, though some of the most significant opportunities they bring bear on the relationships between subject and object, and on the traditional priority of form-idea, as these feature in accounts of human understanding. This returns us, at last, to Derrida's observations regarding Artaud and the drawing principle, and in particular to the relevance of the subjectile for Matta-Clark's oeuvre. As Derrida writes elsewhere, the underlying danger of

assuming that everything is intelligible, of attempting to give everything a meaning, lies not in any number of resulting presuppositions (such that the ‘drawing principle’ can act as a guarantor that space be made legible, to use Lefebvre’s criticism as but one example), but that we become blind to the ‘baselessness of the non-meaning from which the basis of meaning is drawn.’²⁷ To do this is to take a ‘restricted economy’ —the architecture of our own economy (as common sense) with all the attendant disciplinary propriety that has been discussed—as the general case.

In contrast, the promise of the subjectile is that it (re)opens our economy onto a general baselessness: for Derrida, the subjectile is improper, it has no ‘address,’ no place proper to it because of the two way and reciprocally presupposing trajectories of support and interrogation that are involved in an encounter with such work. This interrogation could no longer be considered to be organised so as to involve a subject enquiring of an object’s form, and expecting to interpret from that form a particular idea. Rather, the subjectile provides a dynamic and mobile support associated with a work, which is both altered and altering in the various acts of traversal involved in the encounter between someone and that work, an alteration that can bear on both the idea and the form involved. In this way, as neither form nor content, the subjectile exceeds the *eidos* and is presupposed by it. Unable to be located in a conventional schema, Derrida finds it necessary to designate it a *third genos*:

We have to start with what takes place with the impropriety of a subjectile... A place... neither sensitive nor intelligible... rather a “third *genos*,” difficult to conceive except as a hybrid “bastard reasoning”...²⁸

Matta-Clark’s discrete violation belongs to something similar to this third *genos*. Precipitating ‘defective language,’ it too invites hybrid reasoning, vacillating between the intellect and the senses but exceeding the firm grasp of both. Defective language was mediated across the renovations his work brought to both the material and disciplinary ‘support’ of each piece, which he addressed as the addition of a ‘non-material event.’

Discrete Violation: Non-Material Event

A LIMITED REMOVAL’S EFFECT ON THE LARGER STRUCTURAL CONTEXT²⁹

Matta-Clark’s projects set out to establish a complex traffic between the objects of familiar experience and what he referred to as the *real idea*, associated with the conditions of that

experience while also pointing to possibilities that lay beyond. In the case of building dissections such as *Circus*, this traffic aimed to produce a 'clearly new sense of space' for the visitors alongside the alterations to their sense of orientation, although similar traffic can be associated with his entire oeuvre. Matta-Clark emphasised the way in which he might instigate this traffic with a simple gesture:

Usually the thing that interests me is to make a gesture that in a very simple way complicates the visual area I'm working in. Looking through the cut, looking at the edges of the cut, should create a clearly new sense of space. But the cut also must reveal a portion of the existing building system, simply as that which exists.³⁰

The various projects that have been discussed in previous chapters can all be taken to share this economy of means; Matta-Clark's gestures operate very simply to complicate the economy of the familiar. Brian O'Doherty's account of gestural artworks is uncannily appropriate in this context: 'Gestures are... the most instinctive of artworks in that they do not proceed from full knowledge of what provokes them. Indeed, they are born out of a desire for knowledge, which time may make available... A gesture is antiformal...'³¹ These aspects of the gesture are clearly identifiable across Matta-Clark's oeuvre, and bear both on considerations of his own artistic practice, and on the experience within or of his work, and they are worth dwelling on a little longer. The suggestion that Matta-Clark's gestures did not proceed from full knowledge or awareness of their target is somewhat contentious, as he was able to articulate his motivations clearly. It is more straightforward to accept O'Doherty's second assertions into the context of Matta-Clark's oeuvre, given his repeated emphasis of the exploratory aspect of his work and its particular antiformal operation.

Beyond this broad co-incidence, O'Doherty's more detailed examination of the gesture's operation is a helpful accompaniment to considerations of the particular experience of Matta-Clark's work, as well as pointing to its wider importance. Returning again to Matta-Clark's own account of the gesture, his explanation is given in a visual register: although the experience of 'looking through the cut' undoubtedly would have 'snared attention' in the way O'Doherty demands, this register contrasts with O'Doherty's assertion that a gesture's real sphere of operation is temporal:

...the gesture must snare attention or it will not preserve itself long enough to gather its content. But there is a hitch in a gesture's time, which is its real medium. Its content, as revealed by time and circumstance, may be out of register with its presenting form. So there is both an immediate and a remote effect, the first containing the latter, but imperfectly. The presenting form has its problems. It must relate to an existing body of accepted ideas, and yet place itself outside them.³²

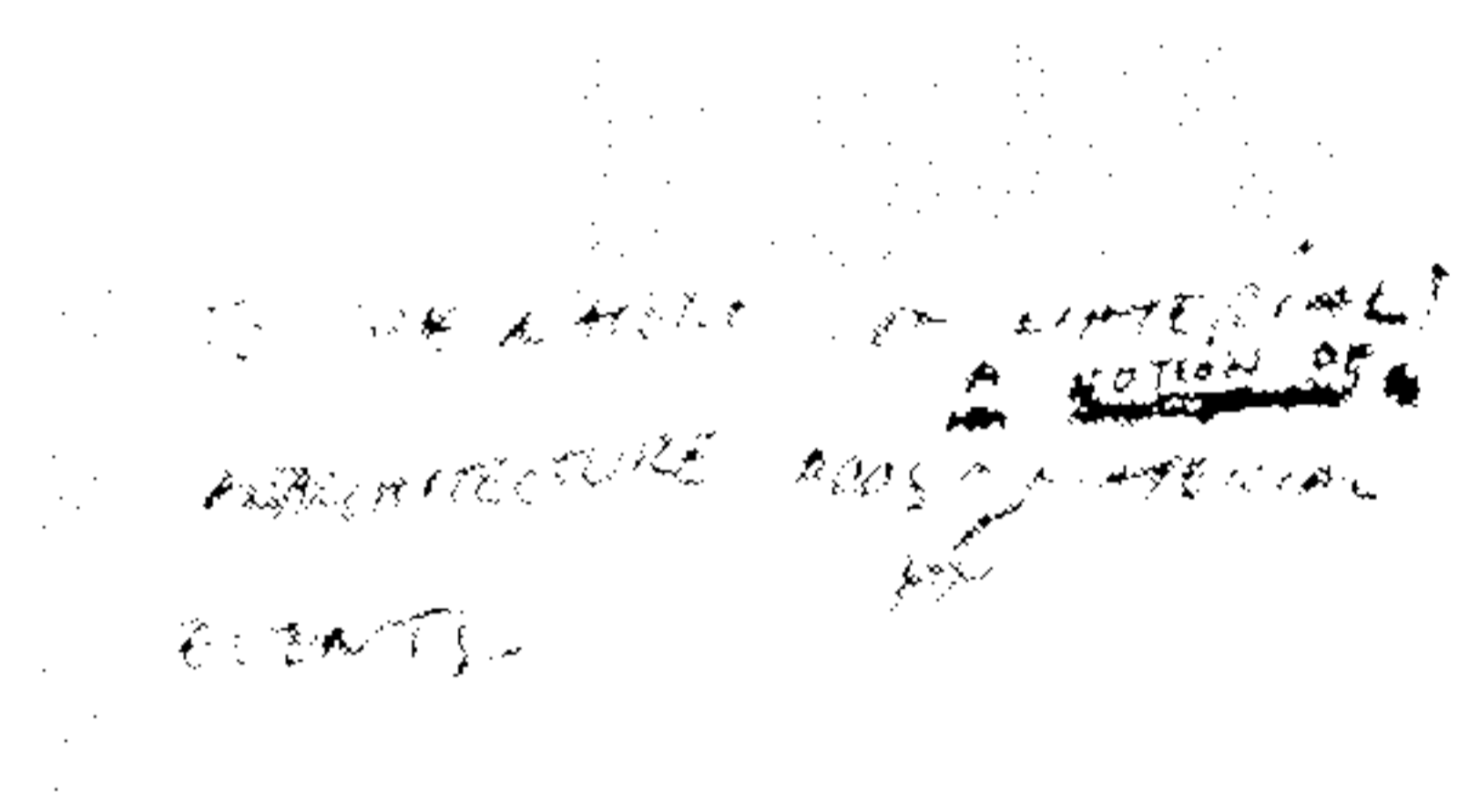
Here again, O'Doherty's account is extraordinarily close: just as Matta-Clark emphasised the importance of his gestures maintaining portions of that which exists while creating a new sense of (in this case) space, O'Doherty similarly demands that a gestural work establish itself in an awkward location with respect to the familiar. Moreover, there is no real conflict between a gestural medium of time and Matta-Clark's discussion of visual experience; his stated intention here was to create new sense of space, and for these and other gestures to operate successfully, they had to expand the commonly accepted modality of an increasingly atrophied human experience. The experience within a building dissection may initially have relied predominantly on the visual, although as the visitors moved around (recall '*you have to walk*') the complicating consequences of the gesture would have increased. The hitch in the gesture's time operates against the familiar expectations of a particular context, preventing the experience being easily assimilated—or spatialised—by the intellect. Read through Matta-Clark's work, time might be a gesture's real medium, but it is never read in isolation, and it operates not by replacing the conventional visual-spatial framework of experience, but by complicating the modality of experience itself.

The gesture brings hitches, imperfections, problems; these various aspects of awkwardness are crucial in discrete violation's attempts to maintain creative questioning. The immediate and remote effects of the gesture are linked, and if we recall the earlier discussion of Bergson's two types of clarity, they can be understood to be productively caught up in the broader balance between familiar (easy clarity) and the violation of the familiar through the second, opaque clarity. As the remote effect returns to the familiar, the gesture's time itself splits in two, and returns to experience as the sequential time of perception (where the gesture snags our attention) and in so doing acts as an anchor for the real work of the piece which is undertaken by the other, subjective and non-sequential time of recollection.

Considering Matta-Clark's gesture as a particular instance of his expressed interest and extensive application of syntax-juggling can emphasise the broader occurrence of this strategic approach across his oeuvre. Recalling the terms introduced in the previous section, his oeuvre's inscription of defective language operates in such a way as to instigate a variety of illocutionary events or stammers, the experience of which would open a gap through which that experience could never be entirely legible according to the familiar language that surrounds it.³³ This defective language of illocution would not simply introduce a stammer into the otherwise flowing language

all around, but would open up an opportunity for a singular event that could creatively exceed the expectations and modality underpinning it.

The impact of Matta-Clark's gestures potentially reach the language of architecture on two levels, affecting both the experience of a particular work and also the disciplinary expectations surrounding it; or in a different register, it would reach the two economies of judgement discussed in the previous chapter. Matta-Clark himself signalled a desire to bring about an alteration to the familiar language of architecture, indeed to its very nature, by valorising the role of intangible events:



TO THE NATURE OF MATERIALS ANARCHITECTURE ADDS A NOTION OF NON MATERIAL EVENTS.³⁴

In contrast to the architectural profession's valorisation of the static, unchanging architectural object, within which activities may or may not take place, Matta-Clark's interest in 'adding' non-material events clearly lay in the possibilities these brought about not only for an individual's expanded experience, but also for the possible changes these events might bring in the architectural setting itself. Such events could be read both in terms of the architectural space of experience, and in the disciplinary setting, within which familiar legibility would be disrupted by an illocutionary moment where 'normal' recourse to language failed.

The particular dynamics of Matta-Clark's non-material, Anarchitectural events demonstrate a close relationship to his strategy of discrete violation. It is perhaps of little surprise that the quasi-Bergsonian creative questioning of discrete violation finds a parallel in John Rajchman's quasi-Bergsonian account of the event, which he argues enacts an illocutionary moment of interruption in the 'normal' syntax of the familiar, and which can in turn bring about a transport in the understanding of that experience: 'An event is not, something as Aristotle thought, a narrative sequence of words and deeds occurring within a setting and organised by a plot. It is rather a moment of erosion, collapse, questioning, or problematisation of the very assumptions of the setting within which a drama may take place, occasioning the chance or possibility of another, different setting.'³⁵ As Rajchman's take on the event stresses, its role is not to refer experience back to a (pre-) designed outcome (with all the baggage of design-*disegno-eidos* that was rehearsed earlier), but rather to call the familiarity of a particular setting into question. Alongside Rajchman's stress on erosion and challenge, Matta-Clark's Anarchitectural events stressed the importance of maintaining as much as altering the framework and ingredients with which an

individual can actively and creatively determine their (contingent) experience: his play between 'TRANSMITTED / TRANSMITTER / FIXED POINT / BEYOND WHICH SPACE IS VARIABLE ACCORDING TO PRESENCE OF RECEIVERS' involved a dual transmission enjoying the more fluid support of the subjectile that can be associated with his *œuvre*.

Considering the experience of Matta-Clark's projects, it can be suggested with some force (and awkwardness) that they offered a dual dualism. In addition to the Bergsonian dualism involved in creative questioning, where the gesture's hitch offered to expand experience by inscribing two kinds of clarity, Matta-Clark's *œuvre* also implicitly aimed to introduce a dualism into their disciplinary context, where the ambiguity of its medium, precipitated by the OVER & OVER of its process, directly countered the medium specificity demanded by modernism's approach to purism. Sayre has suggested that the increased performativity involved in both the production and experience of recent art practice needs must produce this kind of awkwardness, arguing '[t]he medium of avant-garde art is itself "undecidable".'³⁶ Although Sayre's comments were not directed towards Matta-Clark particularly, his acknowledgement that advanced art must raise questions that remain undecidable, at least when approached from a conventional art-historical position, does find support in Matta-Clark's *œuvre*. This undecidability of medium bears on Matta-Clark's work in terms of the two grey zones we have encountered in previous chapters (Ward and Wagner), where two aspects of the non-material event are active. Firstly, a grey-zone of experience, approached through Matta-Clark's explicit interest in transmission and reception and most clearly articulated in his strategy of discrete violation, with all the attendant issues of creative questioning (event and habit): secondly, a grey zone associated with the disciplinary situation and impact of Matta-Clark's work. The concluding sections will address these two grey zones in turn.

Grey Zone I: Experience and Experimentation, Habit and Gamble

It was suggested in Chapter Six that the experience of Matta-Clark's projects would have had an impact on the audience that was commensurate with Frazer Ward's discussion of a 'grey zone.' Ward's account describes this impact as uncomfortable, brought about when the audience members experienced a dilemma regarding their subjectivity (being both autonomous individuals and institutionally determined), though his broader argument is that this discomfort is potentially productive. Matta-Clark discussed the audience's experience of his own work in similar terms, and expanded the contradictions encountered to include his own dilemmas, experienced when he was

producing the work, which similarly involved irreconcilable dimensions of both art-institutional conventions and 'real' environmental settings. The particular reading of Sayre's 'undecidability' that is relevant for Matta-Clark's oeuvre emerges from this two-fold call, associated with both the production and the subsequent experience or illocutionary event of his work.

In an interview with Liza Bear, he discussed the general problems of 'propriety' associated with avant-garde work that took place out of the gallery, and the particular manifestations of these problems that came about in his own work through his desire to make it both legible and accessible. Matta-Clark spoke to her of the forces pulling the experience of his own work in different directions, referring in particular to the difficulties involved in this dualism: '...there's a kind of schizophrenia... [t]hat interests me more, how to extend a real environmental situation into something that's more accessible for people.'³⁷ Rather than trying to overcome contradiction or schizophrenia, his projects deployed and sometimes literally enacted it by performing domestic chores in downtown Manhattan, or by super-imposing academic or art-institutional strategies in-situ. Indeed, the whole issue of his *discrete violation* demanded the retention of 'something that is familiar...' in order that the schizophrenia be legible: '...the situation must be common enough so that everyone can still understand it even after I undo it. Especially after I undo it, the original situation must remain undiminished in clarity.'³⁸

People's habitual expectations of the familiar were upset by his work, but his intention that such upset be productive depended on this retention of initial clarity that supports habitual response. The complex temporal dimensions of his work emerge in this situation, as the clarity of past experience was maintained *and* upset by the demands the work presented to the observer. The sufficiency of contingent experience was valorised and set up both alongside and against the demands of traditional judgement. This account of experience clearly shares the concerns of Matta-Clark's artistic contemporaries, but it also engages with the underlying assumptions of modernism. As such it becomes more awkward to read Matta-Clark's oeuvre as simply a reaction against institutional art that repeats the broad oppositionality between, say, minimalism and High Modernism. It also reiterates the undecidability of his oeuvre's medium: Matta-Clark's works no longer enjoyed a single or stable medium in the way this was assumed by habitual experience and upheld by modernism's categorical distinction between (and ultimate conflation of) space and time. Instead, experience of these works emphasised the potentially constructive role of habit, where the familiar was not something to be simply overcome, but played an active role.

Matta-Clark's discrete violations demanded an imaginative response from the observer if they were to 'understand' the work, as past experience alone would fail to measure it. Within the work of the imagination, the possibilities that exceeded previous experience would need to be balanced with those that experience could provide, and only then could the work be evaluated and a contingent understanding enjoyed. For Deleuze, such a balance is struck by habit: 'In brief, habit has opposite effects upon the imagination and on the judgement: on one hand, extension, *and on the other*, the correction of this extension.'³⁹ Matta-Clark's work similarly relied on the role of habit in the establishment of judgement and understanding: an audience's experience could be both extended with reference to the habitual (where a 'clearly new sense of space,' for example, is clearly understood as such) and corrected (by clinging to 'doorknobs and cut doors and things like that'), but these two aspects would not be sublimated. The habitual is not a state to be overcome, or to be fallen back into later, once 'judgement' has been made. Deleuze echoes Matta-Clark's assertion that this schizophrenic situation cannot and should not be overcome: '...this aesthetic game of the imagination and reason is not a reconciliation; it is rather the persistence of a contradiction, whose terms we alternatively embrace.'⁴⁰ To-ing and fro-ing between extensive and corrective contributions, habit can momentarily establish criteria that permit the evaluation of a situation, leading in turn to its understanding. The importance of this formulation is that such understanding is contingent, and the rules predicating judgement are carefully established for the situation and in such a way as to acknowledge past experience, but also to exceed or 'correct' it appropriately, unlike the quasi-divine grounds for judgement enjoyed by traditional disciplinary formulations.

Echoing the broad persistence of contradiction that was central to Ward's discussion of the grey zone of experience, the experience brought about by Matta-Clark's NON-MATERIAL EVENTS can be understood more precisely to operate by setting up this kind of superpositionality that begins with habit and loads it simultaneously in different directions. Habit + (imagination and judgement): Habit + (matter and memory). What Ward refers to casually as the 'nagging empiricism' of this grey zone needs to be highlighted more forcefully in this context. Empiricism doesn't just nag at conceptual or rational thought, it supports them; they are reliant on it, not vice versa. Challenging the received valorisation of mind over body in the various ways discussed in previous chapters, both Matta-Clark's oeuvre and Ward's analysis usher the body to occupy something of this grey zone. This is not to identify or conflate the two, though clearly the habitual memory of the body operates with a similar modality in the gap between knowledge and action,

and offers a possible site of resistance to what Matta-Clark believed to be the atrophied experience of modernism. Fuller experience involves this persistent contradiction and draws on both its poles.⁴¹ There is no single locus for the habitual; much like the 'bastard reasoning' of the subjectile, the habitual has no place proper to it in the experience of Matta-Clark's projects, passing into such an experience from both sides of the encounter, from the 'object' and from the audience, yet supporting that experience and permitting intelligibility. Matta-Clark both conserves and gambles with the habitual, his projects setting it up and subjecting it to a two-way interrogation that assumes and exceeds common sense; here lies Sayre's undecidability of medium.

Approaching discrete violation (again) through this process of conservation and gamble returns us, at last, to the role of creative questioning that lies at the centre of any encounter with Matta-Clark's oeuvre. To encounter such work in this grey zone offers a more nuanced understanding of our possible involvement, one that shifts from 'experience' towards a more active 'experimentation.' Paraphrasing Rajchman, we can assert that Matta-Clark's oeuvre precipitates an aesthetic encounter (in the full, renovated sense that inscribes the habitual within the bodily aesthesis) that takes the form not of a judgement, but rather of an experimentation and creation that defies judgement.⁴² This demands that we read relationships and movements, rather than attempting to totalise the work, in much the same way as Matta-Clark's own interest in transport, transmission and reception found diagrammatic expression in his *Anarchitectural* DYNAMIC BOUDRIES and TRAFFIC GAME-BOARD CENTERS, or more opaquely in his *Anarchitectural* notes from the same time:

RULES & GAMES — — — >GAMESTRUCTURE TENDS TOWARD ARTIFICE OF LEASURE

IF PART OF GETTING CLOSER TO A CLEAR ~~SIGHT~~ SEEING INVOLVES A STRUCTURE THERE IS NO PROBLEM OUTSIDE OF CONFINEMENT

THE CROSSROAD IN TRAVEL RATHER THAN INTERSECTION IS ANARCHITECTURAL⁴³

While again conserving and gambling, expressed here as playing games around established rules, Matta-Clark's interest in *Anarchitectural* events lay in the possibilities of side-stepping the confinement intrinsic to traditional Architectural relationships and values, in order to celebrate the contingency of people's particular experiences. However, we might go further with the consequences of this change, and suggest that there also exists a parallel between an encounter with Matta-Clark's work and the present attempts to discuss and theorise that encounter. Just as the discrete violation across Matta-Clark's oeuvre operates around the habitual by superpositioning

different relations of imagination and reason, in so doing it always inscribes that nag of empiricism, never fully surrendering to theory. Such an excess is itself produced by attempts to theorise, as experience-experiment always both sustains and exceeds theoretical accounts: this theorising is itself a central part of that productive and excessive process (that's what's happening here).

As much as this productive excess is involved in the grey zone of experience, it also brings about the awkwardness of the *œuvre's* various disciplinary relationships. While Matta-Clark pushed discrete violation as an attempt to gain a different, renovated CLEAR SEEING that operated OUTSIDE OF CONFINEMENT, this also maintained a legible disciplinary situation as part of that process. Although the previous chapter discussed Anne Wagner's move to locate his work in a disciplinary grey zone between sculpture and architecture, there are other categories of art- and architectural-history that are also called into question by his *œuvre*, in particular the relationship it enjoys with Modernism (at least as this was defined in the introduction). Here again, the awkwardness that is encountered is a consequence of the productive excess of discrete violation. However, unlike his explicit interest in and address to experience, these categorical and disciplinary complexities, while clearly implicit in his work and at least as important in its ongoing influence, were less clear to, and less clearly articulated by, Matta-Clark himself.

Grey Zone II: within and without modernism

To move from the first grey zone of experience to the second grey zone of disciplinary relationship is to trace how experience might be categorised, and how that process of categorisation is itself always already caught up in experience. Matta-Clark's ambition for discrete violation was to provide an opportunity for people to enjoy an expanded experience through the super-impositional strategies just discussed. His broader intention was that his art practice would play some sort of heuristic role rather than being simply disorientating, and here his determination to maintain the legibility of the familiar while pointing beyond it provided support for the kind of creative experience-experimentation just discussed. Deleuze, himself picking up Bergson's work on creative questioning, championed such experience-experimentation and distinguished 'fully modern' artworks that brought this about from those that remained tied to classical-modernist criteria. (Recall the discussion of 'Movement' in Chapter Four.) In contrast to classical-modernist accounts, which organised the encounter with artworks and architecture by referring experience

back to the prior, ideal form for appropriate judgement against correct disciplinary criteria, Deleuze argues that a fully modern work supports experience-experimentation by exposing what is there to be experimented with, namely, a new spatiality and temporality that effect both the ongoing production of a reconfigured subjectivity, and the role of disciplinary categorisation.

On first inspection, it would seem that Matta-Clark's œuvre would clearly meet Deleuze's expectations for a fully modern work. Matta-Clark attempted to encourage such an expanded experience by super-impositioning legible representational devices and exposing their contingency, thus permitting an encounter that could be routed through the experiential grey-zone in order to discover something categorically delirious and impersonal about that work.⁴⁴ However, through both his explicit determination to maintain and gamble with the familiar as the locus of this super-impositioning, and also through the more unconscious —yet clearly continuing and strong— influence of the particular strands of classical-modernism that marked his education, Matta-Clark's œuvre can more confusingly be read through both lenses: as 'modern' (fully modern, in Deleuze's sense) and also as classical-modernist (quasi-Kantian). The issue here is not where Matta-Clark might line up in Deleuze's categories, but to suggest that such categorisation remains awkward whether undertaken from the point of view of modernist or fully modern criteria. Just as the encounter with his work can open experience-experimentation onto a general delirium (productively), so Matta-Clark's projects play the grey zone of categorical madness, and in so doing they are able to expose the blind spot of modernism's claim to impermeable categorical boundaries.

As mentioned at the outset, Adrian Forty has demonstrated how modernism operates to establish and maintain such absolutism through its own categorical definitions. He suggests that unlike previous systems of architectural or aesthetic discourse, there was no binary opposite to balance modernism's key terms, and that they tended to occupy the whole field, with no opposites, no 'other:' modernism's terms claim to have no outside.⁴⁵ Matta-Clark's œuvre established a different approach to this 'other' by pointing to the existence of such an outside: rather than trying to set this up as either *the opposite* or *the left-over*, it demonstrates the blind spot of modernism's totalising attempts, a blind-spot that opens as an outside occurring both within and without modernism. More precisely, we should say that Matta-Clark's œuvre is without modernism twice over: it operates *without-outside* by addressing a fundamentally different organisation of experience, and it is *without-inside* by operating on some of modernism's assumptions—here in particular the juridical assumptions that tie experience back to an organisational *a priori* or re-

instate a bounded neo-Kantian idealism— without repeating them. While these might be pulled out and discussed in turn, it is clear that they are two aspects of discrete violation's operation, and that Matta-Clark uses one to bring about the other: without-inside to without-outside or vice-versa. As I have suggested, though, Matta-Clark's discrete violation was not motivated by a strategy of replacement, and in either one of these aspects, *without modernism* is also *with* (an albeit renovated) modernism.

One example discussed by Adrian Forty that is here both literally and metaphorically appropriate for Matta-Clark's relationship without modernism is architecture's use of metaphor. Forty is critical of the way in which modernist discourse has deployed metaphor in order to allow the lie to be discussed as if it were truth.⁴⁶ The important aspect of this deployment does not concern the particular metaphoric devices used, but modernism's underlying assumption that architecture can be given a rational explanation. This assumption contrasts with an earlier acceptance of architecture's ability to be both truthful *and* deceptive, a situation that broke down as architecture became influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment. This is not to suggest that the relationship between truth and falsity was straightforward before then, but to point towards a readiness to accept the boundary transgression inherent in metaphor as an operation that sustained an epistemology without system. Christine Buci-Glucksmann discusses Mlle de Gournay 'who defended the poetic and even epistemological powers of metaphor against the moralists of language, and affirmed discordance or excess in the beautiful; for her, metaphor was "the art of discerning a conformity in opposites".'⁴⁷ The importance of the transgressive operations of metaphor lay here, in their ability to maintain contingency of judgement by inscribing excess and discordance as central dimensions of experience, in contrast to the switch made by the Enlightenment, and adopted by the discourse of modernism which rationalised the lie as an aberration in the otherwise consistent understanding of the rational world.

Matta-Clark's own take on metaphor echoed the potential championed by Mlle de Gournay, inasmuch as it could exceed measurable accounts of the world or of experience that occurred within a rationalising epistemology: 'ALL MEASURE IS AN ADMINISTRATIVE (FUNCTIONAL) PART A CONVENIENT FRA[C]TION OF WHATEVER CONSTANT... MEASUREMENT WILL ALWAYS BE A FU[N]CTION OF SOME RULE AND ARE JUST NOT AS IMPORTANT AS THE SENSE OF SPACE. WHEN A MEASUREMENT DOESN'T WORK ... A MORE INTIMATE NOTION OF SPACE BEGINS...'⁴⁸ He described the *Anarchitecture* group's deployment of metaphor as having a similar intention and sphere of operation, with-out function, in order to challenge the epistemological structure assumed and

upheld by modernist discourse. They worked with *metaphoric gaps and voids*, 'metaphoric in the sense that their interest or value wasn't in their possible use... [but that nevertheless remained] on a functional level that was so absurd as to ridicule the idea of function.'⁴⁹ *Anarchitecture* deployed metaphor to work without-outside modernism by avoiding its expectations, particularly towards

A PRIMARY ARCHITECTURAL
FAILING A SYSTEMATIZED
CONSISTANT APPROACH TO A
WORLD OF "TOTAL "WONDERFUL"
CHAOS.

the 'uncovering' of truth, exposing instead the duality and contingency of architecture's claims: a grey-zone of both truth and lie that aimed to counter 'A PRIMARY ARCHITECTURAL FAILING A SYSTEMATIZED CONSISTANT APPROACH TO A WORLD OF TOTAL "WONDERFUL" CHAOS.'⁵⁰

To return to the broader discussion, this redeployment of metaphor was not an end in itself; it takes its place in the context of Matta-Clark's strategy of discrete violation alongside numerous other moments where his oeuvre provided deliberately 'defective' language. The gestures, illocutionary, *Anarchitectural*, NON-MATERIAL events, and so on, these were not an offer of separate or parallel languages nor a new language system, they were a-syntactical, moments where experience confronted a gesture that was itself irrational, which led away from *and* maintained the familiar. The 'false' movements of Matta-Clark's super-impositioning operate as such, whether the diachronic superimposition of dissections such as *Splitting* or *Circus*, or the synchronic operation undertaken by the (re)presentation of *Reality Properties: Fake Estates*. His technique of 'passing through boundaries' proceeded by not only inscribing conventions from within and without the discipline under scrutiny, but also set these up in such a way as to produce an interference pattern that introduced the chaos of the world within these disciplinary boundaries. Such gestures in (impossible) isolation are irrational, but operate to link different rationalities; in terms of Bergsonian clarities emerging from the creative questions such links set up through their mutual interference, they offer an obscure clarity that can in turn illuminate the things around them.

Reflecting back both on experience and on disciplinary categories, the metaphorical surfaces of his projects accommodate discord and interference; there are two in particular that have been discussed, and which themselves assume something of a recto-verso relationship here: namely the renovated disciplinary working surface and the surface-subjectile of experience. (This is itself a quasi-architectural technique.) Both surfaces, as Matta-Clark's own account of discrete violation suggests, require a certain violence if their promise is to be realised. This is a violence of optimism, taken up when the familiar is both expanded and retained (without and within), and

contrasts with the insidious violence of architecture's conventional working surface, given up in advance to the priority of form-*eidōs*. Matta-Clark's œuvre attempted to save the potentially productive violence of experience-experimentation from the temptation of this static form.

To maintain his method as a discrete violation rather than the complete elimination of a particular discipline, Matta-Clark was obliged to acknowledge fully the restrictions imposed by Architecture and embraced by architects, while redeploing these very techniques beyond their familiar sphere of operation. 'This [process of discrete violation—SW] imposes restrictions of another kind which the professional architect doesn't have...'⁵¹ He described this superimpositional approach as working 'WITHROUGH' walls: by simultaneously adopting, redeploing and exceeding particular accepted boundaries of possibility, Matta-Clark's projects remained beyond any explanation offered by the disciplinary discourses that they addressed, while offering the observer a role in the establishment of contingent meaning.

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- 1 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #829, 1970.
 2 Matta-Clark, Kirshner Interview, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, op.cit., p.391.
 3 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, op.cit., p.204.
 4 Boundas, *Translator's Introduction*, Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, op.cit. p.6.
 5 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, op.cit., p.30.
 6 James, 'A World of Pure Experience,' in James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, op.cit., p.34.
 7 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1182, *Anarchitecture* Period, c.1973.
 8 'Nos gustaría argumentar ahora en unos pocos párrafos a favor de la siguiente idea: que todo ello [Gordon Matta-Clark's anarchitectural concerns, forms of social interpretation, the complex social pressure of the political subject that this involved—SW] deriva hacia la *puesta en crisis* de la idea fuerte de identidad y la imagen centrada del sujeto, o dicho en otra manera: que el trabajo de Matta-Clark es provechoso a la hora de problematizar las formas dominantes en que los discursos de poder contituyen tales imágenes y representaciones fuertes como base de sus formas de organización social.' Marcelo Expósito & Gabriel Villota, *Saber Vivir*, in Corbeira (ed.), *¿Construir.o deconstruir?* op.cit., p.236. Their take is that the Western subject is in crisis, therefore the body and its representation are important to consider. '...cómo las obras de Matta-Clark desvelan la manera en que los entornos de vida urbana *producen* la subjetividad...' p.238.
 9 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit, #11b.
 10 Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, op.cit., p.104.
 11 Gordon Matta-Clark, Letter to Carol Goodden from Amsterdam, EGMC, *Letters, 1973*, Monday December 3rd 1973.
 12 'Il est vrai que l'*altération* principale n'est pas celle que subit le support du dessin. Le dessin lui-même se développe et s'enrichit en variétés, en accentuant dans tous les sens la déformation de l'objet représenté.' Bataille, *L'art primitif*, op.cit., vol. I, p. 252-253. It is tempting to translate le *support du dessin* as the *subjectile*, as this would open a conversation with Derrida's essay on Artaud, which will be introduced shortly.
 13 Gordon Matta-Clark, invite card for *A W-Hole House*, EGMC, *Articles & Documents, 1942-76*, 1973.
 14 Jacques Derrida, *To Unsense the Subjectile*, in Jacques Derrida and Paule Thévenin, *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud*, [1986], tr. Mary Ann Caws, MIT Press, 1998, p.138. Original emphasis.
 15 *ibid.*, p.76.
 16 *ibid.*, p.124.
 17 *ibid.*, p.105.
 18 *ibid.*, p.105.

- 19 Bataille makes this connection explicitly when writing on Manet, observing that it was the subject that was destroyed in Manet's painting: 'To break up the subject and re-establish it on a different basis is not to neglect the subject; so it is in a sacrifice, which takes liberties with the victim and even kills it, but cannot be said to neglect it.' Bataille, *Manet*, *op.cit.*, p.103.
- 20 Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark, in Diserens and Casanova (eds.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.391.
- 21 Gordon Matta-Clark, 'Edges; City Edges Project,' Notebook, EGMC, #829 c.1970.
- 22 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, *op.cit.*, p.313.
- 23 *ibid.*, p.28.
- 24 *ibid.*, p.62.
- 25 *ibid.*, p.97. Although Lefebvre argued that any synthesis of experience and representation would 'betray [the] truly dual nature [of space],' (p.355.), his attempts to avoid this betrayal in his own integrated system ('unity theory') returns too frequently to a dialectical sublimation. On this aspect of Lefebvre's project, see Shields, *Lefebvre, Love and Stuggle*, *op.cit.*, p.172: 'Although he is a great narrator, much of the 485 pages of *The Production of Space* is thus a failure in Lefebvre's own terms.' For a fuller discussion of the relationships and differences between Lefebvre's work on representation and the creative role of drawing in Matta-Clark's oeuvre, see Walker, 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Drawing on Architecture,' *op.cit.*
- 26 See Lindsay Smith's discussion of aspects of 'defective language' in Smith, 'Lewis Carroll: Stammering, Photography and the Voice of Infancy,' *op.cit.*, on the hesitancy of spaces between visual and verbal forms of representation. We have already touched on Smith's essay in Chapter Four, Space (& Time) above.
- 27 Jacques Derrida, 'From a Restricted to a General Economy,' in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, [1967], tr. Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978, p.257.
- 28 Derrida and Thévenin, *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud*, *op.cit.*, pp.134-5.
- 29 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #829, 1970.
- 30 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, *op.cit.*, #15.
- 31 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, *op.cit.*, p.106.
- 32 *ibid.*, p.105.
- 33 It is instructive to compare the experience of such gestures with what Kwinter refers to as an *illocutionary event*, something navigable but never fully sublimated or comprehended: see Sanford Kwinter, *Architectures of Time: Toward a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture*, MIT Press, 2001, p.14.
- 34 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1232, Anarchitecture period, c.1973.
- 35 John Rajchman, *Philosophical Events: Essays of the '80s*, Columbia University Press, 1991, p.viii. Consider also: 'The experience of freedom is an experience of events, an experience not of what we must be or do, but of new possibilities of being and doing.' p.ix., and '...the question of events is also the question of the invention of ourselves.' p.ix. Although he credits Foucault, this sounds more like Bergson's inventive questioning.
- 36 Sayre, *The Object of Performance*, *op.cit.*, p.xiii.
- 37 Gordon Matta-Clark, Bear interview *Gordon Matta-Clark: Dilemmas* WBAI-FM (NY) March 1976, in Diserens (ed.), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, *op.cit.*, p.175.
- 38 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, *op.cit.*, #1.
- 39 Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, *op.cit.*, p.72. Emphasis in the original.
- 40 *ibid.*, p.82.
- 41 'There is, as it were... a gap between rule and application, and a gap between code and execution. This gap must, I shall suggest, be reclaimed by a theory of habitual practice, and, therefore, of habit-memory.' Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, *op.cit.*, p.34.
- 42 Here, Rachman more or less makes a connection between Deleuze and Bergson's experience-experimentation: '[Deleuze's] aesthetic takes the form not of a judgement, but rather of an experimentation and creation that defies judgement.' Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections*, *op.cit.*, p.114. 'The relationship between art and philosophy... is not one of judgement and object, but rather of "resonances and interferences" across two different kinds of practice or activity, neither of which is situated "above" the other.' p.115. Rajchman goes on '...there is no one "image of thought" in the arts that suffices for philosophy; and in each case, extracting the image reflects back on the particular work or its medium in an original manner.' p.116. This clearly echoes the discussion earlier in this chapter, where O'Doherty suggested that the gesture reflect back on its original situation in a way that altered both, and also echoes Bergson's second type of clarity, which begins by being obscure but ends up reflecting light all around. It could also be suggested that the implications of Matta-Clark's work on individual experience might be extended to inter-personal relationships, enacting a quasi-Humean shift away from society based on contract towards society as an

experiment, where the body serves as locus of both social and personal resistance to domination by the authority of society. Although the ambition of Matta-Clark's work aimed for this social change, it is in this aspect that his œuvre was both insufficient and (temporally) parochial.

- 43 Gordon Matta-Clark, *Anarchitecture 4*, EGMC, Articles and Documents 1942-76, c.1972,
 44 Described thus, his projects can be taken either conceptually or experientially to separate out these two moments of the encounter (aesthetic and representation) and to maintain their separation, rather than to deconstruct the classcial-modern work where such a separation would be followed through with an act of recuperation or salvation. Although both approaches have been assumed in the reception of his work, it is the latter that are by far the most prevelant. Rajchman discusses Deleuze's notion of 'modern work' in Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections, op.cit.*, chapter 6 'Sensation' esp. pp.127-8.
- 45 Forty suggests that Modernism was not only a 'new' style of building, it was also a new discourse, revolving around key terms such as *form space design order structure*. Their inter-relationship defines modernist discourse as a system. Importantly, Forty asserts that Modernist language, apparently sidelined during the era of High Modernism, may actually be its most enduring aspect, and that attempts to exceed Modernism remain caught up in the terms of its verbal discourse: 'indeed they have no choice, for modernism drove out all previous vocabularies and there is none to take its place.' Forty, *Words and Buildings, op.cit.*, p.20.
- 46 see Forty's section on 'Spatial Mechanics—Scientific Metaphors,' in *ibid.*, esp. pp.92-100.
- 47 Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason, op.cit.*, p.135. Mlle de Gournay was Montaigne's adopted daughter.
- 48 Gordon Matta-Clark, ~~MEASUREMENT~~ AND THE PLAN, EGMC, Articles & Documents 1942-76, c.1972.
- 49 Gordon Matta-Clark, in Liza Bear, *Splitting*, p.35.
- 50 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1236, c.1973.
- 51 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript, op.cit.*, #1.

Chapter Nine: Discussion & Conclusion

This final chapter will summarise the main explorations of this thesis, discuss certain aspects of its approach to Matta-Clark's oeuvre, and suggest the broader relevance this might have for our contemporary architectural situation. The thesis developed as a response to the awkwardness associated with the reception of Gordon Matta-Clark's work. Addressing what I referred to in Chapter One as the 'Phaidon Moment,' I suggested that the recent changes in this reception have involved the erasure rather than the accommodation of the causes of such awkwardness. The intention of the thesis was not to examine in any detail the machinations of orthodox or 'old' art history, art institutions or the art market in order to explain these changes. Instead, the thesis set out to approach his oeuvre as a whole in order to explore some of the reasons behind the ongoing awkwardness that it carries.

Within the broad relevance his oeuvre can hold for a wide range of situations and disciplines, it was argued that architecture was and continues to be a significant ingredient and concern. Matta-Clark's own relationship with architecture was long and complex, a situation reflected in the title of this thesis, which suggests that the architectural issues raised by his work can be considered to have both a 'major' and a 'minor' involvement with or impact upon the discipline of architecture. The thesis set out to explore rather than explain various aspects of this relationship in order to open up its ongoing relevance. It did not intend to account for Matta-Clark's work, fix its meaning, or to recuperate his oeuvre as architecture in any way.

Given this prospective and speculative aim, the elliptical methodology, based on Orton and Pollock's 'composite text,' was developed to allow the architectural issues just noted to be focused, or shifted, in order to open up and explore questions that Matta-Clark's oeuvre can raise, and to articulate the relevance of his work to a number of contemporary debates. His work pointed out that apparently static and stable disciplines such as architecture actually enjoyed multiple and conflicting ingredients: crucially for the direction of this thesis, he showed these conflicts were productive rather than being simply contradictory or destructive. The intention of the methodological approach was to allow a discursive analysis that could enjoy both the breadth of exploration and the constructive paradox of Matta-Clark's oeuvre.

While bearing in mind the possible concerns and caveats regarding the methodology, this set out to acknowledge the importance of shifting the consideration of Matta-Clark's work away from its general polarised reception as either art or architecture. Moreover, and in contrast to most of those working at the architectural pole who take his work as either anti-architectural or reduce it to a 'stylistic stamp,' the approach assumed by this thesis was underwritten by a broad assertion that Matta-Clark's oeuvre was constructively engaged with architecture.

The structure of the thesis responded to this constructive engagement by addressing Matta-Clark's oeuvre in the context of some of the key terms of architectural modernism's vocabulary (Form, Space, and Time). While he was clearly critical of modernism, it has been argued that he engaged with and worked to alter these terms *from within*: Chapters Three and Four undertook to explore these 'major' issues. That said, his oeuvre also clearly engaged with issues that were beyond (or 'without') modernism's central tenets: the second group of chapters took up certain 'minor' aspects of his work, exploring how his interest in the role of the User or Observer (Chapter Five), the importance of Process (Chapter Six), and the role of Discipline (Chapter Seven) might be encountered in his oeuvre. The main concerns of each of these chapters will be summarised here, along with an account of how they related to or were positioned with respect to the with(in) or without of modernism, and an indication of the main prospective issues that emerged.

3 Form (& Matter)

Chapter Three explored the consequences of Matta-Clark's approach to form. While he was broadly critical of the role that 'form' played within modernism, it was stressed that his work should not be approached simply as an anti-formalist response. In particular, this chapter pursued his concession that form may hold some promise, and his suggestion that considerations of form need not be restricted to static objects but may also be involved in *certain kinds of activity*. To develop the elliptical discussion, certain aspects of Matta-Clark's activity were combined with issues raised by Plato and Bergson, and explored through the figure of the 'clumsy butcher' (Bergson). This discussion of form was broadened halfway through the chapter by including its traditionally poor-relation, matter. It was suggested that Matta-Clark's projects drew attention to the temporal insubordination of matter, demonstrating that contrary to modernism's expectations it never fully submits to the 'cultivating' process of form-making or formation by taking up the 'correct' form and location. Bergson's revised translation of *eidos*, which provides for an intelligibility and instability, was introduced to articulate the repercussions of Matta-Clark's oeuvre

and its demonstration of an altered modality of form, where its role was both as an active destabilising *and* clarifying principle. It was argued that when approached thus, Matta-Clark's oeuvre demonstrates that form (and matter) no longer fall exclusively within the domain of reason, as a second, obscure formal clarity (what was referred to as 'ambiguity,' or more precisely as a formal clarity not available to the intellect), emerges from the domain of form that escapes reason but allows it to function.

The consequences of the discussion in Chapter Three offer alternatives to architecture's approach to form (and matter), and to the role that form might play in the establishment of meaning. To the extent that it can be taken to have been working 'within' modernism, Matta-Clark's oeuvre addressed and went beyond the static, pure, or surface form of (architectural) modernism (what we might also refer to as architecture's *major* form) in ways that both maintained the clarity traditionally associated with *major* form while supplementing this with another kind of clarity. This overturned the presumed exclusivity or hegemony of *major* form as locus of meaning, by operating from a position outside or 'without' modernism's assumptions regarding this key term, that is to say, by operating with *minor* form.

This situation was discussed further, in terms that developed the link between these issues and the methodological position established with reference to Matta-Clark's own working method (*discrete violation*) in the final sections of Chapter Two. There, it was suggested that *discrete violation* could be understood and its applicability broadened with reference to Bergson's notion of 'creative questioning,' which produced the two kinds of clarity just noted. While it would be misleading to suggest that throughout this thesis there was a straightforward alignment of *major* and *minor* and the *within* and *without* of modernism or *clear* and *opaque clarity* respectively, or to suggest an exclusive alignment of modernism with reason, within the context of Chapter Three such alignments are legible. Matta-Clark's creative questioning reveals *minor* architectural issues from within *major* discourse on architecture: the *within* and *without* are not categorically separate or exclusive, but operate simultaneously in different modalities.

4 Space (& Time)

Chapter Four developed some of these awkward issues of temporality and questions of change through time raised by the discussion of matter in the previous chapter. Just as modernism arguably subordinates matter to form, so its time—the time of science—is subordinate to extension and subsumed by space. Chapter Four explored a variety of ways in which Matta-Clark contested

such straightforward duality through an approach to space that could resist quantification, and brought his œuvre into play with issues raised by Giedion, Lefebvre and Bergson amongst others. As with Chapter Three, Matta-Clark's response was not to simply reject or reverse the relationship between controlling and subordinate terms, but to approach the issues they raised obliquely, through his interest in experience. It was argued that his œuvre moved the measure of experience beyond the received axes of space and time, and worked to supplement modernism's demand for 'overt and immediate' spatial clarity with another, more complex, measure which he referred to as 'covert and durational.' Chapter Four pursued the implications of this complexity through 'intensive, experimental spatiality' and 'living archaeology,' both of which echoed something of the 'opaque clarity' introduced in Chapter Three.

The consequences of the discussion in Chapter Four can qualify architecture's traditional approach by distinguishing between the experience and description of space, between what was referred to as intensive and extensive spatiality. This is not to find fault with descriptive systems such as orthographic drawing techniques, but to reassert the possibilities of experience on its own terms, and to acknowledge that the modality of experience can include both overt and immediate, *and* covert and durational complexities.

This both/and situation again echoes Matta-Clark's operative method of discrete violation (maintaining as well as altering existing situations): in the context of Chapter Four, Matta-Clark can be understood to have worked 'within' the terms of modernism, such that not only the priority traditionally given to space over time, but also the very separation of space and time, were found to be problematic. Despite these echoes, Chapter Four began to demonstrate the more complex relationships between the issues of *major* and *minor* architecture, the *within* and *without* of modernism, and the *clear* and *opaque clarity* consequent of Matta-Clark's method of discrete violation or creative questioning, in contrast to the more straightforward alignment of these that was available through Chapter Three. In particular, there was no equivalent to the *major* form mentioned in the summary of that chapter. It is worth dwelling on this point a little, as it bears on a two central aspects of this thesis: the clarity of modernism's 'central terms' (Forty) and the relationship between major and minor issues in the structure of the thesis.

In contrast to the more direct engagement with 'form' and 'matter,' Matta-Clark's œuvre had to be taken much further to mine stuff from the 'major' architectural terms 'space' and 'time' (recall Matta-Clark stated he didn't '...know what the word "space" means... I keep using it. But I'm not quite sure what it means...'), which in turn had to be worked through more obliquely to

articulate Matta-Clark's minor practice around these terms. It was suggested in Chapter Four that Matta-Clark took up modernism's spatialised-time and deployed or misapplied it in projects such as *Open House* in such a way as to foreground the inventive 'time' of duration. In other words, his minor practice already exceeded the terms of space and time, and showed that these could no longer be taken as the axes around which experience should be organised or considered. While this did bear on both these 'central terms' of architectural modernism, this was not so much to reveal what modernism excluded from its definition by identifying a 'without,' but instead to suggest that its claims to a neat 'within' was flawed. The impact this has on the *design* of architecture is more complex, as Matta-Clark's minor practice clearly did not suggest that conventional architectural techniques and representational methods were fundamentally flawed, but that their accepted priority and role at the heart of the design process, and their separation from the experience of architecture, need to be questioned and supplemented with broader (minor) considerations.

This breakdown of modernism's categorical clarity anticipates the shift in thematic approach in Chapters 5 to 8, and moreover it blurs any apparently clear distinction between parts I (major) and II (minor) of the thesis. Chapter Four ended by returning to these notions of major and minor, where it argued that although Rajchman/Deleuze articulate a demand for 'fully modern' work that aspects of Matta-Clark's oeuvre can be understood to anticipate, when taken more fully his oeuvre clearly straddled both 'fully modern' and traditional, classic or high modern positions. Subsequent chapters began to pursue particular implications of this ambiguity or breakdown by introducing architectural issues that Matta-Clark's oeuvre engages with but that modernist discourse tended to pass over in silence.

5 User (observer/viewer)

Chapter Five explored how Matta-Clark's oeuvre questioned modernism's implicit expectations of a passive viewer. Through a discussion of Matta-Clark's *Pipes* (1971) and his project at the *Galleria Salvatore Ala* (1975) it emphasised how his interest in getting outside the gallery can be understood as considered criticism of the quasi-universal relationship epitomized by modernism's 'White Cube' gallery space. It was argued that his filmic exploration projects demonstrated a more active and contingent relationship, where the observer's body became significant in the establishment and maintenance of the complexities introduced in the previous chapters. By combining Matta-Clark's oeuvre with the work of William James, this chapter argued more broadly that the former demonstrates an approach to participatory experience that operates by

addition —inside plus outside, within plus without, matter plus mind— but that unlike James, Matta-Clark's œuvre set out to inscribe instances of lawlessness into 'real' experience, so that 'core' expectations could be interrupted by the peripheral modality of experience.

Although the previous section stated that this part of the thesis did not take its cue from any of modernism's particular terms or frames, this is not to suggest that issues such as 'user' were not part of the discourse of modernism, only that they were repressed. Matta-Clark's œuvre exposes a number of these hidden aspects and demonstrates the extent to which they were taken for granted, while also working to question and exceed the limitations such positions brought about. In the context of Chapter Five, the importance for the spectator of an ability to locate themselves is not denied, but the argument for its ongoing contingency overturns the traditional demand that location be established according to the prior rules of a universal spatial system and the prior division of subjectivity and objectivity, opening instead onto an expanded being that Matta-Clark sought.

The consequences of considering experience in this way clearly have implications for the status of the product (whether architectural or artistic object) and the creative process associated with that product. In contrast to the neat distinction between subject and object that was assumed by modernism, where the passive viewer was expected to commune instantly with an autonomous art, or indeed architectural, object, the argument in Chapter Five has ramifications beyond the experience of the user, suggesting that the environment or object of experience remains radically incomplete. The ways in which Matta-Clark's œuvre operated to inscribe instances of lawlessness also disrupt the clearly defined medium-specific disciplinary rules characteristic of modernism. It was argued that the fuller spectatorial involvement that Matta-Clark sought calls the whole process of artistic and architectural production into question, which in turn has an impact upon disciplinary boundaries and the relationship between the processes of production and judgement supported by such disciplines.

6 process

Chapter Six took up the implications of contingency on the production of art and architecture. In contrast to the autonomy and stasis of most modernist work, Matta-Clark claimed that his projects never reached completion, but instead just continued 'over and over.' Bringing Bataille's notion of *altération* alongside Matta-Clark's œuvre, it was argued that the most significant change that Matta-Clark's process brought about occurred not on the physical fabric he worked in or on, but

through its engagement with the whole framework of disciplinary support that it called into question. Such moments of lawlessness are not simply instances where rules were broken momentarily, only to remain intact after the event, they transform the disciplinary rules themselves. This issue was introduced with reference to the performative aspect of his working process, before being developed in the more specific juridical sense of process through the combination of Matta-Clark's notion of 'directional law' and Derrida's work on legality and justice. The consequences of this argument for disciplinary operations were discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven, which will be summarised below.

The important consequences of process as they can be understood through Matta-Clark's œuvre are to be found in the modality and intentionality of its challenge: while this challenge has frequently been read (and dismissed) as simply destructive, the impossible demand to attain the ideal realm that predicates modernism can be every bit as violent. The discipline or the architectural profession's general desire to transcend the actual experience of architecture is underwritten by the general priority traditionally given to the 'form-giver' in various guises. Within his œuvre's broad contestation of this approach to form-giving, Matta-Clark's proposal for directional law was intended to ameliorate this particular system of judgement, challenging its deferral to archetypes or transcendental *eidos*. Matta-Clark's œuvre enacts an altered process (it continues *over and over*) and passes this on to the user, encouraging an experience that involves experimentation, which in itself constituted or maintained some sort of violence, but which must be understood here as a productive violence against contractual, systematic judgement.

7 Discipline

Chapter Seven began by discussing Matta-Clark's projects *Hair* (1972) and *Reality-Property: Fake Estates* (1973) in order to examine the affects of his work on disciplinary boundaries. It was suggested that Matta-Clark's œuvre demonstrated that the boundaries carefully policed by modernist art and architecture were actually porous and unstable, and that it thus opened up the criteria for both production and evaluation of work from such disciplines. It was argued further that this has a more profound effect on the discipline of Architecture, because of the latter's tendency to set itself up as an overarching system or general condition used not only to discipline itself but also to act as a measure for other disciplines, and moreover to institutionalise Nature.

One of Matta-Clark's most enduring complaints was against any tendency to systematise understanding or experience of the world. Bringing his œuvre alongside the work of Georges

Bataille and Svetlana Alpers, it was argued that different and apparently unrelated systems could be collected together and arranged without contradiction. Instead of the common withholding of this kind of process behind the closed doors of particular disciplines, it was suggested that Matta-Clark's œuvre began to present the user/viewer with the more complex modality of stuff that disciplines such as architecture gather and deal with on their own working surface (out of sight of the uninitiated), offering this for experience to enjoy without contradiction.

Developing these points, Chapter Seven suggested that the *Anarchitecture* group (of which Matta-Clark was a member) offered an alternative model for architectural discipline and practice. In their own ways, Matta-Clark and *Anarchitecture* both operated *within* the rules and according to the strict logic of systems in order to point out the shortcomings of those specifically and the tendency to systematise in general. It was implied that this enactment according to the rules, while directed towards a general cultural tendency, was particularly relevant to and critical of architecture's *modus operandi*. *Anarchitecture's* stated interest in absurd 'functionality' was taken seriously and linked with architecture's own sleight of hand around 'usefulness,' the latest in a succession of attempts by the discipline of architecture quietly to provide itself with unquestionable, pseudo-natural or even quasi-divine grounds for authority. At stake in this attempt to have its authority taken for granted, 'for common sense itself' (Derrida), is architecture's continuing self-portrayal as the stable, the common-measure, while maintaining behind the scenes all the other disciplines it gathers and process it operates. Indeed architecture has a propensity for consummate cross-border juggling while providing the illusion of enjoying a stable boundary, its 'hard shell' (Nonas). By passing through the boundaries, *Anarchitecture* and Matta-Clark offer not a model but an incentive, an imperative even, to renovate the relationships that exist across these boundaries, working both literally and metaphorically between the reduction and collapse of architecture's shell by enacting and enjoying the actual 'weakness' of the discipline.

Drawing in issues from Chapter Six, it could be said that Matta-Clark's œuvre levered open the internal economy of architectural judgement and laid that which is commonly taken for granted bare for others to see. Matta-Clark's œuvre was not against use or function, its target was not the 'hard shell' of realised architecture, but rather it aimed to reorganise the grounds of authority and (disciplinary) judgement. Again reintroducing terminology from Chapter Six, the principal alteration (*altération*) his œuvre brought about was not on the material architectural object but on the disciplinary system that valorised this object. This disciplinary *altération* is the corollary of his

œuvre's impact on process: together they suggest ways to broaden the possibilities for producing and experiencing architecture.

Considering this attempted reorganisation of architecture, Chapter Seven argued that its constitution must change to explicitly involve stuff from within and without—or *withrough*—from both micro and macro scales, and these both physically and non-physically. While this understanding of an altered constitution can be applied retrospectively to the detailed discussion in earlier chapters, it can also signal questions for prospective research that will be sketched out in the final section of this chapter.

8 Discrete Violations

Chapter Eight was the concluding chapter of the main text, and its intention was to draw together a number of threads that had run through the thesis while exploring the importance of Matta-Clark's method of *discrete violation*. Whereas earlier chapters were explicitly positioned in relation to either major or minor architectural issues, this chapter's role was to strike a balance between the two main parts of the thesis and point to their potential integration. Inasmuch as it was charged with this drawing together, it reflected on Matta-Clark's œuvre, but the broader concern to examine discrete violation was undertaken with a more prospective intention. Although the junction between these two roles can be traced throughout the chapter (indeed throughout the thesis) they come together most concisely around the notion of working surface. The remainder of this section will summarise the way in which this notion responds to the aspects of Matta-Clark's œuvre explored within the thesis; the final section of this chapter will then take up some of the prospective issues and outline both their ongoing relevance and the questions they raise for future research.

Addressing the notion of working surface, Chapter Eight considered Matta-Clark's œuvre around his interest in transmission and reception, and how this affected the constitution of the subject within the given: here, 'subject' refers to the subject of architecture, taken as both the human subject (subjected *to* architecture), and the academic or disciplinary subject *of* architecture. Although significant aspects of these topics had been covered earlier, Chapter Eight argued that they should be discussed together, both within the context of Matta-Clark's œuvre, and more generally and prospectively. This discussion was pursued by addressing the renovated roles of (dynamic) boundaries and surfaces, such as these could be considered to provide some kind of support in this constitutive process, and to accommodate the kinds of transit and transmission that

might be involved. Putting Matta-Clark's oeuvre alongside work by Bataille and Derrida, it was argued that Matta-Clark's approach considered material and mental 'objects' together. This argument demanded a more fluid understanding of the 'support' associated with such an encounter, one that was able to respond to the more complex kinds of transmission that Matta-Clark sought. This in turn was explored by positioning Matta-Clark's notion of 'dynamic boundaries' and 'dynamic volumes' alongside the work of Bergson and James, and their respective accounts of the 'lines of fact' transmitted from and to experience.

While the demands for such a dynamic working surface were supplied by what was discussed as the 'subjectile' (Derrida), the demands of transmission were met by considering Matta-Clark's oeuvre as a non-material or 'illocutionary event' (Kwinter). It was argued that these were both factors in the awkwardness associated with Matta-Clark's oeuvre, the issue around which this whole thesis has developed.

With this work at hand, Chapter Eight drew to a close by exploring the consequences of returning to the oeuvre's awkwardness. Drawing on Sayre's more general comments regarding the importance of awkwardness to recent avant-garde art practice, which he identified in its 'undecidability of medium,' the ongoing awkwardness and current relevance of Matta-Clark's oeuvre was located and discussed in terms of two 'grey zones' that had been introduced in previous chapters (Ward from Chapter Six, 'Process,' and Wagner from Chapter Seven, 'Discipline').¹ The first was a grey-zone of experience, approached through Matta-Clark's explicit interest in transmission and reception and most clearly articulated in his strategy of discrete violation, with all the attendant issues of creative questioning (event and habit). The second was a grey zone associated with the disciplinary situation and impact of Matta-Clark's work. Opened up through these two grey zones, Matta-Clark's oeuvre can continue to address questions to the conditions of both production and experience of architecture.

Further Questions and Future Research

Beyond the detailed examination undertaken within the main text, this thesis hands over various questions regarding these conditions of architectural production and experience. This final section will sketch out a number of these questions, and indicate the areas of future research that they might open up or contribute to. These can be organised along two different axes, each one of which considers what difference the present thesis might make to future work.² These axes address

new theories or approaches to architecture, and new (expanded) understandings of architecture and architectural issues respectively.

The first axis, by its very nature, involves more of an imperative than it does organise a set of specific questions. The importance of inventive or creative questioning was introduced in Chapter Two in the context of Matta-Clark's criticisms of the increasing reliance upon systematic knowledge. It was charged with exploring possibilities beyond what is taken for granted. While some specific possibilities will be pointed to below, it is important here to emphasise the general importance of continually questioning the assumptions, expectations, mores and rules underlying the discipline of architecture. At the end of their book, Markus & Cameron similarly stress the need for architects to address the various 'outside' discourses that bear on their own sphere of work; they emphasise the value of their mode of analysis itself, and argue that architects should take text (their object of analysis) seriously, that it should be included in education and reflected on in practice. 'If in the teaching, learning and practice of architecture there develops a more conscious and habitual interest in what is beneath the surface of language, we will have achieved our aim.'³

Along the second axis, there are various ways in which future research might move on from this thesis: for continuity, these will be outlined in terms of major and minor issues. However, given the main text of the thesis worked around Matta-Clark's oeuvre, there are clearly architectural concerns that it has not addressed: the potential for the methodology of the thesis to develop into some areas beyond those issues raised by the oeuvre will also be touched on.

Although the status of modernism has clearly shifted substantially in the years since Matta-Clark was working, its presence within architectural education and practice remains.⁴ While the organisation of the construction industry changes apace, the value-system of the architectural profession remains clearly aligned with the 'major' situation analysed in the main text. What is now generally taken to be 'advanced' or avant-garde architecture remains highly 'modern,' in the sense that much of it occurs within the frames that have been criticised above; moreover, it could be argued that the genuinely 'advanced' architecture is still occurring for the most part under the radar and gains little recognition from the profession or broader public.

Indeed, many of the 'central terms' (Forty) of architectural modernism that have in part helped structure this thesis remain influential in much architectural education and practice. Aspects of the discussion concerning 'Form' and 'Space' could be developed in order to bear more directly on the current manifestation of these issues. For example, changes in form-making have

been brought about by rapid developments in and availability of computational technology. However, while these new formal possibilities for the design and realisation of architecture are frequently heralded, the suggestion that they signify a radical change in the status, consideration and experience of architectural form is perhaps overstated: clear change in the morphology of surface-form and the medium of design are too often taken as evidence of a radically new architecture. Standard bearers for this 'new' architecture, such as Greg Lynn's *Animate Form* or Kas Oosterhuis' *wild-bodied* or *hyperarchitecture*, retain architectural modernism's investment in the primacy of form and the form-making capacity of the architect, and the appeal to disciplinary judgement. The discussion in relevant chapters of this thesis apply equally well to these 'new' forms as to high modernism's more rectilinear versions and the obscurity over the design process associated with them. In both cases, loud claims to either new-form or to formlessness ought to be moderated with a more informed understanding of and fluid approach to the continuing promise that form might hold, one that displaces form's transcendence and centrality in architectural discourse with a contingent and qualified version.⁵

Additional questions emerging from the development of this same technology concern the notion of virtual space and its impact upon architecture. Following a rush of interest in 'virtual reality,' the prospect of totally immersive virtual environments, and the contemporary escapism of parallel worlds, more important consideration is now being given to the impact of combined virtual and 'real' environments.⁶ The discussion from the thesis could be developed to bear on the relational architectural debate, as both move beyond the traditional relationship pertaining between space and (spatialised) time by offering a reformulated notion of this relationship and its impact upon both the design and experience of architecture.

As this thesis has argued, the relevance of form or space to architecture is not to be denied, but rather to be reconfigured such that it is taken less as a quasi-transcendental quality of a static architectural object, and understood more as a contingent quality of the encounter with architecture. The promise of this reconfiguration is summarised well by Deleuze, who stresses the distinction between encounter and recognition.

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*... In this sense it is opposed to recognition. In recognition, the sensible is not at all that which can only be sensed, but that which bears directly upon the senses in any object which can be recalled, imagined or conceived... The object of an encounter... really gives rise to sensibility with regard to a given sense... It is not the given but that by which the given is given.⁷

In tandem with further work on modernism's 'major' terms, the importance being placed on the 'encounter' with architecture increasingly valorises other issues that warrant further research. In addition to a situation that has seen the increasing acceptance and importance of considering issues from 'outside' conventional architectural discourse that was introduced in Chapter Two, a number of the minor issues raised by this thesis could be fruitfully considered alongside recent work on identity politics. While the thesis contested modernism's notion of the passive viewer, to explore the implications of understanding architecture through the notion of 'encounter' would involve expanding the research on the user beyond the argument for contingency and personal memory to address more specifically the differences across users and thus develop the understanding of and potential to acknowledge individual agency through architecture. While the work of writers such as Elizabeth Grosz has done much to open up the terms of such debates, such work is somewhat foreclosed due to its limiting association of the work of the architect to space-maker. Developing the approach to recent artistic practice introduced by Bourriaud's *relational aesthetics* towards a relational architecture would allow the reorganisation of the terms of this debate around agency and the encounter, and thus expand its impact into other areas of architectural discipline and practice.⁸

These issues echo questions raised in the final sections of Chapter Eight regarding what Sayre refers to as the 'undecidability of medium' he associated with current avant-garde practice. This raises further questions concerning the relationship between the disciplines of art and architecture, again an area that is witnessing increasing research activity.⁹ While this relationship has been an implicit concern of the thesis, the increasing recognition that there can be productive collaboration between artists and architects (demonstrated by the recent emergence of a number of interdisciplinary practices such as muf, fat and so on) suggests that an explicit exploration of the possibilities this new form of practice might bring would be timely. In particular, it would be important to develop Sayre's 'undecidability' so that its possible roles in mediating between 'advanced' practice and the wider architectural profession could be articulated in ways that respond to the demands for an architectural encounter just raised. While 'undecidability' may be appropriate for advanced artistic practice, there is a danger that it could translate into wilful obscurity during this interchange. In contrast to the 'advanced' neo-formalist architectural practice criticised a moment ago, such an exploration needs to address the enabling aspects of this issue: in their *Afterword*, for example, Markus & Cameron discuss modes of consultation, of engaged,

participatory design, and the enabling or constraining role that drawings and language can play in that process.¹⁰

Through all these questions, and notwithstanding the quite breathtaking gestures that it includes, Matta-Clark's oeuvre engaged and criticised architecture's valorisation of the grand gesture, and the hermetic, static architectural object. All the questions raised here, from within and beyond his oeuvre, call the support for such architecture into question by reconfiguring its approach to production and experience, in order to instigate an architecture of ongoing process, renovated to support encounter and agency.

¹ Interestingly, Sayre qualified his assertion that advanced art must raise questions that remain undecidable by stating that this would be the case at least when it was approached from a conventional art-historical position. It could be suggested that this thesis inscribes a third grey zone, one of methodological excess, as a consequence of its own response beyond art historical approaches.

² This question was posed (somewhat rhetorically) by Borden & Rendell in their introduction to *InterSections*. For them, work such as the present thesis *should* make a difference, it should act as a *transformer*: 'theorised history is a transformer, a constant movement toward achieving new forms and contents of thought and action, an activity that perpetually speculates on the varied differences both of architecture as it now is and of architecture as it is yet to become.' Borden and Rendell (eds.), *InterSections, op.cit.*, p.14. They go on to detail nine points or 'challenges' that the conjunction of architectural history and critical theory can raise, from which the two axes put forward here have developed.

³ Markus and Cameron, *The Words Between the Spaces, op.cit.*, p.178.

⁴ As Peter Osborne notes in a broader cultural context, despite the various declarations surrounding various 'Post-modernisms,' these occur as moments or alterations within modernism. Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and the Avant-Garde*, Verso, London, 1995.

⁵ See my essay on 'Animate Form' for a more detailed rehearsal of some issues that could be involved in this examination; Walker, 'Animate Form,' *op.cit.*,

⁶ Nadia Mounajjed's thesis explores the possibilities of this combination. *Relational Interfacings: Body, Memory and Architecture in the age of Digital Tectonics*, PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2007. Pamela Lee discusses Matta-Clark's interest in computing (both animation and graphics) in her conclusion: see Lee, *Object to be Destroyed, op.cit.*, Ch.5. Lee's conclusion also speculates about the future possibilities of Matta-Clark's interest in pneumatic architecture, as does Peter Fend in his 'New Architecture from Matta-Clark,' in Breitwieser (ed.), *Reorganizing Structure, op.cit.*, pp.46-55. Rather than taking this literally as do Lee and Fend, and thereby fetishising or instrumentalising his interest in technology in a way that parallels Modernism's treatment of the machine-style, Matta-Clark's approach to technology could open onto future research into new architectural materials and technology that is directed by a determination to expand how and where and with whom architects might consider working.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, [1968], tr. Paul Patton, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994 p.175-6

⁸ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, [1998], tr. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods and Mathieu Copeland, Les presses de réel, Paris, 2002. Bourriaud discusses the possibilities of the 'encounter' and the notion of it working within 'social *interstices*' in ways that suggest complementarity with the terms of this thesis. (see pp.15 *passim*.) Such a 'relational architecture,' although a term already in circulation thanks to Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, would more explicitly follow Bourriaud in that it opens up onto the political implications of this discourse.

⁹ For example, Helen Castle (ed.), *Art + Architecture*, Architectural Design, May/June 2003, Jes Fernie (ed.), *Two Minds: Artists and Architects in Collaboration*, Black Dog Publishing, London, 2006, and Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2006.

- ¹⁰ Markus and Cameron, *The Words Between the Spaces*, *op.cit.*, p.174ff. Furthermore, they ask what the limitations are of 'expert' evaluative languages, and of designs that play down differences between differing interests (public, state, employer, employee, and so on).

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Primary source material for this thesis was gathered from Gordon Matta-Clark's archive, held by the Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark, now on deposit at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal. When I consulted it during 2002, it was held by Matta-Clark's widow, Jane Crawford, at her home in Weston, Connecticut. I also used the (smaller) facsimile archive at the Arkiv/Studienraum at the *EA Generali Foundation* in Vienna. References given in the text are to the accession and filing system used by Jane Crawford, which continues in use at the CCA. I am grateful to the curator at CCA, Gwendolyn Owens, for her advice on this matter.

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