'In this moment of Modernism's reappraisal, Stephen Walker builds a necessary bridge between the oft-divided worlds of architecture and art. Connecting the avant-garde of early twentieth-century building to 1970s process art—each aimed to dismantle past disciplines to lay claim to the future—he illuminates a generative interplay at the centre of which is the prescient figure of Gordon Matta-Clark. Practicing an uncommon openness of mind and making, Matta-Clark shared his mode of creative questioning with the spectator through the dynamic, multi-perceptual experiences he created, just as Walker does now with the reader through this insightful treatise.'

**Mary Jane Jacob**, Executive Director of Exhibitions and Professor [of Sculpture], The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

'Matta-Clark's work is an event. As an event it unfolds in relation to both art and architecture. However that relation troubles any envisaged purity that either domain may be thought to have had. As such Matta-Clark's work necessitates a reconceptualization of modernism. Stephen Walker's scholarly and engaged study of Matta-Clark starts with that necessity. Rarely has an artist found a commentator whose writings evince the philosophical and historical acuity of this study. Walker announces the importance of Matta-Clark for a new generation.'

**Andrew Benjamin**, Professor of Critical Theory and Philosophical Aesthetics, Monash University

'In this excellent study, Stephen Walker draws upon the thought of Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to develop a new kind of account of Gordon Matta-Clark's work. Paying close attention to primary sources, the author takes a wide-ranging approach to Matta-Clark, resulting in a book that makes innovative arguments and which, while focused on architecture, will also be of great interest for related subject areas in the humanities.'

**Mark Dorrian**, Reader in Architectural Design and Theory, University of Edinburgh

*to Julia, Felix and Benjamin*

# Gordon Matta-Clark

## Art, Architecture and the Attack on Modernism

STEPHEN WALKER

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All works by Gordon Matta-Clark.
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# Preface

> The foundation of one's thought is the thought of another; thought is like a brick cemented into a wall. It is a simulacrum of thought if, in his looking back on himself, the being who thinks sees a free brick and not the price this semblance of freedom costs him: he doesn't see the waste ground and the heaps of detritus to which a sensitive vanity consigns him with his brick.
>
> The work of the mason, who assembles, is the work that matters. Thus the adjoining bricks, in a book, should not be less visible than the new brick, which is the book. What is offered the reader, in fact, cannot be an element, but must be the ensemble in which it is inserted: it is the whole human assemblage and edifice, which must be, not just a pile of scraps, but rather a self-consciousness.
>
> — Georges Bataille, *Where This Book is Situated*[1]

To begin a book on the artist Gordon Matta-Clark with a passage from the French thinker Georges Bataille is not, on the face of it, new or surprising. Several distinguished writers have enjoyed this connection, using Bataille's thought to elucidate Matta-Clark's work, or using Matta-Clark's work to clarify the relevance of Bataille for contemporary debate in art and architecture.[2]

However, to read Bataille's architectural analogy here *praising* the work of the mason, the assembler, and stressing the importance of the ensemble, may strike those already familiar with the work of Bataille or of Matta-Clark as odd. Wasn't Matta-Clark, and wasn't Bataille, consistently critical of architecture? Certainly. Isn't Matta-Clark best known for his dramatic, physical 'attacks' on architecture? Apparently. Then surely, his work was anti-architectural? No.

Since Matta-Clark's death in 1978, his work has exerted a significant influence on artists, architects and critics. Now, a generation after their production, his projects still elude easy classification, and continue to raise questions that bear on the production and reception of artistic and

architectural work. While his projects are frequently used to illustrate a kind of paragon of 'deconstructive' architecture, dissenting voices to this interpretation can be heard, voices that explore beyond the formalism or sensationalism that can be associated with some of Matta-Clark's work. One such exception is Rem Koolhaas, who recounts how his own interest in Matta-Clark's work has changed:

> 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.[3]

Koolhaas' attention to the *constructive* aspect of Matta-Clark's work is unusual, though it sets the scene for the present work. To retain Bataille's terms, this book takes Matta-Clark as 'mason'; its premise is that Matta-Clark *did* assemble, he was always 'building', even when he appeared to be dismantling. It argues that however critical Matta-Clark was of architecture, he took it seriously, that he worked with it not against it, and that this engagement can be encountered across his whole œuvre, where it proves constructive and profound, not destructive or superficial.

To continue Bataille's analogy, the wall that Matta-Clark's work contributed to, and contributes to still, represents modernism. In the immediate context of its production, this wall reflects the particular tenets of artistic and architectural high modernism that reached their apogee, and were increasingly contested, during the 1960s, the decade during which Matta-Clark trained as an architect and later began his artistic career. In this sense, he enjoyed a unique position from which to question the role and scope of art, architecture and their governance by high modernism. This book sets out to demonstrate the broad artistic, architectural and theoretical importance of his work, to examine how it marked a sophisticated engagement with these tenets of modernism.

Matta-Clark's work exceeded the context of its own production: it exceeds perhaps his own conscious motivations, and there has been more pulled out of it than was available to its initial audience. It produces an excess of questions that cannot yet be contained. As a response to this excess, the overall aim of this book is prospective and speculative. It sets out to focus or shift such excess in order to open up and explore questions that Matta-Clark's work can raise, and thus to articulate its relevance for a number of contemporary debates. In particular, these questions concern

architecture, where the ongoing presence of modernism's influence in both education and practice continues to be felt.

## A Note on the Text

As a consequence of its acceptance by and accession into the institutions of the art world, Matta-Clark's œuvre 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 as the artist who cut up buildings. This book refuses any such received hierarchy, it takes the notion of *œuvre* literally as 'total output'. Conventional understanding of an artist's œuvre reflects a traditional distinction 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. In this book, 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. 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 and the art market more comfortably accommodate.

Passages of Matta-Clark's own writings, mainly taken from his notebooks, are thus cited more or less verbatim. The ~~crossings out~~, *MIS-SPELINGS* and other 'inconsistencies' that they include are not taken as the marks of a 'draft' that can be erased in a neat, final version, but are another instance of his broader working method, and their inclusion in this state is important.

With a final nod to Bataille, the work done to assemble this book and insert into its own ensemble, which comprises existing works on Matta-Clark, on art, architecture and modernism more broadly, has pushed the immediate 'bricks' into the notes that follow the main text. This is not an attempt to displace the *important statements* out of the main text (as Matta-Clark recommended), but perhaps the price of attempting to sustain at least two conversations at the same time.

> FOOTNOTES: MAKE ALL NECESSESSARY OR IMPORTANT STATEMENTS IN OUR FOOT NOTES [14].OB.SIT.
>
> —Gordon Matta-Clark[4]

# Introduction

This book is not a biography, though it does no harm to begin with a few biographical 'facts': 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. 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, are remarkable enough to be worth observing. Having 'grown up', Matta-Clark spent a year studying French literature at the Sorbonne in Paris shortly after enrolling at Cornell University, where he was studying 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.

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: this situation echoes that of Charles and Ray Eames, Robert Smithson, and even Duchamp himself, none of whom have easily identifiable successors. In contrast to these, though, Matta-Clark's work has found neither a substantial public audience nor attracted sustained critical engagement, and it has until very recently remained something of an awkward misfit.

This book sets out to explore the ongoing awkwardness that Matta-Clark's œuvre carries, and to articulate why, in spite of—or indeed because of—this awkwardness, his œuvre remains so important to a wide range of situations and disciplines. The work for which he is best known, the building dissections or building cuts, have skewed his œuvre by instilling a hierarchy that Matta-Clark himself fought (unsuccessfully). A prodigious artist, Matta-Clark produced a huge amount of work 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. His entire œuvre was produced in under 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. Although there are consistencies that can be traced across his work, these lie more in the issues Matta-Clark addressed than the particular means he adopted to explore them, and it is these issues that this book addresses.

Why these issues concerned him, and how he went about questioning them, cannot be explained simply: the biographical 'facts' sketched out above, the particular climate that prevailed at Cornell during his architectural education, and the changes that were affecting art and architecture during the late 1960s and 1970s all played a part. Moreover, Matta-Clark's work is multi-faceted, and it is not the intention here to explain or categorise his work against any of the particular models available from art history. Both the context and formal properties of his work will bear on the discussion, but rather than taking these as anchors of the art-historical tightrope that Michael Podro describes,[1] they will enjoy a different relationship, one that echoes Matta-Clark's own accounts of his working process.

Art and architecture are clearly important considerations in any discussion of Matta-Clark's œuvre; how they figure is not straightforward. Although he had 'given up' on architecture as a career by the time of his graduation, 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, as he explained during an interview with Liza Bear:

> 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.[2]

Additionally, Matta-Clark can be considered as having occupied another, related, grey area: less of his own making, this was a consequence of the changes that were taking place to the accepted definitions of these disciplines themselves, and that announces another equally important consideration that runs throughout the discussion that follows: that of his relationship with modernism.

Significant changes to architectural and artistic modernism took place during the 1960s: without suggesting that modernism could be neatly defined during any period, the changes during this decade, at least in the United States, can perhaps be epitomised by the transition of critical power from Clement Greenberg to Michael Fried. While the dynamics of this transition should only be taken as background to Matta-Clark's work, there are certain aspects that are worth indicating. As Mark Linder has argued, while Greenberg's stated position stressed the need for disciplinary purity, his own critical development enjoyed a broader confusion between the disciplines of art and architecture. Fried's reworking of modernism in the second half of the 1960s attempted to separate off architecture from the debate, denying any relationship between the two disciplines.[3] Matta-Clark's œuvre can be considered to respond, indirectly, to both parties here; he reiterated the importance he placed on disciplinary grey areas 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.[4]

Described by Matta-Clark in this way, his approach seems to be susceptible to a contextual explanation: the issues of *flat art*, *sculptural objects*, and professional or disciplinary regulation were of particular importance 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. However, this in no way provides a satisfactory explanation of the awkwardness associated with his œuvre. In order to address this, his work should not be taken as a simple attack, either on architecture or on high modernism. Whereas Greenberg and Fried were, in different ways, setting out to avoid disciplinary confusion, Matta-Clark's œuvre embraced it. Although he 'abhorred' and 'avoided' some of high modernism's criteria and expectations, its presence—and the confusion it attempted to

remove—runs deep within his œuvre, where it is opened up and engaged in an ongoing conversation. His offence at the rigidity of definition has many manifestations within his œuvre and many consequences beyond it. The chapters that follow will explore significant issues from both positions.

## Introducing Modernism

Matta-Clark's 'abhorrence of flat art' mounted a direct challenge not only to high modernism's valorisation of painting over other arts, but to the broader value system it enshrined. In addition to the issues of 'purity' and disciplinary separation, Matta-Clark's criticisms extended to the apolitical attitude of North American modernism, and to its increasing liaison with scientific, rational thinking.

Greenberg's attempt to define modernism was overarching, applicable to all artistic disciplines: 'The essence of modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself–not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence… Thereby each art would be rendered 'pure', and in its 'purity' find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence.'[5] For Greenberg, this quest for purity demanded the identification, isolation and elimination of any *expendable* conventions, anything that might conceivably be shared with any other artform.[6] The very nature of his generic definition was to exclude and eliminate; the evidence he used to back up his position was highly partisan, and (at least in the caricatured version of his position that circulated) passed over a whole range of work from the historical avant-garde and other geographical locations as part of the process. Inevitably, there remained other claims for modernism within the stuff expended by Greenberg: these were often just as universalising, and (frequently) irreconcilable.

Shadowing Greenberg's particular account of modernism's evolution was a rapid demise in its overt political intentions, despite the various revolutionary goals of the historical avant-garde artistic and architectural movements. For example, modern architecture was stripped of any such social dimensions on the occasion of perhaps its first significant transatlantic crossing in 1932, where it was the subject of Hitchcock and Johnson's *International Exhibition of Modern Architecture* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and their simultaneous publication *The International Style*. Their presentation defined three principles: architecture as volume; regularity; and the avoidance of applied decoration, thus opening modern architecture to subjective formal manipulation.[7]

Gavin Macrae-Gibson roundly criticises this subjective turn, arguing that it reduced the architect's concern to the literal content of architectural form, 'an amnesiac and contextless concern for the purely material aspects

of buildings'.[8] Described thus, modern architecture appears to fall into line with aspects of Greenberg's broader definition, by identifying, isolating and detaching expendable conventions in a process of 'purification' that dictates the architect's interest in form must narrow to focus exclusively on its (preferably geometric) shape. Peter Wollen's discussion in *The Triumph of American Painting* points to a similar occurrence, where high modernism's purist agenda emasculates the avant-garde's early social goals, only to hand over the purified objects of art to the corporate and governmental establishment: 'In the end, purism leads toward stasis… [Jackson] Pollock was followed by a period dominated by various bland, vacuous, grandiloquent canvases… The "ideologically innocent" art desired by Greenberg was inverted into an art of imperial propaganda…'[9] While Fried's apparently explicit 'politics of conviction'[10] might appear to contrast with the 'ideologically innocent' purism of Greenberg, and to be more in tune with a generally increasing politicisation as the decade drew to a close, it perhaps set out to exercise greater disciplinary control over 'correct' judgement than did Greenberg; Matta-Clark's particular response to this relationship between discipline and judgement will be explored in chapter 6 below. Other aspects involved in his criticisms of purism raise issues that will be pursued throughout this book.

One ally of purism cited as frequently in definitions of modernism as it was criticised by Matta-Clark is science or rationalism. The increasing authority and dominance of scientific method was sufficient motivation for many architects and artists to attempt to demonstrate scientific consistency and universal principles within their own disciplines: examples can be traced back well into the nineteenth century, becoming predominant during the early part of the twentieth. Lecturing in 1910, for example, the architect William Lethaby asserted that 'The method of design to a modern mind can only be understood in the scientific, or in the engineer's sense, as a definite analysis of possibilities – not as a vague poetic dealing with poetic matters.'[11] Writing in 1930 (on Henry Moore), R. H. Wilenski asserted that the modern sculptor 'works in exactly the spirit of the research scientist'.[12] The demands for scientific rigour extended beyond practitioners, producing art-historical models such as Erwin Panofsky's systematic study of art [*Kunstwissenschaft*] from the 1920s.[13] The attraction of the categorical judgement of artworks similarly appealed to Greenberg: 'Scientific method alone asks that a situation be resolved in exactly the same kinds of terms as that in which it is presented…'[14] and to Sigfried Giedeon, high priest of architectural modernism: 'We have regarded architecture as a finite organism, isolated it, just as the scientist must isolate certain phenomena in order to determine their interior processes.'[15]

The shift from 'vague poetic' method to design as rational problem solving was epitomised by the *Congrès Internationaux d'architecture Moderne* (CIAM) founding declaration of 1928, which aimed to establish an architecture based on principles of rationalisation and standardisation, and responsive to socio-economic systems.[16] In spite of the claims to internationalism made by CIAM, a significant development of their principles can be traced as they travelled from Europe to the United States in the thirties (as did some of their significant supporters such as Walter Gropius, and Giedion himself), where they were openly received, thanks in part to the thoroughgoing reorientation of modern architecture's agenda undertaken by Hitchcock and Johnson, and in part to its more general concordance with the American foundational myth valorising meritocracy, pragmatism and freedom from history.

The principles of rationalisation and standardisation were rapidly assimilated into the modern architecture of the United States. Free from the apparent socialist agenda of the CIAM declaration, during the post-war period it could act as representative of conservative politics, becoming the architecture of the establishment by the 1960s. Moreover, many schools of architecture in the States had followed Harvard's lead (under Gropius) and the rationalist approach to the design of architectural form took its place in the centre of architectural education's curriculum.[17]

As these principles became thoroughly institutionalised in the art and architectural modernism of the United States during the 1960s, it increasingly attracted dissent. Minimalism, Pop, Land Art and site specific work explicitly contested aspects of this definition by opening the art object up to contaminating effects such as the observer, commercial art, and situation. Whereas these and other criticisms of modern art were highly divergent, reaction to high-modern architecture was sufficiently consistent to permit its frequent categorisation as the third generation of modernism. According to Robert Stern, the previous two generations (crudely, the 'heroic form givers' of the International Style, characterised by the work of Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright, and the post-war 'formalists' such as Philip Johnson, Eero Saarinen and Paul Rudolph) had dealt with 'pure and simple shapes often at the expense of problem solving',[18] searching for prototypes that would develop a universal solution from particular situations. In contrast, his initial definition of the third generation highlighted the value they placed on the particular solution that responded to the individuality of each situation, as well as their attempts to embody values that would be recognised by society at large, and exemplified according to Stern by the work of Robert Venturi. Stern was later forced to revise this 'third generation' category in order to include the influential work of architects such as the 'New York Five' (Peter Eisenman,

Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk and Richard Meier):[19] those associated with this latter position, linked to a revival in formalism, were termed the 'Whites,' in contrast to the 'Greys' such as Venturi, whom Stern linked to pragmatism and pluralism.

The arguments between the 'Greys' and the 'Whites' ran throughout the 1970s: Matta-Clark was dismissive of both positions, criticising their explicit architectural agendas and the implicit (modernist) supremacy they granted the discipline of architecture itself. Andrew MacNair recalled Matta-Clark telling him that Meier, Gwathmey and Graves were 'the guys I studied with at Cornell, these were my teachers. I hate what they stand for.'[20] Matta-Clark's own work addressed the 'monolithic idealist problem-solving of the International Style' in all its guises, and traces of the early European declaration, the mainstream post-war architecture affecting his New York environs, and the educational strand of this agenda can be detected in the critical dimension of many projects he undertook.[21] This set his work apart from many contemporary either-or, white-against-grey contestations of modernism, and granted it more complex dimensions: in order to articulate these dimensions, it is important to examine the role of his own architectural education.

## Contesting Modernism: Cornell Contextualism and Other Sensibilities

> A GENERATION OF THE FORMAL STOOL
> MANIPULATION FOR MANIPULATION FOR MANIPULATION
> A COLLAGE OF IMPORTANT MODER[N] FORMS
>
> —Gordon Matta-Clark[22]

A significant influence on Matta-Clark's œuvre came from Colin Rowe's own critique of modernist architecture, which came to stand for the educational approach at Cornell University during the 1960s and beyond. Rowe had started his influential Urban Design Studio at Cornell in 1963, the same year that Matta-Clark enrolled. The work of this studio focused on architectural contextualism, which was explained by one of Rowe's students, Tom Schumacher, as follows: '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 organisation which can be abstracted from any given context that contextualism seeks to divine as design tools.'[23] 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…'

Adrian Forty has discussed the development of architectural interest in 'contextualism', and he suggests that the nuanced arguments around the notion of *ambiente*, which emerged during the 1950s in Italy in the work of Ernesto Rogers and others in the *Casabella* circle, was laundered of its particular analysis, which combined both the natural and historical character, and the influence of the environment, by its translation as 'context'. This was then further blunted as a conceptual tool in its working through by Rowe's studio, where as 'contextualism' it focused on the purely formal aspects of architecture: 'Rowe's Cornell studio developed a critique of modernist architecture that had a good deal in common with Ernesto Rogers's…' writes Forty, 'But there were also significant differences… Rowe was uninterested in [Rogers's] speculative understanding of the historical environment, and concentrated on the formal properties of works of architecture.'[24]

Matta-Clark emphasised the extent to which architectural education at Cornell foregrounded these 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:

> …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.[25]

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. 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 recognise that certain kinds of activity can be essentially formal without being rigid or mortuistic.'[26]

Taking him at his word demands that we separate two different areas of ambiguity. One is associated with modernism and internal to its definition, the other is that which exceeds modernism. His 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 in different, difficult relationships. Anthony Vidler has stressed the importance of reading both these aspects of his œuvre together: '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.'[27]

For Matta-Clark, if there was any consistency to the various definitions of modernism, this lay more in the 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. 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'.[28] 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.[29]

Adrian Forty's recent work on modernism raises a number of observations that can broaden and clarify Matta-Clark's position. Forty's

examination explores whether the definitions of any of its 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 such system 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.'[30]

Many aspects of Matta-Clark's œuvre can be considered as an enquiry into modernism, an enquiry that took issue with various moves made by modernism to support its claims to absolutism. Significantly in the light of Forty's observations, Matta-Clark operated by knowingly working within modernism's system, but also with an interest in the stuff that modernism both eliminated and overlooked, such as the 'other ranges of sensibility' or the 'ambiguity of a place'. This approach 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…'[31] 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 can be understood to have directed his work 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 these aspects and bringing them into play with each other, an approach he articulated most explicitly as *discrete violation*, and which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

This twofold approach, proceeding simultaneously *within* and *without* modernism, can be identified throughout his œuvre. Taken separately, these two aspects can allow a focused analysis both of modernism's favoured terms and the 'consideration of their opposites' on one hand, and of those things that fall—or are pushed—outside modernism's explicit attention on the other. More broadly, this approach can highlight things that different epochs and disciplines of modernism took for granted (or buried), and aspects of this approach can be brought to bear successfully on issues that continue to concern us today.

Although the relationship between work *within* the terminology or constraints of modernism, and work *without* these rules, is not straightforward, the main text of this book can be considered to have two

parts, the first 'within', the second 'without'. The organisation of the chapters takes its cue from this positioning; the first two explore aspects of the relationship that Matta-Clark's œuvre 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 takes up other aspects of his work, in order to explore how his interest in User, Process and Discipline might be encountered in his œuvre and point to its possible operation *without* modernism.

# 1 Discrete Violation

Gordon Matta-Clark discussed the notion of *discrete violation* in the context of his last major project, *Circus: Caribbean Orange* (1978). He had been invited by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago to produce a work on, or in, what was then an adjacent property to the museum. This was a three-storey townhouse that was scheduled to be incorporated into the museum building proper: although the façade of the building had to be retained, he had free rein behind that. Despite a number of other proposals that he favoured, he was convinced by the museum to produce a signature building cut. In this case, the cut was generated by a series of three notional spheres that ascended from the entrance, and which occupied the full width of the building. The resulting work effectively overlapped these spheres across the domestic-scale spaces of the townhouse, presenting visitors with two different, and potentially conflicting, systems of orientation (figure 1). Matta-Clark drew attention to the importance he placed on this interplay in an interview with Judith Russi Kirshner:

> 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… [1]

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 as being 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

**1** *Circus: Caribbean Orange*, 1978. Photo-collage

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.[2]

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.[3] 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,' as he put it, 'to encourage the inclusion of some sort of expanded being.'[4] This attempt at inclusion echoes the balance his œuvre struck more generally between the *within* and *without* of prevailing values of architectural modernism that was introduced at the end of the *Introduction*. In an earlier letter, Matta-Clark positioned the *discrete violation* of works like *Circus*, which he undertook in buildings, in the context of this broader link:

> I developed my way of working after completing my architectural studies, aware that a genuine spirit of change could not be achieved at the request of private economy. So, for five years I have worked to the best of my abilities to produce small breaks in the repressive conditions of space generated by the system. In spite of no longer working as an architect I continue to focus my attention on buildings, for these comprise both a miniature cultural evolution and a model of prevailing social structures. Consequently, what I do to buildings is what some do with language and others with groups of people: i.e. I organize them in order to explain and defend the need for change.[5]

In projects such as *Circus*, he worked to suggest that apparently static and stable disciplines like architecture actually enjoyed multiple and conflicting ingredients. Crucially, he showed these conflicts could be 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.

For Matta-Clark, the work—either *Circus* in particular or his œuvre in general—was a strategy, a way of getting through to 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 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 photocollages; 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. His close friend, the sculptor Richard Nonas, has suggested that in order to get a particular idea across, Matta-Clark would use and manipulate *any* medium that he thought appropriate.[6]

MAKING THE RIGHT CUT SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE SUPPORTS AND COLLAPSE [7]

## Discrete Violation and Creative Questioning

> 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 Bergson[8]

FORM–PLAN–PARTI–UNITY–ORDER
MEASURE–SCALE–PROPORTION–RHYTM
? ? ? ? ? ?

WHICH OF THESE IS AN ANARCHITECTURAL ANSEWER
A. REALIZING RATHER THAN SOLVING PROBLEMS
SOLUTIONS ARE STRUCTUALLY WEAK A FORMALLY DYNAMIC
Q SOLUTIONS ARE THE WEAKEST FORMS ~~OF~~ AT WORK

—Gordon Matta-Clark[9]

Across his œuvre, 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 reproduced in figure 1, 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.[10] 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 recognisable 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.[11]

At this point, it is helpful to refer to the passage by philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941), set out in the epigraph at the start of this section. 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 œuvre. 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 book. Both were interested in broadening the possibilities for human experience beyond the limits sanctioned by scientific thinking, yet both 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.'[12] 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'.[13] 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'.[14] 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.[15]

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.

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 [16]

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, this 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 [17]

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.

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 from 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.'[18]

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 œuvre 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 invites 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.

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'.[19]

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.*'[20] 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'. [21] 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'.[22]

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 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 Nácional 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.[23] 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, 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'.[24]

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,[25] and the configuration of this particular passage, and the broader issues that it raises, can be 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 adopted by philosophers over this two-hundred year spell as a metaphor for the relationship between the human subject and the observed object, where it positioned the observer so 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 Jonathan Crary, the works of the 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'.[26]

The Camera Obscura's role as a metaphor helped philosophers from a variety of persuasions to provide new accounts of the production of 'truth' about the observed world, although it did broadly repeat a traditional separation of the realm of 'truth' from the 'stuff of the world', and it privileged the sense of vision over the other bodily senses, effectively replacing the role of the eye with a mechanical apparatus. Indeed the price for these 'truths' was arguably the elimination of the body: 'The Camera

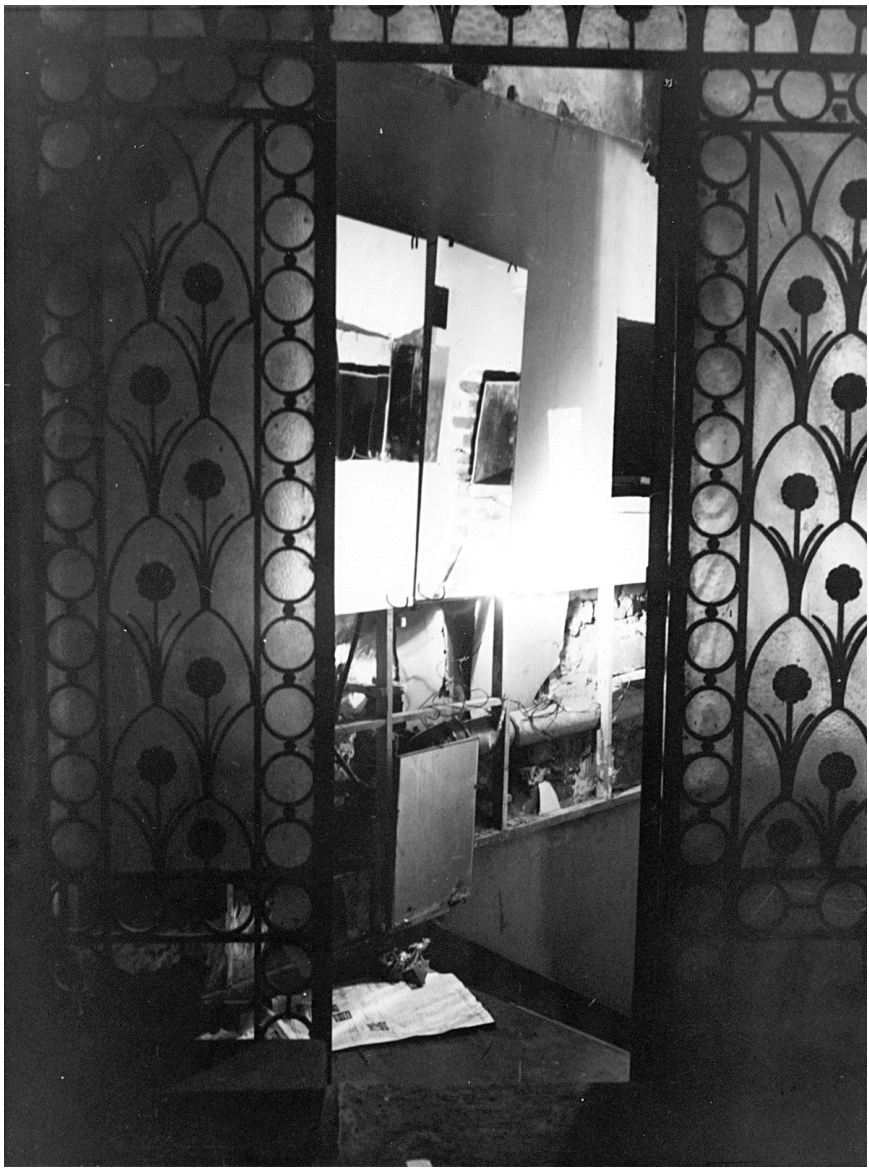
Obscura *a priori* prevents the observer from seeing his or her position as part of the representation.'[27]

Many of Matta-Clark's projects, from the Santiago piece through to *Circus*, mimicked the schematic mechanism of the Camera Obscura, although they did so in such as way as to introduce a discrete violation of its traditional arrangement, one that questioned this pervasive hierarchy of mind (or eye) over matter. They reintroduced the observer as part of the representation, demonstrating the relationships that existed between the observer's position and the space or object they observed.

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; 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. By locating the screen in the basement urinal, 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. By firmly positioning the observer in the complex spatiality of the world, this and other projects attempted to avoid the observer's traditional removal from the process of representation. 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. 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 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'.

However, Leibniz was dissatisfied with the accepted metaphor, and found the need to complicate the screen that for others was simply an inert



**2** (above and facing) *Untitled*, Museo Nácional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile, 1971

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.'[28]

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 the survival of matter beyond rationality, both enjoy literal and metaphoric uses of this distinction as they re-articulate architectural space and mental space, or more precisely here, epistemology. Attempts to overcome matter and encourage the mind to establish knowledge on its own terms 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. Bergson too stressed that the mind overflows the intellect, 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.'[29]

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 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 operations can be brought to bear on several of the 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 following two chapters will explore the consequences this combination can have on the key conceptual terms of architectural modernism, Form, Space and Time.

# Part I: Within Modernism

# 2 Form (& Matter)

> 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.
>
> —Gordon Matta-Clark[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 interprete 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 from that of modernism.

Matta-Clark's concerns were that modernism's licence to manipulate form came at a price it was not prepared to acknowledge, and that the

authority it claimed for this licence was established by a sleight of hand. Both these issues emerged as a result of modernism's general drive for disciplinary purity, which in the case of painting or architecture involved form's 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. 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.[4] 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-Clark[5]

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 realised 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, 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 Bear, 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.[6]

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.'[7] This 'autobiography' and the spatial complexity were both products of the cutting operations, and clearly they were closely inter-dependent. Moreover, they both contested the 'static object' conception of architectural form that Matta-Clark criticised, 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 were 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

**3** *Bronx Floors: Threshole,* 1972 (opposite page), *A W-Hole House: Roof Top Atrium,* 1973 (above), and *Splitting,* 1974 (following pages)

*Splitting*, *A W-Hole House*, and other work such as *Bingo,* 1974, operate by deploying standard techniques of architectural design, in particular orthographic drawing conventions, out of the usual sequence, out of the protected domain of the architect and onto the building proper. Although he made cuts to buildings from as early as 1971, such as the Santiago piece illustrated in figure 2, or the renovations he made as part of the collaborative *Food* Restaurant in New York (1971–3), the more deliberate investigations into the repercussions of cutting began around 1972 with a series of cut drawings, and work to buildings such as the *Bronx Floors* series. The scale of this work increased substantially in the following two years with *A W-Hole House*, *Splitting* and *Bingo*. Matta-Clark made four cut drawings 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.

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*.

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 characterise, 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 epitomised 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. 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. 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…'[8]

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…'[9] Now while this echoes Schumacher's account of Cornell Contextualism given in the introduction, 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 1 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 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, 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.[10]

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. Indeed, we can read such a position 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 marvellous 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.[11]

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. For Plato, the adoption of his 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 effect it had on that audience.

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 practised design [*disegno*] for many years, exhibits the perfection and excellence of the arts as well as the knowledge of the artist.[12]

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*.'[13] 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…'[14] 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* while simultaneously exceeding the sphere of architectural activity that Vasari sanctioned.[15]

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.'[16] 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.'[17] 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. Matta-Clark's projects disrupted such easy access to definitive form, and thereby challenged the way in which they could become intelligible. Matta-Clark clearly worked to reveal and maintain these ambiguities 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.

Matta-Clark was implicitly critical of traditional, Platonic theories of form, and explicitly critical of the concept of form adopted by modern architecture, arguing that it moved in the wrong direction (towards the eternal and immobile) from an improper starting point. Importantly, though, the repercussions of cutting that Matta-Clark explored, the discrete violation they brought about, offered not the simple replacement, but a revised translation, of 'form,' (*eidos, disegno*) one which provides for an intelligibility *and* instability. 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 most legible form for a stable 'view' that permits intelligibility, but this is no longer the static form that acted as the defining principle of things. The second, obscure clarity, draws on the alterations of this legible 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. 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.

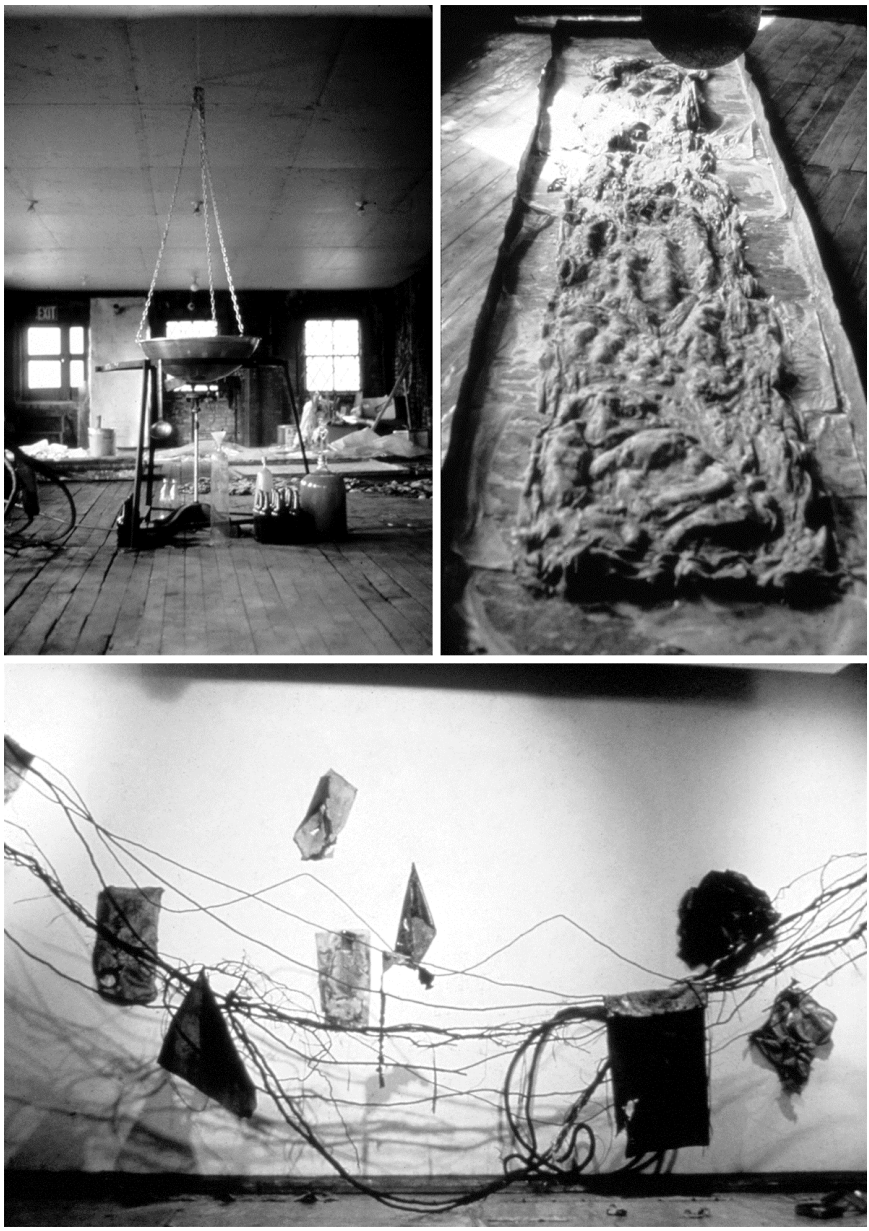
## The Relationship with Matter:[18] Cultivating Nature and Matter's Location

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, matter did remain a key co-principle or essence, and a source of creative ambiguity, until it was rationalised by the new science of the seventeenth century. The consequence of this move relevant in the present context is that natural science and philosophy parted company. Bergson laments this move; for him, it is a bad philosophy that leaves matter to science.[19]

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 œuvre 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)[20] 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 4, experimented directly with stuff like agar (a seaweed-based gelatin-like substance), glass, metals, minerals, food and non-foodstuffs, street debris and so on.[21] 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



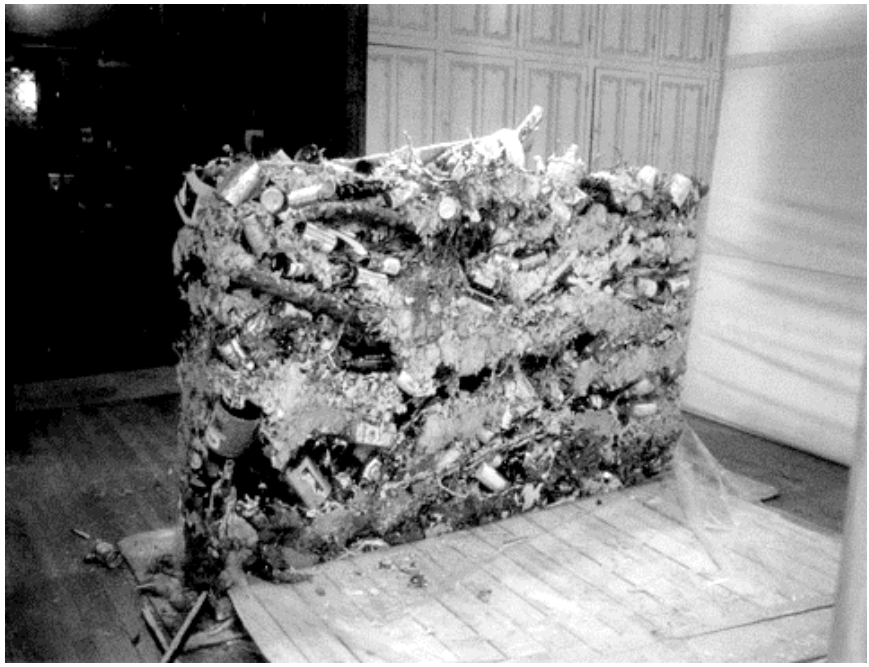

**4** *Agar* pieces in process and *Incendiary Wafers* (top), and *Museum* (bottom), 1970–1
This series of works involved 'batches of undefinable stuff…constantly brewing in large vessels or fermenting in large flat trays'. A number of these pieces were displayed in *Museum*, mimicking the typical arrangement of a nineteenth century picture gallery. In front of the wall Matta-Clark hung further stuff from a chaotic lattice of vines; these moldering pieces were supplemented with a microscope, provided to allow the visitor to make more detailed inspections of the life of the agar-matter.

changes that occurred to the Agar pieces raised issues of transmogrification that developed initially to address the effect of situation on matter, particularly on its classification, this consequently opened onto social and political concerns that can be read across his œuvre 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…[22]

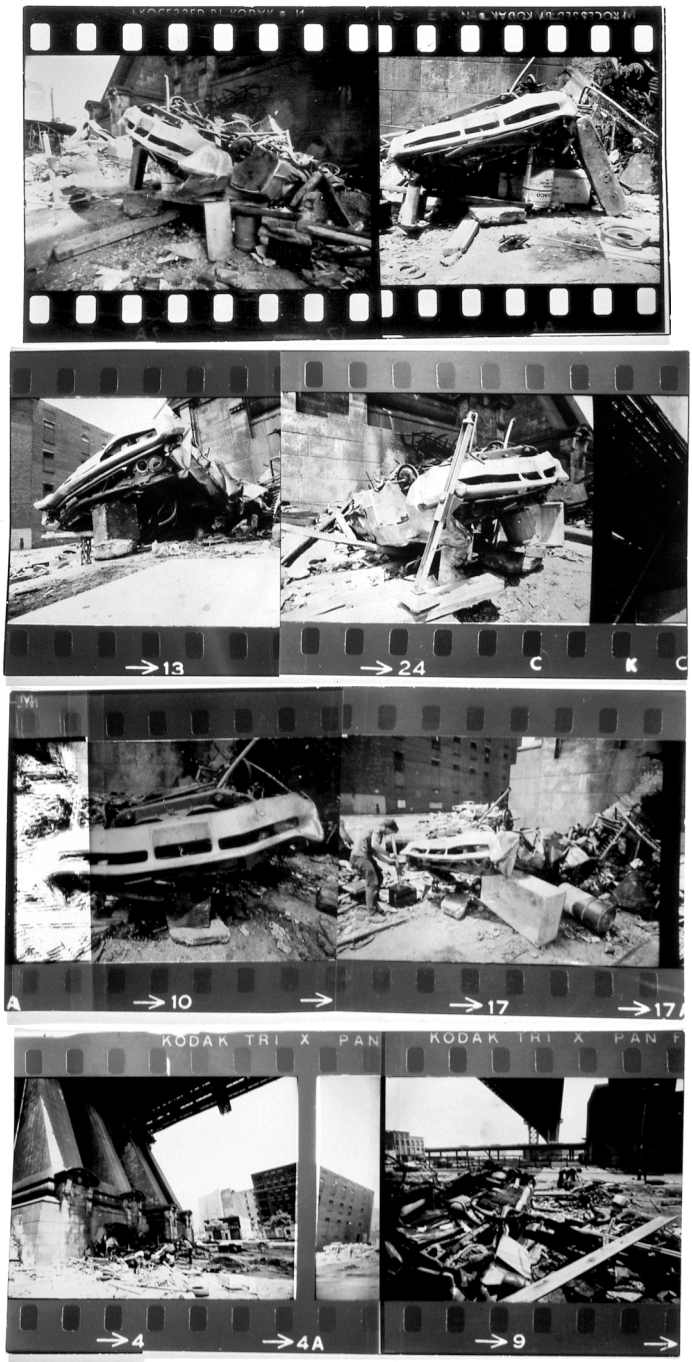
Considering this battle of the cultivated against the naturally chaotic, Matta-Clark's work from this time involved both spheres of what he referred to as this 'dualistic conflict' between 'nature' and humans. The projects just mentioned–demonstrated that matter stubbornly remained beyond the controlling desires of 'cultivating' humanity. 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)[23] (figure 5) demonstrated that even within the domestication carried out by the suburbanising 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'.[24] 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



**5** *Garbage Wall* (above), 1970, and *Jacks* (opposite), 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.


→13
→24
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→4A
KODAK TRI X PAN
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waste was useless and formless.[25]

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 interest through at a bigger scale, in order to exercise the political and cultural dimensions to which Graham referred. 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 by 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.[26]

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 Wall* (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.'[27] 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 realisation 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 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…'[28] 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 emergence of modern science in the late seventeenth century. In contrast to its treatment by this science, where it was analysed according to static, quantifiable criteria, Matta-Clark's work suggests that matter continues to carry temporal dimensions. He was entirely accepting of the fact that matter enjoyed a temporality independent of human control, although he did not simply link this to decay, but to an actative *life force*. Indeed, he stressed that he would avoid working in situations 'where I would be competing with factual disintegration'.[29] 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 remnata 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.'[30]

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. 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.[31]

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. 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.[32]

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.[33] 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".'[34] 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 dramatises the exclusive domestication of nature*, and which Matta-Clark's entire œuvre 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.'[35] 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.'[36] 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 observers 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 the register of natural time 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).[37] 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.[38]

The broader consequences of this stance are 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 more active role it had assumed in classical thought. 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 TOGETHER
>
> —Gordon Matta-Clark[39]

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.[40] 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.

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.

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. Matta-Clark's interest 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 DISORDERS[41]

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 book, the particular questions it prompts regarding creative method and judgement need to be taken up: their presence runs throughout the text, while they are explicitly addressed in chapters 5 and 6. 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.

# 3 Space (& Time)

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

— Gordon Matta-Clark [1]

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE WORD 'SPACE' MEANS… I KEEP USING IT. BUT I'M NOT QUITE SURE WHAT IT MEANS.

— Gordon Matta-Clark[2]

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 œuvre 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 an 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. 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.'[6] Bergson suggests that the temptation to accept space as innocent and legible is deeply rooted in the modern tradition, whereby '[i]ntelligence…is bathed in an atmosphere of spatiality'.[7] On this 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*. According to Lefebvre, such '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.'[8]

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 1, 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.'[9]

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 are experienced:

> There are certain kinds of pieces that can be summarized —or at least characterized—very quickly from a single view. And there are other ones which interest me more, finally, which have a kind of internal complexity which doesn't allow for a single and overall view, which I think is a good thing. I like it for a number of reasons, one of which is that it does defy that category of a sort of snapshot scenic work and that whole object quality that is with all sculpture.[10]

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 establishing a contingent agreement between matter and memory 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

modernism. 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.[11]

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 organise space.[12] Intensive space involves those aspects of the body and the mind that operate outside the intellect, a configuration that permits and sustains 'extensive' space, allowing contingent understanding (form-moment) while defying the whole object.

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. 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-Clark[13]

> …the indistinction of inside and outside leads to the discovery of another dimension.
>
> —Deleuze & Guattari[14]

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 6. 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.'[15]

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 mismatch 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

**6** *Open House* (also known as *Drag-on* or *Dumpster)*, 1972. (The image opposite is from one of several reconstructions, this one recreated in 2007 for *Gordon Matta-Clark & Rirkrit Tiravanija* at David Zwirner, New York.) There was a performance that took place in *Open House* at the project's opening, and also a film of *Open House* made by Matta-Clark (super 8; colour, silent, 41mins, 1972)

Discrete violations of the familiar were played out along various axes in this project: domestic+urban (familiar domestic architecture of the doors positioned out of doors in the street); domestic+urban/waste (domestic architectural elements positioned in a recognisable waste container); 'form'+waste (the old doors effectively 'belonged' in the dumpster—it was their 'proper' place, but they failed to adopt their 'proper' form, that is to say the recognisable 'bad' form of a heap of rubbish, by being organised instead according to conventional architectural rules.


CAL

once and for all.

These non-quantifiable distances and proximities open onto a related interest of Matta-Clark, 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 œuvre. 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.[16]

*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 carceral, 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. 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.[17]

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. He 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 Mycenean 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…[18]

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.[19]

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.

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; 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,[20] 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.'[21]

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 that this particular approach was taken up more generally across his œuvre; he was 'WORKING BEYOND INSIDE OUTSIDE BY SEEING WITHIN'.[22] 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.[23] 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 only 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 INTENNDED 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.[24]

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.'[25]

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 emphasising 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.[26]

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.[27]

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.[28]

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.'[29] 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.[30] 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.'[31]

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.[32]

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.[33] 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.'[34]

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.

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.[35] 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.

Clearly for Matta-Clark, the 'fine memory device' of our body was necessary but not sufficient for the expanded experience he advocated. Perception operated alongside incorporated memory: both played a part in recognition and both operated across the gap within the process of experience (that is, between knowledge and action). Nevertheless, they were different, theoretically independent, and their difference is due to the kinds of time they involve: the linear time of perception, (logically reducible to the instant) and the non-chronological time of bodily memory or recollection. In conversation with Donald Wall, Matta-Clark explained his understanding of the role that memory plays in experience, 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~~ amorphic 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.[36]

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. 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. In its strongest sense, this discontinuity—or *strange contradiction*—between the perception of the physical world and the world of recollection, 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…[37]

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 ONES 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. 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 misused to generate many of Matta-Clark's building dissections). 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.

## Mapping the Labyrinth

Matta-Clark described various stages of evolution that culminated in the kind of photocollages reproduced in figure 1: 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.'[38]

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 collection of 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.'[39] 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 an 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 œuvre, 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 photocollaged 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 photocollages.

Matta-Clark clarified what he understood to be the differences between photographic representation and experience when he discussed how his photocollages 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 that the camera ever had.[40]

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 photocollages 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.[41]

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 photocollages 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', emphasising that this can spring from non-optical qualities of vision. 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 book, 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 photocollages 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'.[42]

The suggestion that the photocollages 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). 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.'[43] 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 œuvre 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, and he expresses this impossibility in visual terms: '…the multiplicity of views is the question opened up by the picturesque, its knot of contradiction'.[44]

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.'[45] Bois argues that any stroll around Serra's sculpture will frustrate observers' 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.

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. Instead of attempting to do this directly, it is 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: experience of a picturesque work could encounter both the possible co-presence of an organising plan, and the disruption of that plan. As part of 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.

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 a 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.

Matta-Clark emphasised 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'.[46] The photocollages that I have been discussing can be understood to echo this kind of narrative variation, but again it must be emphasised 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. His interest is in supplementing here-there movement of extensive spatiality by including intensive or haptic spatiality.

To acknowledge and incorporate the creative power of movement associated with haptic spatiality, or what might be termed 'false' movements, involved in the actual experience of the dissections, and the re-presentation of this experience through the photocollages, 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 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 inform and 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.
>
> —Gordon Matta-Clark[47]

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.[48]

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 systematising methods of traditional archaeology, his approach was more concerned to show the past as incomplete, fragmentary, and involved in other, non-chronological relationships with the present.

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,'[49] 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.[50] 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'.[51] 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'.[52]

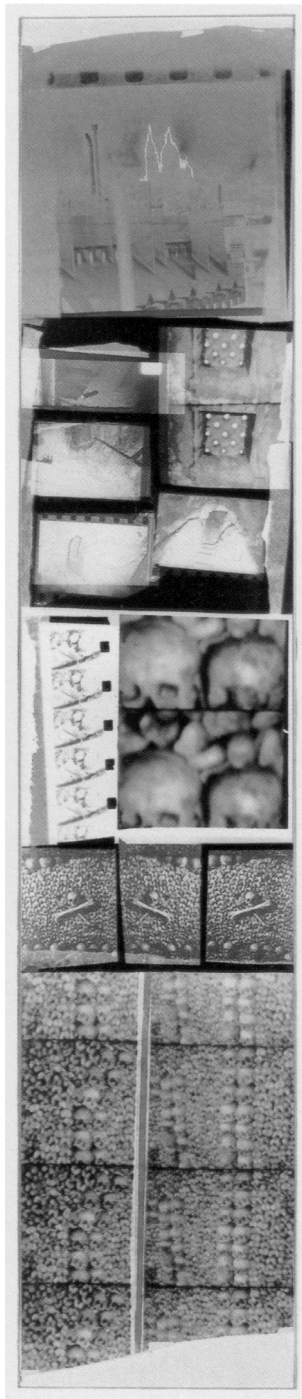
*Underground Paris* comprises a set of four photocollages, each of which documents a particular investigation undertaken by Matta-Clark at Les Halles, the Ópera, St. Michel, and Notre Dame respectively (figure 7). Each collage gives up a small amount of space towards the top of the composition for a 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

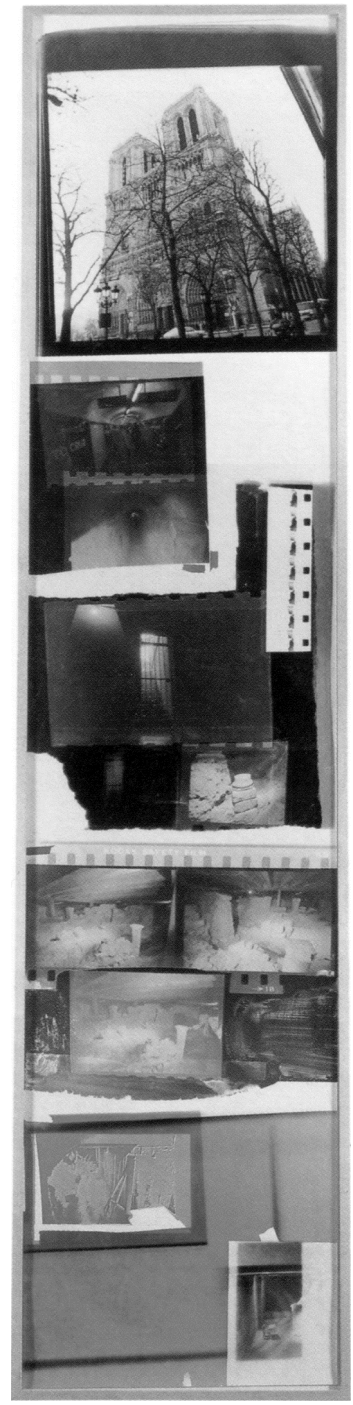
city's spaces takes its place as a middle zone of everyday familiarity, between the sky and the subterranean. The overall verticality of each of the four collages is emblematic of the process of excavation itself, although the arrangement taken up by the fragments of information within each collage, 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, *Sous-sols de Paris* and *Substrait* (illustrated in figures 8 and 9). When *Substrait* takes the viewer under the ground of New York, the expedition is for the most part described within a documentary format. 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.

**7** (Following pages) *Underground Paris*, (Ópera, Les Halles, St. Michel & Notre Dame), 1977

Further complication of the direction and connection of the explorations emerges as these are located within Matta-Clark's broader œuvre. *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, 21 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.



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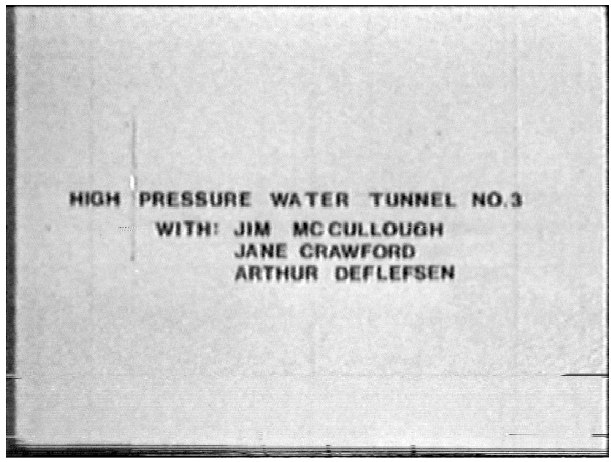
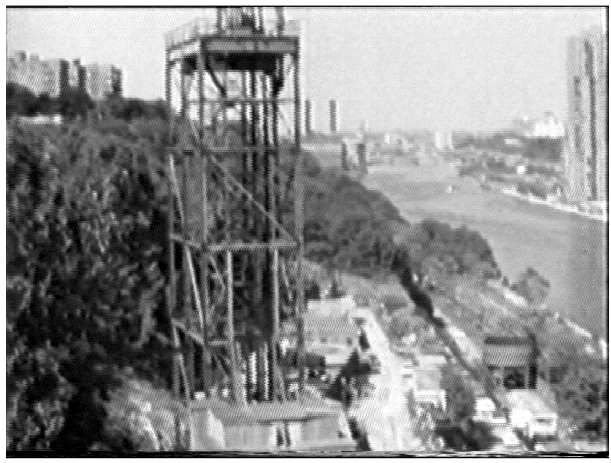
**8** (Above & opposite) Stills from *Sous Sols de Paris* (Super 8 and 16mm, B&W, sound, 18:40 min), 1977

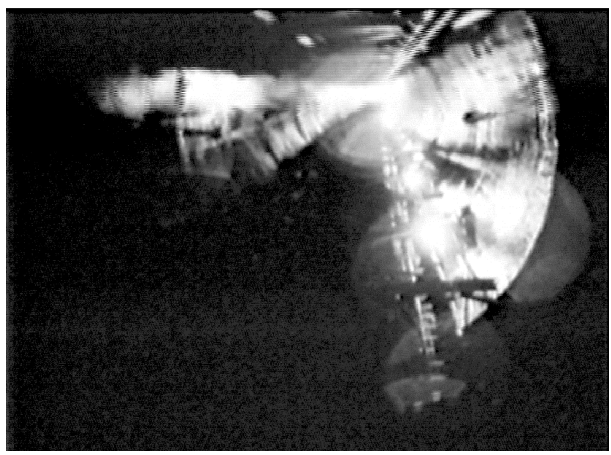
In *Sous sols de Paris* there occur many repetitions and juxtapositions of both visual and 'narrative' motifs in the film language and events. Also, there is a gestural stammering, with same camera movement run over different terrain. The movement suggested by the cinematic image is frequently contrary to the actual movement of camera.

**9** (Following page) Stills from *Substrait (Underground Dailies)* (16mm, colour and B&W, sound, 30 mins), 1976

*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. On the whole, the protagonists are clearly identifiable and their involvement does nothing to undo what each section possesses of a narrative structure. Camera movement fairly consistently follows a documentary approach, sound and image can both be made out and are generally synchronic, although the direct-sound inscribes off-screen space that unsettles any straightforward spectatorial identification with the space of the image.


HIGH PRESSURE WATER TUNNEL NO.3
WITH: JIM MC CULLOUGH
JANE CRAWFORD
ARTHUR DEFLEFSEN





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.'[53] 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. In this regard, these films, and the photocollages of *Underground Paris*, can be related to Matta-Clark's attempts to map the experience of the building dissections using photocollages, 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 differences in the particular devices Matta-Clark used to bring this about. Whereas the photocollages 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 the 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.'[54] Although Smith draws on the 'similar temporal dimension [that] resonates both in

photography and stammering',[55] 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 photocollages 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 an dynamic form 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. 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.'[56] 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 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.

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, 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, involving an effort, and cannot be sustained for long on their own terms, but 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 œuvre 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 œuvre 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.

# Part II: Without Modernism

# 4 User (Observer/Viewer)

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 13) 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 systematisation that was epitomised by the gallery, but manifest much more oppressively in the carceral state of, for example, social housing he observed:

> PRISON CELLS—LIVING CELLS
> ENCLOSURE—CONTAINMENT—CONFINEMENT
> MIND CELL → BODY CELL[4]

The expanded experience of space discussed 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. 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.'[5] Despite various caveats, she maintains that both the coherence and promise of installation work resides in this notion of participation.

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.[6] 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.[7] 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.[8]

While Matta-Clark's stated interest in bringing art 'out of the gallery and into the sewers'[9] implicitly echoes this 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 idea over the sensual and the material, and the notion of 'progress' or 'civilisation' linked to its accomplishment. 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.'[10]

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'[11] 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.'[12] '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…'[13]

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.'[14] 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.[15]

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

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 œuvre 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*). 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. 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'.[16] 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.'[17]

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'.[18] 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 œuvre.

## Body

> BEING WITHOUT A PLACE TO LIVE
> NOT BEING COMFORTABLE IN YOUR OWN SKIN
> HAVING NOWHERE TO GO
> STANDING PERFECTLY STILL…
> —Gordon Matta-Clark[19]

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…'[20] 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 materialised human body became increasingly predicated on 'the propriety of gravity and the upright viewer. This is the etiquette of normal social discourse'.[21]

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 7 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 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 SIDE[22]

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 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.[23]

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 8, 9).

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 the 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 discomforting 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.[24] Within these sequences of *Substrait* and *Sous-sols de Paris* though, they clearly figure, as here Matta-Clark's filmic work inscribes 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 photocollages 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.[25]

Across the various media that Matta-Clark used, whether film, photocollages 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.

Matta-Clark frequently experimented directly with the effects of gravity and suspension: early pieces such as *Tree Dance* (1 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.[26] 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'.[27] 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.

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 photocollages, Matta-Clark gave the spectator or the visitor a problem. They 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 a 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

photocollages, 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 obtain 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 from 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;[28] 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.

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). 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 obtain 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.

The importance for spectators 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. 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 œuvre, 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.

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 the conceptual framework for their experience, these issues impact elsewhere.

In particular, they clearly raise questions for the creative process that is charged with such reconfiguration, and the impact of these deliberations extends beyond the user (viewer, observer) to the artist and architect, challenging assumptions regarding the production of their work in a variety of ways. 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 these issues, the following chapter will examine Matta-Clark's own particular approach to processes of production and judgement.

# 5 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 œuvre 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 cannot 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. 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.'[2]

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. Challenges to autonomy thus had to exceed the conditions of art's reception, by also altering the artist's own relationship to the creative process. 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.[3]

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 demands 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.[4]

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.'[5] 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.

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'.[6] 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.[7] 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.[8]

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 photocollages. In addition to his aim of approximating the 'all-around' experience of space discussed in chapter 3, 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.[9]

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 façades 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 photocollages *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 durational or performative artpieces, 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.[10]

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. 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 wordplay names 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.'[11]

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.'[12] 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 DIMENTIONS MAKING THE DISCUSSIONS THE SHOW AND THE WORK.—KEEPING IT AN ONGOING OPEN PROCESS NOT FINISHING JUST KEEPING GOING AND STARTING OVER & OVER[13]

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 œuvre 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.[14] 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'.[15] 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. 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.'[16]

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*).[17]

Addressing the object 'in all its senses', Matta-Clark's œuvre undertook an ongoing *altération* 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;[18] to attack the paper may well get to the 'support' of the drawing, but it would leave the architect's 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 architectural experience. 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. 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 misapplied 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 realised, 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: rather than just adding another instance to Bataille's non-vegetable art history,[19] Matta-Clark's own projects enjoy a more involved temporality: *altération* was enacted within his own œuvre, 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 principal target: reading *altération* within Matta-Clark's œuvre 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.[20] 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'.[21]

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 and 23, 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'.[22] 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.[23]

> I cannot 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…[24]

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 photocollages 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 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 œuvre, 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.

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.[25]

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 lowpoint 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.'[26] 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.[27] 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 NESSARY 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.[28]

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.'[29]

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 Nácional 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. 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-architecturing 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 œuvre 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.'[30] 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. 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 10). 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.[31]

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. 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 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 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,

**10** Still from *Clockshower* (16mm, colour, no sound, 13:50min), 1974

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.

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.[32]

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 organisation 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 idealised, autonomous self, on one hand, and of being a relay within a broader system, on the other.

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 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.'[33]

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 œuvre 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 LAW[34]

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 œuvre 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'**

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.[35]

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',[36] 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.'[37]

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'. 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 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 form. 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.[38]

To position Matta-Clark's discussion beyond paradox it is necessary for *Directional Law* to both uphold the law while demonstrating its lawlessness. 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. That a judgement involves violence does not invalidate it *per se*, but this does require the notion of violence be approached carefully.

Here particularly, this notion is found within Matta-Clark's œuvre 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.'[39] She reads this sign as a pointer to 'the individualistic power of the artist'[40] 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'.[41]

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 recognised 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, observers are 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'. Instead of being bound by contract to one position, an individual's situation in society would be redraughted 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 œuvre 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 œuvre'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, 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. 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 from an observer's experience of the ambiguities of the grey zone, through which their particular experience was decided contingently.

To make this distinction in terms of jurisprudence, it can be understood as the difference between *legal* and *just* decisions: it 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 ambiguities of the grey zone for the various reasons already rehearsed, 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 ambiguities of the grey zone 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 œuvre, 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.[42]

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, Crary repeats the common seventeenth century reference to the juridical process as being *in camera*).[43] While this model apparently humanised the understanding by secularising judgement, it again established and policed the absolute separation between the mundane sensory world and the realm of transcendental form-ideas.

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 are just repressed and lurk behind that which is taken for granted. His œuvre brings these undecidables, the ambiguities of the grey zone, 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, not only does their 'view' become a momentarily stable view of a changing situation rather than an enduring view of a static object, 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, there is no singular private audience position removed from this process; to accept the ambiguities of the grey zone 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.'[44] 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 authorisation 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 œuvre challenged this position by revealing these aspects of process in everyday situations. 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 faced with the excess of practice. 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, Matta-Clark's challenges to such disciplinary purity operated from within disciplinary borders by exposing a certain multiplicity of viewer positions and responses that undermined authority.

# 6 Discipline

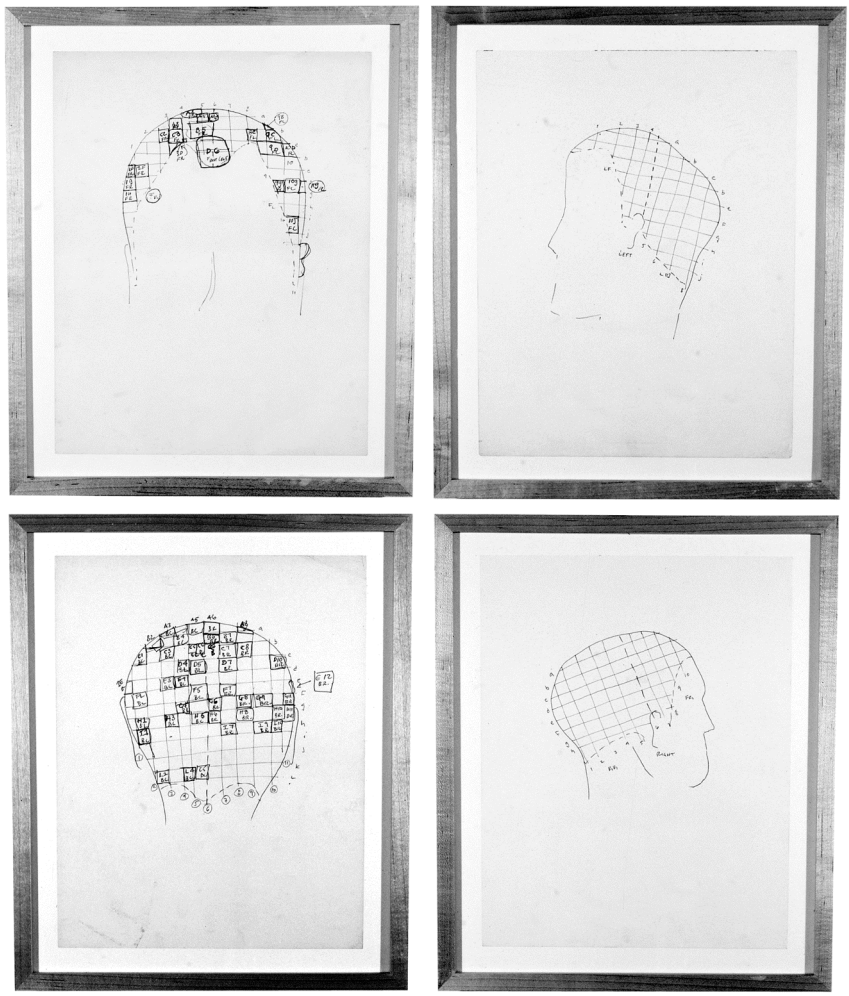
> The most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system
> —The Earl of Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy or Advice to an Author*[1]

> A PRIMARY ARCHITECTURAL FAILING A SYSTEMATIZED CONSISTANT APPROACH TO A WORLD OF TOTAL 'WONDERFUL' CHAOS
> —Gordon Matta-Clark[2]

Matta-Clark's œuvre demonstrates a variety of responses to system. Although he criticised the consequences of any unswerving belief in the ability of a 'SYSTEMATIZED CONSISTANT 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 11, adopted this approach, and despite its low-key position in his œuvre 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:

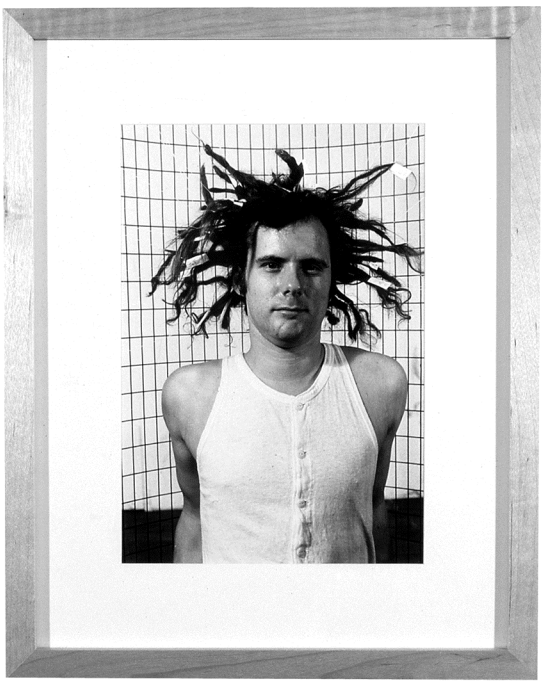
> A schematic plan [of Matta-Clark's head] was drawn, like a complex phrenological map, dividing the cranium into quadrants (front, back, left, right), and then subdividing each into a grid system. The coordinates of the numerical and alphabetical plottings corresponded to the labels that tagged each 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.[3]

Carol Goodden, who actually did the cutting, recounts how she 'carefully tagged each clump [of hair], like an archaeological dig, and then tied each



**11** (This page and opposite) *Hair*, 1972

According to Carol 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.'



piece (this was his idea) to a wire cage so that I could photograph it for identification purposes to make a wig'.[4] 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 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'.[5] 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'.[6]

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 interchangeably). 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…'[7] 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 'civilising' 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.'[8]

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 11); 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.

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, 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 characterises the production and viewing of Renaissance perspective—SW].'[9] 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 'civilising' of wild nature, territories and peoples, (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.[10]

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 photocollages 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.[11] 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

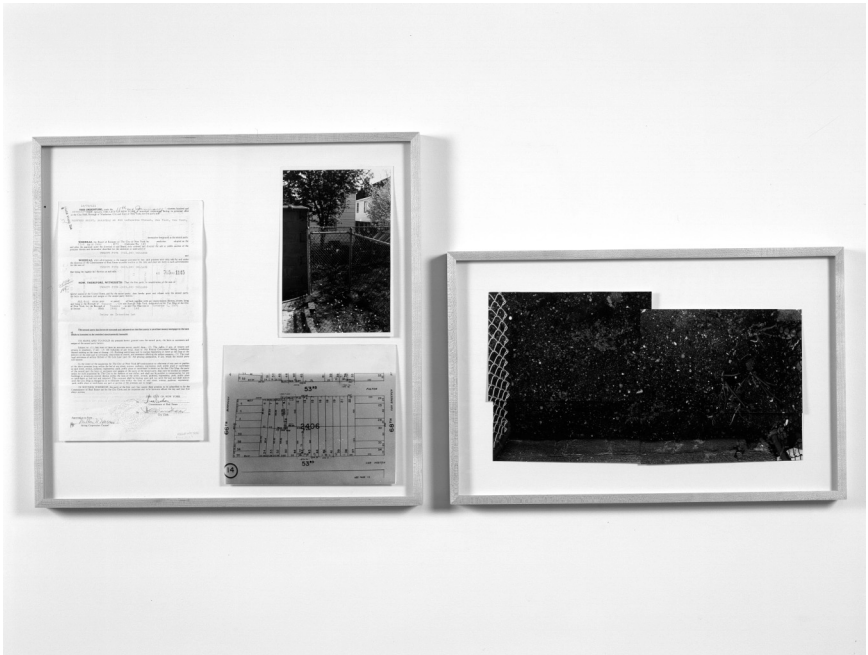
contrast between the well-ordered planning drawings and the Medusa-like photos), but the drawings themselves enjoy two different ways of describing the same object (quasi-perspective and cartographic projections), acknowledging the relationship of point of view to working surface. The latter, even with 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 12) played out more explicitly many of the issues rehearsed in *Hair*. At 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 'kerb 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.[12]

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.[13] Like *Hair*, *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* operated according to the rules of a particular system: in this case, Matta-Clark



**12** *Reality Properties: Fake Estates ('Maspeth Onions')*, 1973

Matta-Clark intended *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* to exceed the gesture of the land purchase, though it is not clear in what format it was first exhibited. Some initial thoughts shared with the journalist Dan Carlinsky indicate that he proposed a gallery-based work involving written documentation and a full-size photographic work. The implication was that these would establish a relationship with the third part of the work, the plot of land itself, in a way that echoes the *Site/Non-Site* projects of Robert Smithson. His intentions for exhibiting the project are uncertain; although they developed beyond these early thoughts, they were still to involve a combination of written and photographic work. In the version illustrated here, the project 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 receives this same treatment: fourteen plots, fourteen frames. (The fifteenth Estate has never been exhibited, as it is impossible to photograph.)

became a buyer and played the spaces and processes of the real estate system at its 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: these are the frames that can pick up the analogy of architecture's working surface. 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. 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. For Matta-Clark, to acknowledge the 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 Bear, 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.[14]

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 the 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 RI~~
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 ABSTRACT[15]

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. 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'.[16] 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'.[17] 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?[18]

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.'[19] 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 than, can you start probing the issue.[20]

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'.[21] 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.

'Usefulness' takes on the role previously occupied by 'nature', a concept or force that appears to belong outside of architecture and to which both the design and the judgement of architecture refers. However, the particular dynamics of this relationship are not so straightforward. In fact, the laws of architecture enjoy a sleight of hand at precisely this junction: rather than being controlled by outside forces such as 'nature,' the discipline of architecture gathers up and assumes control over a variety of processes while passing this situation off as natural.

What architecture puts forward as 'natural' or 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 obfuscates the mechanisms of judgement. While it insinuates itself into our own common-sense judgement, a very different process is operating behind the scenes, where the architectural profession attempts to retain control over the practice of architecture: the complex relationships between these two processes or economies are identified by much of Matta-Clark's œuvre.

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' of any profession are inseparably bound up with the nature of the profession itself'.[22] 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.

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…'[23]

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.'[24]

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.'[25] 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. 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 continued to overlook the involvement of the observer, and the general contingency and messiness that they bring. In other words, these challenges pertained only to the 'aesthetic phase' of the discipline, where rules and codes were disputed, while continuing to ignore the contingent phase of the observer's experience.

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'.[26] It is important to add, though, that he was equally ready *to include everything*.[27] His œuvre 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 as 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.[28]

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 œuvre targeted the accepted values of institutional art: although his work would not as easily be considered 'anti-art', 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 13), 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

**13** *Untitled Wall and Floor Cutting,* Galleria Salvatore Ala, Milan, Italy, 1975

This project comprised various interventions, including a wall cutting, a wire running from the street to an internal courtyard, and crossing not only the gallery but also the ancillary spaces such as offices and storerooms en route; and a floor piece (shown here) consisting of a regular array of crosses dug in the floor.

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 STRUCTED 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 VERIABLE FUNCTION. EACH SIGN (SCULPTURAL GESTURE) ~~COSIGN~~ OPERATES ON A SPECIFIC ASPECT OF SPACE OR STRUCTURE (COSIGN) AND IS VARIBLE IN TERMS OF THE LIMITS SET UPON IT BY ITS IMPOSITION ON A SPECIFIC CONDITION.[29]

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 epitomised 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.[30] It is precisely this metonymic tendency that Matta-Clark's projects and broader approach contest: 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. 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 œuvre 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.'[31] 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 needs 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. 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.'[32]

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.[33]

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, 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.'[34] 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.'[35]

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.[36]

*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' (figure 14). 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.[37]

AN ARK KIT PUNCTURE
AN ACHITECTURE
ANARCHYTORTURE
AN ARCTIC LECTURE
ATLANTIS LECTURE
AN ORCHID TEXTURE
ANT LEGISLATOR
ANARCHY LECTURE
AN ART COLLECTOR
AUNT ARTIC TORTURE
AN AIRKEY TACKLE

A KNEECAP FRACTURE
INARCHITECTURE
ONARCHITECTURE
AN ATTIC TORTURE
AN ARCTIC VECTOR
AN ART KIT TORTURE
ANARCHY THUNDER
A LETTUCE TEXTURE
AN ART DEFECTOR
AN ASS REFLECTOR
AN AIRKEY TACTILE

ANACUPUNCTURE
ANASTRALVECTOR
AN AUSTRAL UNDER
A NECTOR TASTER
A NARCO TRADER
AN ASSTRAL FACTOR
A fillibUSTER
A FULLER BRUSHMAN
AN AUSTRAL BUSHMAN
AN ARTIC TRACTOR
AN AIR KEY TICKLE

Their only exhibition, later published as a double page spread in *Flash Art*, 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 too is precisely Cousins' point: the elements of the [weak] practice neither authorise nor constitute the practice as such.'[38] *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

**14** Photographs collected (top row) and taken (bottom row) by the *Anarchitecture* group, c.1974

The *Anarchitecture* show at 112 Greene St (9–22 March 1974), and the subsequent article in *Flash Art* (June 1974, pp.70–71) included such material, as well as the variations and permutations of the name of the discipline cited in the text opposite, various references to architecture's long history (such as *The Phallus of Delos* (c. 300BC) and the Renaissance architect and theorist 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 revelazione' for the centrally planned church), and images referring to weather, decay, the recycling of ideas, the horizon, the moon and so on.

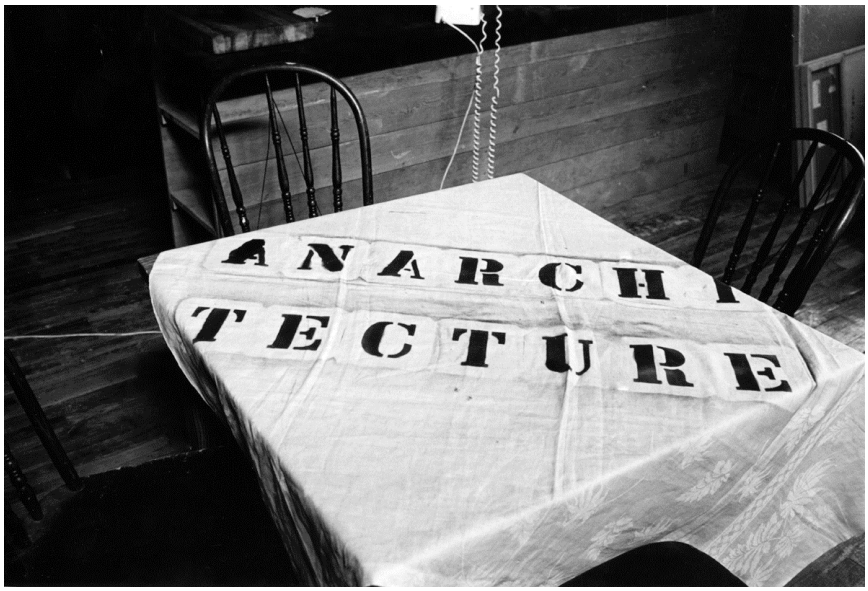
and the profession: in Kennick's terms, we can either repeat the traditional mistake and laugh it off, simply dismiss it as that which is conventionally dismissed, or we can *decide* how to put it together, and take up the moral, practical and aesthetic dimensions of this evaluation.

## 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.[39]

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 (figure 15). 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 œuvre. 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, it is also apparent that the discipline




**15** Photograph of the *Anarchitecture* table, which was used as the base for the invitation to the *Anarchitecture* show, 112 Greene St, 9–22 March, 1974

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.'[40] *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.[41]

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*.

# 7 Discrete Violations

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.

—Gordon Matta-Clark[1]

We've passed through here before, but we haven't quite finished. Although Matta-Clark's work with *Anarchitecture*, and his œuvre 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 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 blackholes 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 œuvre 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 5 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 figure for this more nimble relationship; the photographs, reproduced in figure 16, 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 BOURDIES', 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 œuvre 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 traditional explanations that 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.

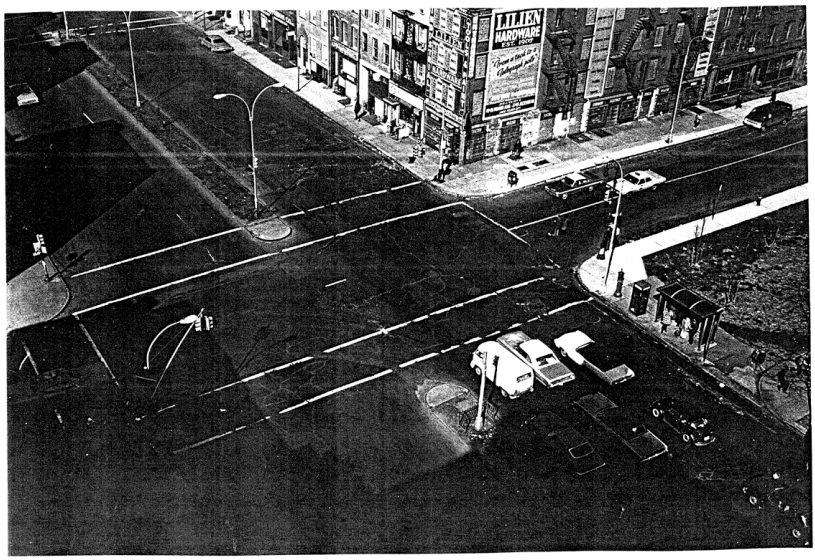
Similarly to Matta-Clark, Bergson argued that full human experience must position the subject in a broader field of possibilities than traditionally: it is in this situation that the inventive or creative question was charged with exploring the conditions of existence beyond what is taken for granted, behind what we take for common sense itself. The 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 inherited and sustained by modernism, in order to instigate new, dynamic boundaries to explain and support experience.

More precisely then, Matta-Clark's demand that the experience of a architecture should involve a *certain kind of extension* can be understood as an extension-as-creative-questioning, one that separates experience into the various differences of kind explored in the previous chapters, differences that can be pushed in different directions and subsequently recombined as realised experience. 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.'[4]

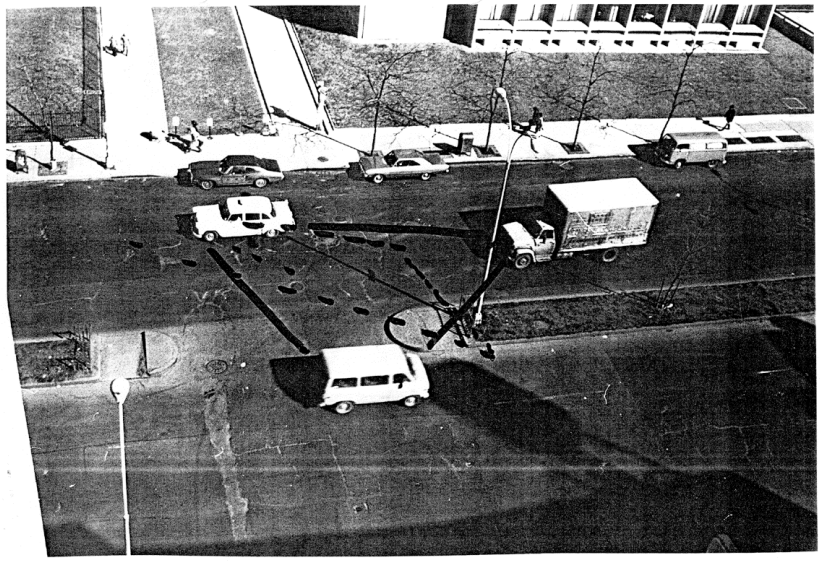
These trajectories away from and returning to experience, these 'lines of fact', include subjective and objective tendencies, qualities and quantities. Coincidentally, Matta-Clark mused on the dynamic relationships involved in spatial experience in similar terms; terms that echoed both the centrality 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
> TRANSMITTER
> FIXED POINT
> BEYOND WHICH SPACE IS VARIABLE ACCORDING TO PRESENCE OF RECEIVERS[5]

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,




**16** *Traffic Game Board Game Centers* and *Dynamic Bourdies*, annotated photographs from the *Anarchitecture* period, c.1974



DYNAMIC BOUNDARIES

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.[6]

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. 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 inter-relationships 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.[7]

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 5, 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',[8] 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 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-Clark[9]

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' 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.'[10] 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 dynamise this skin by perforating it, traversing it, passing through to the other side: "after having exploded the wall of the problem," as [Artaud] says.'[11] 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,[12] 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 dynamised 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.'[13]

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.'[14] Derrida's exhortation to dispose of the normal cleverness of the drawing principle echoes earlier discussions of the apparently innocent role played by 'common sense' in upholding disciplinary authority. Here, he points more clearly to a way around this situation, 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 œuvre. 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.

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…'[15] 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 œuvre 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 HOMOGENIOUS ACCESSABILITY 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-USE[16]

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…'[17] 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.'[18]

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.'[19]

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'.[20] 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, 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'[21] is helpful in the present discussion. From Smith, we could suggest that much of Matta-Clark's œuvre 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.[22] 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 insists on two types of clarity that are different in kind.

In so doing, Matta-Clark's œuvre 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 œuvre. 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'.[23] 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 form-idea 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'…[24]

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 CONTEXT

—Gordon Matta-Clark [25]

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 œuvre. 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.[26]

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…'[27] These aspects of the gesture are clearly identifiable across Matta-Clark's œuvre, 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 œuvre, given his repeated emphasis of the exploratory aspect of his work and its particular antiformal operation.

Beyond this broad coincidence, 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.[28]

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 a 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 œuvre. Recalling the terms introduced in the previous section, his œuvre's inscription of defective language operates in such as way as to instigate a variety of 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. This defective language 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.[29]

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 a moment where 'normal' recourse to language failed.

Matta-Clark's Anarchitectural events stressed the importance of maintaining as much as altering the framework and ingredients with which individuals 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. 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: 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 5 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.

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.'[30] 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.'[31]

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 œuvre 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 œuvre'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 observers 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. Matta-Clark's work 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. 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. 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 œuvre 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. 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.

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 œuvre. 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'. 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 BOURDIES and TRAFFIC GAME-BOARD CENTERS

(figure 14), 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 ANARCHITECTURAL[32]

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 œuvre 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.

In contrast to traditional expectations, which organised the encounter with artworks and architecture by referring experience back to the prior, ideal form for appropriate judgement against correct disciplinary criteria, Matta-Clark's œuvre supported contingent and prospective experience-experimentation. Nevertheless, the latter cannot simply replace the former: taking account of both his explicit determination to maintain and gamble with the familiar demands that his œuvre, inasmuch as this was a critique of the particular strands of modernism that marked his education, be approached as both within and beyond 'modern' disciplinary categories and processes of categorisation.

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.[33] 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 a bounded 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.[34] 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. The importance of the transgressive operations of metaphor lay 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 CONVIENIENT 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 BEGININGS…'[35] He described the *Anarchitecture* group's deployment of metaphor as having a similar intention and sphere of operation, without 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'.[36] *Anarchitecture* deployed metaphor to work without-outside modernism by avoiding its expectations, particularly towards 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'.[37]

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 œuvre provided deliberately 'defective' language. The gestures, *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 superimpositioning 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 as way as to produce an interference pattern that introduced the chaos of the world within these disciplinary boundaries. Such gestures in 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. 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-idea. 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 redeploying 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…'[38] He described this superimpositional approach as working 'WITHROUGH' walls: by simultaneously adopting, redeploying 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.

# Notes

## Preface

1 Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion,* tr. Robert Hurley, Zone Books, New York, 1989, p.9.

2 These include Marianne Brouwer, in Corinne Diserens and María Casanova (eds), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* IVAM Centre Julio González, Valencia, 1993; Pamela M. Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark,* MIT Press, Cambridge, 1999; James Atlee and Lisa Le Feuvre, *Gordon Matta-Clark: The Space Between,* Nazraeli Press, Tuscon AZ & Portchester, 2003; Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide,* Zone Books, New York, 1997. Many of these writers approach Bataille through Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille,* MIT Press, Cambridge, 1989.

3 John Rajchman, 'Thinking Big (John Rajchman talks with Rem Koolhaas),' in *Artforum,* 33, December 1994), p.99. 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.' Anthony Vidler, "'Architecture-to-Be": Notes on Architecture in the Work of Matta and Gordon 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.59.

4 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark, on deposit at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal (hereafter EGMC), *Articles & Documents 1942–76*, Anarchitecture Period, c.1973.

## Introduction

1 Podro notes 'Either the context-bound quality or the irreducibility of art may be elevated at the expense of the other. If a writer diminishes the sense of context in his concern for the irreducibility or autonomy of art, he moves toward formalism. If he diminishes the sense of irreducibility in order to keep a firm hand on extra-artistic facts, he runs the risk of treating art as if it were the trace or symptom of those other facts. The critical historians were constantly treading a tightrope between the two.' Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art,* Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1982, p.xx.

2 Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Liza Bear, 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Splitting (the Humphrey Street Building),' in *Avalanche,* (December 1974). (Reprinted in Diserens and Casanova (eds), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., pp.374ff., and in Corinne Diserens (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* Phaidon Press, London & New York, 2003, p.166.) Anthony Vidler emphasises

the point: 'From the outset of his career as an artist, his care with respect to what he understood to be the true goals of architecture is abundantly evident.' Vidler, 'Architecture-to-Be,' op.cit., p.69.

3 Mark Linder has done much to challenge the caricatured version of Greenberg in his excellent *Nothing Less Than Literal: Architecture After Minimalism,* MIT Press, 2004.

4 Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Florent Bex (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark*, Internationaal Cultureel Centrum Antwerp, 1977, p.8ff. (Interviewer unknown).

5 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, pp.5–6.

6 ibid. See also *American Type Painting* [1955] in the same collection.

7 Henry-Russell Hitchcock & Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*, New York, 1932. see also Hitchcock's *The 'International Style' Twenty Years After* [1952] reprinted in the new edition of *The International Style* in 1966, along with the Foreword, for a discussion of their original intentions of this term. See also Henry-Russell Hitchcock *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Penguin Books, 1958, 1977, Ch.22, n.1, p.621, for a discussion of the difference between the terms *International Style* and the 'vaguer' *modern architecture of the second generation*.

8 Gavin Macrae-Gibson, *The Secret Life of Buildings: An American Mythology for Modern Architecture,* MIT Press, Cambridge, 1985, p.170.

9 Peter Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth Century Culture,* Verso, London, 1993, p.114.

10 Michael Fried, 'How modernism Works: A Reply to T. J. Clark,' in *Critical Inquiry* (September 1982), p.227.

11 William Lethaby, *The Architecture of Adventure*, in 'Form and Civilisation' [1922] OUP, p.95, cited in Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture,* Thames & Hudson, London, 2000, p.130.

12 R. H. Wilenski, 'Ruminations of Sculpture and the Work of Henry Moore,' in *Apollo*, December 1930, vol.12, pp.409–13. cited in Sue Malvern, 'The Identity of the Sculpture, 1925–1950,' in Penelope Curtis, Denise Raine, Meatthew Withey, Jon Wood and Victoria Worsley (eds), *Sculpture in 20th-Century Britain,* Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2004, p.81. Wilenski's *The Meaning of Modern Sculpture*, Faber & Faber, London, 1932, advocates the disposition to study from 'first principles and general laws', in common with much of contemporary culture.

13 Panofsky's system attempted to establish an absolute viewpoint from which to regard the art of the past, and was framed explicitly as an attempt to overcome 'merely historical' approaches, which were unable to 'fix it [an artwork] in its absolute place and meaning related to an Archimedean point outside of its own sphere of being…' Erwin Panofsky, *Der Begriff des Kunstwollens*, [1920] *Aufsätze*, p.33, translated in Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art,* op.cit., p.180.

14 Greenberg, *Modern Painting*, op.cit., p.8.

15 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: the Growth of a New Tradition,* [1941], Harvard University Press, London and Cambridge, MA, 1967, p.581.

16 Despite their affirmed 'unity of viewpoint', the CIAM declaration at Sarraz involved extensive negotiations both prior to and during the congress, and effectively required the signatories to support Le Corbusier's vision for the organisation as 'an exclusive cadre of architects providing built solutions to problems defined by the business elite and international experts'. Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960,* MIT Press, 2000, p.27. Mumford's account highlights several serious conflicts in the background of the CIAM declaration; in our context, the various drives to 'purify'

(Mies, Gropius) and to 'clean up' (Giedion) modern architecture are of particular interest; see Ch.1, esp. pp.10–11.

17 For an examination of the relationship between avant-garde modernism and the institutionalised, orthodox pedagogy it spawned in the United States, see Simon Sadler, *An Avant-garde Academy*, in Andrew Ballantyne (ed), *Architectures: Modernism and After,* Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, pp.33–56. Vidler also discusses the connections between Greenbergian modernism, art and architecture, and architectural education (and particularly the development of a formalist architectural pedagogy by the so-called 'Texas Rangers' grouped around Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky that structured Matta-Clark's education at Cornell): see particularly Vidler, 'Architecture-to-Be,' op.cit., pp.66–70.

18 Robert A.M. Stern, *Toward a Modern Architecture After Modernism*, Rizzoli, New York, 1981, p.8. Stern's alternative terminology is more telling: he groups the first two generations together as the 'exclusives', referring to aspects of their design process that clearly echo the purifying drives of modernism raised above. In contrast, his initial definition of the third generation acknowledged their 'inclusive' approach.

19 A significant publication, on the back of a 1969 conference, is *Five Architects*, Oxford University Press, [1972] 1975. Includes, significantly in our context, an introduction by Colin Rowe, and a postscript by Philip Johnson. In his Preface, Arthur Drexler explicitly positions these architects picking up '…where the thirties left off…'

20 Andrew MacNair, interviewed by Joan Simon, in Mary Jane Jacob (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 1985, p.96. MacNair was the curator of the 'Idea as Model' exhibition at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York (December 1976), occasion of Matta-Clark's now infamous 'Window Blow-Out' piece. On this project and its relationship to the 'New York Five', see David Cohn's excellent essay 'Blow-out: Gordon Matta-Clark y los cinco de Nueva York', in Darío Corbeira (ed), *¿Construir.o deconstruir? Textos sobre Gordon Matta-Clark,* Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca, 2000, pp.77–90.
Matta-Clark remarked to Donald Wall: 'Incidentally, the only professional architect I have any empathy with is Robert Venturi. His contradictory, complex layering of space and surfaces have a modicum of interest, obviously for self-justificating reasons. But then he has to verify, to "pedigree", what he does in terms of some historical review, and then he applies it all to functional programs. Complexity/contradiction justifies itself. It serves no purpose other than just being.' Gordon Matta-Clark, *Transcript: Interview Between Wall and Matta-Clark: Rough Draft*, EGMC, *Articles and Documents 1942–76*, circa late 1975/early 1976, #11a.

21 'I grew up in New York in this kind of [totally unattractive and derelict ] environment. As the City evolved in the Fifties and Sixties into a completely architectured International Style steel and glass megalopolis, by contrast, great areas of what had been residential were being abandoned. These areas were being left as demoralising reminders of "Eploit it or Leave it." It is the prevalence of this wasteland phenomena that drew me to it.' Gordon Matta-Clark. Interview from Bex (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.8ff.

22 Gordon Matta-Clark, Loose-leaf notes drafting the Anarchitecture exhibition, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942–76*, Anarchitecture Period, c.1973.

23 Thomas Schumacher, 'Contextualism: Urban Ideals + Deformations,' in *Casabella*, #359/60, 1971, p.84. 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.

24 Forty, *Words and Buildings,* op.cit., pp.134–5. Forty follows the Italian interest in context and *ambiente* via Aldo Rossi (*The Architecture of the City*), where Rogers is criticised for the

vagueness of *ambiente*; Rossi, in contrast, wanted to identify a concrete manifestation of historical development in architectural forms themselves.

25 Gordon Matta-Clark, cited in Bear, 'Splitting,' op.cit., pp.34–7.

26 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #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".'

27 Anthony Vidler, 'Splitting the Difference,' in *Artforum*, Summer, 2003, p.36.

28 '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.

29 Gordon Matta-Clark, Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #8.

30 Forty, *Words and Buildings,* op.cit., 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 Paleolothic 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 Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting,' op.cit., and also *American Type Painting* [1955] in the same collection.

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

## Chapter 1

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

2 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #15.

3 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 the previous chapter, but which are beyond the concern of the present work.

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

5 Gordon Matta-Clark, 'Proposal to the Workers of Sesto San Giovanni, Milan,' typewritten letter, EGMC, *Letters 1975.*

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

7 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1330 (the same text appears on Notecard #1178).

8 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind,* tr. Mabelle L. Andison, F. Hobner & Co., New York, 1946, pp.58–9. For Bergson, the ability to create novelty had ethical and political implications: on the nature of the free act, see ibid., p.17.

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

10 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,*.

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

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

13 ibid., p.149.

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

15 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.' pp.38.

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

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

18 'ANARCHITECTURE————————WORKING IN SEVERAL DIMENTIONS 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.

19 Bergson, *The Creative Mind,* op.cit., pp.38–9.

20 ibid., pp.38–9. Emphasis added.

21 ibid., pp.38–9.

22 ibid., pp.40–1.

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

24 Jeffrey Lew, Letter to IVAM, October 1992, in ibid., p.370.

25 '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*, EGMC, *Articles and Documents 42–76*, August 1973.

26 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century,* MIT Press, 1990 p.40. Italics in the original.

27 ibid., p.41.

28 G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding* [1765], tr. Peter Remnant & Jonathan Bennett, Cambridge, 1981, (Book II, Ch.xi) p.144.

29 Leibniz, *New Essays*, op.cit., Bk.II, Ch.xi, p.145.

## Chapter 2

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

2 ibid., #4.

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' Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting,' op.cit., 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 '… 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 Fontano 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.

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

6 Gordon Matta-Clark, interviewed by Bear, 'Splitting,' op.cit. p.35.

7 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.

8 Plato, *Phædrus*, 265E.

9 *Timæus*, 28. (§3: Prelude).

10 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' Ordover, 4th December 1975, where he states that 'If anything emerges to cut up, I'll go anywhere anytime.' EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942–78*. Brinoy Fer has discussed Matta-Clark's own description of his cuts as 'Spatial Drawing'; see 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.

11 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. Maclehose [1907], Dover Publications, New York 1960, §74 'The Nature and Materials of Design or Drawing.'

12 Vasari, *On Technique*, op.cit., §74 *The Nature and Materials of Design or Drawing.* See also Karen-edis Barzman, 'Perception, Knowledge and the Theory of Disegno in Sixteenth-Century Florence,' in L. Feinberg, 'From Studio to Studiolo,' (Ex.Cat.) Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1991. Cited in Lee, 'Drawing In Between,' in Sabine Breitwieser (ed), *Reorganizing Structure by Drawing Through It: Zeichnung Bei Gordon Matta-Clark,* Generali Foundation, Vienna, 1997, p.28.

13 Vasari, On Technique, op.cit., §75 Use of Design (or Drawing) [disegno] in the Various Arts, emphasis added.

14 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.

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

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

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

18 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', and 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.

19 Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* op.cit., p.205ff.

20 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: A Retrospective,* op.cit., p.23.

21 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.

22 Gordon Matta-Clark, 'Cannibalism, Suburbia and Defoliation,' Sketchbook EGMC, #828, c.1969–71, pp.11–12.

23 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.

24 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.

25 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 my 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Drawing on Architecture,' in *Grey Room,* 18, (Winter 2005).

26 Matta-Clark, Letter to Harold Stern (Assistant Commissioner, Department of Real Estate, NY), EGMC, *Letters 1970–74*, July 10th, 1971.

27 Gordon Matta-Clark, 'RECIPIES,' Sketchbook, EGMC, #828, c.1969–71, p.7.

28 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 Francisco Art Institute*, 'The Splitting Series of Gordon Matta-Clark,' given on 27th November 2001: see also Crow, 'Survey,' op.cit.

29 Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' p.77.

30 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.

31 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 channelling the loss of energy.' Gloria Moure, 'Short Term Eternity,' in Gloria Moure (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark: Works and Collected Writings,* Ediciones Polígrafa, Barcelona, 2006, op.cit., p.15.

32 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 trasmutation 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 my 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Matter, Materiality, Entropy, Alchemy,' in Katie Lloyd-Thomas (ed), *Material Matters: Architecture and Material Practice,* Routledge, London, 2007.

33 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.

34 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.*

35 Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy*, [1956], tr. Stephen Corrin, Chicago University Press, 1978, p.173.

36 Vincent of Beauvais, cited in Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, *The Architecture of Matter,* Hutchinson, London, 1962, p.125.

37 Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* op.cit., p.259ff.

38 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* [1908], tr. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer, Zone Books, New York, 1988, p.219.

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

40 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.

41 Gordon Matta-Clark, two sheets detail paper, EGMC, #502, Anarchitecture period, c.1972.

## Chapter 3

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

7 Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* op.cit., p.215.
8 ibid., p.216.
9 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* op.cit., p.57.
10 Gordon Matta-Clark, interviewed by Judith Russi Kirshner, 'Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark', Diserens and Casanova (eds), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.390.
11 John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections,* MIT Press, 2000.
12 ibid., pp.130–1.
13 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #829, 1970.
14 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* [1975], tr. Dana Polan, University of Minnesota Press, 1986, p.8.
15 Greenwald to Simon, in Jacob (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective,* op.cit., p.43.
16 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #18–19.
17 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.
18 Gordon Matta-Clark cited in ibid., op.cit.
19 Georges Bataille, *The Labyrinth*, in Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939,* tr. Allan Stoekl, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985, p.172.
20 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).
21 Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections,* op.cit., p.100.
22 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #829, 1970.
23 Many of these games are also played out in 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.
24 Gordon Matta-Clark, Undated Notecard, EGMC, c.1974. 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.
25 Bergson, *The Creative Mind,* op.cit., p.34.
26 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, pp. 136–145.
27 Judith Russi Kirshner, *Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark*, in Diserens and Casanova (eds), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.391.
28 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.

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

30 Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember,* Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.102.

31 ibid., p.103.

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

33 Stephen Kern, for example, 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 1880–1918,* Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1983 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.

34 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* op.cit., pp.95–6.

35 '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.

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

37 Gordon Matta-Clark, loose leaf notes, EGMC, *Articles and Documents 1942–76,* Anarchitecture period, c.1972.

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

39 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space,* [1976, 1986], University of California Press, 1999, p.88.

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

41 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.

42 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.

43 Jonathan Hill, *The Illegal Architect,* Black Dog Publishing, London, 1998, p.46.

44 Yves-Alain Bois, 'A Picturesque Stroll Around Clara-Clara,' in *October* 29, (Summer 1984), p.34.

45 ibid., p.54.

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

47 Gordon Matta-Clark, Loose notes, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942–76*, #1340.

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

49 Dan Graham, 'Gordon Matta-Clark,' in Diserens (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.201.

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

51 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)

52 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 *Sous-sols de Paris* from the following year. For a fuller discussion of his late use of film as a medium, which covers *Substrait* and *Sous-sols de Paris*, see my '*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*.

53 Gordon Matta-Clark, letter to Wolfgang Becker (Aachen), EGMC, *Letters, 1976,* June 10th 1976.

54 Lindsay Smith, 'Lewis Carroll: Stammering, Photography and the Voice of Infancy,' in *Journal of Visual Culture,* 3, 1 (April 2004), p.105.

55 ibid., p.104.

56 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.

## Chapter 4

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., pp.74–9.

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

5 Julie H. Reiss, *From Margin to Centre: The Spaces of Installation Art,* MIT Press, 1999, p.xiii.

6 '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.

7 Just for clarity, this chapter takes the *White Cube* from O'Doherty's essays 'Inside the White Cube' where this stands as an unrealised archetype for the relationship between viewer and work, and not the family of 'White Cube' galleries in London.

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

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

10 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.

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

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

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

14 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.
15 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, c.1973. Ellipsis in the original.
16 Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* op.cit., p.202.
17 ibid., p.201. '…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.' Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* op.cit., p.204.
18 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.
19 Gordon Matta-Clark, Anarchitecture notes, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942–76*, c.1974.
20 Connerton, *How Societies Remember,* op.cit., p.101. 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.
21 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube,* op.cit., p.36.
22 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1225, c.1973.
23 James, 'Essays in Radical Empiricism,' op.cit., pp.17–18.
24 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.
25 Gordon Matta-Clark, Bear interview *Gordon Matta-Clark: Dilemmas* WBAI-FM (NY) March 1976, in Diserens (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* p.177.
26 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 Atlee and Le Feuvre, *The Space Between,* pp.62–67, and Peter Fend, 'New Architecture from Matta-Clark' in Sabine Breitwieser (ed), *Reorganizing Structure by Drawing Through It,* Generali Foundation, Vienna, 1997, 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 links, and similarly makes links to Trisha Brown's own work in this context; see Fer, 'Celluloid Circus,' op.cit., p.140.
27 Corinne Diserens, 'Gordon Matta-Clark: The Reel World,' in Corbeira (ed), *¿Construir.o deconstruir?* op.cit., pp.48–9. My translation.
28 Indeed, several anecdotal accounts of visiting Matta-Clark's projects describe the experience with reference to vertigo; for example, Yve-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, 'Threshole,' in Bois and Krauss, *Formless,* 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.

## Chapter 5

1 Gordon Matta-Clark, Interviewed by Florent Bex, in Bex (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.8ff.
2 Willoughby Sharp, 'Air Art,' in *Studio International*, May 1968, vol.175, no.900, pp. 262–3.
3 Gordon Matta-Clark, Bear interview *Gordon Matta-Clark: Dilemmas* WBAI-FM (NY) March 1976, in Diserens (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.176.
4 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.
5 Richard Nonas, 'Gordon's Now, Now,' in ibid., p.400.
6 Gordon Matta-Clark, interviewed by Liza Bear: Bear, 'Splitting,' reproduced in Diserens and Casanova (eds), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.375.
7 For a full catalogue and reproductions of Matta-Clark's 'Cut Drawings,' see Breitwieser (ed), *Reorganizing Structure,* 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.
8 See catalogue raisonné, ibid., pp.162–5.
9 Gordon Matta-Clark interviewed by Kirshner; see Kirshner 'Non-Uments,' in Diserens and Casanova (eds), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.393.
10 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.
11 Gordon Matta-Clark in an interview with Donald Wall: see Wall, 'Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' op.cit., p.79.
12 Richard Nonas, interviewed by Richard Armstrong NYC, October 14th 1980, in Diserens and Casanova (eds), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.399.
13 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC. #1218, Anarchitecture Period, c.1973.
14 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: Premièrs écrits, 1922–1940 (Gallimard, Paris, 1970) pp.247–254. Further references to this essay will be to the *Œuvres complètes*.
15 'Simplement charactérisé par l'altération des formes présentées,' *L'art primitif*, op.cit., vol. I, p.251.
16 'L'art, puisque art il y a incontestablement, procède dans ce sens par destructions successives.' Bataille, *L'art primitive*, op.cit., vol. I, p. 253.
17 '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 primitive*, op.cit., vol. I, pp. 252–253.
18 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* op.cit., p.361.
19 In his book on Manet, Bataille criticises the 'gradual, regular evolution comparable to vegetable growth' that Gautier used to describe the development of art over time.

Georges Bataille, *Manet: Biographical and Critical Survey,* tr. Austryn Wainhouse and James Emmons, Skira, Lausanne, 1955, p.63.

20 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 art-work, 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.

21 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube,* op.cit, p.47.

22 Matta-Clark, draft letter, addressed *Dear Steve*, and regarding a conversation with Larry Fagin, 'Compositions #1' in Notebook, EGMC, #829, c.1970.

23 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.

24 Gordon Matta-Clark, Interviewed by Florent Bex, in Bex (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit, p.8ff.

25 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #11b.

26 Gordon Matta-Clark, letter to Helga Retzer (Berlin), EGMC, *Letters 1975*.

27 'I have had the greatest personal satisfaction in my more renegade efforts but find it extreemly hard to exicute or sustain in truely public or even easily accessible places except once miraculously in paris where it was truley visible to the public.' Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard #5, EGMC, accessioned in *Letters 78–80*.

28 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*.

29 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.

30 Gordon Matta-Clark, letter from Paris to Jerald 'Jerry' Ordover, EGMC, *Letters 1975*, dated by hand 12/4/75, that is, 4th December. (American usage places the month first.)

31 Matta-Clark, Draft letter, addressed *Dear Steve*, and regarding a conversation with Larry Fagin, 'Compositions #1' in Notebook, EGMC, #829, c.1970.

32 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: A Retrospective,* op.cit., p.91.
When the legality of *Shoot* came to be 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.

33 Gordon Matta-Clark, letter from Paris to Jerald 'Jerry' Ordover, EGMC, *Letters 1975*, dated by hand 12/4/75.

34 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.'

35 Peter Collins, *Architectural Judgement,* Faber & Faber, London, 1971, p.76.
36 ibid., pp.34–5.
37 ibid., p.170.
38 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #8.
39 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.
40 ibid., p.139.
41 ibid., p.141.
42 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, c.1973. Original ellipsis.
43 See Crary, *Techniques of the Observer,* op.cit., pp.42–3.
44 Robin Evans, *The Projective Cast: Architecture and its Three Geometries,* MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1995, p.62.

## Chapter 6

1 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.
2 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1236, c.1973.
3 From Jacob (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective,* op.cit., 'Chronology,' more or less reprinted in Diserens and Casanova (eds), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.372.
4 Caroline Yorke Goodden, interviewed by Joan Simon, in Jacob (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective,* op.cit., p.39.
5 Georges Bataille, 'The Deviations of Nature,' in Bataille, *Visions of Excess,* op.cit., p.55.
6 ibid., p.55.
7 Caroline Yorke Goodden, interviewed by Joan Simon, in Jacob (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective,* op.cit., p.39.
8 Connerton, *How Societies Remember,* op.cit., p.34.
9 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.' p.138.
10 See ibid., Ch.4 'The Mapping Impulse in Dutch Art,' and esp. section III.
11 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.
12 Gordon Matta-Clark, in Bear, 'Splitting,' op.cit., p.35. He made a related to observation to the journalist Dan Calinsky; '[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* (14 October 1973), Real Estate Section, p.1, 12.

13 Although the relationship between these phases of *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* is different from 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 my 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Drawing on Architecture,' op.cit.
14 Gordon Matta-Clark interviewed by Liza Bear. Bear, 'Splitting,' op.cit., p.35.
15 Gordon Matta-Clark, EGMC, *Articles and Documents 1942–76*, c.1974.
16 '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. Catherine Ingraham, *Architecture and the Burdens of Linearity,* Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1998 p.30.
17 ibid., p.10.
18 ibid., pp.10–12.
19 Gordon Matta-Clark, interviewed by Liza Bear, see Bear, 'Splitting,' op.cit., p.35.
20 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #8.
21 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, p.14.
22 Collins, *Architectural Judgement,* op.cit., p.191.
23 ibid., p.33.
24 Karl N. Llewellyn, 'On the Good, the True, the Beautiful in Law,' in *The University of Chicago Law Review*, vol.ix, 1942, p.230.
25 Collins, *Architectural Judgement,* op.cit., p.141.
26 Anne M. Wagner, 'Splitting and Doubling: Gordon Matta-Clark and the Body of Sculpture,' in *Grey Room,* 14, Winter 2004, p.42.
27 For a discussion of this important qualification of Matta-Clark's 'sacrifice', see my 'Sacrificing Architecture? Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' in Ballantyne (ed), *Architectures,* op.cit., pp. 118–141.
28 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #2–3.
29 Gordon Matta-Clark, loose leaf notes, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942–76,* 1975.
30 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube,* op.cit., p.14.
31 W. E. Kennick, 'Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?' in Cyril Barrett (ed), *Collected Papers on Aesthetics,* Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1965, p.18.
32 ibid., p.19. Original emphasis.
33 Richard Nonas, in Diserens and Casanova (eds), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.374.
34 Vitruvius, *The Ten Books of Architecture,* [c. C1st BC] tr. Morris Hicky Morgan [1914], Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1960, p.5.
35 Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture,* op.cit., p.581.
36 Mark Cousins, 'Building an Architect,' in Jonathan Hill (ed), *Occupying Architecture: Between the Architect and the User,* Routledge, 1998, Ch.1, pp.14–21.
37 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.
38 Cousins, 'Occupying Architecture,' op.cit., p.21.
39 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #829, 1970.
40 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, c.1974, EGMC, *Articles & Documents, 1942–76,* Anarchitecture period, c.1973.
41 Gordon Matta-Clark, Letter to Carol Goodden from Amsterdam, EGMC, *Letters, 1973,* Monday Dec 3rd 1973.

## Chapter 7

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 James, 'A World of Pure Experience,' in James, 'Essays in Radical Empiricism,' op.cit., p.34.
5 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1182, *Anarchitecture* Period, c.1973.
6 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #11b.
7 Gordon Matta-Clark, Letter to Carol Goodden from Amsterdam, EGMC, *Letters, 1973,* Monday December 3rd 1973.
8 '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 primitive*, op.cit., vol. I, pp. 252–253.
9 Gordon Matta-Clark, invite card for *A W-Hole House,* EGMC, *Articles & Documents, 1942–76*, 1973.
10 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.
11 ibid., p.76.
12 ibid., p.124.
13 ibid., p.105.
14 ibid., p.105.
15 Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark, in Diserens and Casanova (eds), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.391.
16 Gordon Matta-Clark, 'Edges; City Edges Project,' Notebook, EGMC, #829 c.1970.
17 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* op.cit., p.313. Pleonasm is, coincidentally, a rhetorical device involving the use of more words than are necessary, or the redundant use of words.
18 ibid., p.28.
19 ibid., p.62.
20 ibid., p.97. 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 œuvre, see my 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Drawing on Architecture,' op.cit.
21 See Lindsay Smith's discussion of aspects of 'defective language' in JVC, 3(1), April 2004, pp.95–105, on the hesitancy of spaces between visual and verbal forms of representation. We have already touched on Smith's essay in Chapter 3, Space (& Time) above.
22 '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 Goodden, interview with Joan Simon, in Diserens (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.195.
23 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.
24 Derrida and Thévenin, *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud,* op.cit., pp.134–5.
25 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notebook, EGMC, #829, 1970.
26 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #15.
27 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube,* op.cit., p.106.
28 ibid., p.105.
29 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1232, Anarchitecture period, c.1973.

30 Gordon Matta-Clark, Bear interview *Gordon Matta-Clark: Dilemmas* WBAI-FM (NY) March 1976, in Diserens (ed), *Gordon Matta-Clark,* op.cit., p.175.
31 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #1.
32 Gordon Matta-Clark, Anarchitecture 4, EGMC, *Articles and Documents 1942–76,* c.1972.
33 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.
34 See Forty's section on 'Spatial Mechanics–Scientific Metaphors,' in ibid., esp. pp.92–100.
35 Gordon Matta-Clark, ~~MEASUREMENT~~ AND THE PLAN, EGMC, *Articles & Documents 1942–76*, c.1972.
36 Gordon Matta-Clark, in Bear, 'Splitting,' op.cit. p.35.
37 Gordon Matta-Clark, Notecard, EGMC, #1236, c.1973.
38 Matta-Clark, *Wall Transcript*, op.cit., #1.

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