

From Minimalism to Performance Art: Chris Burden, 1967–1971

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## ABSTRACT

From Minimalism to Performance Art: Chris Burden, 1967–1971

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This dissertation was conceived as an addendum to two self-published catalogs that American artist Chris Burden released, covering the years 1971–1977. It looks in-depth at the formative work the artist produced in college and graduate school, including minimalist sculpture, interactive environments, and performance art. Burden's work is herewith examined in four chapters, each of which treats one or more related works, dividing the artist's early career into developmental stages. In light of a wealth of new information about Burden and the environment in which he was working in the late 1960s and early 1970s, this dissertation examines the artist's work in relation to West Coast Minimalism, the Light and Space Movement, Environments, and Institutional Critique, above and beyond his well-known contribution to performance art, which is also covered herein. The dissertation also analyzes the social contexts in which Burden worked as having been informative to his practice, from the beaches of Southern California, to rock festivals and student protest on campus, and eventually out to the countercultural communes. The studies contained in the individual chapters demonstrate that close readings of Burden's work can open up to formal and art-historical trends, as well as social issues that can deepen our understanding of these and later works. Benefitting from access to the artist's estate, as well as archives collected at various institutions in Southern California, this dissertation is the first authoritative coverage of Chris Burden's early career.

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I love you.

## Introduction

“From Minimalism to Performance Art: Chris Burden, 1967–1971” looks in depth at the earliest work of the American sculptor and performance artist, Chris Burden (1946–2015), who is best known for a string of radical actions that he undertook in the early 1970s, such as *Five Day Locker Piece* and *Shoot* (both 1971). This study was conceived as an addendum to the two self-published catalogs that Burden released in the 1970s, covering the years 1971–1973 (1974) and 1974–1977 (1978), respectively.<sup>1</sup> I will cover the years preceding 1971, as well as work from that year that Burden did not, until recently, acknowledge as part of his mature career trajectory. In treating the artist’s first three performances from 1971—*Locker Piece*, *Bicycle Piece*, and *Shout Piece*—I attempt to elucidate how Burden’s collegiate sculpture informed his first significant works. While Burden continued to work in the vein of performance art off and on throughout the 1970s, as the decade wore on he reverted back to making sculptural objects and installations, many of which contained kinetic elements. In addition to these mediums, Burden also distinguished himself in the realm of television and video art, and he has more recently become a producer of beloved public artworks, such as *Urban Light* (2008), the refurbished lamppost installation in the plaza of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), which has become an icon, not only for the museum, but the entire city. Considering that Burden spent the majority of his 50-year career working primarily in sculpture, it is pertinent to look back on his foundational work in the medium in order to develop a more complete picture of an artist who is best known for only a narrow segment of his work.

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Burden, *Chris Burden 71–73* (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1974); Chris Burden, *Chris Burden 74–77* (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1978).

It has been customary to speak of Burden's early performances as if they came out of nowhere, in part because the artist himself considered his career to have begun only in 1971, with *Locker Piece*. In preparation for a late-career catalogue raisonné published in 2007, Burden delved back before *Locker Piece* and, for the first time, released information about a prior sculptural installation and performance he created in February 1971 at F Space, the alternative gallery he ran in collaboration with other graduate students from the University of California, Irvine (UCI), where Burden was amongst the school's first MFA class in studio art. In 2006, Burden titled the piece *Being Photographed, Looking Out, Looking In*, and he created a relic for it, as well as a sketch showing the layout, because no photographs of the space were taken during the installation (Fig. 67).<sup>2</sup> *Being Photographed* belongs to what Robert Smithson called, in relation to his own earliest work, the "preconscious" phase of production, or work made before the spark of the first great idea was ignited. Of such work, Caroline Jones said, "Rather than undercutting or endangering our view of Smithson's most famous earthworks, the tumultuous past that can now be constructed makes the 'conscious' productions seem even more powerfully complex."<sup>3</sup> The same is true of Chris Burden. Far from tarnishing the artist's career by appending sophomoric work to an illustrious resume, the elucidation of Burden's other collegiate and post-collegiate efforts provides a narrative in which the ambitious young artist quickly worked through different styles on his way to shedding the art object and making what we now call performance art. I argue that, in order to fully appreciate Burden's *Five Day Locker Piece*, for instance, it is essential to consider Burden's prior work in minimalist sculpture and interactive environments, and the steps he took on his way to such a radical gesture. Jones, once

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<sup>2</sup> Fred Hoffman, ed., *Chris Burden* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), pp. 17–19.

<sup>3</sup> Caroline A. Jones, "Preconscious/Posthumous Smithson: The Ambiguous Status of Art and Artist in the Postmodern Frame," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 41 (Spring 2002), p. 21.

again, contends “there are underlying continuities between the early, preconscious works and the mature production, and [...] these continuities reveal qualities that inhere in the mature works but are difficult to see without the example of the hidden production.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, methods, themes, and motifs that were established at the outset of Burden’s performance career came to define numerous later works, so it is necessary that more obscure episodes, such as *Bicycle Piece* and *Shout Piece*, receive proper attention. Due to the fact that the latter works produced less inflammatory responses than *Five Day Locker Piece* and *Shoot*, they have been unduly marginalized in a repeated emphasis on Burden’s more provocative pieces.

A similar case has recently been analyzed by Anne Wagner, who looked at Bruce Nauman’s mid-1960s graduate sculpture and asked the essential question, “What did he actually know about [sculpture],” based on his education?<sup>5</sup> Informed by Wagner’s study, which shows that influential professors, exhibitions, and modes of working had a foundational influence on the artist’s first mature pieces, I will examine Chris Burden’s early sculpture, installation, and performance art to demonstrate how each phase of the artist’s development emerged out of the revolutionary pedagogical atmosphere at Pomona College and UC Irvine, where Burden spent the years 1965–1971. Like Burden, Nauman, who attended the University of California, Davis near Sacramento, had professional success with his graduate work, exhibiting it at Nicholas Wilder’s Los Angeles gallery the same year he finished at Davis (1966). Burden’s early career had much in common with Nauman’s. In addition to attending UC graduate schools, the artists were both taught by sculptor Tony DeLap, and they simultaneously made very similar work in

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<sup>4</sup> Jones, “Preconscious/Posthumous Smithson,” p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Anne M. Wagner, “Nauman’s Body of Sculpture,” *October* 120 (Spring 2007), pp. 53–70; also published in Constance Lewallen, ed., *A Rose Has No Teeth: Bruce Nauman in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007)

the late 1960s. Throughout this study, Nauman is recurrently referenced in comparison with Burden's first sculptures and performances.

Chapter 1 discusses a minimalist, painted plywood sculpture Burden created at Pomona College in 1967 within the local context of West Coast Minimalism. Newly available biographical information puts Burden at the beachside community of La Jolla, in the company of surfers and motorcycle riders, which corresponds with the accepted origin story of the so-called Finish Fetish minimalists, who based their technique, in part, on auto-body detailing and surfboard shaping. For the original, painted plywood version of the sculpture, Burden had to work obsessively to coat and sand down layer after layer of paint in order to get a slick finish, akin to the contemporaneous work of LA sculptor John McCracken. While it is unlikely that Burden ever visited the famed Ferus Gallery, which closed in 1966, both John Mason and David Gray, who were Burden's sculpture professors at Pomona, exhibited at Ferus, and it is likely that Burden picked up on "the LA look," as well as the rebellious posturing of the Ferus crew, from them. Gray, who was one of several West Coast, minimalist sculptors that had an equal showing in New York, was also responsible for acquainting Burden with the wider world of new American sculpture. Burden proved to be a quick study; whether he picked it up from Gray or from reading *Artforum*, his work emulated Robert Morris's theory of good Gestalt or "unitary form," as well as Tony Smith's rudimentary steel boxes and colossal plywood models. Following Mason and Smith, Burden took to exhibiting his work outside and he extolled the virtues of the Southern California's mild climate for the sculptor.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips," in *It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969–1973*, ed. Rebecca McGrew (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2011), p. 275.

The first two chapters are bolstered by archival documents from Burden's estate, including a term paper from an art history class (Twentieth Century Art), wherein Burden wrote about his own work and his personal theory of art, rather than the course material. Titled "Three Sculptures," the essay explains the thinking behind the artist's corridor pieces and describes how he made them. Burden barely mentions any other artists by name, except to take potshots at them: Frank Stella and Kenneth Noland for being the dull "remnants of a dying concept of art"; and George Segal and Edward Kienholz for being static.<sup>7</sup> Instead, Burden argues that objective, visual art is dead and that "a unique kinesthetic experience" should be the means and meaning of contemporary art. This formulation of sculpture-as-experience was textbook Minimalism, which Burden adapted into interactive installations that existed somewhere in between 1960s environments and 1970s earthworks. On a disused practice field on the edge of the Pomona College campus, Burden erected two giant corridors out of plastic sheeting, 96 and 200-feet long, respectively. The shorter one was arched, like a tunnel, and diminished in height along its length, such that the participant had to duck, crawl, and then fully prostrate themselves in order to complete the piece. It was not a thing to look at, but rather something to be experienced by an active participant, not a "viewer." The second, longer corridor had tall, opaque walls, which buckled in with the air pressure, such that it was difficult to see the length of the corridor. Once a participant entered, their body created an air pocket as they moved down the corridor, but both in front of and behind them, the plastic closed in upon itself. Together Burden's corridors, which he created in the spring of his senior year at Pomona (1969), applied what he learned from an intense year studying with sculptor Mowry Baden, whose related, task-based promenade pieces aimed to make the body more aware of itself by testing its comfort in different situations. Like

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<sup>7</sup> Chris Burden, "Three Sculptures," Pomona College, May 21, 1969, Chris Burden Estate.

Bruce Nauman, who made his first corridor piece in 1969, Baden tailored his works to his own physical proportions, so anyone else who used them would likely feel the uncomfortable disequilibrium between their body and the apparatus.

Moreover, the first corridor, which was shaped like a truncated cone, recreated the experience of entering a cave, wherein passages taper down to small fissures and open back up again into expansive caverns. Following Georges Bataille's concept of the formless (*informe*) operation and his writing on Paleolithic cave painting, Chris Burden's first corridor piece can be read as not only a physical plunge from the upright to the horizontal register, but also an evolutionary backslide in which humans are encouraged to confront their own foregone animal nature. Burden's second corridor referenced yet another archaic human spatial formulation, the labyrinth, which Bataille also employed as a means of contesting order and rationality. For Bataille, who advocated what Denis Hollier called an anti-architectural philosophy, where built structures of church and state (cathedrals, palaces, banks) were the ultimate symbols of oppression, the labyrinth possessed a dark side that perfectly encapsulated the dual ontological and epistemological nature of the formless operation. Along with Bruce Nauman's corridors, Mowry Baden's perambulatory apparatuses, and several other interactive environments of the late 1960s, Burden constructed straight-lined passages that approximated the experience of walking through a labyrinth. Chapter 2 situates Burden's corridors in a mid-century cultural paradigm that employed the labyrinth as both a metaphor for human alienation in the modern world, as well as a formal device used to wend the audience through a potentially unsettling course.

Chapter 3 begins with an overview of the pedagogical atmosphere at the UC Irvine in the years 1969 to 1971, when the university was participating in a nationwide upheaval in higher



education. In the Studio Art department, a new pedagogical model was being tested, in which students apprenticed under professionals in their field and course structure was open to interpretation. A shake-up in the administration in fall of 1969 left Dean of the School of Fine Arts, Clayton Garrison, largely in charge of the department, wherein he had several run-ins with the MFA students over the content of their work and their conduct in certain performances. This study is the first to bring to light the fact that Chris Burden was involved in one such disagreement, when he proposed to ride his bicycle continuously through the university art gallery during his class's MFA thesis exhibition (*Bicycle Piece*). At first, Garrison vetoed the piece, which, I argue, was part of the context behind Burden's legendary *Five Day Locker Piece*. Chapter 3 examines *Locker Piece* in relation to student activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which used the tactic of occupational protest as a means of disrupting and wresting control from colleges and universities. By inhabiting a locker on school grounds, Burden was implicitly utilizing the same technique, and thereby staging an affront to the Dean's prohibition, which resonated with the student uprisings at the time. A newly available audio recording that Burden made while he was in the locker reveals that he repeatedly provoked Garrison to rein him in by challenging the Dean to interrupt the piece.

Given the circumstances surrounding *Five Day Locker Piece*, chapter 3 builds on a reading of the work as a form of Institutional Critique, which I recently published in *RACAR*.<sup>8</sup> Even though Burden created some of the most significant work in the field, he is not often considered as someone whose work challenged art institutions. What is necessary in order to appreciate Burden's early performance work, in particular, as Institutional Critique is simply a

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew Teti, "Occupying UCI: Chris Burden's *Five Day Locker Piece* as Institutional Critique," *RACAR (Revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review)* 43:1 (Spring 2018), pp. 39–52.

better understanding of it, so that its full resonance can be used to determine the works' meaning. Part of the reason *Five Day Locker Piece* has never been considered Institutional Critique is because it occurred within, and took as the object of its critique, the art school, rather than art galleries or museums. Burden and his colleagues were each given a multipurpose studio-classroom in the Fine Art Building at Irvine in order to exhibit their work for a final, internal review, separate from their collective thesis exhibition in the art gallery. Instead of mount his apparatus sculptures, which had just been on view at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, Burden left the gallery space empty and set up a habitat for himself in a bank of luggage lockers, where he stayed, night and day, for the length of a workweek. In so doing, Burden's attack on the art school was multifaceted. On the one hand, it criticized the lack of studio space for graduate students at UCI, who were otherwise relegated to live and work out of the same lockers Burden occupied. Secondly, it called into question the terms of accreditation under which the university was tasked with training fine art professionals. Lastly, *Five Day Locker Piece* parodied the role of the faculty in such institutions, who, in many cases, had to teach in order support themselves. The 9-to-5 artist that Burden embodies in *Locker Piece* was also a figuration of the post-studio or conceptual artist's adoption of an administrative methodology, as well as their newfound roles as a pedagogues. The audio recording that Burden made documents discussions between the artist and his colleagues, almost all of which revolved in some way around being an artist, especially securing academic employment upon graduation. With all of this background information elucidated for the first time, *Five Day Locker Piece* can be properly categorized as a work that is essentially about artistic practice itself. It stands today as one of the most emblematic characterizations of the changing nature of the art world that occurred with the adoption of the professional Master's as the new terminal degree in the fine arts.

The final chapter looks more in depth at F Space, the alternative gallery started by the MFA students in their last year at UCI, which was open from January 1971 through July 1972. As mentioned above, before *Five Day Locker Piece* Burden created an interactive sculptural installation at F Space that also contained an element of occupational performance. In *Being Photographed, Looking Out, Looking In*, Burden installed himself in the gallery bathroom and allowed visitors to peep at him through a fisheye lens in the door, which was reversed to look inwards. Burden later said that it was the idea of inhabiting a preexisting space in *Being Photographed* that planted the seed for the artist's infiltration of the locker later that year. Chapter 4 covers the formative role that F Space played in the professional education of its members, and it describes some of the work produced there by Burden and his peers. Both Barbara Smith and Nancy Buchanan, who went on to become notable performance artists, created interactive installations at F Space, which serve to situate Burden's work within the community in which it was made.

*Shout Piece*, Burden's first post-graduate performance and the only post-graduate work covered in this study, took the concept of occupying gallery space in a new direction. In it, Burden assumed a hostile attitude towards the audience, whom he perceived to be trespassing on his turf. Dressed up like a Native American and perched high above the floor on a platform suspended from the ceiling of F Space, Burden screamed through a PA (public address) system, through which he ran an echo effect and further distorted his voice with harsh feedback from the microphone. For the one-night run of the piece, Burden shouted at gallery-goers to immediately get out of the gallery, and he continued to berate them until they complied with his demand. Like *Locker Piece*, *Shout* can be associated with the social protests of the era through its means and metaphors. Taking the mic at a protest rally in order to speak about political issues or motivate

the crowd to march has here devolved into a territorial squabble in which Burden's character has ceased to be reasonable. The costume play invoked by Burden's dress recalled the late 1960s protest stunts of the Yippies, an allusion that is reinforced by the artist's anti-social behavior. It also relates to the trend towards communal living, which became increasingly popular as the utopian ideals of the 1960s failed to impact mainstream society. Disillusioned by protest against the Vietnam War and social injustice, many of those young people who were designated hippies chose to follow Timothy Leary, "drop out," and move to rural parts of the country. The appropriation of Native America culture that had already pervaded urban youth culture was thus translated into a mythos upon which many communes were established. At the same time, this well-worn form of self-identification with Native American life tended to overshadow the civil rights struggle of the contemporaneous American Indian Movement, which gained some media spotlight as the student movement waned. Thus, this form of dress-up, with all its connotations of white privilege and cultural insensitivity, was ripe for parody in the absurd style of the Yippie agitator that Burden mimics in *Shout Piece*.

This project does not cover everything Burden made in college and graduate school, but rather it highlights significant works that are emblematic of changes in medium and method, as well as leaps of thinking or cruxes in the artist's evolution from minimalist sculpture to performance art. The works that are not dealt with here include several sculptures that Burden made from new materials (Fiberglass, Plexiglas) as an undergraduate at Pomona College; an installation that he fabricated from the repurposed black polyethylene sheeting used to make his second corridor piece; interactive sculptures very similar to the work of his mentor, Mowry Baden; and the so-called apparatus pieces Burden produced in graduate school, which are commonly related to exercise equipment.

## Methodology

The first two chapters, and to a large extent the third, use art historical precedents to position Burden's work with relation to Minimalism (both its East and West Coast variants), Post-Minimalism, and Institutional Critique. For the first three chapters, which trace Burden's evolution through minimalist and post-minimalist modes of sculpture up to *Five Day Locker Piece*, the shadow of Robert Morris looms large in the young artist's work. In the mid-1960s Morris was one of the most eloquent theorists of the new sculpture, as well as one of its most accomplished practitioners. His writing, which was widely disseminated via *Artforum*, could be considered as a kind of formal orthodoxy that was ingrained in art students at progressive schools like Pomona College. Once he had shown proficiency for Gestalt form, Burden seemed to take his cues from Morris's earlier performative sculptures, such as *Passageway*, *Column*, *Box for Standing*, and *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (all 1961). While Burden's corridor pieces from Pomona fit comfortably within the post-minimalist genre of environments, they also share much in common with *Passageway*, including a uni-cursal path, visual deprivation, and spatial restriction. In chapter 2, the formal properties of Burden's corridors are used to liken them to caves and labyrinths, both of which were among the forms of archaic architecture that interested Morris. As Burden reiterated on many different occasions, *Locker Piece* was, in addition to a performance or action, an interpretation of the minimalist paradigm, especially in its activation of the otherwise hollow enclosure of the industrially fabricated structure. Like Morris's *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, *Locker Piece* placed not only the sound, but the act of creation itself within the confines of a rectilinear box. By honing close to Morris's model and working through issues that the elder artist had already broached, Burden set the bar high for

himself, but he also created work that resonates with the most current trends of the late 1960s, and it deserves to be restored to its rightful place in the canons of Minimalism and Post-Minimalism.

As Burden's work moved into the realm of performance art, then the precedents come increasingly from other walks of life, which lend the work social significance beyond their sensational formalism. One of the prime goals of this study is to reinvigorate Burden's early work by reading it in light of the turbulent state of affairs facing post-secondary education in the 1960s. Burden undeniably benefitted from his participation in two of the most exceptional fine art training programs of the day at Pomona College and UC Irvine. Moreover, especially at the state school, UCI, Burden was surrounded by an atmosphere of social protest, wherein students collectively called on the university to relinquish more responsibility to students for their own education. The faculty at UCI embraced new mediums, such as performance, and their laissez-faire approach to pedagogy afforded the MFA students wide latitude to pursue experimental formats, in keeping with the changing values of higher education. Nancy Buchanan is quoted in chapter 4 as having said that the expansion of the medium of art beyond painting and sculpture in the late 1960s entailed a concomitant absorption of social issues into the field of fine art in a way that was immediately relevant at the time. From our vantage point today, it is harder to apprehend the full relevance of Burden's work in relation to its time period, but far from impossible.

Given the preoccupations and scholarly trends that have guided the interpretation of it, Burden's work has largely become divorced from its social significance for a number of reasons. When photographs and rumors about Burden's early performances began to circulate in the media around 1973, the artist experienced a meteoric rise to fame when he was profiled in the

popular press and newspapers, as well art magazines. The violent content of some of his work and the stark documentary photographs that stood as evidence of his actions resulted in a caricature of the artist in the popular press, which portrayed him as the “Bad Boy” or “Evel Knievel of Art.” Writers frequently reduced Burden’s work to restrictive and reactionary analyses that did not respect his intentions or even adequately describe his work. Frustration with this condition led Burden to increasingly shy away from the media and alter his practice, in part to avoid the type of misunderstanding and misrepresentation that had plagued him. For Burden, this problem was compounded by the fact that, beyond the dry descriptions that he self-published in two catalogs of his work, the artist was reticent to say much about the social implications or significance of his work, preferring to leave it unsaid, even when it was fairly explicit. Burden surrounded his oeuvre with a contextual vacuum, and thus it was left open to a wide variety of interpretations.

This is not to say that Burden’s work received no social readings in the 1970s and 1980s. In an *Artforum* cover story on Burden from 1976, Robert Horvitz bucked the trend of evaluating the formal properties of the work self-reflexively, and he argued, “a disinterested esthetic appraisal” of Burden’s performances was “somewhat ludicrous, if not downright perverse.”<sup>9</sup> Instead, Horvitz associates Burden’s work with “the surrounding social climate,” such as the Irish Republican Army hunger strike in Belfast, which took place at the same time the artist sequestered himself and fasted for three weeks in *White Light/White Heat* (1975). However, the critic notes that Burden himself did not comment on the “symbolic connotations” of his work,

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Horvitz, “Chris Burden,” *Artforum* 14:9 (May 1976), p. 24.

“or its possible resonance with events happening simultaneously in other parts of the world.”<sup>10</sup>

He concludes by saying,

Perhaps reading world-historical trends into Burden’s work may be as ridiculous as fixing narrowly on its technical novelty as art. But because it moves at such an emblematic, elemental level and speaks with such Delphic self-assurance, the temptation to do so is quite irresistible.<sup>11</sup>

In his introduction to the catalog of Burden’s 1988, early-career retrospective, Paul Schimmel wrote that the mission of exhibition was connect the artist’s work with the “political, social, environmental, and technological change” of the early 1970s, but he and the other authors in the catalog rarely took the opportunity to do so.<sup>12</sup> Howard Singerman was insistent that Burden’s “body works of the early seventies were social,” and that “the situations had their origins in shared illusions and public fantasies.”<sup>13</sup> However, of all the “familiar present” situations to which Burden’s early performances might be related, Singerman notes only the violence of the Vietnam War, television, and crime. He left out an entire range of domestic responses to Vietnam, which were more close-to-home for the young man designated IV-F, and thus unfit for military service. Singerman inaugurated a now-familiar tendency amongst critics and historians simply to list traumatic social events of the late 1960s and early 1970s as touchstones for Burden’s work, but no one to date has juxtaposed specific events or tendencies with Burden’s work, causing their associations to ring hollow.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Schimmel, “Just the Facts,” in *Chris Burden: A Twenty-Year Survey*, eds. Anne Ayres and Paul Schimmel (Newport Beach, CA: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1988), p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Howard Singerman, “Chris Burden’s Pragmatism,” in Ayres and Schimmel, *Chris Burden*, p. 21.



## Literature Review

In 1971, while he was in the midst of finishing up his MFA at UC Irvine, Chris Burden received his first mention in the national art press. Writing for the New York-based *Arts Magazine*, Cindy Nemser included Burden in a pioneering survey of Body Art, alongside Vito Acconci, Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman, Dennis Oppenheim, and Barry Le Va, among others.<sup>14</sup> Burden had come to attention through his participation in the three-man exhibition “Body Movements” at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art with Nauman and Mowry Baden, who was also included in Nemser’s article. The critic likely read Burden’s apparatus sculptures through photographs showing the artist activating works, which were really intended for viewer interaction. Nevertheless, Nemser’s article solidified Burden’s place within a movement of which he would become one of the most notorious members, even before he created his first signature performances.

On the tails of this first piece of press, Burden started to receive regular reviews in *Arts Magazine*, as well as *Artforum*, *ArtNews*, and *Avalanche*, but it was in the popular print media that the artist really took off. In a little over four years, between 1971 and 1975, Burden was the subject of feature articles in *LA* magazine and the *Los Angeles Free Press*, *New York Times*, *Village Voice*, *Soho Weekly News*, *Chicago Sun Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *Independent Press Telegram*, *Women’s Wear Daily*, and *Oui*—a subsidiary of *Playboy*. He received shorter mention, usually accompanied by photo-documentation of one of his performances, in *Time*, *Esquire*, *Newsweek*, *Penthouse*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *The New Republic*. Additionally, Burden’s work was discussed in an essay by Norman Mailer, and it was the subject of a series of articles by the influential Chicago critic Roger Ebert. The cause of such

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<sup>14</sup> Cindy Nemser, “Subject-Object: Body Art,” *Arts Magazine* 46 (September 1971), pp. 38–42.

affluence was no doubt the provocative nature of Burden's performances. What foremost fascinated the press was Burden's bold defiance of the boundaries that normally delimited fine art. Durational pieces in which Burden spent up to three weeks confined in gallery spaces under demanding strictures, doing little to nothing besides subsisting, were particularly outrageous to the press. It was moreover the spectacular aspects of Burden's work, often violent and unpleasant to consider, not to mention watch or see reproduced, which captured the attention of American journalists and lay art critics.

The circulation of images and stories about Burden's performances made the artist almost instantaneously famous, but the success was as much of a curse as it was a blessing. A lot of what was written about Burden in the popular press was negative and condescending. A notable example is art critic Robert Hughes's "The Decline and Fall of the Avant-Garde" from *Time* magazine, which was a polemic against various new working methods, including conceptual, process, video, installation, and body art, which Hughes disparaged for not living up to the promise of the historic Avant-Garde and the perceived apex of American art in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>15</sup> Hughes lambasted an international group of young artists, from the Vienna Actionists to New York conceptualists, not only dismissing their efforts, but also proclaiming the cultural sphere to be facing a profound crisis. The skepticism with which the press treated Burden's performances only grew sharper and more critical as the artist's fame increased. In just a few short lines on Burden in "The Decline and Fall of the Avant-Garde," Hughes labeled his work "gratuitous" and "vulgar."<sup>16</sup> Even sympathetic interlocutors, such as Burden's friend and fellow UC Irvine graduate Terry McDonell, who, as a young journalist, profiled the artist in 1972,

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Hughes, "The Decline and Fall of the Avant-Garde," *Time* 100:25 (Dec. 18, 1972), pp. 111–112.

<sup>16</sup> Hughes, "The Decline and Fall," p. 112.

wondered if “perhaps he is simply crazy.”<sup>17</sup> In the early 1970s, the press rapidly unleashed a barrage of name-calling upon Burden. At a loss as to what to make of him, journalists had recourse to essentializing, false parallels, such as daredevil or stuntman, egomaniac, freak-show, ascetic, masochist, saint or martyr, and even Jesus Christ. He was called Superman, Harry Houdini, and he was equated to Charles Manson,<sup>18</sup> but the one characterization that dogged Burden the most was “the Evel Knievel of art.”<sup>19</sup>

Early on, Burden’s work also suffered from inaccurate and insufficient descriptions in the press. Reporters also often confused Burden’s works by mixing up their titles, locations, and, more damagingly, their content.<sup>20</sup> Whether it was a result of inattention on the part of the reviewer, rumor, or embellishment, Burden’s work seemed destined to breed misinformation. Mistakes regarding the length or exact parameters of Burden’s performances were the most common errors. At times, inaccurate information led authors to take interpretive missteps. As Kristine Stiles has pointed out, such erroneous claims were not isolated to the popular press, but they also appeared in trade periodicals, like *Artforum*, where reviewer James Collins’s assertion that Burden had shot himself in *Shoot* led the writer down a dubious path that related Burden’s

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<sup>17</sup> Terry McDonnell, “Man is Shot for Art’s Sake,” *LA* (November 18, 1972), p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*; Peter Plagens, “He Got Shot—For His Art,” *The New York Times* (September 2, 1973); “Art Mailbag,” *New York Times* (September 23, 1973).

<sup>19</sup> Douglas Davis, “Art Without Limits,” *Newsweek* (December 24, 1973), p. 68.

<sup>20</sup> “Rumbles,” *Avalanche* 4 (Spring 1972), p. 6; McDonnell, “Man is Shot,” p. 19; William Wilson, “Art Walk: A Critical Guide to the Galleries,” *Los Angeles Times* (January 11, 1974); Clark Polack, “Chris Burden: The Church of Human Energy,” [*Los Angeles*] *Free Press* (January 25, 1974), pp. 24–25; Donald Carroll, “Chris Burden: Art on the Firing Line,” *Coast* (August 1974), p. 30; “People you should forget,” *Viva* (November 1974), p. 22.

work to masochism.<sup>21</sup> Collins, like many subsequent commentators, also made an allusion between Burden and the poorly understood Austrian artist Rudolf Schwarzkogler, which was derived from factual inaccuracies about the latter's work that Hughes propagated in "The Decline and Fall of the Avant-Garde."<sup>22</sup> Presumably based on Schwarzkogler's staged photographs of models simulating castration (primarily his *3rd Action*, 1965), and possibly based on an elision between them and Günter Brus's "Self-Mutilation Actions," Hughes wrongly identified "self-amputation" as the cause of Schwarzkogler's untimely death.<sup>23</sup> Hughes's lie was exposed in the late 1980s, when a massive research project and touring exhibition charted the history of the Viennese Actionism in minute detail and set the record straight: Schwarzkogler died by falling from the window of his flat in Vienna in 1969, at the age of 28; the cause of the fall remains unknown.<sup>24</sup> Following this revelation, Stiles chided Hughes for his deleterious fabrication, noting that his article "has had an enduringly negative impact on the reception of performance art and on the understanding of its cultural meaning and social purpose."<sup>25</sup> As Stiles recounts in her chapter on Burden, the pairing of his work with the myth of Schwarzkogler's

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<sup>21</sup> Kristine Stiles, "Burden of Light: Chris Burden" (2007), in *Concerning Consequences: Studies in Art, Destruction, and Trauma* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 159–160; James Collins, "Chris Burden," *Artforum* 12 (May 1974), p. 72.

<sup>22</sup> See also Polack, "Chris Burden," p. 24; Thomas Albright, "Crucifixion and Whatnot: An Artist's Schtick," *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 12, 1974).

<sup>23</sup> Hughes, "The Decline and Fall," p. 111.

<sup>24</sup> Hubert Klocker, ed., *Der zertrümmerte Spiegel = The Shattered Mirror* (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1989), p. 381. See also, Stuart Morgan, "Schwarzkogler: The Mystery of St. Rudolf" (1993), in *What the Butler Saw: Selected Writings by Stuart Morgan* (London: Durian, 1996), pp. 295–297; Murray White, "Schwarzkogler's Ear," *New Yorker* (November 11, 1996), p. 36.

<sup>25</sup> Stiles, *Concerning Consequences*, p. 399, n.4;

actions also had a negative effect on the young American, none of whose work participated in a tradition of masochism or the Freudian psychology that informed Schwarzkogler's images.<sup>26</sup>

Burden's reticence to discuss his work beyond the matter-of-fact presentation of what happened during each performance, no doubt exacerbated the frustration of critics who struggled to understand him. Beyond his own descriptions, which many writers repeated virtually verbatim, the artist was less than forthcoming regarding his motivations and the possible meaning behind his pieces. Burden told several early interviewers that he made work like *Shoot* simply in order to find out what happened.<sup>27</sup> Probing for the larger significance behind Burden's oeuvre, McDonell was told, "I do what I do because I'm an artist. *Shoot* and *TV Hijack* were the best things I could think of doing at the time."<sup>28</sup> Unintentionally or not, Burden's disavowal of interpretation made him come off as an elitist in a world where fine art was changing rapidly and becoming increasingly more intellectual. Struggling to comprehend what he was doing, many writers were left feeling like Burden was pulling the wool over their eyes.

The year 1973 afforded Burden opportunities to speak with fellow artists, curators, and critics who were engaged with contemporary artistic practices and thus better suited to understand and provide context for the misunderstood young man's production. Perhaps the most influential pair of colleagues with whom Burden interacted was Willoughby Sharp and Liza Béar, whose artist-centric *Avalanche* magazine (published in New York from 1970 to 1976) was an important record of minimalist, post-minimalist, land, video, performance, and conceptual art

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<sup>26</sup> Stiles, "Burden of Light," pp. 159–160.

<sup>27</sup> Marjie Driscoll, "Zany Gallery Offers Art Without Price Tags," *Los Angeles Times* (June 2, 1971); William Wilson, "This is Art—These People Are Artists," *Los Angeles Times* (March 24, 1972); Grace Glueck, "Winning the West," *New York Times* (April 16, 1972).

<sup>28</sup> McDonell, "Man is Shot," p. 18.

in the United States and Europe.<sup>29</sup> One of Sharp and Béar's missions was to allow artists to speak for themselves in solo or double interviews with the publishers, who posed probing questions that led to a significant outpouring of context and interpretation for work, like Burden's, that was not otherwise very approachable. The interviews in *Avalanche* were often the culmination of what Béar described as "a continuing dialogue that might last for years."<sup>30</sup> Burden's interview with *Avalanche*, which was published in the fall of 1973, was also predicated upon an ongoing relationship with the publishers. As early as 1971, Burden was corresponding with Sharp and Béar and keeping them abreast of his performance activities.<sup>31</sup>

Burden's *Avalanche* interview, titled "The Church of Human Energy," has become one of the most important records of the artist's self-conception of his work, predominantly because of the interviewers' challenging queries. Unsatisfied with Burden's boilerplate response, "I wanted to see what happens," Sharp pressed Burden on the subject of *Shoot*. In response, he received a telling answer that went much deeper into the social significance of the work than Burden usually did.

CB: [...] It's the idea of being shot at to be hit.

WS: Mmmmm. Why is that interesting?

CB: Well, it's something to experience. [...] It seems interesting enough to be worth doing it.

WS: Most people don't want to be shot.

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<sup>29</sup> See the magazine's excellent website, "Avalanche Magazine Index," <http://avalancheindex.org> (accessed August 4, 2016).

<sup>30</sup> Liza Béar and Willoughby Sharp, "The Early History of *Avalanche*" (1996/2005/2012), pamphlet published online by Primary Information, <http://www.primaryinformation.org/product/liza-bear-and-willoughby-sharp> (accessed April 9, 2018), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> *Avalanche Magazine Archives*, folder II.115, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

CB: Yeah, but everybody watches it on TV every day. America is the big shoot-out country. About fifty percent of American folklore is about people getting shot.<sup>32</sup>

This revelation, coaxed out through Sharp's insightful dialogue, is noteworthy for adding two layers of possible interpretation to *Shoot*—the content of contemporary television and American folklore—that anomalously still remain relatively unexamined in the abundant literature on the piece. Burden's response also had the benefit of remaining vague and avoiding explicit references to the telltale images of gun violence to which it made reference. The interview continued,

WS: Do you see a lot of violence in the culture?

CB: It's not always out front, but it's there. That's what was so exciting about the sixties, all those big rock festivals and riots in Berkeley. It was horrible but it was interesting. When that was on TV, you watched it.<sup>33</sup>

Although the latter comment was made in relation to *Shoot*, I read it as a statement of Burden's general interest in festivals like Woodstock and Altamont, and the hippie counterculture they embodied, as well as the student protest movement that erupted in violence during the Berkeley Free Speech Movement's occupation of People's Park in 1969. For this project, Burden's rare allusion to the social issues of the time period is taken as a point of departure for examinations of how *Five Day Locker Piece* and *Shout Piece* draw from and reference protest culture of the late 1960s.

In addition to Sharp and Béar's illuminating interview, *Avalanche* published Burden's standardized descriptions of his work, which were interspersed throughout the text in a manner

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<sup>32</sup> Willoughby Sharp and Liza Béar, "Chris Burden: The Church of Human Energy," *Avalanche* 8 (Summer/Fall 1973), p. 54.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

that was subsequently adopted in published interviews with the artist.<sup>34</sup> What is important about this development is that, rather than being editorialized and described in someone else's words, Burden was given space to speak for himself and assert his own, admittedly dry, interpretations of his work. Evidence from Burden's archives shows that the artist began working on drafts of his canonical performance descriptions as early as 1971, but they had been given short shrift in previous publications.<sup>35</sup> By 1973, when Burden was preparing his first self-published monograph, *Chris Burden 71–73*, the short, textual descriptions that he would circulate for the rest of his career were nearing their final form.<sup>36</sup> While these "terse statements" did little more than recount empirical facts, their rendition was, and has always been, central to the dissemination of information about Burden's work.

In winter and spring 1974, Burden exhibited the first volume of what he called the *Chris Burden Deluxe Photo Book* in an exhibition, first at Mizuno Gallery in Los Angeles and shortly thereafter at Ronald Feldman Fine Art in New York, which was arranged, in Burden's words, "to clarify what his art was about."<sup>37</sup> The *Deluxe Photo Book* contained documentation of 22–23

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<sup>34</sup> E.g. Chris Burden and Jan Butterfield, "Chris Burden: Through the Night Softly," *Arts Magazine* 49:7 (March 1975), pp. 68–72; Jim Moisan, "Border Crossing," *High Performance* 5:2 (March 1979), pp. 4–11.

<sup>35</sup> Chris Burden "Explanations of some recent pieces" [1971], Chris Burden Estate. It is interesting to note that few of Burden's 1971 performances had titles at the time. The artist's description of *Jaizu* appeared as an inset in McDonnell, "Man is Shot," p. 18; and four descriptions were published in Chris Burden, "Performances," *Bulletin—Allen Memoriam Art Museum* 30:3 (Spring 1973), pp. 128–130.

<sup>36</sup> The descriptions reproduced in "The Church of Human Energy" differ slightly from the definitive versions published in *Chris Burden 71–73*, which also makes them an intriguing record of Burden's formulation of his work as he tried to package it for presentation.

<sup>37</sup> Jeanne Siegel, "Reviews and Previews," *ArtNews* 73:4 (April 1974), p. 102; Judith Van Buren, "Chris Burden," *Arts Magazine* 48 (April 1974), p. 66. The catalog entry for the *Deluxe Photo Book* is in Lisa Phillips, ed., *Chris Burden: Extreme Measures* (New York: New Museum, 2013), p. 210.



pieces made between 1971 and 1973, and it was an embryonic form of Burden's 1974 self-published catalog. In both its iterations, *Chris Burden 71–73* paired the artist's short, textual descriptions of his work with one or more photos documenting most of the performances Burden realized in his first two years working as a professional.<sup>38</sup> Here, Burden's descriptive wording was standardized in the form in which it was subsequently disseminated. Some of the works were documented by just one, crystalized image, while others were represented by several photos that together provided a chronological sequence of events. As a gallery object that could circulate and endure long after Burden's actions were complete, and moreover as a publication with a broader possible audience, *Chris Burden 71–73* was an essential promotional tool for the artist, insofar as it was the authoritative presentation of his work. The self-published catalog was also a wise business decision for the young performance artist who, up until this point, had only produced a few marketable artworks.<sup>39</sup>

Reviews of Burden's 1974 exhibitions of documentary material were quick to mention the effect of the color photographs (approximately nine were printed in color),<sup>40</sup> which Anne Wagner argued are integral to a full appreciation of the work, because they transport the documentation out of the realm of the evidentiary and into the real, where its social valences

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<sup>38</sup> The only work not documented photographically was *Disappearing* (1971), in which Burden literally disappeared without a trace for three days prior to the Christmas holiday, without telling anyone where he was or that he had left. Unlike his previous efforts, Burden did not conceive *Disappearing* in visual terms and thus he produced no image to document it.

<sup>39</sup> Burden also made a few multiples: the 1973 pair of lithographs, *If you Fly* and *If you Drive*, and the 1974 untitled lithograph, which is often referred to as *Trans-Fixed*. Each of these works was a kind of performance documentation, which combined photographs of Burden's works with enigmatic texts, such as Barbara Burden's hand-written note to Chris: "Took bus to work. Can NOT do nails. Couldn't sleep." Unlike Burden's standardized form of text and image description of his work, these early prints did not attempt to promote the facts, but rather they courted the aura of mystery surrounding the work.

<sup>40</sup> Polack, "Chris Burden," p. 24; Collins, "Chris Burden," p. 72.

become clear.<sup>41</sup> Reviewing for *Artforum*, James Collins was not in favor of Burden's post-performance presentation of his work, claiming that the artist risked "watering down [...] his pieces' power by their purist Conceptual gallery model, making them seem respectable and dated."<sup>42</sup> It is significant that, no matter how skeptical he was of the artist's practice, Collins situated Burden's mode of presentation with that of conceptual artists, such as Douglas Huebler, whose documentation of ephemeral occurrences relied on the juxtaposition of photographs and explanatory texts, very similar to those Burden employed. This allusion is important insofar as it demonstrates that the early reception of Burden's work aligned it with the dominant intellectual trend in the art world at the time. However, Collins also distinguished between two ways of experiencing Burden's work, which may determine different resulting classifications, depending on how it was viewed. Live, Burden's art was unmistakably performance or body art; but in retrospective displays, such as those Burden mounted in early 1974, the work switched registers, so to speak, and was more associated with conceptual art.

Burden's reception in *Artforum* was skeptical at first, but highly dependent upon the reviewer. Editor Max Kozloff dismissed Burden and a handful of other body artists as destitute narcissists who were obsessed with their own self-inflicted pain. He characterized Burden's work as daring, passive-aggressive sensationalism, whose purpose was "to demean" the art world.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, Kozloff gave the go-ahead for a cover story on Burden 6 months later, which was written by the more sympathetic artist and critic, Robert Horvitz. The latter article is unique in the scholarship on Burden for not only describing the artist's sculpture from Pomona College and

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<sup>41</sup> Anne M. Wagner, "Then and There," *Artforum* 50:2 (October 2011), pp. 223–225.

<sup>42</sup> Collins, "Chris Burden," p. 72.

<sup>43</sup> Max Kozloff, "Pygmalion Reversed," *Artforum* 14:3 (November 1975), p. 37.

UC Irvine, but in connecting it in a genealogy that leads directly into *Five Day Locker Piece* and other performances.<sup>44</sup> He wrote, “Burden’s work from 1969 to 1971 appears to develop rapidly in a step-by-step progression, with each series implementing the insights of the preceding series.”<sup>45</sup> Horvitz was also the first writer to treat Burden’s documentation at length. He insightfully observed,

Burden must take special care to establish the documentation’s limited function in the overall scheme of things, i.e. establish that the live event is not subservient to its more durable and distributable complement, and, perhaps more importantly, that the event was not undertaken simply to be recorded.<sup>46</sup>

Burden preserves the integrity of the live performance, Horvitz argues, by providing “barely adequate” photographs and Spartan texts, which “corroborate [Marshall] McLuhan’s thesis that a low-definition ‘hot’ image evokes a greater degree of viewer empathy and fantasy-projection than a high-definition ‘cool’ one.”<sup>47</sup> By excluding supporting details about his works, Burden essentially mythologized his own practice and opened it up to “a number of conflicting interpretations.” Horvitz believed Burden’s work deterred critical evaluation because it was hard to distinguish “those qualities that are specifically attributable to the work from those that are ambient or latent in the environment.”<sup>48</sup> My approach to Burden’s early performances is to restore the circumstances surrounding the work so that both its inherent and latent content can be explored.

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<sup>44</sup> His steps were somewhat retraced by Howard Singerman, although the latter did not describe any of the Burden’s collegiate sculpture in detail; see Singerman, “Chris Burden’s Pragmatism,” p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> Horvitz, “Chris Burden,” p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Burden's first major American retrospective was organized by the Newport Harbor Art Museum (NHAM) in 1988 (traveling to Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art in 1989, under the aegis of curator David Joselit). It was an extensive survey of the artist's first twenty years, consisting of performance documentation, assemblages, works on paper (collages, prints, drawings), sculptures, film, and video. The chief curator of NHAM and co-curator of the exhibition, Paul Schimmel, wanted to expand the public's view of Burden as a daredevil stuntman and focus the attention on the "highly complex [...] technological, financial, and political power," in which Burden trafficked.<sup>49</sup> The exhibition marked a turn in critical reception of the artist, in which Burden's performance work was considered as continuous and concerned with the same issues as the artist's subsequent installation, sculpture, and technological experiments.<sup>50</sup> Schimmel's effort to move beyond the 1970s and bridge two seemingly distinct phases of Burden's career was perhaps most explicit in that "Chris Burden: A Twenty-Year Survey" exhibited the most comprehensive collection of the artist's performance relics, but contained virtually no photo documentation of Burden's performances.<sup>51</sup> Writing for the catalog, Howard Singerman observed that documentary photographs of Burden's work had the effect, by virtue of the artist's reputation, of overshadowing him.<sup>52</sup> The performance relics Burden began creating around 1975 for his past performances took the form of clear, Plexiglas vitrines, which

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<sup>49</sup> Press release, "Chris Burden: A Twenty-Year Survey Opens On April 17, 1988," Newport Harbor Art Museum, January 13, 1988, p. 1; Schimmel, "Just the Facts," p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> This theme was highlighted in the catalog essays by Howard Singerman and Donald Kuspit, in Ayres and Schimmel, *Chris Burden*.

<sup>51</sup> "Catalog of the Exhibition," in Ayres and Schimmel, *Chris Burden*, pp. 167–171. Photographs of Burden's performances only appeared in the lithographs *If You Fly* and *If You Drive* (both 1973) and four "Commentaries" collages (1975), which contained press clippings about the artist.

<sup>52</sup> Singerman, "Chris Burden's Pragmatism," p. 23.

contained elements utilized in prior actions, such as the lock from *Five Day Locker Piece*. The relics were augmented with Burden's textual descriptions of the work, but they indisputably provided less contextual information about the performances; by McLuhan's standards the relics are an extremely "hot" medium. Most notably, in the context of this study, neither this nor any subsequent survey exhibition of Burden's work contained his sculpture predating *Locker Piece*.

Although critics who wrote about Burden in the 1970s recognized him as conceptual artist and associated his work to artists with whom he shared working methods, Burden has subsequently been almost entirely written out of the discipline.<sup>53</sup> In the 1988 exhibition catalog, Schimmel and Singerman joined the chorus and came out in defense of Burden as a conceptual artist. Before the genre of Institutional Critique was codified, both curators recognized the way in which Burden challenged "the institutions of power, universities, museums, art galleries, the defense department and the economy."<sup>54</sup> Singerman said that Burden forced institutions to face their own limitations and understand their responsibilities to the artists and the public they serve,<sup>55</sup> while Schimmel more explicitly characterized the artist's work as "anti-institutional, anti-gallery, anti-monetary."<sup>56</sup> Singerman furthermore suggested that all of Burden's work be thought of in terms of minimal and conceptual sculpture, especially the way in which his early

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<sup>53</sup> To my knowledge, Burden has been included in none of the anthologies and only one of the major survey exhibitions on conceptual art; see Christian Schlatter, *Art conceptuel, formes conceptuelles = Conceptual art, conceptual forms* (Paris: Galerie 1900–2000, 1990), pp. 170–179.

<sup>54</sup> Schimmel, "Just the Facts," p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Singerman, "Chris Burden's Pragmatism," pp. 24–26. C. [Cynthia] Carr picked up on Burden's antagonistic approach to museums and galleries from Singerman and reiterated it in her review of the Newport Beach retrospective in "This is only a test: Chris Burden," *Artforum* 28:1 (1989), pp. 119–120.

<sup>56</sup> Schimmel, "Just the Facts," p. 15.

performances were task-oriented. The crucial difference, Singerman points out, between Burden and other so-called conceptual artists, was that Burden insisted on actualizing his ideas, instead of creating “pure theoretical problems that defined space or created works of art in the mind of the viewer.”<sup>57</sup> In other words, Burden carried out propositions that would have remained simply speculations for other artists.

In his aforementioned 2007 catalogue raisonné, one of curator Fred Hoffman’s main goals was “to illustrate the conceptual lineage” of Burden’s work for later practices of institutional critique, relational aesthetics, and political engagement in art.<sup>58</sup> As noted above, and covered in chapter 4, Hoffman’s catalog was important for, among other things, bringing to light the previously unpublished (and thus unknown) piece, *Being Photographed, Looking Out, Looking In*. However, it began with this work in 1971, relegating Burden’s collegiate and graduate sculpture, installation, and apparatus pieces to a two-page spread that reprinted text from Horvitz’s article and only illustrated a handful of works.<sup>59</sup> As remarked by Anne Wagner and previously noted, the publication of archival and color images from select performances was one of the key contributions that the Hoffman’s catalog made.<sup>60</sup> The editor correctly observed that supplemental images of Burden’s performances “provide a more coherent contextualization of the work insofar as [they include] greater information about the circumstances and setting of the action.”<sup>61</sup> Hoffman followed in the footsteps of earlier exhibitions of Burden’s work by

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<sup>57</sup> Tom Marioni, “Chris Burden: A Sculptor’s Sensibility—The Early Years,” in Ayres and Schimmel, *Chris Burden*, p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> Hoffman, *Chris Burden*, p. 16.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 392–393.

<sup>60</sup> Wagner, “Then and There,” pp. 223–225.

<sup>61</sup> Hoffman, *Chris Burden*, pp. 15–16.

dividing the catalog into thematic categories, which here were further attenuated, and demonstrating continuity between Burden's performance oeuvre and his later sculptural projects by including them under the same headings.<sup>62</sup>

Although another goal of Hoffman's was to reconsider Burden's early performance work "from a more complex, retrospective viewpoint," only one of the catalog's authors treated his performances in any depth.<sup>63</sup> In keeping with the desire to reconcile Burden's early and late work, Kristine Stiles analyzed light (or the lack thereof) as symbol, medium, and method with which Burden was continually preoccupied from some of his earliest performances through his more recent public installations. Stiles developed targeted readings of important performances, such as *White Light/White Heat*, and shared several of the artist's personal accounts of his work, derived from interviews she conducted in 2003, which add a great deal of contextual information to the interpretation of Burden's work. Stiles's other main contribution to the works in question was to qualify the relational aesthetics reading of Burden's performances, which stated that Burden's audience was inherently implicated in his actions.<sup>64</sup> Rather, Stiles argues that there was a significant degree of trust between Burden and his audience, to the extent that their presence ensured that he would not get hurt. She says, "no other artist has so consistently trusted the public to react to dangerous and challenging situations and to treat the artist and his artworks with such responsibility."<sup>65</sup> Stiles's assertion is reinforced by a consideration for the audience

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 16–18, 355. In their essays for the catalog, Kristine Stiles and Robert Storr both either perform or give lip service to the overarching goal of unification; see Stiles "Burden of Light," and Storr, "Immanent Domain," in Hoffman, *Chris Burden*, pp. 22–45.

<sup>63</sup> Hoffman, "Preface," p. 16.

<sup>64</sup> The chief example of this reading, at the time, was Frazer Ward, "Gray Zone: Watching Shoot," *October* 95 (Winter 2001), pp. 114–130.

<sup>65</sup> Stiles, "Burden of Light," in Hoffman, *Chris Burden*, p. 23.

that attended some of Burden's more life-threatening performances, as well as the repeated assertion, made by the artist and his interlocutors, that he maintained a severe degree of control over his performance situations, such that interfering in his work was not something audience members would have even considered. Burden's colleague from UC Irvine, Nancy Buchanan, has also since refuted the standard relational aesthetics reading of Burden's work, writing that she and the artist's other confidants had "absolute respect and trust [...] for one another's ideas; to intervene would have meant dismissing the core ideas of the work."<sup>66</sup> Amelia Jones has recently revised the relational aesthetics interpretation of Burden's work in order to elucidate the mutual tension placed on the artist and audience, which is much closer to Burden's intention to create an energy field that flowed between the two (see chapter 4).

Few studies of Chris Burden treat single works in isolation, save for Frazer Ward's "Gray Zone: Watching *Shoot*," which demonstrates that the artist's complex work can benefit from more concentrated readings.<sup>67</sup> In the cases where Burden's works have been discussed in scholarly studies of performance art, they have usually been lumped together with other, often disparate practices, in thematic studies. Such generalizations, which usually barely scratch the surface of Burden's descriptions of his work, circumscribes it within the purview of ulterior motives and dislodges it from the context of its production. Since the rise of the performance studies discipline and its intersection with art history in the 1990s, a popular method of addressing Burden's performances has been to expound their supposedly latent content. In general, performance studies adopted an explicitly formal reading of Burden's work, which

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<sup>66</sup> Nancy Buchanan, "A Few Snapshots from F Space Gallery, 1514 E. Edinger, Santa Ana," in *In the Canyon, Revise the Canon: Utopian Knowledge, Radical Pedagogy, and Artist-Run Community Art Space in Southern California* (Annecy, France: ESAAA Editions, 2015), p. 51.

<sup>67</sup> Ward, "Gray Zone."



connected his photo-documents with iconic images in the Western tradition, which they often resembled. Despite C. Carr's early warning that Burden's work not be "misread as exercises in masochism,"<sup>68</sup> Burden nevertheless continued to be portrayed as a masochist who was working out trauma in his past through the exercise of asceticism and related symbols of Christian martyrdom.<sup>69</sup> Burden's works were also characterized as "[ironic] and ambivalent versions of masculine, artistic subjectivity," almost totally neglecting its social resonances.<sup>70</sup> These attempts to psychoanalyze Burden's work were in keeping with a scholarly reinvigoration Freudian theory through post-structuralist philosophy and criticism, and although they were codified in Donald Kuspit's essay in Burden's 1988 retrospective catalog, many disputed their relevance. While links between some of Burden's work and Christian martyrdom, for example, are indisputable, in their concentration on the iconic visual residue of live events, such readings leave out much of the detail within the works and the situations in which they were performed.

In the past 10 years, scholarship on Burden's work has come mainly from the Getty's Pacific Standard Time project, discussed above, and the artist's 2013 retrospective at the New Museum, organized by Lisa Phillips and titled "Extreme Measures." The exhibition consisted mostly of Burden's sculpture and installation work from 1979 on, but it also featured selected documentation of Burden's performance work, which was most conspicuous in the form of his

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<sup>68</sup> The quote continues, "or as way stations along some spiritual path." Carr, "This is only a test," pp. 118–119.

<sup>69</sup> Amelia Jones, "Dis/playing the Phallus: Male Artists Perform Their Masculinities," *Art History* 17:4 (December 1994), pp. 568–572; Kathy O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

<sup>70</sup> Amelia Jones, "'Clothes Make the Man': The Male Artist as a Performative Function," *Oxford Art Journal* 18:2 (1995), pp. 27–28.

1975 video survey *Documentation of Selected Works*, which ran on a loop in the exhibition.<sup>71</sup> In her catalog essay, curator Lisa Phillips characterized Burden's early performances as emblematic of American society in the 1970s, defined by violence, "upheaval," and disillusionment.<sup>72</sup> Like many before her, Phillips made a vague references to the time period in which Burden was working, without making any specific connections between social events and the artist's oeuvre. She did, however, emphatically state, "Burden's early performances [...] epitomized this era of radical acts," which I take as my queue to look more closely at what kinds of social behavior Burden's work evokes.<sup>73</sup>

Phillips included countercultural and liberation movements, such as the Native American civil rights struggle, as well as the protests and riots they occasioned, in her accounting of period-specific touchstones in the background of Burden's work, but what she and others have missed is the way in which Burden employed social protest and activism as a medium in his earliest performances. Here I refer to medium in Rosalind Krauss's expanded notion of the term, as a technical support. In brief, technical supports stand in for the old mediums of painting and sculpture by imposing the logic of extraneous fields upon the work art. For instance, Krauss argues that LA artist Edward Ruscha's technical support, no matter whether he was working in painting, photography, or publication, was the automobile, because the logic of car travel dictated several of his signature formal choices.<sup>74</sup> For Burden's *Five Day Locker Piece* and *Shout*

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<sup>71</sup> Chris Burden, *Documentation of Selected Works* (New York: Electronic Arts Intermix, 2006 [1975]), DVD, 36 min., color, sound, available online at [http://ubu.com/film/burden\\_selected.html](http://ubu.com/film/burden_selected.html) (accessed April 10, 2018).

<sup>72</sup> Lisa Phillips, "Double Bind," in *Chris Burden: Extreme Measures*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> Rosalind E. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011), pp. 20–23, 70–75.

*Piece*, the technical support was protest, broadly, but more specifically the occupational protests of the anti-institutional student movement, the anti-war movement, and the guerrilla theatrics of the Yippies.

Following suit, Thomas Crow's essay in the New Museum catalog situated Burden in the context of the Vietnam War era and related *Shoot* to "the masculine subcultures of southern California," such as motorcycle riding, surfing, and street racing, in that they involved distinct physical risks.<sup>75</sup> Crow's pronouncement is important for both taking into account biographical aspects of Burden's life that informed his working method, as well as acknowledging the relevance of socio-cultural forces—in this case, specific to the region—for the interpretation of Burden's 1970s performances. Crow dutifully recognizes that such connotations are "unbidden," given the artist's general refusal to make such allusions himself, but here they are taken to provide, once again, the requisite context for Burden's important early work (see chapter 1). Crow also ruminated on the spaces of display in which Burden's first work was shown—UC Irvine and F Space—contrasting the regular grids of modernist building and planning with the radical performances of the artists working within them. He argues that the austerity of the locations Burden (and his colleagues) chose was intended to emphasize the status of the performed actions as serious art.<sup>76</sup> For example, Crow observed a synecdoche between the bank of lockers in which Burden performed *Five Day Locker Piece* and the "cookie-cutter pavilions" of UCI's new campus. This observation supports the contention of this project that *Locker Piece* was an affront to the university. Crow's attention to the context within which Burden operated in

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<sup>75</sup> Thomas Crow, "Mind-Body Problem: Chris Burden's Performances," in Phillips, *Chris Burden*, p. 48.

<sup>76</sup> Crow, "Mind-Body Problem," pp. 48, 51.

1971 demonstrates the necessity for more in-depth contextualization of Burden's work and the systems (artistic, architectural, administrative, academic, etc.) around which it formed.

New Museum curator and education director, Johanna Burton, writing for the "Extreme Measures" catalog, also had a profound influence on the current study. In consideration of *Shoot*, Burton based her reading of on a revelatory interview with Burden broadcast by the BBC in 2012, in which the artist intimated that "it was the action itself seen against [a] specific cultural backdrop that was of interest to him."<sup>77</sup> Burton's assessment of *Shoot* leads to a somewhat startling conclusion, one that is unique in the copious literature on the piece: she wonders if the work is perhaps not a radical gesture at all, but a conservative one, insofar as it may strive "to keep the establishment intact even amid tenuous societal circumstances."<sup>78</sup> Burton is also explicit in attempting to recoup Burden's work for the discipline of institutional critique, one from which, she notes, he has been roundly excluded. She draws upon Andrea Fraser's definition of institutional critique, wherein controversial encounters between artist and institution are expressly ambivalent in that, while they challenge the bastions of fine art, they also reinforce such structures.<sup>79</sup> The co-dependency at the heart of Burden's institutional critique is also the subject of a short essay in the "Extreme Measures" catalog by Jenny Moore, who discussed the particular exigencies the New Museum faced in mounting the exhibition in 2013.<sup>80</sup> My project builds on this long-awaited inclusion of Burden's works in the canon of institutional critique by

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<sup>77</sup> Johanna Burton, "I Guess You'll Buy a Gun/You'll Buy it Secondhand," in Phillips, *Chris Burden*, p. 135. The interview in question was "Shoot," *Witness* (BBC World Service, 2012), audio, 10 min, available online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p029nlyg> (accessed September 15, 2016).

<sup>78</sup> Burton, "I Guess You'll Buy a Gun," p. 136.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137, 144; Andrea Fraser, "What Is Institutional Critique?" in *Institutional Critique and After* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2006).

<sup>80</sup> Jenny Moore, "Power Play," in Phillips, *Extreme Measures*, pp. 195–196.

demonstrating how, in Burton's words, institutional critique appeared "at every stage of [Burden's] career," even in its earliest, and most seminal manifestations.<sup>81</sup>

Throughout this study, various exhibitions from Pacific Standard Time are used to tell the story of Chris Burden from 1967 to 1971, but a few points deserve special mention at the outset. Pomona College Museum of Art's aforementioned "It Happened at Pomona" was a Herculean effort, comprised of a year-long, rotating exhibition, the reconstruction and conservation of non-extant works from the period, numerous talks and public programs, as well as a mammoth catalog with essays, interviews, and an in-depth historical reconstruction. Co-curator Rebecca McGrew's essay for the catalog speaks of cataclysmic changes at Pomona in those years, when the anti-war and civil rights movements, as well as debates surrounding educational reform, created an atmosphere wherein artistic experimentation was allowed to flourish.<sup>82</sup> At UC Irvine, Burden would experience an even greater degree of student upheaval, as the public university participated more in state- and nationwide protests, something which the artist channeled directly into his work.

Finally, Thomas Crow powerfully inaugurates his essay in the Pomona catalog with the polemic,

It is a credible proposition to assert that the art being made and shown at Pomona College Museum of Art between 1969 and 1973 was as salient to art history as any being made and shown anywhere else in the world at the time.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Burton, "I Guess You'll Buy a Gun," p. 136.

<sup>82</sup> Rebecca McGrew, "Opening Things Up: Why and How it Happened at Pomona," in McGrew, *It happened at Pomona*, pp. 16–26.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Crow, "Disappearing Act: Art In and Out of Pomona," in McGrew, *It Happened at Pomona*, p. 36.

Crow argues that it is necessary to re-inscribe this moment into the history of the artists and curators who shaped it, given their wide-ranging influence over subsequent decades. His essay examined the artistic origins and shared preoccupations that informed not only the work of artists at Pomona, but their associated colleagues from the other burgeoning fine arts programs at colleges in the Los Angeles area. Crow's formulation of this period builds towards what he calls "disappearing acts," or artists who "remov[e] the body from view as the equal and opposite requirement to putting it on display or subjecting it to some stipulated regimen."<sup>84</sup> Taking Burden's *Five Day Locker Piece* as "a Pomona piece by proxy," Crow also demonstrates the tendency towards disappearance in pioneering performances by Bas Jan Ader, Hirokazu Kosaka, and Jack Goldstein, all of whose bodies were perceptibly present and absent at the same time. Crow's work in bringing Burden's early sculpture to light is not overlooked in this study, which relies heavily on his recent writing.

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<sup>84</sup> Crow, "Disappearing Act," p. 46.

## Chapter One

### Minimalism, Pomona College, 1967

In the spring of 2012, three of the sculptures that Chris Burden made as an undergraduate at Pomona College were revived as part of a massive, 9-month-long series of exhibitions at the school's Museum of Art titled "It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969–1973." The third and final installment of the exhibition, which was part of the Getty's "Pacific Standard Time: Art in LA 1945–1980" initiative (2011–2012), featured artist alumni and faculty who worked or exhibited at Pomona in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including Chris Burden (class of 1969) and James Turrell (class of 1965; faculty 1971–1973; M.F.A. Claremont Graduate School, 1973). Writing for the exhibition catalog, Thomas Crow, who graduated from Pomona with a bachelor's degree in Government in 1969, said that the work generated by the school "was as salient to art history as any being made and shown anywhere else in the world at that time."<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, he was referring to the work of Turrell, Robert Irwin, Michael Asher, Bas Jan Ader, and Judy Chicago, artists whose important contributions are well historicized, along with the curators Hal Glicksman and Helene Winer. But Crow was equally referring to some of the lesser-known figures in the Pomona/Claremont Graduate School orbit, such as John Mason, Mowry Baden, Lloyd Hamrol, and Michael Brewster, who made work deserving of retrospective scrutiny. Crow's recent scholarship has gone a long way towards incorporating such minor histories, born from California's vibrant and innovative art scene of the 1950s and

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Crow, "Disappearing Act," in *It happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969–1973*, ed. Rebecca McGrew (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2011), p. 36.

1960s, into the trajectory of movements such as Assemblage and Pop Art.<sup>2</sup> In so doing, Crow has defined multiple inroads into the early work that Chris Burden created as an undergraduate at Pomona from 1967–1969, which help to contextualize Burden’s collegiate efforts.

Various arms of the Getty’s initiative emphasized how the fine art stemming from the progressive colleges and universities in Southern California in the 1960s and early 1970s was significant to broader histories of Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, Installation, and Conceptual Art. Crow’s argument reinforces the stature of Rebecca McGrew’s aforementioned exhibition on Pomona College, but it also speaks to other “Pacific Standard Time” projects that focused on the University of California, Irvine (UCI) and the Woman’s Building at Fresno State and the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts).<sup>3</sup> They were joined by still other exhibitions that looked tangentially at the pedagogical atmosphere, student and faculty collaboration, and student work from Otis College of Art and Design (Otis) and Chouinard Art Institute (one of colleges incorporated into CalArts in 1961).<sup>4</sup> The art history of Los Angeles in the postwar period has been defined by the importance of educational institutions—over museums, galleries, collectors,

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<sup>2</sup> See especially, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), pp. 70–85; and *The Long March of Pop: Art, Music and Design 1930–1995* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 206–231.

<sup>3</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, ed. *Best Kept Secret: UCI and the Development of Contemporary Art in Southern California 1964–1971* (Laguna: Laguna Art Museum, 2011); Meg Linton, Sue Maberry, and Elizabeth Pulsinelli, eds. *Doin’ It in Public: Feminism and Art at the Woman’s Building* (Los Angeles: Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, 2011); Marguerite Elliot and Maria Karras, eds. *The Woman’s Building & Feminist Art Education, 1973–1991: A Pictorial Herstory* (Los Angeles: Otis College of Art and Design, 2011); Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton, eds. *From Site to Vision: The Woman’s Building in Contemporary Culture* (Los Angeles: Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> In most cases, the Getty awarded research grants, as well as generous funds for exhibitions and publications. For a list of projects supported by the initiative, see [http://www.getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/past/pst/pst\\_fact\\_sheet.exhibitions.html](http://www.getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/past/pst/pst_fact_sheet.exhibitions.html) (accessed March 8, 2017).



and critics—in shaping and maintaining its art world.<sup>5</sup> Although there was until recently a disproportionate and gendered focus on the legacy of CalArts,<sup>6</sup> Paul Karlstrom argued that the pedagogical innovation that took place there was predicated upon and replicated at other newer schools, especially in the expanding state university system, which founded new campuses at San Diego, Irvine, and Davis in the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> More recently, an exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, which was very much in the spirit of “Pacific Standard Time,” examined the significant contributions to conceptual art photography that professors and students at UC San Diego made during the same era.<sup>8</sup> The scholars and museum professionals who have put forth such efforts have stated that the work of the students who had access to extraordinary pedagogical environments in the art schools of Southern California is significant within the field of postwar American art.

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<sup>5</sup> Terry R. Myers, “Art School Rules,” in *Sunshine and Noir: Art in LA, 1960–1997*, eds. Lars Nittve and Helle Crenzien (Humbleback, Denmark: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 1997), pp. 201–207; Paul J. Karlstrom, “Art School Sketches: Notes on the Central Role of Schools in California Art and Culture,” in *Reading California: Art, Image, and Identity, 1900–2000*, eds. Stephanie Barron, Sheri Bernstein, and Ilene Susan Fort (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 85–109; Howard Singerman, “From My Institution to Yours,” in *Public Offerings*, ed. Paul Schimmel (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2001), p. 283; Peter Frank, “Context, Attitude Community: The Early Years of the UCI Art Department,” in *Best Kept Secret*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Myers, “Art School Rules,” p. 205. Examples of the preference for CalArts over other institutions in the years prior to the first “Pacific Standard Time” project, include Catherine Lord, ed. *CalArts: Skeptical Belief(s)* (Newport Beach: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1988), which concentrated on the 1980s and included many female artists and contributors; and Richard Hertz, ed. *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia* (Ojai, CA: Minneola Press, 2003), which gave prominent place to Helene Winer, but neglected the Feminist Art Program in its focus on Goldstein and his associates.

<sup>7</sup> Karlstrom, “Art School Sketches,” p. 100. This idea is echoed in Donna Conwell and Glenn Phillips, “Duration Piece: Rethinking Sculpture in Los Angeles,” in *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945–1980* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2011), p. 238.

<sup>8</sup> Jill Dawsey, ed. *The Uses of Photography: Art, Politics, and the Re-invention of a Medium* (La Jolla: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 2016).

This fact could not be any clearer than it is in the example of Chris Burden, who found his voice early and produced a masterwork (*Five Day Locker Piece*, 1971) while still an MFA student at UC Irvine. The work Burden made in college and graduate school benefitted from unique educational opportunities and the boon of the expanding Los Angeles art scene of the 1960s, such that it stands out as more mature and retrospectively more perceptive than the average collegiate achievement. In this chapter and the one that follows, the minimalist sculpture and interactive environments that Burden created as an undergraduate at Pomona College will be given their first in-depth treatment. This section elaborates the influences, both local and national, which bear upon Burden's formation as an artist and the development of his early aesthetics along a trajectory to performance art. This reading is made possible by not only the books and exhibitions mentioned above, but to a wide range of the work that went into "Pacific Standard Time." In synthesis, the various exhibitions and programs hosted by over sixty cultural institutions across Southern California, in addition to the archives collected by the Getty Research Institute, provide a robust background in which to contextualize Burden's early sculpture.

"Pacific Standard Time" also went a long way towards staking a claim for the crucial role that California and West Coast artists played in the movements broadly defined as Neo-Avantgarde. Around the same time that historians became interested in what happened in LA's art schools, they started to reexamine the role California artists played in various national movements, most notably Pop and Minimalism.<sup>9</sup> It quickly became evident how Southern California's artistic legacy had for many decades been marginalized by the dominance of New

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Crow's aforementioned work is foundational and indicative of this trend; see note 2.

York over fine art and its criticism.<sup>10</sup> In his essay “Another Minimalism,” James Meyer takes this position in reevaluating the genealogy of Minimalism to argue against the field’s bicoastal division into Eastern and Western variants.<sup>11</sup> Meyer demonstrates the interrelation between sculptors from both coasts and directly rebuts decades of denigrating criticism leveled against California Minimalists, alleging that their unintellectual approach to sculpture affected the quality of their work.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, one need look no further than the canon-forming exhibition, “Primary Structures” (Jewish Museum, 1966), which included several West-Coast artists, or *Artforum*, the San Francisco art journal that moved to Los Angeles in the mid-1960s and became one of the premier advocates for the new sculpture coming out of both New York and Los Angeles.<sup>13</sup> LA artist John McCracken, one of Meyer’s case studies, claimed that he

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<sup>10</sup> This was the primary *raison d’être* for the first “Pacific Standard Time” project; see Rebecca Peabody, Andrew Perchuk, Glenn Phillips and Rani Singh, “Shifting the Standard: Reappraising Art in Los Angeles,” in *Pacific Standard Time*, p. 1. For a feminist interpretation of the marginalization of the Los Angeles art scene, see Géraldine Gourbe, “Prologue,” in *In the Canyon, Revise the Canon: Utopian Knowledge, Radical Pedagogy, and Artist-Run Community Art Space in Southern California* (France: Shelter Press, 2015), pp. 7–8.

<sup>11</sup> James Meyer, “Another Minimalism,” in *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958–1968*, ed. Ann Goldstein (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004), pp. 33–49. Meyer’s essay is somewhat of a mea culpa for the author, who drew clear distinctions between East- and West-Coast Minimalism in the opening pages of his otherwise admirable study *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 13. Anna C. Chave later called out Meyer for making this division in “Revaluing Minimalism: Patronage, Aura, and Place,” *Art Bulletin* 90:3 (2008), pp. 466–467, 476.

<sup>12</sup> Chave reinforced this opinion in a case study of James Turrell’s affinities with the East-Coast minimalists in “Revaluing Minimalism,” pp. 475–476. This critique has also recently been taken up in William Hackman, *Out of Sight: the Los Angeles Art Scene of the Sixties* (New York: Other Press, 2015), pp. 149–151.

<sup>13</sup> The definitive account of the early years of *Artforum* is Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum, 1962–1974* (New York: Soho, 2000). On the importance of the journal during its years in Los Angeles, see Ken D. Allen, Lucy Bradnock, and Lisa Turvey, “For People Who Know the Difference: Defining the Pop Art Sixties,” in *Pacific Standard Time*, pp.132–134; Hackman, *Out of Sight*, pp. 160–161.

pored over magazines like *Artforum* to absorb all the fresh news from the other coast, which in turn shaped his work.<sup>14</sup> In the pages of *Artforum* in the mid-1960s, in-depth coverage of the LA art scene shared space with foundational essays by East Coast critics. *Artforum* could be cited along with the canon-forming exhibitions “Primary Structures” (Jewish Museum, 1966) and “A New Aesthetic” (Wadsworth Atheneum, 1967) as examples of an inclusive movement that fed off of a bicoastal dialogue. While differences did exist and monikers like Finish Fetish and the Cool School—along with their associations with car culture, aeronautics, plastics, and surfing—were accurate in some cases, Meyer demonstrates that each artist’s influences and contributions must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.<sup>15</sup> The geographic clichés of Californians as sun-drenched, physically fit, obsessed with surface (money and status), hedonistic, and anti-intellectual can no longer be used to relegate their work to the margins of history.

The attentive way in which Crow and Meyer approach the fields of West Coast Minimalism and Light and Space art welcomes aspects of the ill-applied California stereotype only when they are significant to a particular artist. For instance, in *The Long March of Pop*, Crow probes the influence that surfing and motorcycle racing had on Billy Al Bengston’s crucial early paintings, which are often overlooked in discussions of Pop Art.<sup>16</sup> Robert Irwin has vehemently insisted, echoing cultural critic Tom Wolfe, that car customization should be considered not just a hobby, but a craft that strives towards the refinement and technical

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<sup>14</sup> John McCracken, quoted in Meyer, “Another Minimalism,” p. 40. McCracken discusses the importance of magazines in circulating artistic work and ideas in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Thomas Kellein, *John McCracken* (Basel: Kunsthalle Basel, 1995), pp. 24, 28.

<sup>15</sup> A similar argument has more recently been made in Hackman, *Out of Sight*, p. 148.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*

perfection akin to that required by the fine arts.<sup>17</sup> He, along with McCracken, Larry Bell, Craig Kaufman, Ken Price, Judy Chicago, James Turrell, and Ed Ruscha have all worked with, and acknowledged the role that automobile detailing, a style which emerged out of the Los Angeles area in the postwar decades, played in their formation as Southern Californian artists. As Meyer suggests, such influences should not be hidden behind, nor should they presuppose any lack of a critical creative atmosphere in Southern California. Surfing, riding motorbikes, and airbrush-painting car parts are integral to the origin story of these artists. Approached with formal rigor and translated into fine art, such cultural touchstones enriched the work of the California Minimalists, rather than detracted from it.

For Chris Burden, who began sculpting in a minimalist style in 1967, these local influences were strongly felt, but for him they arrived simultaneously with the canonical writings of Robert Morris, Donald Judd, Michael Fried, and Barbara Rose, as well as magazine and catalog illustrations, and important exhibitions of the burgeoning minimalist canon. One of Burden's first sculpture professors at Pomona College, David Gray, was based in Southern California, but exhibited with Richard Feigen in New York and was included in "Primary Structures." Gray had a strong grasp of the new advances in sculpture, which he passed along to his students with exactly the same bicoastal perspective that Meyer attributed to Bell and

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Lawrence Weschler, "An LA High School Youth: Robert Irwin," in *Vermeer in Bosnia: A Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 2004), pp. 269–288; reprinted in Lawrence Weschler, *Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees: Over Thirty Years of Conversations with Robert Irwin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 17–22. See also Michael Fallon, *Creating the Future: Art and Los Angeles in the 1970s* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2014), pp. 156–161. Allusions to Renaissance craftsmanship and Baroque form permeate Tom Wolfe's first major essay (*Esquire*, 1963), which profiled car customizers in Southern California. It is collected under the eponymous title *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), pp. 76–107. See also Cécile Whiting, *Pop LA: Art and the City in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 83.

McCracken.<sup>18</sup> Burden's collegiate sculpture is here analyzed with attention to influences from both coasts, as well as the exceptional instruction the young artist received at special moment for fine art pedagogy in Southern California. This reexamination will contribute to the growing literature on the academic art produced in Los Angeles in the late 1960s with the newly emerged story of the early work of Chris Burden.

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Like much of California's booming postwar population, Chris Burden had migrated from somewhere else. Robert P. Burden, the artist's father, was an environmental engineer who taught at Harvard University, eventually becoming a Dean and having an endowed chair named in his honor.<sup>19</sup> Christopher Lee Burden was born in Boston in 1946, but due in part to his father's work for the Rockefeller Foundation, Burden grew up bouncing back and forth between the United States, Italy, France, and Switzerland. He went to a Swiss boarding school as a young man, before returning to the Boston area to attend the Upper School of the prestigious Cambridge preparatory academy, Browne & Nichols (now Buckingham Browne & Nichols). Living in Europe and traveling as a child, Burden frequented museums and galleries with his intellectual parents, assumably becoming accustomed to visiting cultural institutions and discussing art with them. In adolescence, Burden exhibited a proclivity for the fine arts—particularly photography and ceramics—which was complemented by an equal talent for his father's stock-in-trade, math and science. In the summer after his junior year of high school (1962–1963), Burden won a

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<sup>18</sup> Mowery Baden, Gray's fellow faculty member at Pomona College, said he did not "think that anybody really had as good a grasp on what Minimalism meant as David"; "Mowery Baden Interviewed by Rebecca McGrew," in *It Happened at Pomona*, p. 259. See also David Pagel, "David Gray," in *It Happened at Pomona*, pp. 288–290.

<sup>19</sup> "University Appoints Ten Men to Faculty," *The Harvard Crimson* (August 22, 1941); "Alumnus Donates \$1 Million For Endowment of New Chair," *The Harvard Crimson* (February 5, 1975).

National Science Foundation grant to attend the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California, which was his first occasion to travel west.<sup>20</sup>

Burden claimed that, instead of attending the Institute, he spent the summer of 1963 working on his photography and hanging out with surfers on La Jolla's Windansea Beach, which was one of the most popular surf spots on the southern coast of California.<sup>21</sup> In the early 1960s, surfing was experiencing a craze, thanks to the music of the Beach Boys and Hollywood films such as *Gidget* (1959) and *Blue Hawaii* (1961). These films inaugurated a string of teen-oriented motion pictures that portrayed the sport, which had grown in popularity on the West Coast after World War II, as a stylish pursuit of wholesome, white youths.<sup>22</sup> According to Tom Wolfe's profile of a group La Jolla surfers—the Mac Meda Destruction Company—written a couple of years after Burden's visit, although most of them came from nice, middle-class backgrounds and were generally well educated, the surfer crews behaved antagonistically towards members of the straight society, squatted unlawfully near the beach, burgled, partied disruptively, and fought.<sup>23</sup> It

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<sup>20</sup> The Institute, which had been part of the University of California system since 1912, was incorporated into the new San Diego campus (actually located in La Jolla, where the Institute is based) in 1960; Dawsey, *The Uses of Photography*, p. 70n.20.

<sup>21</sup> "Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips," in *It Happened at Pomona*, p. 272; recounted in Fallon, *Creating the Future*, pp. 97–98. Had he attended the Institute, Burden may have encountered surf culture anyway, as graduate student Ricky Grigg was a former professional surfer who was working on his doctorate at Scripps; see "Ricky Grigg: Surfer-Aquanaut," *Surfer* 6:6 (January 1966), pp. 42–45.

<sup>22</sup> Drew Kampion, *Stoked: A History of Surf Culture* (Santa Monica: General Publishing, 1997), pp. 73–75; Sheila Weller, "Malibu's Lost Boys," *Vanity Fair* 552 (August 2006), pp. 166–179; Whiting, *Pop L.A.*, p. 50.

<sup>23</sup> Wolfe's "The Pump House Gang" was written in 1965–1966 and pushed in the anthology *The Pump House Gang* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1968), pp. 17–39. Kampion proffers that the mainstream media portrayal of surfing was always mixed between decorous and pure evil; *Stoked*, p. 82. Surfers cultivated anti-authoritarian and hostile attitudes in order to scare inexperienced practitioners from the beaches, which were quickly becoming overcrowded. See also Weller, "Malibu's Lost Boys."

is likely that a teenage Chris Burden encountered this latter variant of surf society on the beaches of La Jolla in 1963, but by all descriptions it would not have been easy for an outsider—especially a preppy kid from New England—to ingratiate themselves into such a closely knit community. By his own account, Burden befriended the surfers by offering to do them a favor: he would store their boards for them in the room he was renting at the beach in La Jolla Shores, thus facilitating their nomadic lifestyle and giving Burden a way into their clique.<sup>24</sup>

While it seems unlikely that any of the surfers or other rebellious kids Burden encountered that summer were apprised of the latest news from the Los Angeles art world, it is not out of the question to assume that surfers as far down the coast as San Diego had heard of the wave-riding savants who were stirring up interest in their work at the Ferus Gallery in midtown Los Angeles. Founded by Ed Kienholz and Walter Hopps in 1957, and soon thereafter under the direction of Irving Blum, Ferus showed European and American Abstraction, Assemblage, Pop, and Minimalism. Bringing advanced art to a world where the avant-garde was virtually unrepresented, the Ferus Gallery quickly started to attract attention and an informal collective coalesced around a group of young, local artists, their collectors, and interlocutors. The Ferus stable was almost immediately, and has certainly been most lastingly remembered as a hyper-masculine boys' club.<sup>25</sup> Ed Ruscha, a student and later a Ferus colleague of Robert Irwin, remembers brawling and “near riots that happened in the group,” much of which can be attributed to the fierce competition that developed among this accomplished assemblage of artists

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<sup>24</sup> “Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips,” p. 272.

<sup>25</sup> Kristine McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery: A Place to Begin* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2009), pp. 176, 206–207; Hackman, *Out of Sight*, p. 48.



as they strived to achieve commercial success.<sup>26</sup> Physical and verbal fighting between Ferus Gallery artists was compounded or perhaps even instigated by their (ab)use of alcohol and drugs, which, along with some of the fighting, took place out in the open. There was apparently no attempt to hide the overtly masculine proclivities of the Ferus gang and in fact, part of the group's renown, leading to their nomination as the "Cool School," stemmed from their reputation, as Ruscha put it, for being bad boys. This social and cultural posturing mined the Bohemian roots of Hopps and his Beat Generation associates, but it was equally indebted to the growing popularity of youthful rebellion, embodied by one of the era's most charismatic stars, and a Ferus Gallery associate, James Dean.<sup>27</sup> Ferus' reputation was solidified in the eyes of its ever-growing public when, shortly after the opening of Wallace Berman's first and only Los Angeles exhibition in June 1957, the Vice Squad shut down the show on charges of obscenity.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ed Ruscha, quoted in McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery*, p. 149; there are other accounts of fighting amongst the Ferus artists on pp. 162, 176, 203. See also Betty Turnbull, *The Last Time I Saw Ferus, 1957–1966* (Newport Beach: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1976), unpaginated; Irving Blum, quoted in Weschler, *Seeing is forgetting*, p. 55; Ed Moses interview in *The Beat and the Buzz: Inside the LA Art World*, ed. Richard Hertz (Ojai, CA: Minneola Press, 2009), p. 160; Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise: the Los Angeles Art Scene and the 1960s* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2011), pp. 32, 87.

<sup>27</sup> Dean and his *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) co-star and subsequent Hollywood stand-in, Dennis Hopper, were part of the extended group of Ferus characters as early as the mid 1950s. See Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties*, p. 78; Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, pp. 22, 30, 94.

<sup>28</sup> Turnbull, *The Last Time I Saw Ferus*; Rebecca Solnit, *Secret Exhibition: Six California Artists of the Cold War Era* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1990), pp. 22–23; Richard Candida Smith, *Utopia and Dissent: Art, Poetry, and Politics in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 226–230; Charles Brittin, "The Arrest of Wallace Berman," in *Photographing the LA Art Scene 1955–1975*, ed. Craig Krull (Santa Monica: Smart Art Press, 1996), pp. 24–27; McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery*, p. 157; Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, pp. 28–29; Lucy Bradnock and Rani Singh, "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag: Crafting an Art Scene," in *Pacific Standard Time*, p. 96; Hackman, *Out of Sight*, pp. 51–65. As the example of Edward Kienholz's 1966 exhibition at LACMA proves, the threat of government censorship had the unintended effect of boosting exposure for artists such as he and Berman; see Anne Ayers, "The Long Haul," in Nittve and Crenzien, *Sunshine and Noir*, p. 164.

The Ferus Gallery's rough-and-tumble, boys'-club reputation was particularly embodied by the younger, less established artists in the group, such as the gregarious Billy Al Bengston, who is remembered as being the leader of the Ferus crowd.<sup>29</sup> Bengston, who, like most of the Ferus artists, started off painting in the Abstract Expressionist manner, joined the gallery early on after presenting himself one day in 1958 to Hopps and Kienholz, declaring that he was "going to be the world's greatest artist," and then summarily jumping in front of a car on La Cienega Boulevard (where Ferus was located) with his arms outstretched.<sup>30</sup> This gesture of macho bravura is precisely evocative of Chris Burden's later crucifixion on top of a car (*Trans-Fixed*, 1974) and his performance *Deadman* (1972)—in which the artist lay under a tarp in a lane of traffic on La Cienega in the same gallery row where Ferus was once located—and they serve as a marker of Burden's inheritance from the Ferus Gallery artists, which will be explored in a latter portion of this project. It is worth noting that colleagues who knew Burden in college and graduate school say that he possessed a similar level of self-confidence—though less outspoken than Bengston's—which led those who knew him to intuit that he would in fact go on to do great things.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, and Eve Babitz, quoted in McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery*, pp. 192, 203, 223, respectively; Ed Ruscha, quoted in Hackman, *Out of Sight*, p. 139. See also Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, p. 45; Ken D. Allen, Lucy Bradnock, and Lisa Turvey, "For People Who Know the Difference: Defining the Pop Art Sixties," in *Pacific Standard Time*, p. 125.

<sup>30</sup> Ed Kienholz, quoted in Frances Colpitt and Michael Delgado, eds. "History Repeats Itself (Part I)," *Journal—The Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art* (Winter 1983), p. 38; and McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery*, p. 173. See also Turnbull, *The Last Time I Saw Ferus*; Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, pp. 33–34.

<sup>31</sup> "Michael Brewster Interviewed by David Pagel," in McGrew, *It happened at Pomona*, p. 268; Phyllis Lutjeans, interview with the author, October 11, 2016.

Born in Kansas, Bengston grew up in Los Angeles in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As an athletic and dexterous young man, Bengston was drawn to gymnastics and eventually surfing while he attended Manual Arts High School.<sup>32</sup> In the late 1950s, Bengston was among the original group of Malibu surfers that inspired the characters in the novel and film *Gidget* (one of them is nicknamed Moondoggie, which was Bengston's handle amongst that crowd).<sup>33</sup> In 1960, another surfer, Kenneth Price, joined the Ferus Gallery and took a studio with Bengston in the Ocean Park neighborhood of Santa Monica, close to the beach and the gritty, former destination city of Venice. In the 1950s, beatnik culture thrived at LA's beaches, which led several of the Ferus artists to set-up studios in the area.<sup>34</sup> For Price's first solo exhibition at Ferus in October 1961, he had the outlandish idea of using a photograph of himself riding a wave, with his arms self-consciously outstretched in the manner of a triumphant crucifixion, as the exhibition announcement (Fig. 1). The following month, Bengston, who raced motorcycles at a track in Gardena in order to earn a living, answered with an exhibition announcement that featured a photo of himself allegedly mid-air (but cropped too close to tell) astride his bike during a race (Fig. 2).<sup>35</sup> This self-styled embrace of subcultural sports succinctly summed up the Ferus boys'

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<sup>32</sup> In addition to being Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell's alma mater, Manual Arts High School was something of a training ground for future surfers, because their applied arts curricula trained artists in fabrication techniques and adornment, which they applied to the craft of fashioning and detailing surfboards. See C.R. Stecyk, "Introduction," in *Surf Culture: The Art History of Surfing*, ed. David Carson (Laguna Beach: Laguna Art Museum, 2002), unpagged; Crow, *The Long March of Pop*, p. 211.

<sup>33</sup> Weller, "Malibu's Lost Boys," p. 176.

<sup>34</sup> McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery*, p. 194; Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, pp. 47–48, 84; Bradnock and Singh, "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," p. 98.

<sup>35</sup> McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery*, pp. 222–223; Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, pp. 50–53; Cécile Whiting, "Contemporary Art, Studio Ceramics, and the Clay Revolution in Los Angeles," in *Common Ground: Ceramics in Southern California 1945–1975* (Pomona: American Museum of Ceramic Art, 2012), p. 96; Hackman, *Out of Sight*, p. 133.

reputation as youthful, virile, and sunbaked from enjoying the outdoor activities that the natural splendor of Southern California offered, but it also self-reflexively mocked the institution of art marketing in which it participated.<sup>36</sup>

In the late 1950s, the sport of surfing (as well as its related fashion and styles) began to spread rapidly throughout the United States, due in part to advances in polyurethane foam casting and the use of fiberglass coatings, which made surfboards lighter, easier to steer, and less expensive to produce. These advances in technology ignited a cottage industry for experienced surfers and board shapers, who set up shops in local surfing communities, such as Santa Monica, Dana Point, and La Jolla. Soon a network of DIY board workshops opened along the southern coast of California, stretching from Malibu to Mexico and beyond. Part of what helped the surfing industry to expand was not only the new technology, but also the ancillary products, such as apparel and specialty magazines, which supplemented board shaping and repairing as careers tailored to the skills and lifestyle requirements of former surfers.<sup>37</sup> Like many experienced surfers, Bengston and Price dabbled in surfboard production, the former most notably painting boards and the latter experimenting with tailfin design.<sup>38</sup> While surfing was becoming big business for those well ingrained in the sport, in the early 1960s the community of surfers on the south and central coasts of California was still relatively exclusive. In his profile “The Pump

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<sup>36</sup> Whiting, *Pop LA*, pp. 63–71; Crow, *The Long March of Pop*, pp. 211, 217; Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, pp. 136–137.

<sup>37</sup> On the development of the surfing industry in the late 1950s and early 1960s, see Andrew Warren and Chris Gibson, *Surfing Places, Surfboard Makers: Craft, Creativity, and Cultural Heritage in Hawai'i, California, and Australia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), pp. 84–99.

<sup>38</sup> Stecyk, “Introduction.” A photo of Bengston and Price’s Ferus colleague Robert Irwin holding a board painted by Bengston appeared with the caption “A Painting Surfboarder” in “Wide Open and Way Out: Artists Take To The Place,” *Life* (October 19, 1962), p. 89.

House Gang,” Tom Wolfe noted that news traveled up and down the California coast primarily by word of mouth, fueled by the peripatetic surfer’s life of traveling to catch waves and compete in semi-professional tournaments. News of the surf culture, including affiliated clubs, shops, and films, was also disseminated by magazines, such as *Surfer*, which began publication in Orange County in 1960.<sup>39</sup> Any one of these nodes on the informal surfing network—shops, clubs, competitions, magazines—may have been a source of information about exhibitions at Ferus Gallery involving fellow surfer-artists, such as Bengston, Price, and Robert Irwin. It is easy to imagine Price and Bengston’s exhibition announcements papering surf shops along the coast, which may have been a mode of publicity used to informally promote Ferus exhibitions.

Given that surfboard adornment was a plum way for riders to stand out in the growing field, it is not altogether unlikely that word of the hotshot artists of the Ferus Gallery who were engaged in such pursuits would have spread to the surfer crews of La Jolla, given the aforementioned, widespread popularity of the Malibu crew in which Bengston surfed. A photo spread in *Life* magazine in October 1962 featured pictures of Bengston (with his motorbike) and Irwin (standing with a Bengston-painted surfboard) in a cover story on California.<sup>40</sup> For Burden, whose interests in fine art photography and California’s extreme sports subcultures dovetailed during his sojourn on the beaches of La Jolla, even a glimmer of cross-fertilization between the fields may have caught the young man’s attention. But in those years before Burden officially dedicated his post-secondary studies to the arts, his proclivity for teenage rebellion may have been enough to draw his focus determinably towards the West Coast. Since his senior year of

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<sup>39</sup> In the early 1960s, “[l]arge numbers of kids on both coasts had bought boards and started surfing. Magazines, particularly *Surfer*, had become the main conduit of the surf subculture’s self-celebration”; William Finnegan, *Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life* (New York: Penguin, 2015), p. 70.

<sup>40</sup> “Wide Open and Way Out.”

high school was approaching in the summer of 1963, Burden was expected to visit colleges and have entrance interviews while he was in California. On his way out of Los Angeles on a road trip back to the Northeast, Burden stopped at Pomona College in Claremont, California, where he had an admissions interview. Pomona College is part of the venerable Claremont College Consortium (today the Claremont University Consortium), which at the time consisted of Scripps, Pitzer, Harvey Mudd, and the Claremont Graduate School. Located within steps of one another and operating as a quasi-university the Claremont Colleges are a bastion of intellectual ferment, which must have appealed to Burden, who called Cambridge, Massachusetts home when he was in the States. However, speaking with Glenn Phillips in 2007, Burden chuckled at the very idea of applying to Pomona, which suggests that the whole endeavor might have been a type of cynical rebellion in itself.<sup>41</sup> While Pomona and its sister schools have historically been very well respected and academically competitive, the young Burden's interest in a liberal arts college that was far from the prestige of Harvard and the New England prep school he was attending, may have been an affront to the values of his upbringing and a way of avoiding such a life for himself.

The possibility that interviewing at Pomona College may have been an ironic gesture on Burden's part did not preclude his application and acceptance into the program. The son of an engineer who had exhibited a talent for both the arts and sciences, Burden initially wanted to study architecture at Pomona, but the school did not have an undergraduate program, so Burden was based in the art department and took additional courses in math and physics.<sup>42</sup> The summer after his sophomore year of college (1966–1967), Burden interned at the firm Cambridge Seven

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<sup>41</sup> Glenn Phillips, Oral history interview with Chris Burden, May 4, 2007, California Video Screening Series, Getty Research Institute.

<sup>42</sup> Chris Burden and Thomas Crow in conversation, Pomona College, March 24, 2012.

Associates back in Boston, where he discovered that a career in architecture may not facilitate the professional life that he envisioned for himself. That summer, Burden was relegated to menial tasks, like sorting trade periodicals, and he was stuck working down in a sub-basement. He recounts, “I would come up and talk to recent Harvard graduates in architecture and they were drawing bathroom stalls on blueprints.”<sup>43</sup> Through the internship, Burden realized that it takes a career’s worth of experience to reach a position in such a firm where one can make critical decisions.<sup>44</sup> To Burden’s restless and proactive spirit, this was too long to wait.

In the art department at Pomona, Burden gravitated to the ceramic sculptor John Mason, who later in life Burden would consider to be a strong influence on his early career.<sup>45</sup> Burden took three sculpture studio classes with Mason in his freshman and sophomore years, before the latter left Pomona for UC Irvine, where his path would cross with Burden’s again in a couple of years. A few factors must have endeared Burden to Mason from the start. Entering Pomona College in 1965, Burden already had extensive training in ceramics, having devoted a significant portion of his tenure at Browne & Nichols to a multi-year, 10-hour/week ceramics tutorial, which sounds more like a vocational program than something offered by an elite prep school.<sup>46</sup> For his artistic efforts, Burden was distinguished in 1963 with dual awards in photography and ceramics from the Boston-based *Christian Science Monitor*. Secondly, Mason was one of the original

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<sup>43</sup> Burden and Crow, Pomona College; “Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips,” p. 272; recounted in Fallon, *Creating the Future*, p. 99.

<sup>44</sup> See also, Jan Hoet and Chris Burden. “Chris Burden: Before I was a crazy violent person...,” in *Positionen zur Kunst = Positions in Art. MAK-Round-Table*, ed. Peter Noever (Vienna: MAK, 1994), p. 72.

<sup>45</sup> Chris Burden, quoted in Suzanne Muchnic, “A Burgeoning Art Scene with Room for Ceramics,” in *Clay’s Tectonic Shift, 1956–1968: John Mason, Ken Price, Peter Vouklos*, ed. Mary David McNaughton (Claremont: Scripps College, 2012), p. 182.

<sup>46</sup> Chris Burden, “Resume” [1971], archives of the Chris Burden Studio.

members of the lauded Ferus Gallery, with whom Burden may already have been familiar. In contradistinction from someone like Billy Al Bengston, John Mason was a Midwesterner with a “reticent and modest” demeanor much more suitable to Burden’s own.<sup>47</sup> Mason was also nearly a decade older than some of the younger Ferus “studs,”<sup>48</sup> but according to Thomas Crow, he nonetheless conveyed “the aura of Ferus glamour.”<sup>49</sup> James Turrell, who began his collegiate career working with clay and was one of Mason’s first undergraduate students at Pomona in the early 1960s, remembers that his professor’s soft-spoken authority conveyed to him what it really meant to be a working artist, innovating and making a personal mark on one’s field.<sup>50</sup> Burden echoed Turrell’s assessment of Mason, stating that perhaps the most important effect of Mason’s mentorship was to provide a model of a “genuine, serious artist,” which Burden said was conveyed primarily thorough “his attitude.”<sup>51</sup>

Writing for the “Pacific Standard Time” catalog, Andrew Perchuk and Catherine Taft said that Mason and his colleagues from the Otis pot shop “provided the first reproducible model of how to become successful LA artists” in the 1950s.<sup>52</sup> In tandem with Peter Voulkos, Mason is

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<sup>47</sup> McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery*, p. 71.

<sup>48</sup> “The Studs” was used as the title of a 1964 Ferus promotional poster featuring Ed Moses, Robert Irwin, Ken Price, and Billy Al Bengston. The moniker has since stuck and is used to represent the entire Ferus stable; see Turnbull, *The Last Time I Saw Ferus*.

<sup>49</sup> Crow, “Disappearing Act,” p. 39.

<sup>50</sup> “James Turrell interviewed by Rebecca McGrew,” in McGrew, *It happened at Pomona*, p. 304. This sentiment was shared by other student artists in Southern California at the time, including Ed Ruscha and Llyn Foulkes, reflecting on the influence of their charismatic professors; see Karlstrom, “Art School Sketches,” pp. 98, 108–109n.40.

<sup>51</sup> Chris Burden, quoted in Muchnic, “A Burgeoning Art Scene,” p. 182.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew Perchuk and Catherine Taft, “Floating Structures: Building the Modern in Postwar Los Angeles,” in *Pacific Standard Time*, pp. 49, 62. They further claim that the Otis gang was the model for the one that subsequently developed around the Ferus Gallery.



credited with having transformed the medium of ceramics from being mired in associations with craft into one of the fine arts with a modernist legacy that drew from traditions of painting and sculpture.<sup>53</sup> In 1954, Voulkos arrived to chair the new ceramics department at the Los Angeles County Art Institute (LACAI, now Otis), where, in addition to Mason, he mentored Bengston and Price. Although he never exhibited at Ferus (not for lack of an invitation), Voulkos played as much a part in defining the cool machismo of the Ferus artists as did the marginal presence of a figure like Wallace Berman, who disassociated from the group after his first exhibition.<sup>54</sup> A significant part of the celebrity that began to adhere to Voulkos in the late 1950s stemmed from his working method and approach to the medium, which he demonstrated in virtuoso performances at LACAI and elsewhere. Rather than approaching the wheel like a potter would, Voulkos labored “hundred-pound masses of clay” by “throw[ing] his whole body into the task [...] moving with musical and theatrical flourishes” that had an improvisatory nature, distilled from abstract-expressionist and Cagean influences.<sup>55</sup> He also employed actions previously

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<sup>53</sup> The revolution in clay that happened in Southern California in the 1950s has been the subject of several recent exhibitions and will only be elucidated herein as necessary. For more information, see Mary Davis McNaughton, ed. *Revolution in Clay: The Marer Collection of Contemporary Ceramics* (Claremont, CA: Scripps College, 1994); McNaughton, *Clay's Tectonic Shift; Common Ground*; Sequoia Miller, *The Ceramic Presence in Modern Art* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 2015), pp. 29–49; Janelle Porter, “Letter from California: Men of the Golden West, 1954–1967,” in *Ceramix: from Rodin to Schütte*, eds Camille Morineau and Lucia Pesapane (Ghent: Snoeck, 2015), pp. 48–55.

<sup>54</sup> Bengston described Voulkos as being “the stud duck of all time;” quoted in Crow, *The Long March of Pop*, p. 210.

<sup>55</sup> Crow, “Disappearing Act,” pp. 36–37; Crow, *The Long March of Pop*, p. 210. The summer prior to his arrival in Los Angeles, Voulkos taught at Black Mountain College, where he met John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and Robert Rauschenberg. See also McNaughton, *Revolution in Clay*, p. 51; Mary Davis MacNaughton, “Unexpected Connections: Clay Sculpture in LA and the Avant-Garde,” in *Clay's Tectonic Shift*, pp. 157–158; Hackman, *Out of Sight*, pp. 73–76; Miller, *The Ceramic Presence in Modern Art*, pp. 30–31; Porter, “Letter from California,” pp. 49–50; Cindi Strauss, “Ceramics at Black Mountain College, 1946–1956,” in *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College, 1933–1957*, ed. Helen Molesworth (New Haven: Yale University

antithetical to the fine art ceramicist's toolkit, such as slab-building, denting, cracking, and piling clay, and applying glaze in a partial and gestural manner.<sup>56</sup> Voulkos, and later Mason, rescued clay from its functional and craft connotations, refashioning it as a legitimate sculptural medium at the expense of outmoded ideas about the medium's specific qualities.

When Voulkos decamped for a teaching job at UC Berkeley in 1959, Mason took over the studio that the two artists shared in the Silver Lake neighborhood, where they had installed a custom-built, walk-in kiln that was 7-feet-tall and could accommodate their increasingly large ceramic sculptures. Mason capitalized on the newfound interest in ceramics that his mentor had fostered, and began exhibiting at Ferus in 1957. In the early 1960s, Mason took a teaching job at Pomona College, where he joined another Voulkos protégé, Paul Soldner at Scripps, and together the two reoriented the center of ceramic production in the Southland towards Claremont. Thomas Crow has recently argued for the important influence Voulkos had on Mason and Soldner, insofar as he informed not only their working methods, but also their pedagogical style, and led them to redefine studio art practice at the Claremont Colleges in the early 1960s.<sup>57</sup> Following Voulkos, Mason and Soldner prioritized process, and with it all the flair of the macho, gestural

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Press, 2015), pp. 260–267; Jenni Sorkin, “Peter Voulkos, *Rocking Pot*,” in *Leap Before You Look*, pp. 272–273. The influence of Abstract Expressionism on the work of Voulkos, Mason, Bengston, and others was noted early on by Rose Slivka and codified in John Coplans' exhibition “Abstract Expressionist Ceramics” at the University of California, Irvine in 1966; see Rose Slivka, “Peter Voulkos at Bonnier's,” in *Craft Horizons* 17 (March/April 1957), p. 47; and Rose Slivka, “The New Ceramic Presence,” *Craft Horizons* 21 (July/August 1961), pp. 30–37. Suzanne Foley proffered that Californian ceramics of the mid-1950s “were a direct response to Abstract Expressionism” and fed off of its “spirit of spontaneity and gesture”; see Foley, “Ceramic Sculpture in California: An Overview,” in *Ceramic Sculpture: Six Artists*, eds Richard Marshall and Suzanne Foley (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1981), pp. 10–16.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Plagens, *Sunshine Muse: Art on the West Coast, 1945–1975* (New York: Praeger, 1974), p. 95; Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, pp. 46–47; Peter Plagens, “Culture, Clay, and Credibility,” in *Clay's Tectonic Shift*, p. 13; Hackman, *Out of Sight*, p. 75.

<sup>57</sup> Crow, “Disappearing Act,” pp. 36–39.

performativity of someone like Jackson Pollock. The emphasis these ceramicists placed on making as part of the finished product, equally of value when appreciating their sculptural prowess, left a defining mark on the Claremont Colleges' art programs.<sup>58</sup>

Although Mason's introverted character was seemingly opposite that of Voulkos's eccentricity and outgoing allure, he nevertheless embodied the rugged and psychologically distant demeanor commonly associated with artistic genius. If Voulkos made his claim to ceramic innovation by adopting gestural abstraction from painting, Mason developed an equally original process that was particularly indebted to the arch New York School painter, Jackson Pollock.<sup>59</sup> Proceeding from the large slabs that were the origin of Voulkos's massive abstractions, Mason endeavored to "return [clay] to the easel" in small, painted-tile designs. As the artist describes, "it wasn't until I started to work on the floor that I began to just cut and slam clay down [...] and then take pieces or parts of slabs and add them to make a more linear organic form."<sup>60</sup> Like Burden, Mason was a photographer as well as a ceramicist, and one of his

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<sup>58</sup> Beyond Pomona College, Alexis Smith, who studied with Mason at UC Irvine around 1969–1970, recalled that he galvanized students into making performance artwork; Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, p. xiv.

<sup>59</sup> In 2007, Mason told author Kristine McKenna that he was not interested in any of the Abstract Expressionist painters, but in other statements he's made about his work and methods betray more than a passing affinity with the gestural and improvisatory character of his work, which Suzanne Foley called "brushstrokes in clay." In a 2000 interview, Mason even echoed Pollock when he said that his early work method was "direct." More recently, William Hackman has said that Mason worked "much in the same way Pollock did his drip paintings." See Foley, "Ceramic Sculpture in California," p. 16; *John Mason* (Chicago: Frank Lloyd Gallery, 2000), p. 2; McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery*, pp. 71; Mary Davis MacNaughton, "Unexpected Connections: Clay Sculpture in LA and the Avant-Garde," in *Clay's Tectonic Shift*, pp. 158, 163; Hackman, *Out of Sight*, p. 80. However, Andrew Perchuk and Catherine Taft have recently argued that the label "abstract expressionist ceramics" was detrimental to the careers of the artists so-named, because it tethered them to a New York aesthetic that was not, in essence, very similar; see "Floating Structures," p. 53.

<sup>60</sup> John Mason quoted in Frank Lloyd, "Vanguard Ceramics," in *Clay's Tectonic Shift*, p. 27.

contributions to the legacy of the “clay revolution” in Southern California comes from the photo documentation he made of Voulkos and himself working in the studio. Two photos of Mason working on a slab-built wall piece show the artist kneeling down over the supine clay and actively, if not aggressively cutting a slab in a manner reminiscent of Pollock painting his drip canvases, as captured in Hans Namuth’s legendary photos and film from the early 1950s (Figs 3–4). The reference to Pollock is implicit in Mary Davis MacNaughton’s description of Mason’s method: “Standing over the work on the floor gave Mason a sense of release from traditional ways of composing. He could walk around the sculpture to connect different pieces and see the work from fresh vantage points.”<sup>61</sup> As it was for Pollock, the wall was the intended destination for the work Mason produced with this terrestrial, slab-building process, such as the 21-foot-long relief *Blue Wall* (1959), for which he is perhaps best known (Fig. 5).<sup>62</sup> Whether one is familiar with Mason’s process or not, the finished *Blue Wall* clearly alludes to Pollock’s work in its scale, figure-ground relationship, gestural qualities, and even its title (Pollock’s *Blue Poles*, 1952).<sup>63</sup> Sullen and socially removed in the image of Pollock, Mason was a strong character that his students revered and emulated, as Burden and Turrell’s recollections make clear. Following

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<sup>61</sup> MacNaughton, “Unexpected Connections,” p. 155. Andrew Perchuk and Catherine Taft were also fairly explicit in calling Mason’s method something akin to “action ceramics”; see their “Floating Structures,” p. 53.

<sup>62</sup> *Blue Wall* was exhibited in Mason’s first solo exhibition at the Ferus Gallery, which opened in May 1959. As Mason’s oversized work had previously been displayed at Ferus, *Blue Wall* was installed outside, where it remained hung until it went to Seattle in 1962 for the World’s Fair; McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery*, pp. 71, 197.

<sup>63</sup> In the catalog for Mason’s first major exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, curator John Coplans observed that the artist’s “form sense was developed by extrapolation from Abstract Expressionist painting” both its “gestural content” and scale; John Coplans, *John Mason: Sculpture* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1966). Thanks to Branden W. Joseph for pointing out the similar titles.

Thomas Crow, I would say that the heroic image of the artist in which John Mason cast himself was certainly a contributing factor in his success as an artistic mentor.

In the classroom, Burden did not immediately pick up on the radical innovations that Mason had pioneered in the realm of ceramic sculpture. Burden's ceramics curriculum at Browne & Nichols was undoubtedly traditional, which led him to initially butt heads with Mason, who had exorcised the utilitarian mandate of ceramics from his work. Burden's first sculptural impulse was to make a utilitarian object: "a rocking chopper" (Fig. 6).<sup>64</sup> Burden called the untitled piece "a three-sided Henry Moore," one face of which was intended to have a razor strip embedded into it, so that it could be palmed in the hand (the piece was about 6 inches around) and gently rocked on a flat surface to cut paper. Burden never inserted the razor and the result was a bronze casting with three rounded edges, which lies on one side and resembles a sort of modernist seedpod. The work was indeed conservative and clearly inspired not only by Moore, but Hans Arp and Constantin Brancusi, whose bronze *Newborn* (1920) it closely resembles. The piece reflected Burden's erudite European upbringing, but it failed to compel John Mason. Whether naively or not, the piece did evince the reflective quality that was popular in a diverse array of recent sculpture. Burden captured the mirroring effect of the bronze in a portfolio photo he shot, which shows him and his camera reflected in the work's smooth, shiny surface (Fig. 7). The photo is an emblem of the so-called Finish Fetish and it was used as the back cover for the "It Happened at Pomona" exhibition catalog. But despite being pigeonholed as an aesthetic characteristic that was supposedly natural to LA artists like Larry Bell, Craig Kaufman, and David Gray, shiny chrome, stainless steel, and mirrors, not to mention reflective plastics, were also employed by East Coast Minimalists Walter de Maria, Robert Morris, Donald

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<sup>64</sup> "Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips," p. 272; Chris Burden, quoted Muchnic, "A Burgeoning Art Scene," p. 182.

Judd, and Beverly Pepper—another instance of the shortsighted criticism that was once leveled against West Coast Minimalism.

John Mason's slab-built wall reliefs of the late 1950s were an unacknowledged forerunner of what Donald Judd termed the specific object. Like Judd, Mason's work moved off the wall in the early 1960s and took on what Rosalind Krauss described as the "reduced expression" of minimalist sculpture.<sup>65</sup> His large, usually unglazed pieces took on elemental forms, such as crosses and Xs,<sup>66</sup> culminating in the fully reduced *Geometric Form, Dark* (1966), a solid, rectangular, ceramic monolith (Fig. 8). Standing nearly 5 feet tall on its short side, Mason's *Geometric Form* precipitates an embodied relationship with the viewer, who is prompted to account for the work's human proportions and upright stance, which lends the piece a disquieting presence.<sup>67</sup> The form and anthropomorphic scale of the sculpture, as well as the worn look of the unglazed surface and dark brown hue of the fired clay, recall Tony Smith's first forays into sculpture, *The Black Box* and *Die* (both 1962). Smith's original works (the artist's proofs), in distinction to some of the subsequent editions, were fabricated in Cor-Ten steel, which is known for its appealing patina, which rusts and takes on roughly the same color as earth or clay when it is left to weather in the elements. Intending *The Black Box* and *Die* for private display, Smith placed the works outdoors on the grounds of his home in South Orange, New Jersey. He used no plinth or pedestal to support them, but partially concealed wooden bases held

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<sup>65</sup> Rosalind Krauss, *John Mason: Installations from the Hudson River Series* (Yonkers, NY: The Hudson River Museum, 1978), p. 12; Plagens, *Sunshine Muse*, p. 99; Janet Koplos, *Makers: A History of American Studio Craft* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), p. 297; Plagens, "Culture, Clay, and Credibility," p. 12.

<sup>66</sup> Representative works include *Cross Form* (1962–1963) and *X-Wall* (1965), among others. Mason discusses this period of his career in Coplans, *John Mason*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>67</sup> Lloyd, "Vanguard Ceramics," p. 33.

the sculptures up just above ground level (Figs 9–10). Although Mason’s *Geometric Form* is a gallery object that sits on a short pedestal, the artist himself was no stranger to working and exhibiting outdoors. For at least its first two years, the Ferus Gallery had Mason’s work on permanent display outside on their patio, which is where the *Blue Wall* debuted in 1959.<sup>68</sup> Mason’s elemental works of the early 1960s were also conceived for outdoor display, which they received in 1966–1967 on the plaza of the then new Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) during Mason’s solo exhibition there.<sup>69</sup>

Standing 5 feet tall and 3.5 feet wide, Mason’s reductive *Geometric Form* also calls to mind one of the sinister allusions of Smith’s early work, which Anna Chave highlighted in her groundbreaking article “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power”: the grave. Chave said *Die*’s “mausoleum-like structure” and “human scale [...] renders the work a gruesome gesture: a bleak crypt presented to the viewer with succinct instructions to perish.”<sup>70</sup> Smith’s earliest interlocutor, Samuel Wagstaff, picked up on the mortuary aspect of *The Black Box* and *Die* from the start, based on Smith’s own allusion to coffins and graves, as well as his emphasis on the hollowness of the steel boxes.<sup>71</sup> The artist also joked that his daughters were afraid of *The Black Box*, believing—likely on Smith’s suggestion—that it was in fact a funerary monument.<sup>72</sup> Despite these and numerous other associations Smith and his critics drew to these early works, the artist’s

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<sup>68</sup> See note 59.

<sup>69</sup> Coplans, *John Mason*.

<sup>70</sup> Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” *Arts Magazine* (January 1990), p. 52.

<sup>71</sup> Samuel Wagstaff, *Tony Smith: Two Exhibitions of Sculpture* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1966), n.p.

<sup>72</sup> Scott Burton, “Old Master at the New Frontier,” *ArtNews* 65 (December 1966), p. 54.

mantra, “Not a monument. Not an object,” which was lionized as the epigraph to Robert Morris’s “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2” (1966),<sup>73</sup> speaks to the liminal space in which Smith was working, outside the conventions of sculpture. In a story recounted in another famous text of Minimalism, Smith memorably recalled a car ride with his students on an unfinished stretch of the New Jersey Turnpike at night, where the expansive, man-made space of the darkened road “punctuated by stacks, towers, fumes, and colored lights” was akin to an aesthetic experience, but unrelated to either art or architecture.<sup>74</sup> Of his attempt to translate that experience into form, Smith said that his works “may be seen as interruptions in an otherwise unbroken flow of space. While I hope they have form and presence, I don’t think of them as objects among other objects; I think of them as being isolated in their own environments.”<sup>75</sup> Smith was fond of massive marvels of engineering, such as Egyptian pyramids, ancient Greek monuments, and Nazi parade grounds, which were not architecture in the sense of habitation, but architecture on the scale of landscape. Smith called such experiences “artificial landscape”<sup>76</sup> and his first two sculptural pieces, *The Black Box* and *Die*, are an attempt to create artificial landscapes on a domestic scale. In Rosalind Krauss’s famous Klein Group depicting sculpture’s “expanded field” (Fig. 11), a concept she first applied to John Mason’s work in a 1978 catalog essay, she designated such efforts “site construction” and included Mason, along with Morris, Irwin, Robert Smithson, Mary Miss, and

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<sup>73</sup> Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2” (1966), in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), p. 11.

<sup>74</sup> The tale is recounted in Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood” (1967), in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 157–158. It was first published in Samuel Wagstaff, “Talking with Tony Smith,” *Artforum* 5:4 (December 1966), pp. 14–19; and collected in Gregory Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995 [1968]), p. 386.

<sup>75</sup> Tony Smith, quoted in Wagstaff, *Tony Smith*.

<sup>76</sup> Tony Smith, quoted in Wagstaff, “Talking with Tony Smith.”



Alice Aycock, as some of its early practitioners.<sup>77</sup> Krauss claimed that by working in clay, John Mason and Paul Soldner were essentially already “marginal to ‘sculpture.’” Their medium had inherent connotations of landscape, as well as “too much of the architectonic [...] for sculpture to find it acceptable.”<sup>78</sup> Her implication is that these artists were predisposed to working at the confluence of landscape and architecture. According to Thomas Crow, “the Claremont artistic ethos” propounded by John Mason and Paul Soldner was defined by a search for this limen, both outside of and between landscape and architecture.

For the art that was beginning to gather around Claremont [...] it proved to be exactly those axes of unmediated nature (from the physiology of the living human body to the surrounding semi-desert landscape) and of enclosing architecture (from the simplest shelter to monumental alteration of the terrain) that provided the defining coordinates of an alternative aesthetic.<sup>79</sup>

To read Krauss and Crow together, the scale and medium of Mason’s *Geometric Form* abound in natural connotations of human physiognomy and landscape. Like Smith’s first steel sculptures, it also has a clear connection to the monumental (in the mortuary sense) and the architectonic hue of baked clay. Progressing past the medium-shattering investigations of Peter Voulkos’ pot shop, John Mason “destabilized the notion that media purity was the core of modernist art practice,” which led him to earn Krauss’ recognition as one of the forerunners of post-modernist art.<sup>80</sup>

Before Chris Burden got a chance to apply any of these lessons, John Mason left Pomona for a job in UC Irvine’s brand new art department. David Gray, a product of the University of Wisconsin, Madison who had been living in Southern California for a few years, took over

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<sup>77</sup> Krauss, *John Mason*.

<sup>78</sup> Krauss, *John Mason*, p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> Crow, “Disappearing Act,” p. 39.

<sup>80</sup> Perchuk and Taft, “Floating Structures,” p. 62.

teaching sculpture studio classes at Pomona. As noted above, Gray was an accomplished artist with an impressive track record of exhibiting on both the East and West Coast in some of the very exhibitions that defined the burgeoning minimalist canon.<sup>81</sup> Very much in the vein of Donald Judd's earliest "specific object" sculptures, Gray's polychrome metal pieces from the mid-1960s were symmetrical, geometric objects with parts that were alternately chromed or monochrome spray-painted with automobile lacquer. At the time, Gray worked in series where he configured basic geometric elements into different configurations. In his *L.A.* series (1965–1966), Gray used shiny polished chrome to offset an almost equally lustrous white lacquer (Fig. 12). The *L.A.* works were smaller, tabletop objects, which featured lacquered, rectilinear bases that had some form of chrome cylinder atop them; they "resembled abstract totems or stylized icons."<sup>82</sup> One of the last artists to show at the fabled Ferus Gallery, Gray's work was emblematic of "the LA Look." Combining chrome and lacquer—the primary media of auto detailing—in a series named after the custom-car capital, the work conjures associations with the region's car culture, whether or not they are appropriate in Gray's case (his relationship to auto detailing is undocumented).

Gray's arrival at Pomona in the fall of 1967 coincided with Burden's decision to give up the math and physics classes he needed to get into graduate school in architecture and concentrate solely on sculpture. He recalls, "Minimalism was kind of the hip thing. David came

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<sup>81</sup> Kynaston McShine, *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1966). The West Coast exhibitions were *Some Aspects of California Painting and Sculpture* (La Jolla: La Jolla Museum of Art, 1965); *Five Los Angeles Sculptors*, ed. John Coplans (Irvine: Art Gallery, University of California, Irvine, 1966); *New Modes in California Painting and Sculpture* (La Jolla: La Jolla Museum of Art, 1966); *Ten from Los Angeles*, ed. John Coplans (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 1966); and *American Sculpture of the Sixties*, ed. Maurice Tuchman (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967).

<sup>82</sup> Pagel, "David Gray," p. 290.

in and took all the clay and the foundry out, and he put white paper on all the tables and everybody had to make little cardboard cubes that were perfect.”<sup>83</sup> That fall, in a cover story profiling him in *Time* magazine, Tony Smith discussed how he taught his students at Hunter College in New York to make small, cardboard maquettes in order to design sculptures they intended to later enlarge. Smith practiced what he preached and would, over the course of his career, exhibit various sizes of sculptural models, a fact that was undoubtedly known to David Gray.<sup>84</sup> In order to punctuate his reorientation of Pomona’s sculpture program away from traditional materials, Gray also bought several dozen sheets of plywood and stacked them up in the studio. One of the most agreed upon characteristics of the new sculpture of the mid 1960s was that it unabashedly embraced non-traditional sculptural material, such as plywood and prefabricated metal sheeting. While David Gray worked primarily in metal, he nonetheless recognized that plywood was one of the building blocks of the new aesthetic and a good material on which to start one’s students. In the years 1966–1967, Tony Smith became an overnight sensation for his colossal geometric sculptures, which were fabricated in plywood, spray-painted with automobile lacquer, and exhibited in outdoor, public spaces. Smith showed his work widely in those years, including the installation of a colossal model of *Cigarette* (1961) in LACMA’s plaza for Maurice Tuchman’s blockbuster exhibition “American Sculpture of the Sixties” (April 28–June 25, 1967). Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Ronald Bladen, John McCracken, and Anne

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<sup>83</sup> “Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips,” p. 274. In sculpture classes at Hunter College in the 1960s, Tony Smith had his students make cardboard maquettes of pieces they did not have the space to fabricate due to the restrictions of space in Manhattan. According to Smith, the experience was so revelatory that he adopted it himself; Smith quoted in Robert Storr, ed., *Tony Smith: Architect, Painter, Sculptor* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998), p. 25.

<sup>84</sup> [Hayden Herrera], “Master of the Monumentalists,” *Time* (October 13, 1967), pp. 83–84. This information first appeared in Lucy R. Lippard, “Tony Smith: ‘The Ineluctable Modality of the Visible,’” *Art International* 11:6 (Summer 1967), p. 24.

Truitt also produced sculptures in painted plywood during the early 1960s. Judy Chicago, among others, used wood and plywood as armatures for sculptures that were covered with metal, canvas, or plastic veneers. Gray's introduction of plywood into the sculpture studio at Pomona College signaled the program's re-orientation towards the new aesthetic, which officially began with his tenure.

Burden realized that none of the other students were using the wood, so he endeavored to make something big with it. He initially struggled with the plywood, but Burden had learned from studying with John Mason that trial and error were the crux of gaining proficiency with sculptural raw materials.<sup>85</sup> It was inevitably the necessity for space to work and to erect a massive plywood sculpture that drove Burden outside, but it was also a testament to the influence of John Mason and the rising popularity of Tony Smith. Working on a large scale and exhibiting outside were part of the ethos supported by the pedagogical culture at Pomona, and Burden took advantage of the mild climate of Southern California to transform David Gray's cardboard cube assignment into a full-size, plywood cube. The untitled sculpture Burden made in the fall of 1967 shares the dimensions of Smith's *Die*, with the exception of three 2 ft. x 2 ft. x 6 ft. sections that have been removed from the exterior—one in a corner and one each in the center of the other two sides (Figs 13–14). Burden painted the exterior surfaces of the original cube with yellow lacquer and the surfaces created by the cuts in black lacquer, so that only two of the sides have the same layout, but no two corners of the sculpture afford the same view (Figs 15–19). Burden captured this effect in two series of photographs of the sculpture installed on the Marston Quadrangle, which is the center of the Pomona College campus and only one block from

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<sup>85</sup> Burden recounted that Mason allowed him to make mistakes when working on the bronze piece so that he would better learn the casting process; "Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips," p. 272. This hands-off approach was also a hallmark of Voulkos's mentorship, which Mason promulgated at Pomona; Hackman, *Out of Sight*, p. 72.

Rembrandt Hall, where the art department was located at the time. These photos highlight Burden's early understanding that self-promotion of his work through well-staged photographs was an essential part of communicating and succeeding in an art world where news increasingly traveled through glossy trade publications like *Artforum*. It was likely that Burden had seen and tried to imitate photo layouts, such as the one in the centerfold of Tony Smith's 1966 catalog, wherein his *Amaryllis* (1965) is pictured in 10 shots taken from all sides and arranged in succession like an Edward Muybridge stop-motion perambulation around the sculpture (Fig. 20). What both of these photo series highlight is the dissimilarity of any two viewpoints of these sculptures. Burden said of his piece,

One of the things I concluded was that sculpture actually forces you to move. In this case, in order to understand this sculpture, you have to look at all [sides]. From certain angles it looks like two columns and from this angle it looks like three. In order to understand that, the viewer has to physically move.<sup>86</sup>

Robert Morris, who was one of the great interpreters of Tony Smith's work, best described the effect that the new sculpture had on its viewers as a symbiotic tension maintained between the gestalt conception of a structure's form, which could be held firm in the mind in the face of changing perceptual conditions that were a function of the viewer's unique experience of the work "under various conditions of light and spatial context."<sup>87</sup> For Morris, the key to a good gestalt effect had to be located somewhere in between "the simpler regular polyhedrons such as cubes and pyramids," which are easy to grasp and hold in the mind, and complex irregular polyhedrons, which are too difficult for the mind to conceive in their wholeness as the viewer

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<sup>86</sup> Burden and Crow, Pomona College. Burden shares a similar sentiment in "Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips," p. 274.

<sup>87</sup> Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," p. 15.

moves around them.<sup>88</sup> Thus, the ideal new sculpture was a polyhedron that was just complex enough to provide a “unitary form,” but also a sufficient variety of experience provided by changing viewpoints. Hal Foster astutely observed that Morris’s gestalt forms “are more contingent than ideal,” meaning that they privileged the experiential (phenomenological) over geometric simplicity.<sup>89</sup> Chris Burden’s untitled 1967 sculpture is not so simple the viewer can comprehend it in one glance, but upon circumnavigating the piece, its regular, polyhedral form becomes evident. Discussing the piece with Burden at a program held on the occasion of the “It Happened at Pomona” exhibition, Thomas Crow observed that the work actually consisted of two separate pieces that touched only along one edge (Figs 13–14).<sup>90</sup> Crow noted that this fact was initially imperceptible to the viewer, who experienced it as a contiguous structure. Like Robert Morris’ idea of “complex regular polyhedrons,” or “unitary forms,” Burden’s sculpture resists fracturing into parts and is “bound together as it is with a kind of energy provided by the gestalt.”<sup>91</sup> Simple in plan, but many sided and rewarding of circumlocution, Burden’s outdoor sculpture is a perfect manifestation of the mandate that Morris issued in 1966.

The work also exemplifies the marriage of human physiology, landscape, and architecture that Crow defined as the Claremont aesthetic. Upon the work’s completion, Burden placed it outdoors in the campus’ main quad, where he photographed it from many angles, as well as with a stylish young woman posing in front of and sitting up against the piece, indicating his intention that people further interact with the work, beyond just walking around it (Figs 21–

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<sup>88</sup> Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 1” (1966), in *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>89</sup> Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), p. 36.

<sup>90</sup> Burden and Crow, Pomona College.

<sup>91</sup> Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 1,” p. 7.

22). In his conversation with Crow, Burden committed a telling slip of the tongue when he remarked that, since the refabrication (in aluminum) and reinstallation of the sculpture in the courtyard outside the Pomona College Museum of Art (formerly the Montgomery Art Gallery) and Rembrandt Hall, people tend to go “in” it.<sup>92</sup> What he meant was up to and around it, perhaps even against it or into its crevices. Crow even demurred from calling it a sculpture, but referred to the work as “a built edifice,” which had to be negotiated by an interactive, sensate viewer.<sup>93</sup> Undoubtedly he had in mind Rosalind Krauss’ “site construction,” a combination of architecture and landscape that is comfortably both but neither. Today, the refabricated piece is installed semi-permanently in the center of a courtyard bordered by John Mason’s *Cross Wall* (1964), a 14-foot long, freestanding ceramic frieze in unglazed stoneware.<sup>94</sup> It is significant that Burden was afforded this historically significant and eminently appropriate location in which to show the long-lost work.

Although Burden intuitively understood and applied Robert Morris’s theories of gestalt form in sculpture, he did not acquiesce to the New York artist’s proscription of color.<sup>95</sup> Burden’s choice of a “kandy kolor” yellow for his cube’s original exterior sides is indebted to John Mason and the work of other Ferus Gallery artists. Two of Mason’s 1966 elemental sculptures, *Yellow Cross* and *Red X*, stand out in this regard. Both pieces are large ceramic rectangles, glazed in bold primary colors, out of the profile of which Mason removed rectangular and triangular

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<sup>92</sup> Burden and Crow, Pomona College.

<sup>93</sup> Burden and Crow, Pomona College.

<sup>94</sup> When the Museum moves to a new location in the next decade, Burden’s sculpture will be moved indoors for safe-keeping; personal communication, Rebecca McGrew, Senior Curator, Pomona College Museum of Art, October 17, 2016.

<sup>95</sup> Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 1,” pp. 4–5.

sections, respectively, to arrive at the elemental forms of the cross and the X (Figs 23–24). It should be noted that in conception, Burden’s 1967 sculpture applies the exact same subtractive formal maneuver, just in a different dimension. However “recent”—to appropriate Clement Greenberg’s epithet—Mason’s mid-1960s sculptures looked, their color palette was actually derived from experiments undertaken in the pot shop at LACAI (Otis) when Peter Voulkos led the ceramics department there in the mid-1950s. While Voulkos was known for turning the surfaces of his ceramic creations into supports for gestural, Abstract Expressionist-style glazing, Mason more often left his work unglazed, or when he did produce painted pieces, he preferred a monochromic glaze, which he applied unevenly, as can be seen in *Yellow Cross* and *Red X*. According to Thomas Crow, part of Voulkos’s pioneering pedagogical approach involved marshaling the regionally specific knowledge of his students in order to forge new directions that were perceived as heretical to the craft pottery scene for which he was incessantly tearing down boundaries.<sup>96</sup> In that vein, Voulkos tapped into some of his students’ knowledge of auto-body detailing, which was a leisure-time folk industry that was extremely vibrant in Southern California in the postwar era. Due to the fact that stoneware glazes are unpredictable, Voulkos and his students developed low-fire glazes using epoxy pigments that were typically employed as primers in auto-body painting. These hybrid glazes virtually guaranteed that the colors would remain bold through the firing process, resulting in a palette that art historian Glenn Adamson described as “vivid Technicolor.”<sup>97</sup> Ken Price’s ceramic sculpture from the early 1960s is the most well known exemplar of these experiments. By mixing auto-body paint into his glazes, Voulkos elevated yet another “folk” art—that of custom car building, auto-body detailing, and

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<sup>96</sup> Crow, *The Long March of Pop*, p. 211.

<sup>97</sup> Glenn Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. 46.



racing—to the level of the fine arts along with ceramic sculpture, a lesson which his students took to heart.

Years after his apprenticeship in Voukos' studio, Billy Al Bengston, who along with his friend Ken Price had intermittently studied ceramics at LACAI, worked his pastime of racing British motorcycles into his painting. Bengston's racing career was integral to the "dare-devil persona that competed with the aura of Hollywood celebrity," which he cultivated to accompany his work and augment his own personal caché.<sup>98</sup> Shedding the mantle of Abstract Expressionism that had dominated the sensibility of the early Ferus artists, Bengston devoted a 1961 series of Pop Art paintings to his bike, its parts, and their maker's logo for his aforementioned solo exhibition at Ferus, for which he also wheeled his bike into the gallery and displayed it like a work of art in its own right.<sup>99</sup> Whereas Bengston's Pop works of the previous two years were thinly painted in oils, around 1960 he began to employ the spray-on or airbrushing technique that he picked up in order to detail the gas tank on his bike. Spraying lacquer auto-body paint resulted in an even coat that had a dense, metallic surface quality. It also allowed him to create "feathered

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<sup>98</sup> Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties*, p. 79; *The Long March of Pop*, p. 216–217. Bengston described the harrowing scene at the track in Gardena where he used to race: "It was a nasty scene. It was a half-mile track with a barrier around it that was as hard if not harder than concrete. There was no soft landing. Brakes were nonexistent. You just went to the corner and turned left, again and again. You'd run in to each other. It was a nice aggressive thing"; quoted in Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, p. 50.

<sup>99</sup> The exhibition was reviewed by at least one trade magazine; see "Brush-Stroke of a 4-Stroke," *Motorcycle* (February 1962), p. 20. In 1968, Bengston curated the exhibition "Speed Sculptures" at Pomona College (March 6–24), which also brought motorcycles into the art gallery. And later that year, at his LACMA retrospective, exhibition designer Frank Gehry created a mannequin of Bengston, dressed it in the artist's clothes, and posed it with a motorcycle at the entrance to the show; see Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, p. 225; Allen, Bradnock, and Turvey, "For People Who Know the Difference," p. 125.

circles of paint,” which appeared “ethereal, like glowing halos of light.”<sup>100</sup> Bengston’s painting process, which he taught to Craig Kauffman, John Chamberlin, and Judy Chicago (by proxy), was a painstaking labor “requiring as many as ninety coats of sprayed lacquer,” that had to be sanded down in between coats; it was the same process used to paint custom cars and other luxury automobiles.<sup>101</sup> When he had adequately built up the paint surface, Bengston polished his paintings until they had the mirror-like reflective qualities of car bodies. For Bengston’s Ferus colleague John McCracken, who similarly derived his use of auto-body painting techniques from the car customization culture of Southern California, “it was [also] time-consuming, backbreaking work: hours upon hours spent laying down dozens of lacquer coatings, sanding each, and finally waxing and polishing it to a brilliant shine.”<sup>102</sup> Robert Irwin said of the process, which he knew well from his youth in Los Angeles, “It was just a very exaggerated thing. So it took a lot of work.”<sup>103</sup>

McCracken’s iconic, lacquered wood, “plank” pieces (ca. 1965) are perhaps the best Southern California equivalent to Burden’s 1967 sculpture, in terms of both medium and color (Fig. 25).<sup>104</sup> While Tony Smith painted his plywood models with black automobile lacquer, he

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<sup>100</sup> Karen Tsujimoto, *Billy All Bengston: Paintings of Three Decades* (Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, 1988), p. 22.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22; Hackman, *Out of Sight*, pp. 140–141. The covers of the catalog for Bengston’s 1968–1969 exhibition at LACMA, designed by Ed Ruscha, are sheets of sandpaper; a testament to Bengston’s signature process.

<sup>102</sup> Kellein, *John McCracken*, p. 34; Hackman, *Out of Sight*, p. 146.

<sup>103</sup> Weschler, “An LA High School Youth,” p. 282.

<sup>104</sup> The work featured in Figure 25 represents a subsequent step in the development of McCracken’s technique, when he began to use resin, rather than lacquer. The process required the same laborious sanding and polishing, and the finished product obtained similar colors and surface qualities.

notoriously disregarded surface imperfections that resulted from the wood absorbing the paint at different rates, as can be seen in contemporaneous photographs. What distinguished many of California's "Finish Fetishists" was their unwillingness to accept such surface flaws. Akin to their customizing counterparts, their attention to detail and the uniformity of material application was intensely focused.<sup>105</sup> McCracken's solution to the absorption problem was to coat pieces of wood in fiberglass to produce a stable base upon which to build up layers of lacquer (and later resin). The technique of adding a fiberglass coating was borrowed from surfboard manufacturing—fiberglass being used to seal the board's foam core—and with the lazy angle at which they lean against the wall, McCracken's planks were seen by many as analogous to surfboards. McCracken's work in the years 1966–1967 was also characterized by its use of standardized primary colors, as indicated by the works' literal titles: *Blue Plank*; *Red Slab*; *Yellow Pyramid* (all 1966). However, the colors are nowhere near as benign as the works' titles suggest. In accordance with their means of facture, McCracken's colors are bold and lustrous, and his surfaces are smooth and polished to the point of reflection.

For his 1967 Pomona sculpture, Burden attempted to achieve the same effect. He chose a bright yellow lacquer for the exterior, which he said was "absolutely" drawn from McCracken's palate and the "Finish Fetish" phenomenon, and he set about on the exhaustive work of applying coat after coat of lacquer, sanding, and polishing them all down, a procedure that he claimed took months.<sup>106</sup> Besides having seen the work of McCracken and other LA Minimalists who employed similar processes, Burden may have gleaned some of this technique from the surfers he hung around during his first trip to Southern California in 1963. Recall that Burden stored

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<sup>105</sup> This often repeated stereotype, which contributed to the negative image California Minimalism accrued from the outset, is nonetheless accurate in this case.

<sup>106</sup> "Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips," p. 274; Burden and Crow, Pomona College.

boards for local surfers in La Jolla Shores when he came out for a summer institute that he never attended. He may very well have taken that opportunity to examine the boards and see how they were made and cared for—the process of waxing a board being similar to the process sanding and polishing lacquered surfaces. In return for this favor, the surfers lent Burden their motorcycles, so he could teach himself how to ride.<sup>107</sup> As the example of Billy Al Bengston suggests, cross-fertilization between the surfing and motorcycle-riding subcultures of the Los Angeles area was prevalent. The early surf magazines were rife with ads and articles that united the two pursuits into a single rebellious attitude. As Burden’s story shows, one was indeed a gateway to the other.

At the time of Burden’s 2013 mini-retrospective at the New Museum, Thomas Crow suggested that it was “the greater opportunities [California] afforded for pushing his limits on light British motorcycles” that originally drew Chris Burden to the West Coast.<sup>108</sup> This chapter has logically carried that thought through Burden’s first major piece of sculpture, using the artist’s 1963 trip to Southern California as the crux uniting the critical nodes that connect his untitled 1967 work to surfing, car culture, and the Ferus Gallery. Through his mentorship under John Mason and David Gray at Pomona College, Burden was exposed to the East Coast tradition of reductive sculpture, which he interpreted through the heroic, masculine aesthetics of Los Angeles’s Cool School. Lost for decades and nearly forgotten, Burden’s 1967 sculpture is a notable work of California Minimalism, which deserves to be considered in future explorations of the phenomenon.

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<sup>107</sup> “Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips,” p. 272.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas Crow, “Mind-Body Problem: Chris Burden’s Performances,” in *Chris Burden: Extreme Measures*, ed. Lisa Phillips (New York: New Museum, 2013), p. 48.

## Chapter Two

### Corridors, Pomona College, 1969

If Chris Burden's 1967 sculpture from Pomona College was a proficient, if not somewhat conventional, minimalist object set in the landscape, the corridor pieces he installed on campus in the spring of 1969 perfectly encapsulated Rosalind Krauss's "site-construction" and Thomas Crow's "Claremont aesthetic" by melding the landscape with human physiology and architecture. Once again working outdoors, this time on a remote practice field out beyond an untended grove of trees known as the Wash (southeast corner of the Pomona College campus), Burden erected two massive corridors—96 and 200 feet long, respectively—out of plastic sheeting, steel pipe, and wire (Figs 26–30). Burden conceived of these pieces as Minimalism "blown up" or enlarged in an effort to obviate the works' "object quality."<sup>1</sup> No longer interested in gestalt or unitary forms, Burden was instead attuned to the way in which sculpture, like architecture, could produce certain physical behaviors out of its participants, as he called them. Although Burden's installations were taken down at the end of the spring semester and never reconstructed, the young artist explained his methods and motives in a brazen art history paper, written about his own work rather than a historical subject appropriate to a course on twentieth-century art. Rebecca McGrew and Glenn Phillips's 2011–2012 exhibition, "It Happened At Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969–1973," was once again responsible for reviving Burden's undergraduate sculpture and facilitating interviews with Burden about his process and intentions. Photographs of the corridors and a brief commentary were included in the 1976

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Burden, "Three Sculptures," Pomona College, May 21, 1969, Chris Burden Estate; "Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips," in *It happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969–1973*, ed. Rebecca McGrew (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2011), p. 276.

*Artforum* cover feature on Burden and reprinted in Fred Hoffman's 2007 catalogue raisonné of the artist's work, but Burden's collegiate sculpture has never been individually treated.<sup>2</sup> Burden usually lumped his early sculpture into two general categories and treated them as what Robert Smithson termed, in relation to his own early work, preconscious.<sup>3</sup>

Taking off from the minimalist and interactive sculpture of Robert Morris, this chapter looks at Burden's corridor pieces in relation to post-Minimalist environments and installations, particularly among the West Coast Light and Space artists. Burden's next significant professor, Mowry Baden, arrived at Pomona at the beginning of his senior year and had a profound effect on the young sculptor's transition to devising kinesthetic experiences for an active audience. Thomas Crow credits Baden with translating the "bodily and architectural implications of the Claremont artistic ethos" into participatory environments that were meant to be physically negotiated by himself or the audience.<sup>4</sup> Baden's work closely parallels that of Bruce Nauman, who was also working in the Bay Area in the mid- to late 60s, and whose transition to Los Angeles was marked by his legendary corridor installation at Nicholas Wilder's gallery in March 1970. In addition to providing the closest formal and historical parallel to Burden's corridors, which were produced conterminously, Nauman's corridors exemplified "a paradigm shift" in Post-Minimalist sculpture, with which Burden was in lock step.<sup>5</sup> This chapter argues that

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Horvitz, "Chris Burden," *Artforum* 14:9 (May 1976), pp. 25–26; Fred Hoffman, ed. *Chris Burden* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), pp. 392–393.

<sup>3</sup> Caroline A. Jones, "Preconscious/Posthumous Smithson: The Ambiguous Status of Art and Artist in the Postmodern Frame," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 41 (Spring 2002), pp. 16–37.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Crow, "Disappearing Act: Art In and Out of Pomona," in McGrew, *It Happened at Pomona*, p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Hobbs, *Alice Aycock: Sculpture and Projects* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), p. 49.

Burden's work is equally significant to Nauman's, in terms of its formal innovation. It furthermore situates both Burden and Nauman's work in the context of other very similar environments and installations of the late 1960s.

However, rather than read Burden's corridor pieces as a manifestation of cybernetics or systems theory, as the work of Baden and Nauman has been interpreted, this chapter examines their formal and theoretical resonances with the writing of Georges Bataille. In Bataille's theory of prehistoric humans' first impulses towards the visual arts and image making, the deep, dark location of the cave paintings found in Europe in the twentieth century serves as a metaphor for the human journey from barbarity to civilization. Emerging from the cave and taking mastery over their environment the same way they had over its representation on the wall, early humans evolved, but not before having to confront their animal nature. This equivocation between human and beast was at the heart of Bataille's larger project in editing the journal *Documents*, which was to declassify and disorder hierarchical relationships—what he called the formless. By forcing participants in his cave-like, white corridor to prostrate themselves in order to fully traverse the piece, Burden, however unconsciously, made the same connection between the formal properties of caves and their metaphorical associations. Labyrinths were another form that Bataille used, in this case to topple the spectacle of authoritarian church and state architecture. In the late 60s, the labyrinth enjoyed something of a renaissance amongst post-minimalist sculptors, many of whom created environments and installations that, in one way or another, had labyrinthine properties. Since ancient times, labyrinths have served as a symbol for architectural genius, but for Bataille they were instead the epitome of an irrational space. Artists of Burden's generation seized on the metaphorical resonance of the form to create straight labyrinths, with no turns, that nonetheless retained the enclosing and disorienting characteristics

of unicursal labyrinths and multicursal mazes. Even though Burden's Pomona corridors were never realized beyond campus, like the cave paintings they represent a critical stage in the evolution of his work from Minimalism to performance art.

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While Robert Morris's "Notes on Sculpture" essays were widely influential to minimalist artists like Chris Burden after their publication in 1966, the existential phenomenology found therein prioritized the viewer's heightened awareness of sculpture's relationship with its surrounding space, thus clinging to the general framework of Gestalt psychology by highlighting the figure/ground configuration between object and environment.<sup>6</sup> Through the mid-1960s, much of Morris's work retained a primarily optical quality that relied on certain principles of perceptual psychology, which is evident in his use of visual trickery or optical illusion in works like the so-called *Battered* and *Mirrored Cubes* (both 1965).<sup>7</sup> It was rather some of Morris's earliest, performative sculptures, like *Passageway* (1961), which influenced Post-Minimalism's heightened involvement of human bodily interaction with sculptural environments, installations, and earthworks. Created and exhibited within the context of Fluxus and Happenings in New York, *Passageway* was one of the first interactive environments, intended solely for spectator

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<sup>6</sup> By his own admission, Morris would not come to working in an environment, with the dissolution of the object and the "figure-ground situation," until 1970; see E.C. Goossen, "The Artist Speaks: Robert Morris," *Art in America* 58:3 (May/June 1970), p. 108.

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Berger refers to such effects as both "altered gestalts" and "optical illusion"; see *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 54. See also Rosalind Krauss, "The Mind/Body Problem: Robert Morris in Series," in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1994), p. 12; Catherine Grenier, "Robert Morris and melancholy: the dark side of the work," in *Robert Morris* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1995), p. 318. Both works are officially untitled, but have come to be known by these nicknames. The violence and misogynistic overtones of certain Minimalist sculptures and their titles was discussed in Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," *Arts Magazine* (January 1990), pp. 44–63.



interaction, produced by the American avant-garde. Originally installed across the doorway of Yoko Ono's loft for a series of Fluxus events organized by La Monte Young (June 3–6, 1961), *Passageway* consists of a 50-foot-long, spiraling corridor made of painted plywood sheets that stretched nearly floor to ceiling. Apart from the entranceway of the passage, the piece was entirely concealed behind the walls of the apartment, so that the participant was given no visual information regarding the corridor's shape or direction—it was what Morris later called a “‘blind’ Passageway.”<sup>8</sup> Upon entering *Passageway*, the enveloping effect of the tall walls, the claustrophobic width of the corridor, and the spiraling of the promenade obscured the horizon and erased any semblance of perspectival space. Not only that, but the walls of *Passageway* converged to a point, reducing the width of the corridor over its length, and rendering the last quarter of the corridor inaccessible.

In his early years as a sculptor, Morris created performance-props-cum-sculptural-objects, such as portals, columns, and wheels, which were informed by the artist's work with and relationship to choreographers Simone Forti and Yvonne Rainer, among others. As many have argued, Morris, who designed sets for dance and performed himself, translated props from the task-based performances of the Judson Dance Theater into gallery objects.<sup>9</sup> What Morris

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Morris, quoted in Bruno Corà, *Robert Morris: A Path Towards the Center of the Knot* (Pistoia: Fattoria di Celle, 1995), p. 78; Kimberly Paice, “Passageway, 1961,” in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, p. 94–95.

<sup>9</sup> Morris himself makes this attribution in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “A Conversation with Robert Morris in 1985” (1994), in *Robert Morris* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013), pp. 55–56. See also Annette Michelson, “Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression,” in *Robert Morris* (Washington D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), pp. 55–59; Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 49; Krauss, “The Mind/Body Problem,” p. 13; Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), p. 142; Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and Biography,” *The Art Bulletin* 82:1 (2000), pp. 155–157; Liz Kotz, “Convergence of Music, Dance and Sculpture circa 1961: Reconsidering Simone Forti's *Dance Constructions*,” in *Assign & Arrange: Methodologies of Presentation in Art and Dance* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), pp. 31–51.

removed, by stripping the largely female choreographers and performers from the dances, was a symbiotic relationship of interactivity between the audience/performer and the object, leaving the participant in minimalist sculpture a solely spectatorial role. Chave has described Morris's work of the mid-60s as insistent upon its distance from the viewer, which she said was psycho-sexually charged by male insecurity.<sup>10</sup> She further argues, as others have, that high minimalist sculpture remains rooted in a standard visual relationship between viewer and work.<sup>11</sup> *Passageway* stands out in this regard, because it contained the interactive and directive components of the task-based dance score, but allowed the viewer to fully occupy the position of performer. Although Morris's *Passageway* was not well known in the late 1960s,<sup>12</sup> and its referents (Happenings, Fluxus, and Judson) not generally shared by artists on the West Coast,<sup>13</sup> the work will be used as a framing device for the explication of Chris Burden's corridor pieces of 1969, as the latter share several essential traits with Morris's antecedent.

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<sup>10</sup> Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> See also Branden W. Joseph, "The Tower and the Line: Towards a Genealogy of Minimalism," *Grey Room 27* (Spring 2007), p. 71, where he says, "Primary for Morris [...] were shape and opticality rather than tactility or mass," in an attempt to "[reconnect] with transcendent form" [italics in original].

<sup>12</sup> The catalog for Morris's early-career retrospective at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. would not be published until the fall of 1969, and did not include an illustration of *Passageway* or any significant discussion thereof; see *Robert Morris* (op. cit.). The first illustration of *Passageway* appears in the catalog for the artist's 1971 exhibition at the Tate Gallery: Michael Compton and David Sylvester, *Robert Morris* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1971), pp. 26–27; See also David Antin, "Have Mind, Will Travel," in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> There are plenty of exceptions to this rule, of course, not least among them Allan Kaprow, who was a presence in Northern and Southern California, as well as Claes Oldenburg, Niki de Saint Phalle, and Yves Klein, who were associated with Virginia Dwan's gallery and put on Happenings in L.A. Bruce Nauman, who moved to Los Angeles in 1970, is another clear exception here.

While Morris's work progressed from primary structures to anti-form conglomerations in the late 1960s (before moving into interactive earthworks in the early 1970s), the artists working on America's West Coast, who are loosely grouped together as the Light and Space movement, reacted to Minimalism by rejecting the artwork's status as an object, along with its implicit Gestalt properties.<sup>14</sup> For the Light and Space artists, the artwork itself could be immaterial, as their reading of phenomenology and the related field of perceptual psychology precipitated the conclusion that the viewer's experience of the work constituted the art itself, disregarding any object qualities the work may possess. As Robert Irwin and James Turrell famously theorized, the goal of the environmental sculpture they made around the year 1970 was for the participant "to perceive themselves perceiving," that is to say, for the installation to cause the spectator to be aware of their sense perceptions in a way that was normally unconscious or inaccessible.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Turrell, Irwin, Douglas Wheeler, Maria Nordman, Eric Orr, and Michael Asher created extreme perceptual experiences, beyond the pale of the quotidian human sensorium, without relying on gestalt forms or traditional sculptural objects. Rather than enact a sharp distinction between the viewer and the object, as traditional minimalism tended to do, the Light and Space artists attempted to "[collapse] the distance between perceiving subject and the object of perception."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Robin Clark, "Phenomenal: An Introduction," in *Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface*, ed. Robin Clark (San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 20; Dawna Schuld, "Practically Nothing: Light, Space, and the Pragmatics of Phenomenology," in Clark, *Phenomenal*, p. 110; Melissa E. Feldman, *Another Minimalism: Art After California Light and Space* (Edinburgh: Fruitmarket, 2015), p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Irwin and James Turrell, quoted in *A Report on the Art & Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967–1971*, ed. Maurice Tuchman (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971), p. 132.

<sup>16</sup> Michal Govan, "Inner Light: The Radical Reality of James Turrell," in *James Turrell: A Retrospective*, eds. Michael Govan and Christine Y. Kim (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2013), p. 34.

One of the fundamental methods these West Coast artists used to achieve extraordinary sensory experiences was to deprive the audience of certain sensory information, thereby coaxing them into a heightened awareness of other sensations.<sup>17</sup> It is well known that Irwin and Turrell experimented with sensory deprivation alongside Dr. Edward Wortz (an aerospace researcher under contract with NASA to explore extraterrestrial habitability) as part of the Art and Technology program at LACMA between November 1968 and August 1969.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the collaboration produced no work for Maurice Tuchman's exhibition, but it solidified certain avenues of investigation that were already being followed in Los Angeles, as the hard edges and smooth surfaces of "Finish Fetish" minimalism transitioned into the subjective, kinesthetic experience of environmental sculpture.

Following recent readings of Minimalism by James Meyer and Anna Chave, which find strict formalist distinctions between artists working on the East and West Coasts to be false, it is necessary to note that the move toward environments and installations in American sculpture was not an exclusively West Coast phenomenon.<sup>19</sup> As noted above, the Happenings and performance scores of the Fluxus artists precipitated interactive sculpture in significant ways,

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<sup>17</sup> Donna Conwell and Glenn Phillips aver that sensory deprivation "underpinn[ed]" Light and Space art; see "Duration Piece: Rethinking Sculpture in Los Angeles," in *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945–1980* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2011), p. 220; Schuld, "Practically Nothing," pp. 110–111.

<sup>18</sup> For an account of Irwin and Turrell's research, see Tuchman, *A Report on the Art & Technology Program*, pp. 127–143; Lawrence Weschler, *Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees: Over Thirty Years of Conversations with Robert Irwin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 127–141. See also Conwell and Phillips, "Duration Piece," pp. 218–220.

<sup>19</sup> James Meyer, "Another Minimalism," in *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958–1968*, ed. Ann Goldstein (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004), pp. 33–49; Anna C. Chave, "Revaluing Minimalism: Patronage, Aura, and Place," *Art Bulletin* 90:3 (2008), pp. 466–486.

leading to exemplary pieces, such as Morris's *Passageway*, Lucas Samaras's *Corridor #1* (1966–1967),<sup>20</sup> and Yayoi Kusama's "Infinity Mirror Rooms" (multiple works conceived ca. 1965).<sup>21</sup> All three of these installations deprived the participant of sensory information—fixed points, horizon lines, and light—thus causing a disorienting experience that could be quite stunning. In that way, Morris, Samaras, and Kusama's environments share the characteristic of partial sensory deprivation with artists of the slightly later Light and Space movement. Minimalist Dan Flavin's fluorescent light installations are also frequently compared to the projected light works of West Coast sculptors such as Turrell and Wheeler, but Anna Chave has argued that the exposure of the fixture and light source in Flavin's work, as opposed to its frequent obfuscation in Light and Space installations, conjures up multiple associations that trouble the works' aesthetic purity.<sup>22</sup> It follows that the more subtle manipulation of environmental stimuli by West Coast artists is relatively free of ideology, but as Pamela Lee has suggested, the fine-tuned objects of Finish Fetish sculptors and disorienting spaces of Light and Space art bear with them a profoundly sinister association with the aerospace industry and by extension the military-industrial complex.<sup>23</sup> The formal relationship between military technologies and fine art from

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<sup>20</sup> Maurice Tuchman, ed., *American Sculpture of the Sixties* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967), p. 184; Kim Levin, *Lucas Samaras* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1975), pls. 163–164.

<sup>21</sup> Jo Applin, *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirror Room—Phalli's Field* (London: Afterall Books, 2012); Jo Applin, "Kusama's Object World: Infinity Room—Phalli's Field," in *Yayoi Kusama: In Infinity* (Louisiana, Denmark: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2015), pp. 44–51.

<sup>22</sup> Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," pp. 45–46.

<sup>23</sup> She does so by way of pointing out the participation of IBM, Lockheed Aircraft, and the RAND Corporation, among others, in the "Art and Technology" exhibition organized by LACMA; see Pamela Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), pp. 23–24. This critique was first voiced by Peter Plagens, *Sunshine Muse: Contemporary Art on the West Coast* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 165–166. See also Anne

Southern California that employed some of the same materials and methods should not be discounted when considering Chris Burden's first use sensory deprivation in his 1969 corridors.

Prior to working together in the Art and Technology program, Irwin and Turrell, along with Doug Wheeler, created experimental installations at the Pasadena Art Museum in a series of solo exhibitions curated by *Artforum* co-editor John Coplans between Fall 1967 and Spring 1968.<sup>24</sup> Turrell, who was the first to exhibit (October 9–November 9), “neutralized” the gallery space by removing or otherwise concealing architectural elements in order to arrive at as bare a room as possible for his three strong, monochrome light projections of crisp geometric shapes, averaging 8 feet at the largest dimension.<sup>25</sup> Stripping the space of distractions and sculpting with projected light were methods Turrell pioneered in the interactive light environments he created in his Santa Monica studio, the *Mendotta Stoppages* (ca. 1965).<sup>26</sup> The latter, an immersive experience in which ambient and projected light was channeled into architectural situations that had been altered by the artist, was not open to the public and not widely known in the late 60s, but it stands as some of the first LA installation art and, in retrospect, it has come to enjoy a mythic status as the ur-work of Light and Space. However, as Coplans pointed out in the catalog essay for Turrell's Pasadena exhibition, the artist “dematerialize[d]” or “dissolve[d] the physical-object qualities” of the work of art, but his projections were still resolutely images or optical

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Collins Goodyear, “From Technophilia to Technophobia: The Impact of the Vietnam War on the Reception of ‘Art and Technology,’” *Leonardo* 41:2 (2008), pp. 169–173.

<sup>24</sup> Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise: the Los Angeles Art Scene and the 1960s* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2011), pp. 196–201; William Hackman, *Out of Sight: the Los Angeles Art Scene of the Sixties* (New York: Other Press, 2015), pp. 182–184.

<sup>25</sup> On the process of neutralizing the gallery space in other contexts, see *Jim Turrell* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1976); Auping, “Stealth Architecture,” in Clark, *Phenomenal*, p. 96.

<sup>26</sup> Clark, “Phenomenal,” p. 40.

illusions and had much more to do with Robert Morris's concept of Minimalist Gestalt than with experiential art.<sup>27</sup> For the second exhibition in January–February 1968, Robert Irwin further stripped the gallery space of distracting details by installing a drop ceiling for the exhibition of his air-brush painted metal discs (up to 60 inches in diameter), whose directed light sources cast shadows that caused them to disappear into the wall surface, as if they were flush, even though their mounts protruded two feet from the wall. Irwin was equally concerned with eliminating “blemishes” and “distractions” from the space surrounding the discs, just as he had with his earlier paintings.<sup>28</sup> In Doug Wheeler's exhibition at Pasadena (May 28–June 30, 1968), the artist showed large-scale (over 7 feet square), lacquered Plexiglas boxes, which were backlit by concealed neon lighting. These pieces, which Wheeler called “light encasements,” glowed like an eclipse and filled the space with a softly diffused light.<sup>29</sup> However, Wheeler's early light boxes retained an object quality that directly referenced painting, even as they modified the luminous atmosphere of the spaces in which they hung.<sup>30</sup> Irwin's discs were also presented in the context of painting, but by 1969, Turrell, Irwin, and Wheeler had all, in their own way, tended further towards dematerialization in their work by either concealing light sources or, in Irwin's

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<sup>27</sup> Turrell was also quoted as having referred to himself as more of a painter than a sculptor, in terms of how he used light; John Coplans, *Jim Turrell* (Pasadena: Pasadena Art Museum, 1967), unpagged.

<sup>28</sup> John Coplans, *Robert Irwin* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1968), unpagged. Hal Glicksman, the preparator at the Pasadena Art Museum at the time, describes working with Irwin to transform the gallery into a “white box” in *The Beat and The Buzz: Inside the L.A. Art World*, ed. Richard Hertz (Ojai, CA: Minneola, 2009), pp. 66–67. See also Auping, “Stealth Architecture,” p. 82; Evelyn C. Hankins, “Experiencing the Ineffable: Robert Irwin in the 1960s,” in *Robert Irwin: All The Rules Will Change* (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 2016), p. 34; Matthew Simms, *Robert Irwin: A Conditional Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 72

<sup>29</sup> Clark, “Phenomenal,” pp. 21, 28–31, 33; Conwell and Phillips, “Duration Piece,” p. 200.

<sup>30</sup> Early reviewers were quick to point this out as a touchstone for the otherwise groundbreaking work; see Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise*, p. 199; Schuld, “Practically Nothing,” p. 113.

case, dispensing with them altogether in favor of site-specific architectural interventions, or what he called “inquiries.”

The Light and Space artists were all generally preoccupied by “renovating” architectural spaces to create more immersive environments.<sup>31</sup> Coming from a different trajectory, which took him on a decade-long detour through the Bay Area, Pomona College alumnus Mowry Baden was simultaneously creating performative objects that necessitated a more concerted effort on the part of the participant than the light installations of his Los Angeles peers. Baden returned to Pomona in the fall of 1968 to chair the art department and run the Montgomery Gallery, after the abrupt departure of art historian Nicolai (Nick) Cikovsky for Vassar College.<sup>32</sup> Since graduating from Pomona a decade earlier, Baden received an MFA at Stanford and taught at Raymond College in the East Bay. His early work was exhibited as part of the San Francisco “Funk” aesthetic in 1967, which Peter Selz defined in counter distinction to Minimalism and L.A.’s so-called Finish Fetish: “Funk art is hot rather than cool; it is committed rather than disengaged; it is bizarre rather than formal; it is sensuous; and frequently it is quite ugly and ungainly.”<sup>33</sup> One of the pieces Baden contributed to Selz’s “Funk” exhibition was *Delivery Suite* (1965), a work that originated in his MFA program at Stanford (Fig. 31). Over six feet square, the *Suite* is an interactive sculpture that begs the spectator/voyeur to sit in a molded fiberglass saddle that is aligned with peep holes that peer through a partition onto the back half of the sculpture. The piece replicates a window into a delivery suite in the obstetrics department of a hospital and its sensual forms are evocative of the ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, vagina, and labia, as well as

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<sup>31</sup> Auping, “Stealth Architecture.”

<sup>32</sup> McGrew, *It Happened at Pomona*, pp. 33, 259; Crow, “Disappearing Act,” in McGrew, *It Happened at Pomona*, p. 39.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Selz, *Funk* (Berkeley: University of California-Berkeley Art Museum, 1967).



the tubular, male member. As such, Baden's *Delivery Suite* bears a remarkable resemblance to Marcel Duchamp's ultimate work, *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage* (1946–1966), which the artist worked on in complete secrecy until 1966, and which was not revealed to the public until after the artist's death, in 1969.<sup>34</sup> The incredible cultural convergence linking Baden's work to Duchamp's could be used to suggest that when the viewer looks through the holes in *Delivery Suite*, they are looking directly into the vagina, rather than seeing it at a distance. The view of the reproductive organs is initially obfuscated behind the partition in Baden's work, but seen from the side, the sculpture resembles an anatomical drawing or schematic representation of the female reproductive system. Painted in bold primary colors, the smooth forms of *Delivery Suite* are evocative of L.A. minimalism's treatment of glossy finishes, but its form is simply absurd. It is surely more bizarre than beautiful and "ungainly" only begins to cover the creeping realization of the work's anthropomorphism. As the artist Harold Paris wrote in his early profile of the Funk movement, Baden's *Delivery Suite* represents the "[hu]man actually turned inside-out" to display "[a]ll the vital, sensitive organs."<sup>35</sup>

On September 30, 1968, Baden opened his first exhibition as director of the Montgomery Art Gallery at Pomona College, in which he introduced his work to the community as part of a faculty showcase.<sup>36</sup> In addition to *Delivery Suite*, Baden exhibited the two other signature pieces of his early career: *Auger* and *Phantom Limb* (both 1967). These works, as well as *Stop Gap* of

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<sup>34</sup> Michael R. Taylor, ed. *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2009), pp. 14–15, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Harold Paris, "Sweet Land of Funk," *Art in America* 53:2 (March/April 1967), p. 98.

<sup>36</sup> "Faculty Show," Montgomery Gallery, Pomona College, September 30–October 31; the exhibition also included the work of sculptor David Gray and painter/printmaker Guy Williams.

1968, are also strongly vaginal, both as finished forms and by virtue of their means of facture.<sup>37</sup> Searching for a way to carve from within the medium, rather than in the customary, reductive manner, Baden built an 8-foot tall gimbal box—roughly the dimensions of a telephone booth—that he filled with urethane foam and then burrowed into until it contained his whole body and reflected the contours of his movements as he carved.<sup>38</sup> In doing so, he created dark, tight passages in which he crouched or stood while carving with an automatist’s disregard for the finished form, which he arrived at by casting the negative space created through his burrowing. Harold Paris said of the Funk movement that “[i]ntuitive perception,” such as this, “is desirable. The residue, or the by-product, is more interesting and provocative than the intellectual process that creates it.”<sup>39</sup> *Auger* is the best example of Baden’s method of gimbal casting, as it captures the torquing postures the artist assumed to carve into the box from two sides (Fig. 32). Standing at colossal height, *Auger*’s indexical quality was intended to inspire the viewer to imagine the artist performing these contortions.<sup>40</sup> In that respect, its status as the trace of a task, or simply the performance of creation, was intended to be clear. During the “Faculty Show” at Pomona in Fall

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<sup>37</sup> Baden once alluded to his work as being penetrable, as opposed to traditional sculpture; see Mary Beth Jackson, “PC Profs Display Their Own Things,” *Claremont Collegian* (October 9, 1968), p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Mowry Baden, “Artist’s Statement,” in *Mowry Baden: Maquettes and Other Preparatory Work 1967–1980* (Victoria, BC: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1985), pp. 9–10. As Baden explains, “The gimbal is a common apparatus on shipboard because it adapts to every motion of a vessel at sea. By using bearings to enclose my chamber with a gimbal, I could rotate the mold around two axes simultaneously.”

<sup>39</sup> Paris, “Sweet Land of Funk,” p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> Baden said that they were “a residue, an interesting but undecipherable record of a once lively chamber”; see Baden, “Artist’s Statement,” p. 11. For commentary on Baden’s process, see Crow, “Disappearing Act,” pp. 39, 42.

1968, *Auger* was exhibited outside on the patio of the Montgomery Art Gallery, as can be seen in a contemporaneous photograph.<sup>41</sup>

The form of tunnels and passages were natural to Baden's innovative new medium. *Schlage* (1967; destroyed) was similarly carved and featured a full-length door that opened onto an irregularly shaped interior cavity. Rather than discuss the reveal embodied in the opening of the door, Baden thought of it as a passageway that "led nowhere—an image of frustration."<sup>42</sup> This conception of the gimbal device as a sort of thoroughfare guided the creation of both *Phantom Limb* and *Stop Gap* (1968). Baden said, "that moving through the cavity [...] was of primary importance. What I really wanted was for others to feel what I had felt in making the sculpture—the physical experience of moving through a constricting, convoluted cavity."<sup>43</sup> To convey that experience, Baden translated some of the gimbal box's claustrophobia and discomfort to the participant, who was forced to navigate uncomfortable spaces, which were tailored to fit Baden's own physical proportions.<sup>44</sup> For instance, *Phantom Limb* accommodates the artist on his knees, with very little wiggle-room, but it proves tricky to negotiate for anyone with a different build (Figs 33–34). Baden's main intention was to provide the viewer with a kinesthetic experience that was contradictory to the kind of experience suggested by a visual evaluation of the apparatus: seeing the piece was one thing; trying to activate it on one's own

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<sup>41</sup> Crow, "Disappearing Act," pp. 35, 39.

<sup>42</sup> Baden, "Artist's Statement," p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Baden, "Artist's Statement," pp. 10–11.

<sup>44</sup> Many of Robert Morris's iconic works from 1961, including *Column*, *Portal*, and *Box for Standing* (all 1961), assumed the artist's own physical proportions; Catherine Grenier, "Robert Morris and Melancholy: the Dark Side of the Work," in *Robert Morris* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1995), p. 315.

proved to be an altogether different gambit.<sup>45</sup> Failure to provide any coherent visual indication of what is in store for the participant, recalls Robert Morris's 1961 installation, *Passageway*, whereupon entering, the participant receives little indication of what lies ahead. *Passageway* was also designed to work differently for people of dissimilar physical proportions. Morris said, "You moved into it a certain distance depending on how fat you were and then it was necessary to come back the same way."<sup>46</sup> Insofar as *Phantom Limb* was constructed to Baden's physical proportions, it is likewise indicative of Morris's related performing objects, *Untitled (Box for Standing)* and *Column* (both 1961), both of which were intended to house the artist and made to fit his unique build.

The young sculptor Bruce Nauman, who, like Baden, attended graduate school and started his career in the Bay Area, was also engaged with measuring and casting his own body, as well as producing props that could be activated, most notably his *Performance Corridor* (Fig. 35), which was made in Long Island in the winter of 1968–1969 and exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art that spring, contemporaneous with Burden's corridors at Pomona.<sup>47</sup> Nauman designed his first corridor to accommodate the width of his hips while walking in an exaggerated manner—a kind of dance-step where he thrust his hips to either side—for the video *Walk with Contrapposto* (Fig. 36). However, when Nauman's *Corridor* is displayed in the museum and other participants, with different body types, try to traverse it, the experience can be

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<sup>45</sup> Baden, "Artist's Statement," p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Morris, quoted in Jonathan Fineberg, "Robert Morris Looking Back: An Interview," *Arts Magazine* 55:1 (September 1980), p. 110.

<sup>47</sup> *Performance Corridor* was shown at the Whitney in the exhibition "Anti-Illusion," which ran from May 19–July 6, 1969, subsequent to Burden's installations in April of the same year. Nauman did not move to Los Angeles until later in 1969, but his early sculpture was exhibited at Nicholas Wilder's gallery at least once prior to his expanded installation of corridors in March 1970, which included the original *Performance Corridor*, along with several other related works.

inhospitable and alienating by limiting or constraining their movement. Exactly like Baden, Nauman wanted the audience “to have more or less the same experiences [he] had” when interacting with the piece.<sup>48</sup> Nauman famously remarked that he mistrusted the audience and wanted to create situations that were as limiting as possible, or what Janet Kraynak has called “coercive forms of participation.”<sup>49</sup> Kraynak persuasively argued that Nauman’s addition of surveillance media (CCTV cameras and monitors) to his corridors created a feedback loop that self-reflexively reproduced technocratic systems of behavioral prediction and control that were employed by the surveillance state.<sup>50</sup> Regarding Robert Morris’s career trajectory, Branden W. Joseph has argued that the artist came to realize that the disciplinary restrictions imported into the art-viewing experience through the bodies of the spectators, who come into the sculptural environment already disciplined by myriad socio-political factors, ultimately lead to situations that are more restricting than they are liberating. Morris understood that his role as type of aesthetic choreographer or dramaturge was in reality an exercise of power that entailed the subjection of the audience’s bodies. Even when a sculptor does not set out to discipline the participant’s body, as Nauman explicitly did, the interactive environment inadvertently turns the subject into “subjected body” in the Foucauldian sense.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Nauman, quoted in Coosje van Bruggen, *Bruce Nauman* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), p. 19.

<sup>49</sup> Janet Kraynak, “‘Therapeutic’ Participation: On the Legacy of Bruce Nauman’s *Yellow Room (Triangular)* and Other Works,” in *Practicable: From Participation to Interaction in Contemporary Art*, eds. Samuel Bianchini and Erik Verhagen (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016), p. 463.

<sup>50</sup> Janet Kraynak, “Dependent Participation: Bruce Nauman’s Environments,” *Grey Room* 10 (Winter 2003), pp. 23–45; reprinted in Janet Kraynak, *Nauman Reiterated* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Joseph points out that this effect of the theatricality of minimalist sculpture was already observed by Michael Fried in his famous essay, “Art and Objecthood;” see “The Tower and the Line,” pp. 74–75.

Baden and Nauman's environments were indicative of a practice that critic Jack Burnham coined Systems Aesthetics in 1968.<sup>52</sup> Seeking to define a critical terminology for the artistic paradigm shift towards environments, outdoor, kinetic, and luminous artworks, Burnham employed the metaphor of interaction within biological and other organizational systems in order to explain the process of feedback which produced changes to or the refinement of behavior. In a 1969 essay on Baden's work, Burnham referred to it as "environmental systems" for the way in which it coerced participant bodies.<sup>53</sup> Like Nauman's corridors, especially those outfitted with the dissimulating media of surveillance technology, Baden's conditioning environments provided the participant with feedback, essentially letting them know how to perform or behave correctly.<sup>54</sup> As noted above, this feedback was often of a negative variety, when the situation proved uncomfortable or alienating for the participant, and it offered little in the way of productive recommendations for change. Rather than provide helpful correctives, Baden's unaccommodating feedback systems were meant to challenge the participant's sensory mechanisms. Thus, Baden and Nauman could be said to dispense with any of the utopic notions of liberation or the destabilization of the sculptural canon that attended Minimalism, in favor of recognizing the disciplinary function of sculptural objects, reformulated as manipulative apparatuses. Like the military-industrial complex lurking beneath the finish of Southern

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<sup>52</sup> The essay "Systems Esthetics" originally appeared in *Artforum* 7:1 (September 1968), pp. 30–35, and has recently been reprinted as "Systems Aesthetics" in, among other places, Jack Burnham, *Dissolve into Comprehension: Writings and Interviews, 1964–2004*, ed. Melissa Ragain (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015), pp. 115–125.

<sup>53</sup> Jack Burnham, "On Being Sculpture," *Artforum* 7:9 (May 1969), pp. 44–45.

<sup>54</sup> In this regard, curator Paul Schimmel considers Baden to be a precursor of both Nauman and Vito Acconci; see his "Leap into the Void: Performance and the Object," in *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979*, ed. Paul Schimmel (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), pp. 92–94.

California sculpture of the 1960s, the portentous character of Baden and Nauman's corridors also had deeply disturbing socio-political resonances.

During the 1968–1969 school year at Pomona, Mowry Baden only taught painting and drawing classes, in addition to his other duties as department chair and gallery director. David Gray, who had arrived a year earlier, continued to teach the sculpture classes, and it was he who officially advised Chris Burden's senior thesis project.<sup>55</sup> However, unlike the work Burden was making under Gray, which was objective, formally reductive, and preoccupied with materials—many of them so-called “new” materials, such as Plexiglas, fiberglass, and stainless steel—his undergraduate thesis project was much more indebted to Baden, who introduced the young artist to the notion that the essence of sculpture was bodily movement. Burden recalled of Baden,

He was into phenomenology, and he brought that out. But it was something that was already current before Mowry showed up. I remember writing in my art history class what I thought was a really clever paper about how the perspective would have been different when approaching Greek temples, and how it was a phenomenological experience. I was trying to figure out how the ancient Greek temples were part of that same idea. How you came down low and the columns would appear to you in a physical way.<sup>56</sup>

Burden's relation of sculptural phenomenology to ancient ritual complexes was not original and, in his account, it garnered him no praise for said paper. In the first place, it should have been well known to Burden, as a student of architecture at Pomona in his freshman and sophomore years, that Le Corbusier had been somewhat obsessed by the promenade through the Athenian Acropolis, a theory which he expounded in his 1923 manifesto *Towards an Architecture*. Studying architecture in the mid-60s, Burden would undoubtedly have been familiar with Reyner Banham's popular study of early twentieth-century European architecture, *Theory and Design in*

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<sup>55</sup> Chris Burden, “Resume” [1971], Chris Burden Estate.

<sup>56</sup> “Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips,” p. 274.

*the First Machine Age* (1960), which contained a whole chapter on Corbusier's *Vers une Architecture*: "one of the most influential, widely read and least understood of all the architectural writings of the twentieth century."<sup>57</sup> Banham dutifully drew out the importance of "sequence," "route," or what has been come to be known as the architectural promenade, for Le Corbusier's conception of spatial planning.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, contemporary allusions to and admiration for monumental, ancient structures were expressed by and about the work of Tony Smith and Robert Morris, both of whom were influential to the development of Burden's early sculpture. In fact, in the mid-60s it was one of the most frequent allusions made with regard to Smith, who had previously worked as an architect and was notably showing his large-scale plywood models in urban plazas in the late 1960s.<sup>59</sup> Like Smith, Morris admitted being fascinated by "neolithic building complexes," such as Stonehenge and Egyptian ruins, as many of his commentators plainly saw.<sup>60</sup> Burden's association of phenomenology with Greek building

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<sup>57</sup> Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1967 [1960]), pp. 220–246.

<sup>58</sup> In addition to its application in Le Corbusier's work, the spatial experience of ancient Greek ritual complexes was also widely discussed by specialists at midcentury, e.g. R.D. Martienssen, *The Idea of Space in Greek Architecture* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1968 [1953]), pp. 117–143; Richard Stillwell, "The Siting of Classical Greek Temples," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 13:4 (1954), p. 3; Vincent Scully, *The Earth, The Temple, and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969 [1962]), p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Samuel Wagstaff, *Tony Smith: Two Exhibitions of Sculpture* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1966); Grace Glueck, "No Place To Hide," *New York Times* (November 27, 1966); Scott Burton, "Old Master at the New Frontier," *ArtNews* 65 (December 1966), pp. 68–69; Lucy R. Lippard, "Tony Smith: 'The Ineluctable Modality of the Visible,'" *Art International* 11:6 (Summer 1967), p. 26; Elayne H. Varian, *Schemata* 7 (New York: Finch College Museum of Art, 1967).

<sup>60</sup> Marcia Tucker, *Robert Morris* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970), p. 33; Compton and Sylvester, *Robert Morris*, p. 17; Robert Morris, "The Art of Existence. Three Extra-Visual Artists: Works in Process" (1971), in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), p. 104; *Robert Morris/Projects* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1974), unpagged; Fineberg, "Robert Morris," p. 113; Buchloh, "A Conversation with Robert Morris," p. 56. Anna



complexes in his mid-60s term paper is compelling evidence of the contemporaneity of such formulations in the general discourse on sculpture at the time, as well as a cogent point of embarkation for the work he would make under Baden's influence.

Teaching at the experimental Raymond College—a small liberal-arts institution housed within the University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA—in the mid-60s, Baden was asked to step outside his comfort zone and lead courses in other disciplines, such as civilization, literature, and psychology.<sup>61</sup> This pedagogical experience had a profound effect on Baden, who subsequently modified his fine-art syllabi to reflect his broad exposure to the liberal arts. Several of the non-traditional texts Baden assigned to his students at Pomona College are important, not only for Burden's work, but for the Light and Space artists with whose work Burden's corridors should be categorized. For instance, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (published in translation in 1962), which was by then a staple of the discourse on the new sculpture, was certainly assigned to Burden in the 1968–1969 school year, if he was not already familiar with it.<sup>62</sup> If Burden took one thing away from Merleau-Ponty, it would have been that perception does not exist outside of an environment, to which it responds and to which it is intimately bound up in what Rosalind Krauss called “the relatedness of objects.”<sup>63</sup> As Claire Bishop elegantly summarizes, the common understanding of *Phenomenology of Perception* was that

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Chave has discussed Minimalism's general indebtedness to classical architecture (“Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” pp. 53–54), as well as Morris's specific allusions to Egyptian ruins (“Minimalism and Biography,” p. 155).

<sup>61</sup> “Mowry Baden interviewed by Rebecca McGrew,” in McGrew, *It happened at Pomona*, pp. 262–263.

<sup>62</sup> This and other titles Baden assigned to his Pomona College classes were communicated to me in conversation and via email with Baden, May 17, 2017.

<sup>63</sup> As opposed to the detached viewer that Morris's sculpture produced, Merleau-Ponty stressed “the contingency and reciprocity of the embodied self/other”; Amelia Jones, “Meaning, Identity,

perception is not simply a question of vision, but involves the whole body. The inter-relationship between myself and the world is a matter of embodied perception, because what I perceive is necessarily dependent on my being at any one moment physically present in a matrix of circumstances that determine how and what it is that I perceived.<sup>64</sup>

Robert Morris popularized this essential text of Minimalism in several of the most frequently quoted passages from his “Notes on Sculpture” and it is likely that Burden was aware of its teachings before Baden came back to Pomona.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Dawna Schuld has argued for the importance of Merleau-Ponty for artists associated with the Light and Space movement, noting that their work went a long way towards “naturaliz[ing]” or “fostering a kind of introspective practice” that focuses attention on the body as a perceptual being in the world.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to phenomenology, Baden assigned more specialized psychological texts dealing primarily with perception and sensation. For instance, *The Neuropsychology of Spatially Oriented Behavior* (newly published in 1968), which is a broad summary of research into sensorimotor learning and behavior.<sup>67</sup> Summarizing some of the volume’s essential claims, the editor, Sanford Freedman, reinforced the notion of perception as being an embodied and multi-sensory phenomenon. Furthermore, several of the experiments described in Freedman’s collection utilize sensory modification and deprivation in order to analyze the coordination

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Embodiment: The Uses of Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology in Art History,” in *Art and Thought*, eds. Dana Arnold and Margaret Iversen (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 74–77.

<sup>64</sup> Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Tate, 2005), p. 50.

<sup>65</sup> Morris was joined by the critics Michael Fried, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson, among others, in calling on Merleau-Ponty to justify an embodied experience of the work of art; see Jones, “Meaning, Identity, Embodiment,” pp. 76–77.

<sup>66</sup> Schuld, “Practically Nothing,” pp. 109, 121.

<sup>67</sup> Sanford J. Freedman, ed., *The Neuropsychology of Spatially Oriented Behavior* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1968).

between human perception and the environment. A key observation regarding sensory deprivation environments that emerged from *The Neuropsychology of Spatially Oriented Behavior* was that their perceptual effects could be instantaneous and prolonged, as well as protracted for up to three days.<sup>68</sup> One study cited a delayed response to sensory deprivation that made multiple subjects feel intense physical discomfort, a condition referred to as “hyposensory agitation syndrome.”<sup>69</sup> Richard Gregory, in a project funded by the U.S. Air Force, asked, “What happens to perception in moving observers with limited information?” a problem that affected people in space shuttles and other aircraft when they lost touch with the ground and other contextual markers of spatial orientation.<sup>70</sup> The experiment Gregory outlines involved, in part, a darkened corridor with a motorized “carriage” that ran on a dolly track (Fig. 37). The blackout situation that the researchers created in the corridor—a sensory deprivation environment—was intended to help the subject focus on a projected shape, the afterimage of which, on the retina, was the object of study. Gregory’s article is illustrated with an image of the corridor, harshly illuminated to show the experimental apparatus (Fig. 38). Such observations about perceptual effects and explanations of how to push the boundaries of phenomenal experience must have been the main impetus for Baden to introduce this otherwise extremely technical material to his undergraduate students.

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<sup>68</sup> Another, even more esoteric text that Baden assigned to his students at Pomona was neurophysiologist Warren McCulloch’s collection of essays, *Embodiments of Mind* (1965), which discussed sensorial “reverberations,” albeit in the most technically advanced manner.

<sup>69</sup> Edward Taub and A.J. Berman, “Movement and learning in the absence of sensory feedback,” in Freedman, *The Neuropsychology of Spatially Oriented Behavior*, p. 183.

<sup>70</sup> Richard L. Gregory, “On not having our feet on the ground,” in Freedman, *The Neuropsychology of Spatially Oriented Behavior*, pp. 163–171. It is pertinent to note that Gregory’s research is remarkably similar to the habitability research that Dr. Ed Wortz (collaborator with Irwin and Turrell) was performing at Garrett Aerospace Corporation.

Another avenue of experimental psychology that was tangential to the type of reading Baden assigned to his students at Pomona, but not unrelated, was the burgeoning field of Gestalt therapy. Gestalt therapy should first and foremost be differentiated from the perceptual, Gestalt psychology that was influential to the first wave of Minimalism. Gestalt therapy rests on the understanding that each individual constructs their own world out of a synthesis of sensory experience and interpretation that is unique and highly contingent. The term “gestalt,” in this context, refers to whole units of sensory information that have always already been refined by the interpretive schema of the user. Gestalt therapy was the cornerstone of the 1960s human potential movement and combined bits and pieces from diverse religious, psychological, philosophical, and cultural sources. It grew “out of the leftist intellectual and émigré circles of New York City in the early postwar period and then [spread] progressively across the country to take root” at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, where its founding theorist, Frederick (Fritz) Perls, taught beginning in 1964.<sup>71</sup> During the 1960s, Gestalt therapy and the Esalen Institute had “profound formative effects on the mainstream culture,” as well as various fields within contemporary psychology, and it served as an emblem of the decade in terms of its “call to return to the body and break the shackles of conformity.”<sup>72</sup> The practice of Gestalt therapy entailed numerous therapeutic physical activities; some were relatively standard, such as yoga and cardiovascular exercise, but others were programmatic and related to task-based encounter group therapy. Although Gestalt therapy and the Esalen Institute were sometimes lambasted in

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<sup>71</sup> Gordon Wheeler, “Spirit and Shadow: Esalen and the Gestalt Model,” in *On the Edge of the Future: Esalen and the Evolution of American Culture*, eds Jeffrey J. Kripal and Glenn W. Shuck (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 170.

<sup>72</sup> Wheeler, “Spirit and Shadow,” p. 170, 172–173, 188. For contemporaneous, popular accounts of Esalen’s teachings, see Severin and Peggy Peterson, “Psychedelic Exercises: Something New for Your Piece of Mind,” *Ladies Home Journal* 85:2 (February 1968), pp. 112, 114; Jane Howard, “Inhibitions Thrown Into the Gentle Winds,” *Life* (July 12, 1968), pp. 48–65.

the press as a symptom of the counterculture's hedonism and contemptible permissiveness, its teaching struck a chord with artists interested in phenomenology and perception. For instance, Bruce Nauman expressed an interest in Gestalt therapy for its emphasis on confrontational situations and prescribed movement.<sup>73</sup> In fact, certain of the private performances Nauman videotaped in his studio, wherein he paced back and forth with a concerted purpose (e.g. *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square*, 1967–1968), were similar to exercises performed in Esalen's famed encounter group sessions, not to mention its broader ethos of embodied healing.<sup>74</sup>

Nauman's walks, which were demonstrably the source of his corridor pieces, coalesced, in part, around the artist's readings of Irish author Samuel Beckett, whose existentialist plays and novels were very popular in the U.S. in the 1960s, including among the Minimalists.<sup>75</sup> Beckett's work is full of movement that is impeded, often by confounding objects, such as Molloy's crutches and bicycle. Nauman's 1966 *Device to Stand In*, which irreverently parodies Morris's

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<sup>73</sup> Nauman's interest in Gestalt therapy is widely remarked; see Willoughby Sharp, "Nauman Interview," *Arts Magazine* (March 1970), pp. 22–27; Jane Livingston, "Bruce Nauman," in *Bruce Nauman* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1972), pp. 12, 16, 21; David A. Ross, *Southland Video Anthology, June 8–September 7, 1975* (Long Beach: Long Beach Museum of Art, 1975), unpaginated; Bruce Nauman, *Please Pay Attention Please*, ed. Janet Kraynak (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), p. 166; Anna Dezeuze, "Bound to Fail: Constraints and Constrictions in Bruce Nauman's Early Work," in *Bruce Nauman: Make Me, Think Me*, ed. Laurence Sillars (Liverpool: Tate Liverpool, 2006), pp. 51–52; Marco De Michelis, "Spaces," in *Bruce Nauman: Topological Gardens* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2009), pp. 67–71; Auping, "Stealth Architecture," p. 98.

<sup>74</sup> As described in Howard, "Inhibitions Thrown Into the Gentle Winds," p. 60. Robert Slifkin discusses the similarity of some of Nauman's works to Gestalt therapy exercises in *Bruce Nauman: Going Solo* (Portland: Reed College, 2012), pp. 15–18.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Morris, "Aligned with Nazca," *Artforum* 14:2 (October 1975), pp. 26–39; Rosalind Krauss, "The Mind/Body Problem: Robert Morris in Series," in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, pp. 2–17; Maurice Berger, "Wayward Landscapes," in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, pp. 18–33; Grenier, "Robert Morris and Melancholy," p. 318; Chave, "Revaluing Minimalism," p. 478.

*Box for Standing*, could be read as such an impediment, or else as the figure of immobility itself, which is conjured by so many of Beckett's litanies. Like Beckett's protagonists, Nauman's early studio performances teetered on "the continuous threat of collapse, of losing his balance or otherwise failing" to progress.<sup>76</sup> Nauman tipped his hat to the author in *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* (1968), which he borrowed from Beckett's Watt, whose eccentric gait—rotating his torso and flinging his legs in both directions—reduced his forward momentum to an absurd dance that constantly threatened his balance.<sup>77</sup> Beckett scholar Derval Tubridy has observed that "[t]he systematization of everyday activities and the development of these, through permutation and repetition, is a key characteristic of Beckett's prose and drama," which Nauman motivates to great effect.<sup>78</sup> Early in his career, Nauman referenced Molloy's renowned sucking stones as a model for the absurd and endless activities undertaken in his films and videos.<sup>79</sup> The interminable quality of the tasks performed in Beckett's novels were perfectly crystallized in Nauman's expert employment of the videotape's medium-specific qualities, insofar as they fully consume hour-long cassettes with "repetitive and emotionless task[s]."<sup>80</sup> The senseless and somewhat irrational repetition of physical activities with which Nauman occupied his time in the

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<sup>76</sup> Van Bruggen, *Bruce Nauman*, p. 50.

<sup>77</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett: The Grove Centenary Edition* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), v. 1, pp. 191–192.

<sup>78</sup> Derval Tubridy, "Samuel Beckett and Performance Art," *Journal of Beckett Studies* 23:1 (2014), p. 40.

<sup>79</sup> Livingston, "Bruce Nauman," p. 26.

<sup>80</sup> Slifkin, *Going Solo*, pp. 25–32.

studio led to the construction of *The Performance Corridor*, so that the participant could “have more or less the same experiences” as not only Nauman, but one of Beckett’s hapless fools.<sup>81</sup>

At the same time, the older, San Francisco-based Mowry Baden was equally influenced by Samuel Beckett to create dissimulating experiences of spatial alienation. Like Nauman, Baden measured *Phantom Limb* (discussed above), *I Walk the Line* (1967), and *K Walk* (1969) after his (or his wife’s) proportions, such that other users could feel inharmonious with the apparatus. Baden and Nauman expressed an analogous desire to give the viewer an experience akin to their own, as well as one that would approximate the written travails of Beckett’s many discombobulated characters. Baden assigned no less than three works by Beckett to his classes at Pomona College: the plays *Waiting for Godot* (French, 1952; English, 1954) and *Happy Days* (English, 1961), and the collection of novels *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable* (English, 1959).<sup>82</sup> He also recalls seeing a Beckett play staged at Pomona College, which he described as a “staggering” experience.<sup>83</sup> Many of Baden’s works, beyond what I am calling his corridor pieces, involve funny walks hampered by the artist’s prop-like pieces. In *I Walk the Line* (Fig. 39), a large, interactive sculpture with minimalist overtones, a concealed ramp raises and lowers to allow the walker safe passage over a genital-threatening hump in the middle. However, those with an inseam shorter than Baden’s will run into trouble. Hampered, like one of Beckett’s disabled protagonists, the short participant has to back out of the pieces or else try to hop, jump, or scamper over the barrier, to potentially comedic results. While neither Baden nor Nauman’s environments mandate repetition, they certainly invite repeat passes, if only for the subtle

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<sup>81</sup> Bruce Nauman, quoted in van Bruggen, *Bruce Nauman*, p. 19.

<sup>82</sup> E-mail correspondence with Mowry Baden, May 17, 2017.

<sup>83</sup> “Mowry Baden interviewed,” p. 262. It is unclear whether or not this occurred during Burden’s senior year, 1968–1969, or not.

pleasure of experiencing the difference each time. However, as in Beckett, the languid pace and lack of clear destination lend absurdity, and perhaps a touch of mental illness, to the repetitious performance of these pieces.

As previously discussed, with his corridors Nauman sought to restrict the movement of the participant so that only one avenue of experience was open to them. Furthermore, his environments outfitted with the media of surveillance anticipate a society of control where movements and identities are technologically tracked. Taken together, Nauman's corridors have frequently been described as disturbing, alienating, and uncomfortable; allusions to peril, entrapment, and chaos have not been far behind. Anne Ayers has proffered that "Nauman's physically raw corridors and rooms from the early seventies were the very antithesis of the private bliss of Space/Light installations."<sup>84</sup> In a well-cited early interview, Willoughby Sharp squarely asked Nauman, in relation to his theory about audience interaction, "Isn't that rather perverse?"<sup>85</sup> Indeed, two performers Nauman once hired for an endurance performance had what the artist called "violent" reactions to the sensory deprivation situation he scripted for them.<sup>86</sup> Mowry Baden's interactive work was generally more ludic than Nauman's, with the exception of his ominously titled *Instrument* of 1969 (Fig. 40). Suspended from the ceiling—once again suiting some physical builds and not others—*Instrument* is a corrugated metal passage that accommodates only the participant's head. As it leads the performer down a 16-foot, serpentine path, the claustrophobic walls circumscribe forward vision and the participant inevitably rubs against or collides into the apparatus. Thomas Crow says that Baden's "pieces only communicate

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<sup>84</sup> Anne Ayers, "The Long Haul," in *Sunshine and Noir: Art in L.A., 1960–1997*, eds Lars Nittve and Helle Crenzien (Humbleback, Denmark: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 1997), p. 166.

<sup>85</sup> Sharp, "Nauman Interview," p. 23.

<sup>86</sup> Slifkin, *Going Solo*, p. 14.



by the pressures they place on the sensitive parts of the body that come into contact with their surfaces”; he goes on to speak of submission and regimentation at the hands of such devices.<sup>87</sup> A highly attuned, yet simplistic tool for manipulating physical behavior, *Instrument*’s brusque treatment of the participant implies the socio-political dark side of Systems Aesthetics: behavioral monitoring and feedback systems, used by the military-industrial complex to control, kill, and market to populations.

One of the many ways in which the art loosely categorized as Post-Minimalism advanced and critiqued its parent movement, was by drawing out the common unpleasantness of the audience’s experience of the work. Robert Morris’s *Passageway* “was pointedly hard and antagonistic to participants, where body and environment conflict rather than commingle.”<sup>88</sup> Anna Chave has written about the capacity of visitors to be upset, frustrated, and dismayed by Minimalist sculpture, arguing that, as a symbol of their times, “[t]he Minimalists effectually perpetrated violence through their work—violence against the conventions of art and against the viewer.”<sup>89</sup> In two seminal essays, Chave posited Robert Morris’s self-identification as a sadomasochist as the latent image of the minimalist sculptor.<sup>90</sup> Like several of his compatriots, Morris’s work has both injured participants and been the target of iconoclastic reactions from the

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<sup>87</sup> Crow, “Disappearing Act,” p. 42.

<sup>88</sup> Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 76.

<sup>89</sup> Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” pp. 44, 54–57.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57–58; “Minimalism and Biography,” p. 155.

audience.<sup>91</sup> Morris's *Passageway* was allegedly so "unpalatable," the artist's friend, colleague, and future partner,

Yvonne Rainer took a pencil from her pocketbook and scrawled "FUCK YOU BOB MORRIS" across one of the walls. Indeed, the work's interior was besmirched with a variety of graffiti, insults, and autographs, and Morris recalls touching up the wall at the end of each day.<sup>92</sup>

*Passageway* enraged even some of Morris's close friends because of the way it frustrated the senses and barred forward motion by tapering down and trapping the participant in a claustrophobic dead-end. In the catalog for Morris's 1994 Guggenheim retrospective, Rosalind Krauss situates her discussion of *Passageway* underneath the heading "Haptic" in a Bataillan dictionary of the artist's career. The experience she describes is precisely the one the viewer would have experienced in Baden and Nauman's later pieces: "impact, of the body encountering the resistance of a material external to it." She further draws from Beckett's prose, which was dear to Morris, by positing *Passageway* as an impediment that acts on the body, putting pressure on it.<sup>93</sup>

With only one way in and out, Morris's *Passageway* resembles a cave and the graffiti left by the audience might be likened to the earliest known images painted and incised on walls of Paleolithic caverns, most notably in Western Europe. Georges Bataille, who was a frequent commentator on cave painting around mid-century, when he benefitted from major new discoveries and a flurry of interest in prehistoric art, held that the impulse to mark the walls was essentially human in that it was never arbitrary, but always in the service of a some form of

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<sup>91</sup> On participants being injured during Morris ill-fated Tate Gallery retrospective in 1970, see Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Hard Hats and Art Strikes: Robert Morris in 1970," *The Art Bulletin* 89:2 (2007), pp. 345–346.

<sup>92</sup> Paice, "Passageway, 1961," p. 94.

<sup>93</sup> Krauss, "The Mind/Body Problem," p. 10.

representation, which evidenced human evolution.<sup>94</sup> It was also basely destructive and libidinous in that, when figurative, cave paintings almost unequivocally related to hunting and represented primarily, and in the most detail, the presumed prey. Bataille said the Paleolithic cave painters

had a sordid, self-interested goal in mind. These paintings functioned in the same way magic does. One had to believe [...] that through the depiction of real things it is possible to act on them. [...] In this sense, depicting arrows flying toward the animal really put the animal in danger.<sup>95</sup>

Bataille argues that the motivation spurning the first image-makers was instrumental, covetous, and mortally violent. Their renderings of animals exhibit a patience and attentiveness that Bataille and many other anthropologists and prehistorians believed was a sign of reverence for the prey and the hunt itself. Considering the psychosocial and sexual relationship Rainer had with Morris, concisely encapsulated by the epithet “fuck you,” her graffiti could be read as conjuring up her prey, depicting Morris on the walls of his own cave in order to symbolically slay him. Like many a vandal before her, Rainer must have realized the ineffectual nature of her complaint, but, like cave painting, her gesture recognizes a symbiotic relationship of codependence and a shared experience between the antagonists in the situation. That *Passageway* would inspire this kind of ill will once again speaks to the dehumanizing effect of the sensorially abrasive and conscripting environmental sculpture of the 1960s.

Chris Burden’s first corridor, sheathed in white, semi-opaque plastic sheeting and shaped like a truncated cone, approximated the experience of entering a cave. The piece resembled a tunnel, with a semi-circular, 6.5-foot tall opening at one end that gradually tapered down, over a 96-foot span, to a 2-foot opening at the other end. It is clear from Burden’s descriptions of the

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<sup>94</sup> Georges Bataille, *The Cradle of Humanity: Prehistoric Art and Culture*, ed. Stuart Kendall (New York: Zone, 2005), pp. 36, 41, 100–101.

<sup>95</sup> Bataille, *The Cradle of Humanity*, p. 100.

piece that as one entered the taller opening and proceeded towards the other end, the work “forced” or “manipulated” participants to bend over, crawl, and then squirm on their stomachs to exit the shorter end.<sup>96</sup> The wriggling required to get out the low side of Burden’s white corridor could be compared to the slim fissures in the earth that first revealed some of the famous caves in France and Spain, not to mention the tight passages contained within them, which necessitated an analogous kind of movement. In a 1955 lecture on the caves at Lascaux, commemorating the publication of his book on the subject, Bataille spent some time ruminating on the discovery of the cave and showed a slide of prehistorian Abbé Henri Breuil first entering the cave with the boys who had discovered it (Fig. 41). Throughout his dissertations on cave painting, Bataille frequently referenced the youth whose slender physiques allowed them to squeeze into such fissures and make these remarkable discoveries.<sup>97</sup> In so doing, Bataille crafted a subtle allusion between the “childhood of man,” the origin of art, and the curiosity and blind exuberance of youth. He also masterfully bestowed upon these young people a profound courage by which he links them across some 20,000 years to the last humans to set foot in these dark, remote, and inherently terrifying bowels of the earth. While Burden’s white corridor was physically manipulative and threatening, like a cave, it shared a ludic quality with Mowry Baden’s work and Bataille’s youthful spelunkers. Crouching, crawling, and wiggling on the ground, the participant in Burden’s piece was no doubt more aware of their body in space, which may have even elicited the parodic chuckle of a debased participant laughing at their own prostration. More than that, one can imagine students and their adult professors having a bit of genuine fun writhing around in the grass out on the remote practice field at Pomona College.

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<sup>96</sup> Chris Burden, “Three Sculptures,” Pomona College, May 21, 1969, Chris Burden Estate; Chris Burden, quoted in Horvitz, “Chris Burden,” p. 26.

<sup>97</sup> Bataille, *The Cradle of Humanity*, pp. 91, 93–97.

Long before Bataille published his book on Lascaux, he followed scientists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in observing

an evident, even shocking duality at the beginning of figurative representation. Reindeer, bison, and horses are shown with a meticulousness so perfect that if we had similarly scrupulous pictures of men themselves, the remotest period of human development would cease to be the most inaccessible. But the drawings and sculptures that represent the Aurignacians are nearly all formless and *much less human* than those that represent the animals.<sup>98</sup>

Bataille believed that cave paintings “deformed” the human figure by lending it only the roughest “schematic” portrayal, compared with the attention to detail paid to the animals. His reference to the figure of Paleolithic humans in the caves as “formless (*informe*)” speaks to the equivocation at work by which early humanoids probably saw themselves as “much closer to the realm of the animal than we do today.”<sup>99</sup> Writing in 1930, Bataille was employing his recent definition of formless as a process of declassification or any act that rebutted the mandate of rational order that was foundational to Western civilization. He rather enigmatically wrote, “That which [formless] designates has no claim in any sense, and is always trampled upon like a spider or an earthworm.”<sup>100</sup> This conception of form laid low was perhaps best illustrated in the Pit at Lascaux, a mural painting with which Bataille was fascinated.<sup>101</sup> It represents a masked or part-human, ithyphalic man, apparently fallen and perhaps dead, lying next to a bison whose entrails spill out of a spear wound in its side (Fig. 42). With the exception of the man’s bird-like mask,

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<sup>98</sup> This quote comes from Bataille’s 1930 review of Georges-Henri Luquet’s *L’art et la religion des homes fossils* (1926); see Bataille *The Cradle of Humanity*, p. 40.

<sup>99</sup> Bataille, *The Cradle of Humanity*, p. 79.

<sup>100</sup> The definition of “formless” from Bataille’s Critical Dictionary first appeared in the journal *Documents* 1:7 (1929); for a translation, see “Critical Dictionary,” *October* 60 (1992), p. 27.

<sup>101</sup> Bataille’s reading of the image, which encapsulates many of the points discussed herein, comes from a 1952 lecture published in *The Cradle of Humanity*, pp. 50–55.

he is “crudely schematic” compared to the bison and lacks naturalistic human form. He is also laid virtually horizontal with respect to the proud animal’s distinguished uprightness. Thus, the Paleolithic painting from Lascaux enacts the ontological and epistemological imperatives of the formless by depriving the human of its formal characteristics and forcing it into a prone position of inferiority in relation to a beast.

In their handbook on formless, Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois dubbed one of its signature operations “horizontal,” a process of “lowering from the vertical to the horizontal.”<sup>102</sup> What goes unremarked in their exhibition catalog is the way in which plunging into a Paleolithic cave effects the very physical lowering of the body and the “taxonomic disorder” (via the evolutionary backslide to four legs) that together constitute the dual nature of formless. Rather, Bois relates horizontality to Bataille’s article “The Big Toe,” as well as two entries on “Spittle” by Marcel Griaule and Michel Leiris from *Documents*.<sup>103</sup> These essays define the terms of a related, corporeal equivocation in which previously upstanding body parts (head, mouth) are brought down and made low by their associations with, for lack of a better word, the abject (feet, saliva).<sup>104</sup> Like the painters of Lascaux and Altamira, Bataille and his associates reaffirmed our animal nature, which civilization had presumably sublimated. Walking on all

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<sup>102</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, “The Use Value of ‘Formless,’” in *Formless: A User’s Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), p. 26.

<sup>103</sup> “The Big Toe” was first published in *Documents* 1:6 (1929); a translation appears in Robert Lebel and Isabelle Waldberg, eds., *Encyclopaedia Acephalica* (London: Atlas, 1995), pp. 87–93. The two entries on Spittle appeared in *Documents* 1:7 (1929); translations are published in “Critical Dictionary” (op. cit.).

<sup>104</sup> Krauss has spoken out against the wholesale inclusion of the abject as a category of formless, though Hal Foster has written persuasively in its defense. See Hal Foster, et al. “The Politics of the Signifier II: A Conversation on the ‘Informe’ and the Abject,” *October* 67 (1994), pp. 3–21; Hal Foster, “Obscene, Abject, Traumatic,” *October* 78 (1996), pp. 106–124; and Rosalind E. Krauss, “The Destiny of the *Informe*,” in *Formless*, pp. 235–252.

fours, as one is forced to do in Burden's white corridor, the upstanding human returns to "the horizontal axis that governs the life of animals" and restores the "biological mouth-anus" alignment that defined homo sapiens's closest evolutionary ancestors.<sup>105</sup> Bataille relished the anti-Platonic plunge into the cave by which early humans prostrated themselves in order to develop beyond their bestial forebears.<sup>106</sup> Burden's tunnel/cave represents a formless operation by both physically and metaphorically bringing humans to their knees and eventually their bellies, reintroducing them to the primal dirt and the horizontal register of the carnal. Intuitively picking up on this association between the troglodytic passage and the most base and scatological themes, Burden unconsciously referred to the shorter side of his white corridor as "the back end."<sup>107</sup> Crawling and writhing on their stomachs, the participant in Burden's first corridor piece "voluntarily appears as a kind of waste," just like the debased or declassified humans that painted their own, partially evolved likenesses on cave walls in the Paleolithic era.<sup>108</sup>

The glimpse out of the short end of Burden's first corridor reassures the participant that this tunnel, while tough to negotiate, has an egress. However, it is easy to imagine walking into the piece and looking up so that one's field of vision is overtaken on all sides by the cloudy, translucent plastic. Burden said that once "one had proceeded [...] into the piece, one's visual field was reduced," which approximated a visual deprivation phenomenon known as a

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<sup>105</sup> Bois, "The Use Value of 'Formless,'" pp. 25–26.

<sup>106</sup> Jeremy Biles, *Ecce Monstrum: Georges Bataille and the Sacrifice of Form* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 74.

<sup>107</sup> "Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips," p. 276.

<sup>108</sup> Bataille, *The Cradle of Humanity*, pp. 45–46.

Ganzfeld.<sup>109</sup> A Ganzfeld is a completely homogenous visual field, the effects of which can be estimated by broad, uninterrupted spans of smooth, monochrome material. Around the same time that Burden's corridors came to fruition, Robert Irwin and James Turrell, who had both attempted to create a Ganzfeld-like situation by neutralizing the galleries of the Pasadena Art Museum for their exhibitions in 1967 and 1968, were exploring actual Ganzfeld effects with Dr. Ed Wortz at Garrett Aerospace Corporation for the Art and Technology program (Fig. 43). This work, the results of which were not published until 1971, was presumably unknown to Chris Burden when he experimented with creating similar environments at Pomona College. What the two projects share is an abiding interest in perceptual psychology, which Burden received in his senior year through the mentorship of Mowry Baden and his kinesthetic conception of artistic experience. Burden's corridors also shared his professor's predilection for linear, task-based activity to be completed by a mobile and embodied participant.<sup>110</sup> Along with Bruce Nauman's corridors and colored rooms, which have recently been recuperated for the Light and Space movement,<sup>111</sup> Burden's corridors deserve to be counted alongside Michael Asher's cave-like installation at Pomona's Montgomery Gallery in 1970, as essential examples of the perceptual emphasis of L.A. art at the end of the 1960s.

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Burden's second corridor was more than twice as long as the first (200 feet), with 9-foot-tall walls made from black plastic sheeting, set 3 feet apart to allow comfortable passage for one spectator at a time. More than the white corridor, whose conical shape distinguished it as an

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<sup>109</sup> Burden, "Three Sculptures."

<sup>110</sup> *Freckled Gyres: Sculpture by Mowry Baden* (Claremont, CA: Montgomery Gallery, Pomona College, 2001), pp. 5, 11.

<sup>111</sup> Clark, "Phenomenal," pp. 50–53.



exemplary kind of space, the black corridor channeled Burden's early collegiate architectural training and his aforementioned interest in the promenades of Greek ritual complexes. Burden believed that the scale of the piece, in combination with human interaction, produced an effect akin to architecture. He said,

With a large enough scale, the piece could no longer be manipulated but would have to be dealt with on its own terms much the same way as a building forces people to behave in certain fashions. The building acts on you rather than you acting on it.<sup>112</sup>

Once again, Burden preconceived the aspect of partial sensory deprivation that the piece entailed, saying that he "wanted the corridor to be high enough so that once inside, a person could see only the sky."<sup>113</sup> Here Burden is clearly concerned with restricting peripheral vision as a way of destabilizing the participant's sense of their surroundings. In fact, his corridor closely resembled Richard Gregory's previously cited Air Force study, which examined how lack of visual stimuli disoriented subjects moving through a darkened corridor without any indication of the horizon line or figure/ground relationships. While one can imagine standing at one end of Burden's 200-foot long corridor, which was perfectly straight, and looking through to the other end, the wind had the unintended effect of causing the walls "to billow inward on both sides," which "at times reduced [the width] to zero." Burden said,

only rarely was it possible to stand at one end of the corridor and look through to the other end. Walking through the full length was an intimidating process because the shifting wind would alternately open and close a portion of the corridor; the [participant] often had to physically battle the plastic to proceed. [However,] running through the corridor produced an air pocket [about 3 feet in front of and behind the participant.] From the outside it appeared as a huge bubble moving through the corridor proceeded by shock waves in the plastic.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Burden, "Three Sculptures."

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

The way in which the work “acted upon” the participant was critical for Burden in distinguishing between a static object to be contemplated from a remove (painting, sculpture) and an experience of art that takes place through time and movement. Stifling the visual acumen of the participant and then thrusting them into a haptic environment that undulated erratically, Burden attempted to “destroy the artificial one-way” conception of passive spectatorship and enliven the participant as an “active agent” in the work.<sup>115</sup>

In a 2005 commentary on Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s *The Gates* (1979–2005) installation in Central Park, which in some ways resembled Burden’s outdoor corridors, Barry Gewen related the work to medieval carnivals, in which

participants were invited to take a holiday from the getting-and-spending responsibilities of their daily lives. [...] It was spontaneity, motiveless and undirected play, a vacation from the dull, rational grind of routine, an invitation to people to be exuberant, open, childlike, naïve, sweet.<sup>116</sup>

While this description could be applied any number of interactive, environmental artworks from the Happenings of the 1950s through to today, it is a particularly apt representation of what it must have been like to experience Chris Burden’s corridor pieces. Without being overly grandiose about the implications of his newfound methodology, Burden thumbed his nose at artistic tradition by creating a completely ephemeral piece, too large to be owned, and thus destroyed at the end of their run, like many of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s public installations. Though they cease to exist, these experiential works retain the aura of use-value that writers such as Georges Bataille and Walter Benjamin described as adhering to art objects that were activated in ritual contexts. For Bataille, art in general constituted a useless expenditure, because the

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Barry Gewen, “State of the Art,” *New York Times Book Review* (December 11, 2005), p. 32.

energies it consumed produced no utilitarian product, but rather something that appealed to a higher faculty. In their ritual context, such objects occasioned superfluous expenditure, “on the spot,” leaving no remainder and no gain, but in accordance with the law of entropy, energy squandered, disorder, and multiplicity.<sup>117</sup> Burden’s corridors fit these criteria in the playful, but slightly menacing, release of energy caused by participant interaction. While these experiences produce self-awareness of spatio-temporal phenomena, they do not beget a physical product (artwork), and the experience is the reward itself. The only gain is perceptual, and thus Burden’s corridors satisfy Bataille’s notion of unregulated expenditure in a ritual context free from any economic implications. Gewen’s evocation of medieval carnivals, which are often described as topsy-turvy—the world turned on its head—also relates to the equivocation of the formless operation, which entails a similar leveling of hierarchical orders.

With its tall opaque walls, expressly designed to restrict vision, Burden’s black corridor resembles a labyrinth. The designation “labyrinth” nominates a diverse array of things: a mythological literary tradition, a common human symbol, and actual built environments, all of which have significant, but heterogeneous connotations. The labyrinth as an architectural structure has its origin in the Cretan myth of the artist and craftsman Dedalus, who created an inextricable prison for the Minotaur in King Minos’s palace. Labyrinthine structures were rumored to exist in ancient Greece and Egypt, and descriptions of, as well as plans for labyrinths were known in the Middle Ages, though three-dimensional labyrinths were uncommon and related most often to fantastic historic or mythological buildings in the old world. Up to the Renaissance, all labyrinths, whether three-dimensional or graphic, were unicursal—a single, un-

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<sup>117</sup> See Denis Hollier, “The Use Value of the Impossible,” *October* 60 (1992), pp. 3–24.

branched, circuitous route leading inevitably towards a center point.<sup>118</sup> When they were built, rather than represented in manuscripts or on the floor of cathedrals, medieval labyrinths took the form of garden buildings, pergola-covered paths, hedge mazes, and turf mazes. In the Christian kingdoms of England and France, the walking or dancing of the labyrinth was commonly performed at Church festival times, especially during Carnival and Easter celebrations.<sup>119</sup> In the medieval festival context, labyrinth-walking was a ritual of expenditure that qualifies it as a specialized kind of art object that must be activated by a mobile participant in order to be properly experienced.

Since labyrinths are unicursal—having only one direct, albeit circuitous, route to the center—their enactment was defined by repetition: one walked into the labyrinth and followed the path to the center, then reversed course and retraced their steps out. The prescribed movement of labyrinth-walking was akin to the type of control that Burden perceived in architecture and tried to harness in his corridor pieces. Along those lines, labyrinths were also often characterized as choreographed and related to dance, especially in the context of cathedral floors.<sup>120</sup> However, even though it was impossible to get lost in a unicursal maze, labyrinths, in their most common form as “hedge mazes,” nonetheless bewildered Renaissance participants, who recounted being disoriented, confused, angry, and physically and emotionally taxed by the experience.<sup>121</sup> Their description of disequilibrium, anxiety, and fatigue recalls the encounters

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<sup>118</sup> Hermann Kern, *Through the Labyrinth: Designs and Meanings over 5,000 Years* (Munich: Prestel, 2000), p. 23; Penelope Reed Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 18–19, 40.

<sup>119</sup> Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, pp. 113–114, 123–127.

<sup>120</sup> Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, pp. 23–26, 44, 46; Corà, *Robert Morris*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>121</sup> Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, p. 110.

some viewers had with minimalist, post-minimalist, and light and space art of the 1960s. Robert Morris, who created full-size labyrinths beginning in the mid-70s, noted that the labyrinth “threatens collapse, slippage, loss” and vertigo “at every turn.”<sup>122</sup> Here the comparison with Bruce Nauman is also especially apt. Nauman’s corridors were derived from activities related to modern, task-based dance performance, a medium Nauman was familiar with through connections in New York. In this context, Nauman’s *Walk with Contrapposto* is like a labyrinthine dance performed in the repetitive pathway of the *Performance Corridor*. Perambulations such as Nauman’s *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* represent the disorienting experience of walking the labyrinth, with its repetitious turns. Hermann Kern, the venerable art historian of the labyrinth, was a harsh critic of what he called the “fad” for labyrinthine structures in the late 60s, but he figured Nauman’s corridor pieces to be the most praiseworthy contemporary revisions of the design.<sup>123</sup> Like Burden’s black corridor, Nauman’s pieces follow a straight, rather than a circuitous route, but they nonetheless display labyrinthine properties, such as sensory deprivation, disorientation, and task-based, repetitious movement.

In the literary society of the 1960s, the labyrinth was an extremely popular metaphor, with which Chris Burden was undoubtedly familiar. For some, the protagonists of Franz Kafka’s proto-existentialist stories were often helplessly mired in bureaucratic labyrinths, wherein the rules of the game changed as erratically as the built environment morphed and endlessly reduplicated.<sup>124</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, whose collection *Labyrinths* was released in the early 60s and rapidly went through several printings in the U.S., used the labyrinth as a literary model, which

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<sup>122</sup> Robert Morris, quoted in Corà, *Robert Morris*, p. 40.

<sup>123</sup> Hermann Kern, “Labyrinths: Tradition and Contemporary Works,” *Artforum* 19:9 (May 1981), p. 65.

<sup>124</sup> Kafka’s work was published in the U.S. by several popular presses in the 1940s and 1950s.

he outlined in the story “The Library of Babel.” In addition to the contents of the library, the space Borges describes is a labyrinth composed of endlessly repeating rooms that are each filled with an equal number of indistinct volumes. Those volumes contain a “formless and chaotic [...] labyrinth of letters” that is without order or reason.<sup>125</sup> Insofar as Borges’s stories themselves are rife with fabricated citations and imagined authors that no amount of research could elucidate, they prophecy a body of work that is beyond the order and reason imposed by the library’s rational classification system. Borges wrote labyrinthine volumes whose proper place is adrift in his own Library of Babel, but they were also assigned by Mowry Baden, who gave the author’s collection *Ficciones* (English, 1962) to his students at Pomona.<sup>126</sup> Writing in the 1950s and 1960s, well-known New Novelist, Alain Robbe-Grillet, pursued a different kind of labyrinthine literary formalism. In his novel *In the Labyrinth* (English, 1960) and his film *Last Year at Marienbad* (dir. Alain Resnais, 1961), Robbe-Grillet continuously returned to the same set of starting points, fixed locations, and plot lines, over and over, telling the story differently each time. His tales contain no actual labyrinths, but they are written such that they embody the labyrinth’s qualities of disorienting repetition and doubling. For Borges and Robbe-Grillet, the labyrinth was more than a metaphor; it was a literary operation that the authors pursued to great acclaim. In the same way that these writers conceived a labyrinthine methodology, Chris Burden and Bruce Nauman constructed labyrinth-like structures that were not literally labyrinths, but maintained some of the same essential qualities.

The early association of labyrinths with the mythic building constructed by Dedalus was preserved in the Middle Ages, when, in France, they were referred to it as a *dédale* or *maison*

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<sup>125</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, “Library of Babel,” in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, eds. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 53.

<sup>126</sup> Baden, personal communication.

*dédalus*.<sup>127</sup> The architectural paradigm of which the labyrinth is an emblematic structure is also referenced in the common practice of naming labyrinths simply “Troy,” or by the name of another foundational Western city, such as Jerusalem or Babylon.<sup>128</sup> The medieval labyrinth was thusly linked to the idea of the archetypal city as a symbol of civilization—which kept the monstrous hybrid Minotaur at bay—a practice dating back to Roman tradition. The complexity of the labyrinthine design is both a metaphor for the intricacy of the city’s urban fabric, but also a testament to the architectural genius of builders (and by extrapolation, God). In medieval Europe, the labyrinth was viewed as a manifestation of and symbol for an architect’s masterful skill, which was celebrated in the pavement labyrinths of certain High Gothic cathedrals.<sup>129</sup> For Bataille, the great cathedrals of northern France and other monuments of Western civilization were not great edifices, but rather symbols of “society’s real nature—that of authoritative command and prohibition.” He says,

Thus great monuments rise up like dams, opposing a logic of majesty and authority to all unquiet elements; it is in the form of cathedrals and palaces that church and state speak and impose silence upon the crowds. Indeed, monuments obviously inspire good social behavior and often even genuine fear.<sup>130</sup>

Denis Hollier has written that, for Bataille, architecture is “the system of systems. The keystone of systematicity in general,” indicating its use as a metaphor for all structures, both built and, moreover, ideological. Hollier’s *Against Architecture* (French, 1974) was written in the shadow

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<sup>127</sup> W.H. Matthews, *Mazes and Labyrinths: A General Account of Their History and Development* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1922), p. 60; Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, p. 247; Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, p. 107.

<sup>128</sup> Matthews, *Mazes and Labyrinths*, p. 60; Kern, “Labyrinths,” p. 62; Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, pp. 115–117.

<sup>129</sup> Matthews, *Mazes and Labyrinths*, pp. 61, 111; Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, pp. 121–123.

<sup>130</sup> Georges Bataille, “Architecture” (1929), trans. Dominic Faccini, *October* 60 (1992), p. 25.

of May '68, which he acknowledges in his introduction as the backdrop for reading his own post-structuralist revolt against architecture. It was also the environment in which Chris Burden was working, as college campuses across the U.S. erupted with protests in the late 60s and early 70s in response to a view of society overrun by authoritative systems and inhuman forms of control. Bataille gave the storming of the Bastille during the French Revolution as the example of his anti-architectural platform, but examples of a similar monument-bashing exist from the student movement of Hollier and Burden's generation.

As Hollier argues, Bataille's disavowal of architecture and its metaphorical implications is a type of formless operation: "man's revolt against prison [architecture] is a rebellion against his own form, against the human figure. [...] the only way for man to escape the architectural chain gang is to escape his form."<sup>131</sup> Hollier draws on the tradition, at least as old as Vitruvius, of equating the human form and architecture, by way of emphasizing the far-reaching significance and centrality of the architectural metaphor in Bataille's thinking. He proposes the labyrinth as the ideal figure through which Bataille deconstructs architecture, but he markedly notes that Bataille's theory refutes all anthropocentrism related to the labyrinth: "The legend of Dedalus representing the labyrinth as a human creation must be forgotten. No man (especially not an architect), no men ever created it."<sup>132</sup> Bataille recognized that the duality of the labyrinth in its connotation of the exalted architect or master builder (constructor of systems), while simultaneously being a place of darkness, confusion, and irrationality, made it a battleground in the fight between architecture and its other. In his Critical Dictionary entry "Architecture" from *Documents*, Bataille goes so far as to say that architecture is an attack on man, and he proposes

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<sup>131</sup> Hollier, *Against Architecture*, p. xii.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 57.



the labyrinth as an escape route: “a path—traced by the painters—opens up toward a bestial monstrosity, as if there were no other way of escaping the architectural straitjacket.”<sup>133</sup>

By invoking the Minotaur at the center of the labyrinth, as he was wont to do, Bataille associated the labyrinth with the Paleolithic painted caves, which featured illustrations of human-animal hybrids. Since ancient times, labyrinths have been associated with caves, burial complexes, and other subterranean structures, so this was not much of a leap for Bataille.<sup>134</sup> Caves, which one normally enters and exits via that same passageway, are quintessentially labyrinthine in form, not to mention the disorientation of actually experiencing them. In relation to his own labyrinthine works, Robert Morris retreated back through Greek and Egyptian civilizations to the Magalenian period cave paintings (“shaman’s images”) at Trois Frères, where deep in the “dark mazes,” a telltale “half-human figure” is painted. Echoing Bataille, Morris speaks of the cave as “the origin of the form,” that is, of representation.<sup>135</sup> In a curious 1971 article in which Morris discussed the work of three up-and-coming artists, who were not real, but composites of himself and artists he admired, Morris invented a character named Marvin Blaine, an Ohio-based sculptor whose work reflects his interest in the state’s Native American earthworks, namely the anomalous Great Serpent Mound. The Blaine character—equal parts James Turrell, Robert Smithson, Robert Morris, and Robert Irwin—worked with “caves dug into bluffs” that mimicked the actual archeological excavations that are carried out on the Ohio

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<sup>133</sup> Bataille, “Architecture,” pp. 25–26.

<sup>134</sup> Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, pp. 31, 43, 57, 67; Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, pp. 48, 104; Corà, *Robert Morris*, pp. 20–22.

<sup>135</sup> Robert Morris, “Five Labyrinths,” in Corà, *Robert Morris*, p. 66.

mounds.<sup>136</sup> In 1982, Morris undertook a revision of his 1961 *Passageway* in Tuscany, on the grounds of his patron Giuliano Gori's villa, Fattoria di Celle, outside Pistoia, where Morris's *Labyrinth* (1982) was simultaneously being built. His intention was to reuse a bunker on the property, which had been dug by Nazi occupiers during World War II, to create a dark cave that went into the side of a hill about 50 m. The path was again unicursal, and the cavity is dark and disorienting, exactly like a cave.<sup>137</sup>

Denis Hollier wrote that in Bataille's thought, the labyrinth connoted "Old Mole's tunnels, with the underground networks of chambers and corridors of caves (like Lascaux)."<sup>138</sup> For Bataille, the labyrinth, like the cave, was metaphor for the human struggle with their own dual nature: civilization's rationality on one side and animal urges (sex and death) on the other. It is no coincidence that the labyrinth too is inhabited by a half-man, half-bull hybrid creature, just like the shaman figure painted in the Pit at Lascaux. Bataille's colleague and friend, Simone Weil, said that one emerged from the labyrinth changed or different, the same way that Bataille thought early humans left the decorated caves having moved one rung higher on the evolutionary ladder.<sup>139</sup> For Weil, as for many in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the experience of walking the labyrinth had deeply spiritual connotations, which speaks, once again, to Bataille's concept of *dépense*, or an unproductive expenditure typically associated with religious experience. The emergence from the labyrinth "is not therefore an emergence into a renewed life so much as an

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<sup>136</sup> Morris, "The Art of Existence," pp. 100–105. Another composite artist featured in the article, a Jason Taub, also proposed making several passageway pieces (p. 109).

<sup>137</sup> Corà, *Robert Morris*, pp. 75–79.

<sup>138</sup> Hollier, *Against Architecture*, p. 57.

<sup>139</sup> Simone Weil, "Forms of the Implicit Love of God," in *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), pp. 163–164.

evacuation that can be conceived, through a Batailleian reading, as defecation—an anal birth,” according to Freud, who related the twists and turns of the labyrinthine plan to the bowels.<sup>140</sup> In the spirit of equivocation, Robert Morris rather suggested that the brain is the “anatomical structure” that was “the most probable archetype for the labyrinth.”<sup>141</sup>

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Scholars focused on the work of Alain Robbe-Grillet have argued that, for the author and filmmaker, the labyrinth was both a Jungian archetype with transcendental meaning, as well as a symbol of the postwar zeitgeist.<sup>142</sup> Fittingly, a preference for labyrinthine spaces permeated post-minimalist, sculptural environments in the 1960s, as well. Their pre-minimalist predecessor is, of course, Robert Morris’s *Passageway*, with its unicursal path or “*cul de sac*” that forces the participant to retrace their steps out of the installation.<sup>143</sup> Morris too saw the labyrinth as an emblem of “the tangled passages of our time,” broadly referring to the twentieth century.<sup>144</sup> Lucas Samaras’s aforementioned *Corridor #1*, a drawing of which was exhibited at LACMA as part of the “American Sculpture of the Sixties” exhibition (April 28–June 25, 1967), was a sadistic device, covered in mirrors inside and out, that forced the participant to drastically duck down to their knees while going through two abrupt cut-backs over the span of 20 feet (Fig.

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<sup>140</sup> Biles, *Ecce Monstrum*, p. 97. The Freud essay cited by Biles is “Revision of the Theory of Dreams” (1933).

<sup>141</sup> Robert Morris, quoted in Corà, *Robert Morris*, p. 24.

<sup>142</sup> John J. Michalczyk, “Recurrent Imagery of the Labyrinth in Robbe-Grillet’s Films,” *French Studies* 2:1 (1978), pp. 115–116; Ben Stoltzfus, “Robbe-Grillet’s Labyrinths: Structure and Meaning,” *Contemporary Literature* 22:3 (1981), pp. 293–294.

<sup>143</sup> Bruno Corà first made the connection between Morris’s 1961 *Passageway* and his later *Labyrinth* pieces (1974; 1982); see Corà, *Robert Morris*, pp. 21, 24, 37.

<sup>144</sup> Morris, “Five Labyrinths,” p. 67.

44).<sup>145</sup> Samaras's piece is the perfect amalgam of a corridor, a labyrinth, and a cave, making it the closest comparison for Burden's 1969 pieces.

During the run of "American Sculpture of the Sixties" in LA, where Tony Smith's monumental *Cigarette* was installed outdoors on the museum's plaza and could be walked under or through, the architect-turned-artist built a room-size installation at Finch College in New York that he called *The Maze* (1967). Working with the existing measurements of a room, Smith devised a series of proportionate partitions over 6-feet tall that divided the space into a series of pathways around and through the sculpture (Fig. 45). In the grandiloquent language in which he described his work in the 1960s, Smith likened it to Stonehenge, saying that he favored an "archaic or prehistoric look."<sup>146</sup> Two years later, and again working with curator Maurice Tuchman at LACMA, Smith designed an interactive environment that was both labyrinthine and troglodytic in conception. *Bat Cave* (1969–1971) was first exhibited at Expo 70 in Osaka, Japan, and later in L.A. for the Art and Technology program, under whose auspices it was created in collaboration with the Container Corporation of America (Fig. 46). Smith wanted to design a labyrinth and was more concerned with the negative space that was traversed by the viewer than the overall appearance of the piece, which was not graspable in toto because of the way the piece snugly filled the exhibition space in Osaka. Instead, viewers interacted with *Bat Cave*'s interior and, to Smith's delight, densely covered the walls in a babel of international graffiti.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Op. cit. At the same time, Samaras also created the plan for a piece simply titled *Corridor* (1966/1970), which is also mirrored and unicursal, but the participant can remain upright and the pathway is one long, straight passage with no turns, just like Burden's. Less is known about this piece, since it was, as of recently, still in the artist's personal collection.

<sup>146</sup> Tony Smith, quoted in Varian, *Schemata 7*, unpagued.

<sup>147</sup> Tuchman, *A Report on the Art & Technology Program*, pp. 306–319.

Artist and critic Brian O’Doherty intended to build a labyrinthine sculpture for the same exhibition at Finch College, mentioned above, but instead opted to show something else when he learned of Smith’s analogous intention. Around 1967, O’Doherty developed several proposals for full-sized labyrinths, some of which he later realized under the name Patrick Ireland in the 1990s and 2000s. O’Doherty notably conceived of the labyrinth simplified to the form of a straight line in order to shed the connotations with authority and control that the symbol had for him. He executed this idea in a conceptual text piece, *Labyrinth as a Straight Line* (1967), and a related performance (1977).<sup>148</sup> Jean Toche, better known for his later involvement in the Art Workers’ Coalition and Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG), also built a straight-line labyrinth in 1967 for an exhibition at the Judson Gallery in New York. “It involved the participant traversing a narrow base lined with bright floodlights,” which set off an alarm as they moved through the piece (Fig. 47).<sup>149</sup> Titled *Labyrinths and Psychological Stress*, Toche’s piece alludes to the malevolent effects of sensory deprivation or overstimulation, which it undoubtedly induced in the participant.

In 1967, Les Levine also embarked on the creation of a series of environments or installations where the participant moved through corridor-like spaces in order to complete the work. Levine was expressly concerned with systems aesthetics, which culminated in his exhibition “Body Control Systems” (Isaacs Gallery, Toronto, April 7–27, 1970). His “Star”

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<sup>148</sup> Jan van der Marck, “Brian O’Doherty/Patrick Ireland,” in *Patrick Ireland: Labyrinths, Language, Pyramids, and Related Acts*, ed. Russell Panczenko (Madison: Elvehjem Museum of Art, 1993), pp. 8–9; Christina Kennedy and Georgina Jackson, eds., *Beyond the White Cube: A Retrospective of Brian O’Doherty/Patrick Ireland* (Dublin: Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, 2006), pp. 22–30, 72, 80; Brenda Moore-McCann, *Brian O’Doherty/Patrick Ireland: Between Categories* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Lund Humphries, 2009), pp. 134–139.

<sup>149</sup> Julie H. Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), pp. 72–73.

series (*Mini-Star*; *All Star Cast*; *Star Machine*, all 1967) were made up of shaped, transparent plastic corridors that manipulated optical and aural sensory information received by the participant while inside the piece. As Tony Smith had been doing to great acclaim around the country, *All Star Cast* was installed outdoors in the America's Plaza of the Time-Life Building (Sixth Avenue and 50th Street) in New York for the site-specific "Sculpture in Environment" exhibition organized by the city of New York in the fall of 1967 (Fig. 48).<sup>150</sup>

In the spring of 1969, when Burden erected his corridors at Pomona College, there was clearly already a strong interest in labyrinthine spaces in post-minimalist sculpture. This tendency carried over into the 1970s in work by Dennis Oppenheim (*Maze*, 1970), Robert Smithson (*Spiral Jetty*, 1970), Richard Long (*Connemara Sculpture*, 1971), Alice Aycock (*Maze*, 1972), Richard Fleischner (various works, 1972–1978), Robert Morris (*Labyrinth*, 1974), and John Willenbecher (*Labyrinth*, 1975). The 1976 "Labyrinths" exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia contained several of these artists and testified to the florescence of the form.

Writing in the early to mid-1970s to ratify the turn away from object sculpture to environments, installations, and earthworks, Robert Morris described a genealogy born from gallery environments, such as Bruce Nauman's corridors and Chris Burden's later installation-performance *White Light/White Heat* (1975), both of which he illustrated in the article "Aligned with Nazca" (1975). In that essay, Morris describes earthworks as a type of outdoor, physical enclosure akin to the indoor environments of Light and Space artists Nauman, Larry Bell, Michael Asher, and Robert Irwin.<sup>151</sup> He suggests something very close to Thomas Crow's

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<sup>150</sup> *Sculpture in Environment* (New York: Administration of Recreation and Cultural Affairs, 1967), unpagued.

<sup>151</sup> Morris, "Aligned with Nazca," p. 33.

Claremont aesthetic: “the self in relation to an enclosure and the expanse of the surrounding site.”<sup>152</sup> Morris compared such enclosures to the prop (tragic-)comedy of Samuel Beckett’s novels *Murphy*, *Malone*, and *Watt*, wherein the unfortunate protagonists carve out “spaces discontinuous with the rest of the world.” Unsurprisingly, Morris also associates this type of work with labyrinths, having recently created his first labyrinth inside the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia (*Labyrinth*, 1974). In “Aligned with Nazca,” Morris’s definition of environmental sculpture shares much with Jack Burnham’s formulation of an anti-object “Systems Esthetics” in the late 1960s. However, by the early 70s, Morris was thinking beyond Minimalism’s “basic, rationalized information systems,” such as the permutations represented by his *L-Beams* (1965), which Burnham included in this category. Morris rather distinguished his systems-based Minimalist work from his more recent earthworks and environments.<sup>153</sup>

At the same time he was writing a short feature about Mowry Baden for *Artforum*, Jack Burnham allegedly showed an interest in Burden’s corridors, but chose never to comment upon them.<sup>154</sup> As Pamela Lee summarized, Burnham’s systems aesthetics conceived art “as a kind of organism, indivisible from other contemporary sign systems, open to variables [...] or messages from the outside world.”<sup>155</sup> The work Burnham was describing involved transactional relationships between user and work, as well as mediated energy exchanges. While Burden’s black plastic corridor undulated according to environmental stimuli in an ecological system in

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>154</sup> Burden, “Resume.”

<sup>155</sup> Lee, *Chronophobia*, p. 72.

which the participant was an actor, I would characterize this system as one producing waste or otherwise entropic. The system that Burden's corridor defines is one typified by disorder and uncertainty in the same way that the experience of walking the labyrinth is never the same, even though the path itself literally never changes. Unlike the corridors of Baden and Nauman, there is nothing to necessarily be learned from this kind of system—such as how to navigate it better or more efficiently—and thus no meaningful communication takes place between system and operator (participant). Morris describes environments as “situations that elicit strong experiences of ‘being’ rather than the implied actions of the ‘having done’ common to much ‘thing’ art now available.”<sup>156</sup> Having encountered a somewhat hostile environmental artwork and likely some form of sensory deprivation, the body reacts by turning inward and disengaging with the harsh ecosystem. The difference between works of systems aesthetics and environments is that the latter lacks a task-oriented logic of behavioral control. There is no right way to experience an environment or an earthwork, because the work necessarily changes with each revolution.

Chris Burden's 1969 corridor pieces were massive outdoor installations that were closer to Earthworks than Minimalism, which is reinforced by their association with labyrinths—in their most common Western manifestation as landscape or garden designs. These works are the paradigmatic representation of Thomas Crow's aforementioned Claremont aesthetic, in that they melded the body, the landscape, and a crude sense of architecture.<sup>157</sup> As such they are also indicative of Rosalind Krauss's site construction, which is the positive confluence of landscape and architecture in sculpture's expanded field.<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, they motivated the viewer-turned-

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<sup>156</sup> Morris, “The Art of Existence,” p. 98.

<sup>157</sup> Crow, “Disappearing Act,” p. 39.

<sup>158</sup> Rosalind Krauss, *John Mason: Installations from the Hudson River Series* (Yonkers, NY: The Hudson River Museum, 1978), p. 11.



participant to activate the work by moving through the space created by the plastic corridors, a method of engagement that Burden continued to work through in his subsequent two years in the MFA program at the University of California, Irvine. More than that, Burden's corridors begged to be repeated, because the experience of descending the cave or being engulfed between the 9-foot walls of the black path was never the same twice. Rather than conditioning the body through feedback in the vein of systems aesthetics (Baden, Nauman), Burden's pieces were ludic and transcendental, related to ancient ritual complexes and the phenomenal artistic space of the painted caves. By association with the Light and Space movement and the perceptual psychology that Baden emphasized at Pomona, Burden's works were more in line with experiments that sought to expand the boundaries of perception, rather than restrict the body's movement. Sensory deprivation, another topic that continued to occupy Burden for some time, was not used here to control the participant, but to transport them to another plane of perception. With connotations of carnival diversions and early human ancestors, Burden's corridors theoretically counter ideas of hierarchy, reason, and civilization, as represented by the labor (rather than ritual) economy, Enlightenment values, and architecture. In the case of getting horizontal, the one corridor enacts an evolutionary backslide or reenacts an evolutionary progression—it works both ways—which returns the participant to a foundational turning point, not only in human history, but in our impulse to make art.

## Chapter Three

*Five Day Locker Piece* and *Bicycle Piece*, University of California Irvine, 1971

*Five Day Locker Piece* is one of a handful of Chris Burden's most well-known performances, and probably the most legendary MFA thesis presentation, ever. For his final review at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), Burden famously spent one week confined in a 2 x 2 x 3 foot luggage locker in the art studio/classroom he was given for the purpose, leaving the rest of the space empty (Fig. 49). Burden described the piece as a type of minimalist sculpture, sans object, and it has recently been related to the work of Light and Space artists, including Burden's UCI professor, Robert Irwin.<sup>1</sup> After an introduction to *Locker Piece* and the pedagogical atmosphere of Irvine, this chapter will analyze the minimalist elements of the work in relation to the sensory deprivation environments of the Light and Space movement and the performative sculptures of minimalist paterfamilias, Robert Morris. Like many of Morris's early works that actually or metaphorically concealed the artist's body within them, Burden occupied a reductive, industrial box. *Locker Piece* went a step beyond Minimalism by rendering its anthropomorphism literal and dispensing with objects, in accordance with the dematerialization of conceptual art around 1970. Burden joined other, mainly Californian sculptors who critiqued Minimalism by filling up the movement's hollow forms with the pernicious, "theatrical" bodies lurking beneath their blank surfaces.

With *Locker Piece*, Burden made a decisive step towards body art and what is now known as performance art, and the artist considered it his first mature work. However, mainly as

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Auping, "Stealth Architecture: The Rooms of Light and Space," in *Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface*, ed. Robin Clark (San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 95–96.

a result of Burden's mechanical descriptions of this and other early works, the piece has not been appreciated to the fullest extent.

I was locked in locker number 5 for five consecutive days and did not leave the locker during this time. The locker measured two feet high, two feet wide, and three feet deep. I stopped eating several days prior to entry. The locker directly above me contained five gallons of bottled water; the locker below me contained an empty five gallon bottle.<sup>2</sup>

What Burden's description neglects to describe is the situational context in which the work was performed, and what happened surrounding the locker and through the slats in its door over the course of that week and beyond. *Locker Piece* was not so much a work of isolation, as Burden has indicated, but rather a profoundly social piece. Encouraging people to visit him, Burden found himself holding court with not only his friends and colleagues, but also faculty members and TAs who brought students to the locker to discuss the piece with him. Burden also conducted art-world business from inside the locker, planning his next performance for his graduating class's thesis exhibition in the school's gallery, discussing scheduling for F Space—the cooperative gallery Burden co-founded with other UCI MFAs—and even holding an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*. The one person Burden hoped would not show up was Dean Clayton Garrison, who the artist feared could shut the piece down if the right person raised an objection. Burden frequently invoked the Dean in conversation with his interlocutors, almost provoking him through third parties and potential gossip.

While the allusion was nowhere explicit in any summation Burden ever gave, *Locker Piece* was very similar to the occupational protests that crippled campuses across the U.S. throughout the late 1960s. In conversations with people outside the locker, Burden established a rumor of antagonism between himself and Dean Garrison, who, it turns out, was severely

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<sup>2</sup> Chris Burden, *Chris Burden 71–73* (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1974), pp. 4–5.

restricting what the MFA students at Irvine were allowed do as far as boundary-defying performance work was concerned. Feeling reined in by a university administration, which they believed was restricting the educational potential of the school, Burden and his colleagues boycotted exhibitions and occupied space, very much in the spirit of the times. Their actions resembled those of the Art Workers' Coalition and related strikers, who were challenging the social and political standing of art museums and galleries in New York. Among UCI's visiting professors, Robert Morris would leave Southern California to return home and embark on an Art Strike that included the closing of his lauded retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970. These contestations with the systems and structures of the art world were indicative of a vein of conceptual art known as Institutional Critique and the second half of this chapter examines Burden's *Locker Piece* as an emblematic work in that tradition. Here Burden, whose work is only rarely acknowledged as Institutional Critique, engages with the institution of the art school, which simultaneously enables and restricts his practice. In *Locker Piece*, Burden occupied space in the university as a means of disrupting the flow of business-as-usual and turning a critical eye on several aspects of his graduate education. Drawing on newly available archival documents and interviews, this chapter reevaluates one of the seminal pieces of 70s performance art with an eye towards its proper place in the canon of Institutional Critique.

### ***Five Day Locker Piece***

After finishing up his undergraduate degree in 1969, Chris Burden spent the summer working as a teaching assistant for Mowry Baden, and then started in the brand new MFA program at the University California, Irvine in the fall. Irvine is a city in Orange County, located just inland from Newport Beach, south of Los Angeles. It arose in the 1960s as a planned

community, built by real estate developers, the Irvine Company, on a former ranch. The Irvine Company donated the land (1,000 acres) for the UC Irvine campus, which was designed by William Pereira (architect of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Los Angeles International Airport, among many other distinguished public commissions). In a grand utopian schema, which largely succeeded, Pereira and the Irvine Company “endeavored to create a ‘city of intellect’ out of the ranchland through the development of small residential communities orbiting around the new campus.”<sup>3</sup>

The University was founded in 1965, along with fellow campuses at San Diego and Santa Cruz, amidst great fervor in American higher education, when students began to agitate for more control over their education and the administration of universities and colleges. Thomas Crow has argued that UC Irvine’s recent foundation in a relatively untouched corner of the mythic frontier of the American West provided an ideal setting to question the pretenses of art education.<sup>4</sup> Legendary UC President Clark Kerr, who served from 1957–1967, was receptive to the changing tides and granted the new universities wide latitude to pursue experimental pedagogical methods.<sup>5</sup> Under Kerr, the reputation of the University of California system soared and their campuses attracted some of the best minds of the era. When Chris Burden attended UC

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Kett and Anna Kryczka, *Learning By Doing at the Farm: Craft, Science, and Counterculture in Modern California* (Chicago: SoberSCOPE, 2014), pp. 12–13.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Crow, “Mind-Body Problem: Chris Burden’s Performances,” in *Chris Burden: Extreme Measures*, ed. Lisa Phillips (New York: New Museum, 2013), p. 53. This idea was expressed earlier by Grace Kook-Anderson in her introduction to the exhibition catalogue *Best Kept Secret: UCI and the Development of Contemporary Art in Southern California 1964–1971* (Laguna: Laguna Art Museum, 2011), p. xiii.

<sup>5</sup> At the time, Kerr was widely published and known as something of a public intellectual. For his well-known pedagogical theory, see Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963). On his time at the University of California, see *The Gold and the Blue*, 2 v. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Irvine, the Studio Art faculty included several veteran L.A. artists, including Robert Irwin, Larry Bell, Tony DeLap, Ken Price, Craig Kauffman, John Mason, Ed Moses, John Paul Jones, Ed Boreal, and Vija Celmins, and it was chaired off and on by the co-founder and editor of *Artforum* magazine, John Coplans, who also served as the director of UC Irvine's art gallery (1965–1967) and as a curator there (1970–1972). Coplans and his *Artforum* partner, Phil Leider, who also taught periodically at Irvine, moved the magazine to Los Angeles for two years and it was a significant recruiting tool for UCI into the early 70s.<sup>6</sup> Through *Artforum* and his connections in New York, Coplans opened the door to top visiting artists and lecturers at UCI, including sculptor Robert Morris, critic Barbara Rose, curator Alan Solomon, and art historian Moira Roth. As a graduate student at Irvine, Chris Burden studied with Bell, DeLap, Kauffman, Mason, and Morris; Robert Irwin oversaw his MFA project.

Although the Irvine faculty was stacked with so-called Finish Fetish sculptors, who were adamant about process and materials, the brand new university did not initially have much in the way of equipment or studios.<sup>7</sup> Before Burden and the first MFA class arrived at UCI,

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<sup>6</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Connie Glenn, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum. On the early history of *Artforum* magazine, see Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962–1974* (New York: Soho, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Shiro Ikegawa, Tony DeLap, and Verni Greenfield, quoted in Melinda Wortz, *University of California Irvine, 1965–1975* (La Jolla: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1975), pp. 80, 82, 87; Alexis Smith and Chris Burden, quoted in Zan Dubin, "UCI Artists' Reflections," *Los Angeles Times* (November 11, 1997); Oral history interview with John Mason, August 28, 2006, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Chris Burden interview with Glenn Phillips, May 7, 2007, California Video Screening Series, Getty Research Institute; Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden, 14, April 2011, Laguna Art Museum; Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Richard Newton, May 18, 2011, Laguna Art Museum; Oral history interview with Robert Walker and Nancy Buchanan, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum; Suzanne Muchnic, Oral history interview with Chris Burden, September 28, 2010, Getty Research Institute, Institutional Archives; Peter Frank, "Context, Attitude, Community: The Early Years of the UCI Art Department," in Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, p. 24; Cole Akers, "Chris Burden," in Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, 48; Cole Akers, "Alexis Smith," in Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, p. 92; George Melrod, "Interview: Chris Burden,"

undergraduate artists kept studios in an area distant from the main campus called The Farm, which was in fact a working farm left over from the Irvine Ranch and used by UCI for educational purposes.<sup>8</sup> The ceramic studio and a sculpture workshop with few tools were also initially located in outbuildings on the periphery of the campus. However, The Farm closed in 1969 and the Fine Arts Village, a cluster of buildings that subsequently housed the School of the Arts, did not open until the fall of 1970. While the new facilities were more accommodating, the graduate students were still not provided with studios on campus and rather had to find their own space in the surrounding cities of Orange County. The lack of space and equipment at UCI resulted in a general de-emphasis of craft in lieu of conceptual, performance-based, and site-specific methods.

In the fine arts, the MFA was rapidly becoming the standard terminal degree for a new class of professional artists, who were ordained to teach as well as practice. In the classroom, strict disciplinary boundaries (painting, sculpture, etc.), foundational exercises (such as life drawing), and hierarchical relationships between students and faculty were rejected in favor of a conservatory-style apprenticeship under the tutelage of actual working artists, rather than career

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*Art Ltd.* (September/October 2012), p. 51; Oral history interview with Alexis Smith, January 24–April 14, 2014, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Nancy Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots from F Space Gallery, 1514 E. Edinger, Santa Ana,” in *In the Canyon, Revise the Canon: Utopian Knowledge, Radical Pedagogy, and Artist-Run Community Art Space in Southern California* (Annecy, France: ESAAA Editions, 2015), p. 50; Oral history interview with Tony DeLap, John Mason, and Hal Glicksman, February 2, 2016, UCI Libraries, Department of Special Collections.

<sup>8</sup> The Farm subsequently housed an experimental primary and secondary school that opened in 1970. See Samuel Clyde McCulloch, ed. *Instant University: The History of the University of California, Irvine, 1957–93* (Irvine: University of California, Irvine, [1996]), 135; Kett and Kryczka, *Learning By Doing at The Farm*.

educators.<sup>9</sup> At UCI, technical training in the fine arts was largely foregone in favor of a much more informal method of exchange that involved students and faculty in shared experiences of thinking, discussing, and problem solving.<sup>10</sup> The UCI course catalogue for 1969/1970 described the new graduate program thusly:

The emerging sophistication [...] necessitates training artists in an intellectual environment, an environment which provides stimulation beyond technical facility. The artist cannot work in a vacuum: he is dependent upon a community for concepts, conversation, and communication. The atmosphere of the university provides the developing artist an ideal opportunity to live sensitively in the midst of accessible resources in a climate that is constantly vibrating with life and challenging our sensibilities.<sup>11</sup>

Rather than holding traditional studio classes, Robert Irwin, Larry Bell, and other Irvine faculty members visited the students' off-campus workspaces and met with them individually.<sup>12</sup> When the graduate students did gather together for classes, they usually took the form of a discussion or critique (Fig. 50). In addition to organizing field trips to museums and galleries, Tony DeLap took the students around to visit fabricators and supply shops, showing them the types of businesses and materials that were available in the region, should they want to work in the

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<sup>9</sup> Harold Rosenberg, "Educating Artists" (1969), in *New Ideas in Art Education: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1973), pp. 91–102. Pamela Lee describes how this methodology played out at UC San Diego; see her essay "“There was no radicalization...It was normal for us”: Teaching and Learning with the Visual Arts Department, 1967–1976," in *The Uses of Photography: Art, Politics, and the Reinvention of a Medium*, ed. Jill Dawsey (La Jolla: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 2016), pp. 80–93.

<sup>10</sup> Frank, "Context, Attitude, Community," 23–24, 27. For accounts of various Irvine professors' approaches to teaching, see Wortz, *University of California Irvine*; and Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, xii–xv.

<sup>11</sup> *UCI General Catalogue 1969–70* (Irvine: The University of California, Irvine, 1969), p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> Chris Burden and Jan Butterfield, "Chris Burden: Through the Night Softly," *Arts Magazine* 49:7 (March 1975), p. 68; Wortz, *University of California Irvine*, pp. 8–9; Barbara Smith, quoted in Wortz, *University of California Irvine*, p. 79; Elizabeth Perlmutter, "A hotbed of advanced art," *ArtNews* 75:1 (January 1976), p. 44; Chris Burden quoted in Dubin, "UCI Artists' Reflections"; Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, p. xiv.



mediums of their professors and take advantage of Southern California's renowned access to goods and services.<sup>13</sup> Robert Morris and other visiting faculty members came to town for whirlwind 3-week stints and conducted seminars in which they assigned a broad spectrum of reading in philosophy, psychology, religion, and culture, rather than teaching studio classes.<sup>14</sup> Barbara Rose's art history classes, in contrast to the formal lectures of Coplans and Leider—slide lectures in a large, darkened hall—were informal affairs, conducted in her office, where students came barefoot, brought their dogs, and sat around on whatever furniture was available.<sup>15</sup>

On a personal level, the studio art faculty at UCI almost uniformly treated the graduate students as equals and relied on strong dialog and interpersonal relationships in order to mitigate the lack of structure in the program that partly resulted from the University's dearth of facilities.<sup>16</sup> By his own admission, Larry Bell did not "teach" or evaluate student work at all, but focused on cultivating what Tony DeLap called the "artist in society."<sup>17</sup> Many of the graduate

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<sup>13</sup> Oral history interview with Tony DeLap, John Mason, and Hal Glicksman; Barbara T. Smith, personal communication, October 26, 2016. Access to materials and fabricators was a catalyst for L.A.'s strong showing in sculpture in the 1960s and has widely been cited by artists as a beneficial difference between working in Southern California versus New York.

<sup>14</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Marcia Hafif, August 27, 2010, Laguna Art Museum; Oral history interview with Marcia Hafif, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum; Oral history interview with Tony DeLap, John Mason, and Hal Glicksman; Barbara T. Smith, personal communication.

<sup>15</sup> Oral history interview with Constance Glenn, March 16, 1990, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Connie Glenn; Oral history interview with Paula Sweet, April 1, 2011, Laguna Art Museum.

<sup>16</sup> Wertz, *University of California Irvine*, 8–9; Oral history interview with Marcia Hafif; Oral history with Charles C. Hill, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum; Oral history with Marilyn Nix, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum; Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, p. xiv; Grace Kook-Anderson, "Laddie John Dill," in *Best Kept Secret*, 58.

<sup>17</sup> Larry Bell and Tony DeLap, quoted in Wertz, *University of California Irvine*, p. 82. Marcia Hafif, one of the graduate students in the first MFA class at UCI, corroborates that Bell did not

students in Irvine's first MFA class fondly remember Robert Irwin's visits to their studios and the transformational one-on-one meetings that characterized his teaching style.<sup>18</sup> Burden said,

I took most of my courses from Irwin. [...] Irwin was a lot cooler [than the other faculty members]—he would just come to the studio about once every two months and spend whole days at a time. It was really good, because it was on a one-to-one basis. He would come by for a whole week, and sort of do a total head blitz and then leave. You had to sign up for classes, but I just signed up for about three or four with Irwin; that just kind of took care of school.<sup>19</sup>

DeLap summarized the ethos nicely when he said, “This atmosphere of mutual respect breaks down the student-teacher barriers, and can ideally result in situations where two or more artists simply work out their problems together.”<sup>20</sup> This is how he, Irwin and the other faculty members approached their role as mentors to the students at Irvine. Needless to say, the newly founded University of California campus at Irvine was not the dusty, moribund institution against which student activists raged in the late 60s. UCI's Studio Art Department was a progressive, permissive environment in which Chris Burden and his colleagues were given the utmost freedom and respect for which a student could hope.

In the spring of 1971, UC Irvine graduated its first class of MFA students, who were each given a studio-classroom in the Fine Arts Building to exhibit their final projects for internal critique (Fig. 51). As the School of Art was settling into the semi-autonomous Fine Arts Village, room 167 in the Fine Arts Building was turned over to the graduate students to use as their own

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do very much teaching at all and was only “vaguely there”; see Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Marcia Hafif.

<sup>18</sup> Burden and Butterfield, “Chris Burden,” p. 68; Barbara Smith, quoted in Wortz, *University of California Irvine*, 79; in the same volume, Irvine student Bruce Richards said “Irwin was the first instructor to truly function one-on-one” (p. 84). See also Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Marcia Hafif; Frank, “Context, Attitude, Community,” p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Burden and Butterfield, “Chris Burden,” p. 68.

<sup>20</sup> Tony DeLaps, quoted in Wortz, *University of California Irvine*, p. 81.

exhibition space. It was home to each of the MFAs' final review exhibitions, as well as other projects, chosen at the students' discretion. Nancy Buchanan, who exhibited her final project the week before Burden, said that the space was "[un]usable for much of the work being created," because the light could not be controlled and various institutional features, such as "a huge industrial clock and large lockers[,] made it seem more appropriate for a gym."<sup>21</sup> In other words, room 167 was not a white cube and, as Buchanan recounts, totally unsuited to the minimalist aesthetic that was current at the time. She and her fellow students thus found it difficult to adequately control the presentation of their work in the space. Furthermore, since their classes took place mainly via ad hoc meetings with their professors or informal lectures, the graduate students were not entirely familiar with the facilities in the Fine Arts Building.

Burden describes visiting room 167 several times while he was trying to figure out how to mount his work. Off to one side of the open floor of the large studio space, a wall had been added to create an adjacent alcove, wherein there was a deep bank of luggage lockers, three tall by fifteen deep. Burden described them as "more like lockers you'd find in [...] the train station or the airport," here installed so that the studio-less students had somewhere to store their work and materials.<sup>22</sup> Burden's initial idea was to build a box of some kind that he would inhabit for duration of his allotted time. He sought to forward the work he had been doing, starting with the corridors at Pomona College, which activated the body of the viewer in order to complete the work. In this case, it would be the artist himself, whose presence inside the box would constitute the crux of the piece. However, in contemplating the room on several trips to survey the space,

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<sup>21</sup> Buchanan, "A Few Snapshots," p. 50; Nancy Buchanan, personal communication, December 22, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> *Willoughby Sharp Videoviews Chris Burden* (New York: Electronic Arts Intermix, 1975 [1973]), video, 27:45 min., b&w, sound.

Burden had what he often referred to as a “breakthrough,” when he realized that he did not have to produce any physical object, but could use the existing boxes of the locker. To Burden, this was a critical advancement because it led him to the realization that it was not the thing itself which constituted the art, but the “action” of occupying the space.<sup>23</sup>

Unfamiliar with this classroom and not being accustomed to exhibiting his work on campus, Burden alighted on the radical performance-cum-sculpture *Five Day Locker Piece*. At 8am on Monday, April 26, he climbed into locker number 5, where he remained interred until 5pm Friday, April 30, the length of a standard workweek, plus nights and evenings (around 105 hours). The locker measured 2-feet square on its face and 3-feet deep, accommodating Burden, who was short of stature, curled up in a fetal position. He outfitted the locker above with a 5-gallon jug of water and the locker below with an empty vessel of the same size, referring to himself as simply a filtration system for the water.<sup>24</sup> Burden had begun fasting the week before, so that he would not have to eliminate any solid waste. He sent out an announcement for the exhibition that, as of Monday morning, had not reached its audience through the Postal Service, so his initial presence in the locker was a surprise to his professors and colleagues (Fig. 52). Burden’s wife, Barbara, visited the locker to feed him juice and soup through a straw that she slid through the louvers of the locker door (Fig. 53), and at some point he was administered

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<sup>23</sup> Chris Burden, Artist’s talk, Rhode Island School of Design, November 12, 1974; Jim Moisan, “Border Crossing,” *High Performance* 5:2 (March 1979), p. 9; Claudia Gould, “Chris Burden,” in *Breakthroughs: Avant-Garde Artists in Europe and America 1950–1990* (Columbus: Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, 1991), p. 196; Chris Burden and Thomas Crow in conversation, Pomona College, March 24, 2012; Jarrett Earnest, “Applying Pressure,” *The Brooklyn Rail* (November 5, 2013), available online at <https://brooklynrail.org/2013/11/art/applying-pressurechris-burden-with-jarrett-earnest> (accessed 20 November 2017); Andrew McClintock, “In Conversation with Chris Burden,” *San Francisco Arts Quarterly* (October 5, 2013), <http://sfaq.us/2013/10/in-conversation-with-chris-burden/> (accessed November 22, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Willoughby Sharp *Videoviews Chris Burden*.

muscle relaxants to ease the cramping in his legs.<sup>25</sup> Through the slats in the locker door, Burden was able to see a little of what was going on outside and he was easily able to talk to people standing in his vicinity.

### ***Locker Piece as Minimalism***

Over the years, Chris Burden frequently called his early performances, especially *Five Day Locker Piece* and *Shoot*, sculptures; specifically, works of Minimalism. Burden was, after all, trained by predominantly minimalist sculptors: David Gray (at Pomona), Larry Bell, Tony DeLap, Robert Irwin, and Robert Morris. Though he quickly moved beyond minimalist sculpture as an undergraduate, Burden had a strong familiarity with the style's formal and theoretical grounding, which he continued to work through as a graduate student. Burden said that the minimalist aspect of these performances was their distillation of an idea, "trying to pare it down to something essential."<sup>26</sup> In the later *Shoot* piece, the moment—a fraction of a second when the bullet passed through the artist's arm—constituted the sculpture. In other words, being shot was the idea, plain and simple, without any of the attendant rhetoric or political conviction, which the artist summarily refused. Though it encompassed a much different duration, *Five Day Locker Piece* was also driven by a similarly concise concept: remain confined in a box/locker/classroom for the entire length of a week. Further, Burden described *Locker Piece* as "a sculptural concern; a way of dealing with space and activating a certain space."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas Garver, personal communication, November 3, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Melrod, "Interview: Chris Burden," p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Carroll, "Masterpieces of Modern Art" interview with Chris Burden, n.d. [1974], Chris Burden Estate.

When he made the connection between *Locker Piece* and Minimalism, Burden conjured up a range of touchstones and parallels that are important to situating the work historically, with regard to the movements that preceded it. One reading of *Locker Piece* that has not yet received much attention follows curator Michael Auping, who recently suggested that the work “played at least a cameo role in the Light and Space movement,” for its use of a sensory deprivation environment.<sup>28</sup> As outlined in the previous chapter, Burden created two interactive, outdoor sculptures as an undergraduate at Pomona College, which entailed partial sensory deprivation by limiting the vision of moving bodies, an avenue of research followed at the time by the Air Force and NASA in an effort to make high-altitude and long-duration flight less shocking to the human body. Burden’s professor at Irvine, Robert Irwin, along with James Turrell, engaged in similar research with technologies such as ganzfelds, anechoic chambers, and alpha wave conditioning as part of the Art & Technology program at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in the late 60s.<sup>29</sup> Nancy Buchanan, who was in Burden’s MFA class at UCI, remembers that Irwin led discussions about the way anechoic chambers affect the senses, tying his experience in the Art & Technology program into his teaching.<sup>30</sup> The sensory deprivation that *Locker Piece* entailed is correlative to the experiments that Irwin, Turrell, and others carried out in anechoic chambers, whereby the participant is deprived of a certain amount of visual, tactile, and audio stimuli. In *Locker Piece*, Burden was not fully deprived of any of his faculties, but his core senses were severely limited by the situation of the locker, not to mention the duration of his

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<sup>28</sup> Auping, “Stealth Architecture,” p. 95.

<sup>29</sup> Maurice Tuchman, ed., *A Report on the Art & Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967–1971* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971), pp. 127–143; Lawrence Weschler, *Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees: over thirty years of conversations with Robert Irwin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 127–135.

<sup>30</sup> Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots,” p. 52. See also, Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, p. xiv.

enclosure. Echoing Irwin's description of an anechoic environment, Burden told Auping that one of the hardest parts of *Locker Piece* was "first getting out and being exposed to the light" at the end of the piece.<sup>31</sup>

Burden's ordeal was made that much more intense by the fact that he fasted for over 7 days during the course of *Five Day Locker Piece*.<sup>32</sup> Fasting is an ascetic, usually religious practice, which in the context of California in the 1960s, could be related to other, predominantly Eastern disciplines that seek to control the body's autonomic nervous system, like yoga and meditation, activities in which one brings consciousness to and control over the breath and heart rate.<sup>33</sup> In *Locker Piece*, Burden regulated his digestive, as well as his skeletal and muscular systems, along with the limited visibility, auditory capacity, and companionship he had to endure. However, what Burden risked more than physical pain was the psychological disorientation that sensory deprivation can induce. In sensory deprivation situations, avenues of perception previously closed to the waking mind are revealed as a result of the limitation of sensorial information coming from other sources. This can cause hallucinations, which no doubt appealed to the countercultural interests of a young Chris Burden, who made more than one allusion to such states of being in his early career.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, speaking to a colleague at the locker,

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<sup>31</sup> Auping, "Stealth Architecture," p. 95.

<sup>32</sup> Burden had to begin fasting at least two days in advance of the performance in order to clear all solid waste from his digestive system. See *Willoughby Sharp Videoviews Chris Burden*.

<sup>33</sup> Lisa Phillips has also related Burden's endurance performances to Zen Buddhism, which can be described as "a path to spiritual growth [...] through self-deprivation"; see "Double Bind," in *Chris Burden: Extreme Measures*, p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> In *Jaiizu* (1972), Burden created "a mock altar, where [he] was like a religious idol," who sat in front of pillows and an offering of joints for his visitors; see Carroll, "Masterpieces of Modern Art." Burden's *White Light/White Heat* (1975) was named after the Velvet Underground's 1968 studio album and is thought to compare that artist's sensory deprivation to being high on

Burden postulated that he should “start hallucinating soon, [...from] lack of food.”<sup>35</sup> Psychedelic drugs, which can also cause hallucinogenic effects, were pursued at the time in conjunction with deprivation environments, as well as Eastern philosophy and religious practices, by those seeking similar answers.<sup>36</sup> All of these sources of consciousness expansion must be folded into the cultural resonance of the sensory deprivation that Burden undertook in *Five Day Locker Piece*.

Just as Robert Morris’s influence can be demonstrated in each of the progressive stages that Burden went through as a young artist, here the arch-Minimalist’s presence was felt, once again, in the form of his earliest performing objects, such as *Column*, *Pine Portal*, and *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (all 1961). Coming from a background in the radical experimentation of Ann Halprin’s San Francisco workshops and the Judson Dance Theater, Morris initially approached sculpture as a “directly temporal medium in which the articulation of process” was fundamental.<sup>37</sup> *Column*, which later became a static sculpture with two identical rectangular elements, was originally intended to perform a fall from an upright to prone position, with the artist concealed inside the hollow rectangle acting as the impetus. As it happens, Morris was injured while rehearsing this prop performance for a benefit organized by La Monte Young at the Living Theatre, and Morris decided to activate the sculpture with a string rather than risk further harm to his person. Whether or not Morris was actually in the piece, “the action of the

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amphetamines; see Kristine Stiles, “Burden of Light,” in *Chris Burden*, ed. Fred Hoffman (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> The audiotape source of this quotation is discussed below and is courtesy of the Chris Burden Estate.

<sup>36</sup> For a prime example of the confluence between psychedelic drug use and Eastern religions, especially Hinduism, see Allen Ginsberg, “Public Solitude” (1966), in *Deliberate Prose. Selected Essays 1952–1995*, ed. Bill Morgan (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), pp. 125–133.

<sup>37</sup> Annette Michelson, “Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression,” in *Robert Morris* (Washington D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), p. 49.



sculpture as a kind of confrontational *performer* created an explicit analogy between itself and the artist's body."<sup>38</sup> While *Column* functioned like an automaton and actually moved by virtue of a hidden source of energy, *Pine Portal* implied movement and passage in its resemblance to the archetypal post and lintel doorway. The work's implied anthropomorphism furnishes the viewer with "a sense of self-reflexivity," as they can easily relate the sculpture's shape to experiences of their own built environment. Thus, *Pine Portal* has been counted as "a piece of task performance" and related to *Column*, as well as *Passageway*, from the same year.<sup>39</sup>

Maurice Berger argued that with his portals, Morris was "emphasizing the temporal experience over the art object's autonomy," thus making the implied transversal of the threshold the essence of the piece, as integral as the toppling of *Column*.<sup>40</sup> Along the same lines, Morris brilliantly crystallized process and object in *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, a plain, 10-inch, walnut cube, which housed a speaker that played a 3-hour recording of the artist fabricating the selfsame container. This time the work does not contain body of the artist, but the residue of his creative endeavor. Branden W. Joseph has shown that *Box with the Sound*, like *Column*, was a "performing object," which was itself presented in a 1961 concert at Harvard organized by Henry Flynt.<sup>41</sup> Joseph further pointed out that John Cage admired the piece as a type of performance score, insofar as it contained a type of auditory blueprint for its own construction.

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<sup>38</sup> Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 47–48.

<sup>39</sup> The quotes are respectively from Kimberly Paice, "Portals, 1961," and Rosalind Krauss, "The Mind/Body Problem: Robert Morris in Series," in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1994), pp. 10, 100.

<sup>40</sup> Berger, *Labyrinths* p. 49.

<sup>41</sup> Branden W. Joseph, "The Tower and the Line: Towards a Genealogy of Minimalism," *Grey Room 27* (Spring 2007), pp. 64–65.

As such, Morris associated *Box with the Sound* with his *Card File* (1962) and *Self-Portrait (EEG)* (1963), “objects that documented their own existence, or the process of their being formed.”<sup>42</sup> In 1970, Annette Michelson persuasively argued that *Box with the Sound* and *Card File* were indexical works for the way in which they self-reflexively represent the traces of embodied process.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, writing around the same time, David Sylvester suggested, “The thought occurs that the maker is shut up in the box, endlessly sawing and hammering, trapped in his own artifact.”<sup>44</sup>

*Column*, *Pine Portal*, and *Box with the Sound* were all designed to accommodate the artist’s body within their interior—what Jeffrey Weiss termed “vessels for the artist’s body” or “bodily containers.”<sup>45</sup> While Morris subsequently moved into the more orthodox Minimalist phase of his career, wherein his work shed the neo-Dada trapping of Cagean performativity, in 1964 he returned to the idea of an inhabited Minimalist box in his performance with Carolee Schneemann, *Site*. As the sounds of construction work (jackhammering) played, Morris, dressed in a workman’s coveralls and wearing a lifeless mask of his own face, set about dismantling a minimalist box made up of full-size, untreated, 4 x 8 foot sheets of plywood. In so doing, he revealed a nude Schneemann, motionlessly posed as Édouard Manet’s *Olympia* (1863), within the box. Notwithstanding its many allusions to the divisions of labor, *Site* ultimately reaffirmed

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Morris, quoted in Jonathan Fineberg, “Robert Morris Looking Back: An Interview,” *Arts Magazine* 55:1 (September 1980), p. 110.

<sup>43</sup> Michelson, “Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression,” pp. 49–50. See also Krauss, “The Mind/Body Problem,” p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> David Sylvester, “Box with the sound of its own making,” in *Robert Morris*, eds Michael Compton and David Sylvester (London: The Tate Gallery, 1971), p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey Weiss, “Things Moving and Things Stopped,” in *Robert Morris: Object Sculpture 1960–1965* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 30, 40.

the anthropomorphism lurking beneath the reductive new sculpture of the mid-60s, by exposing the artist—in the guise of his model—actually inside the work.

The obvious parallel between *Locker Piece* and Morris's aforementioned work lies in the containment of the artist—in actuality or metaphorically—within the otherwise blank form of a hollow cube or rectangular form, but Burden also referred to the piece, "like a task" that he imposed upon himself.<sup>46</sup> The connotation of performing the task or object has historically led Burden and others to consider *Locker Piece* his first work of performance art, especially since it produced no physical product. This was the significant distinction that Burden made from Morris: his action was pure task, without being converted into any finished product, and as such it closely resembled the live model inside the box in *Site*. Morris's related *Box for Standing* (1961), which is normally reproduced in an archival photograph picturing the artist following the title's directive and filling out the piece's interior, is another ideal manifestation of sculpture as a container for its maker (Fig. 54). Along with Morris's electroencephalogram *Self-Portrait, Box for Standing* involved the measurement and translation of the artist's body into an objective trace or index. Here, the simple pine box conforms to the artist's physical proportions and resembles an austere coffin.<sup>47</sup> The comparison between the minimalist box and a tomb arrests the implied movement, dare I say the "presence," which attended some of Morris's aforementioned 1961 sculptures. It also echoes the characterization of Tony Smith's first sculptures as funeral monuments, a reading that was promulgated first and foremost by the artist himself.<sup>48</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>46</sup> Butterfield and Burden, "Chris Burden," p. 69.

<sup>47</sup> Kimberly Paice, "Box for Standing, 1961," in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, p. 96.

<sup>48</sup> Samuel Wagstaff, *Tony Smith: Two Exhibitions of Sculpture* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1966), n.p.; Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," *Arts Magazine* (January 1990), p. 52.

several of Morris's proto-minimalist sculptures from the same year, nicknamed *Tombstones*, resemble Brancusi-esque monuments similar to Carl Andre's contemporaneous cedar block pieces.<sup>49</sup> However, whereas Morris's *Box for Standing* was built to comfortably house the artist's erect body, Burden's locker crams and manipulates the artist into a hunched position and severely restricts his movement. *Locker Piece* turns the dialogical anthropomorphism of Minimalism, where there was a natural 1:1 relationship between viewer and sculpture, into a tiger cage of the Vietnam War, incarcerating rather than accommodating the artist.<sup>50</sup> Thomas Crow has written that the stream of visitors that Burden entertained at the locker gave the piece a funereal connotation with "implications of loss and melancholy."<sup>51</sup> By submitting himself to the minimalist cage, Burden evoked the subliminal violence that Anna Chave has attributed to Minimalism by alluding to the continuing escalation of the Vietnam War and turbulence on the home front, which were not far from every American's mind.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to violence, ruminations on the hollowness of the minimalist box have been another frequent avenue of critique, which Burden's *Locker Piece* engenders. Tony Smith

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<sup>49</sup> *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, cat. 5.

<sup>50</sup> This comparison was originally made by Howard Singerman, "Chris Burden's Pragmatism," in Anne Ayres and Paul Schimmel, *Chris Burden: A Twenty-Year Survey* (Newport Beach: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1988), p. 21. During the Vietnam War, the Americans and Vietnamese used various kinds of tiger and other animal-sized cages to hold prisoners of war. This fact was known to the American public through such stories such as, "The Tiger Cages," *Life Magazine* (July 17, 1970), pp. 26–29, and the controversial Winter Soldier hearings, in which former American servicemen detailed American war crimes in Vietnam, including practices of prisoner maltreatment and torture. Lisa Phillips has argued that Burden "physicalized the pain of the nation, the violence of the race riots, Kent State, Mai Lai...acts of brutality"; see "Double Bind," p. 18.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Crow, "Disappearing Act: Art In and Out of Pomona," in *It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969–1973*, ed. Rebecca McGrew (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2011), p. 47.

<sup>52</sup> Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," pp. 44, 54–57.

emphasized the hollowness of his early steel boxes and critics quickly picked up on the concavity of Minimalism, which was more concerned with shape than mass.<sup>53</sup> Michael Fried used hollowness in his attempt to sideline Minimalism as “incurably theatrical,” because of its anthropomorphic connotations.<sup>54</sup> In the complicated polemics surrounding Minimalism, the hollowness of its boxes was not only seen as a symbol of human presence, but conversely as an affirmation of the body’s absence. Frazer Ward has argued that *Locker Piece* accused the minimalist box of being both literally and metaphorically hollow, thus participating in a tradition of critique, whereby young American sculptors sought to define themselves against the profound success of their minimalist predecessors.<sup>55</sup> One such critical filling of the hollow primary structure was Bruce Nauman’s *Cast of the Space Under My Chair* (1965–1968), where instead of constructing a gestalt form, the artist used the antithetical process of casting to encapsulate a negative space, thereby demonstrating the hollowness of the minimalist object, in comparison.<sup>56</sup> Sculptor Paul Thek also busied himself filling up minimalist boxes, but unlike the opaque structures of Smith, Morris, and others, Thek’s Plexiglas boxes were transparent and filled with wax sculptures that resembled hunks of flesh and body parts (Fig. 55). Thek’s series, collectively named “Technological Reliquaries” (1964–1967)—a subset of which are popularly known as the “Meat Pieces”—“made a statement against what he saw as the emotional and spiritual bankruptcy of Minimalism,” by critiquing “the repression of the corporeal in the abstract

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<sup>53</sup> Wagstaff, *Tony Smith*.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood” (1967), in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 156–157.

<sup>55</sup> Frazer Ward, *No Innocent Bystanders: Performance Art and Audience* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2012), p. 48.

<sup>56</sup> Carter Ratcliff, *Out of the Box: The Reinvention of Art 1965–1975* (New York: Allworth, 2000), pp. 127–128.

language” of the hollow, rectilinear form.<sup>57</sup> Casting his own body parts to make the disembodied limbs in the reliquaries led Thek to create a full-size effigy of himself, which he interred in a 1-meter tall, pink-painted, ziggurat called *The Tomb* (1967). It literalized the implications of Morris’s *Box for Standing* by turning a structure, reminiscent of both an ancient funerary monument and minimal sculpture, into a mausoleum for the artist. Here Thek portrayed himself as mortally “trapped in the impersonal geometry of the Minimal art of the 1960s.”<sup>58</sup>

Around 1970, Burden and his generation of sculptors shed the object altogether and began to focus on the leftover body of the artist, which they used as a medium in the vein of what was then called body art, or colloquially “actions.”<sup>59</sup> There was a particular strain of California-based body art that engaged in a critical practice that I would call a performative or embodied form of minimalist sculpture. Bruce Nauman employed the minimal square as what Harold Rosenberg defined in relation to Abstract Expressionist painting as an “arena” in which to work. In pieces such as *Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square* (1967–1968) and *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* (1968), Nauman laid out a square on the floor of his studio, around which he performed a variety of task-based actions that were, like Morris’s early work, related to experimental dance. Barry Le Va sought to apply “the rigorous structure of minimalist

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<sup>57</sup> The former quote is from Lynn Zelevansky, “Life Is Just a Bowl of Cherries: The Life and Art of Paul Thek,” in *Paul Thek: Diver*, eds. Elisabeth Sussman and Lynn Zelevansky (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2010), p. 13. The latter quote appears in Stefan Germer, “Full Fathom Five My Father Lies: Speculations about Paul Thek’s Contemporaneity,” in *Paul Thek: Artist’s Artist*, eds. Harold Falckenberg and Peter Weibel (Hamburg: ZKM/Center for Art and Media, 2008), p. 244.

<sup>58</sup> Suzanne Delehanty, “Paul Thek: Seeking the Way,” in Falckenberg and Weibel, *Paul Thek: Artist’s Artist*, p. 274. On *The Tomb*, see Sussman and Zelevansky, *Paul Thek: Diver*, pp. 13–14; 88–95.

<sup>59</sup> Ward, *No Innocent Bystanders*, p. 42. “Actions” was the term Burden preferred in the early 70s; see Carroll, “Masterpieces of Modern Art.”

thinking” to create a Minimalism by other means in his *Velocity Piece: Impact Run* (1969).<sup>60</sup> For over an hour and forty minutes, Le Va ran full speed across the length of an empty gallery and threw himself into the wall, leaving indexical traces of the impact in the form of sweat, blood, and skin.<sup>61</sup> For the exhibition, Le Va left the gallery empty, save for speakers that played an audio recording of the event, thereby rendering the artist’s “ghostly presence” palpable on yet another indexical register.<sup>62</sup> *Velocity Piece* was a re-envisioning of Morris’s *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* and a devoutly minimalist recognition of the exhibition space as its own type of reductive container. Le Va reprised *Velocity Piece* (originally performed and exhibited at the Ohio State University) for the exhibition “Projections: Anti-Materialism” at the La Jolla Museum of Art in 1970, which may very well have caught the attention of Chris Burden in nearby Orange County.<sup>63</sup> La Jolla curator Lawrence Urrutia, who exhibited Burden’s work at the museum in 1971, wrote about the “demanding and psychologically disturbing” nature of Le Va’s piece.<sup>64</sup> In both *Velocity Piece* and *Locker Piece*, the artist went through an ordeal to produce the work, which was perceptible through traces of the artist’s presence. Ultimately, Burden and Le Va both

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<sup>60</sup> Liza Béar and Willoughby Sharp, “Discussions with Barry Le Va,” *Avalanche* 3 (Fall 1971), pp. 62–75.

<sup>61</sup> On *Velocity Piece*, see Ingrid Schaffner, ed., *Accumulated Vision, Barry Le Va* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 2005), pp. 29–30, 67–68, 126–129; and Michael Maizels, *Barry Le Va: The Aesthetic Aftermath* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), pp. 1–3.

<sup>62</sup> Cindy Nemser, “Subject-Object: Body Art,” *Arts Magazine* 46 (September 1971), pp. 40–42.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Maizels suggests, “It seems very plausible, though it is hardly certain, that Le Va’s *Velocity Piece* informed Burden’s art at an early moment in his career.” See Maizels, *Barry Le Va*, pp. 14–16.

<sup>64</sup> Lawrence Urrutia, *Projections: Anti-Materialism* (La Jolla: The La Jolla Museum of Art, 1970), n.p.

represent Minimalism as a kind of prison, holding them to extreme physical punishment that combined bodily strain and duration as a kind of self-inflicted torture.<sup>65</sup>

Equally close to home for Burden was Scott Grieger, whose *Impersonations* series consists of doctored photographs that picture the artist enacting various modes of minimal and conceptual art, using his own body as material (Fig. 56).<sup>66</sup> In *Impersonations*, Grieger mimics the trademark styles of Ronald Bladen, Sol Lewitt, and Richard Serra, as well as a handful of California Minimalists and UC-Irvine professors. *Impersonations* was published as a book in 1970 and exhibited in Grieger's solo show at LACMA in January and February of 1971, which closed just about 6 weeks before Burden began *Five-Day Locker Piece*.<sup>67</sup> Grieger belonged to a cohort of artists then working in Pasadena, including Bruce Nauman and Peter Plagens, who although they were not known to Burden personally, may have been on his radar.<sup>68</sup> While Grieger's photographs resemble concrete comedy, Northern California artist Robert Kinmont assumed a more contemplative position with his body in relation to the landscape. In his similar photographic series, *8 Natural Handstands*, published as a book in 1969, Kinmont assumes a yogic handstand at various locations throughout the wilderness of north-central California,

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<sup>65</sup> With regard to Le Va, see Ratcliff, *Out of the Box*, pp. xii, 147.

<sup>66</sup> Willoughby Sharp, "New Directions in Southern California Sculpture," *Arts Magazine* (Summer 1970), p. 38; *Scott Grieger: Impersonations* (Logan: Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Utah State University, 2007).

<sup>67</sup> Maurice Tuchman, *Scott Grieger* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971). *Impersonations* was also shown at the Whitney Annual in 1970.

<sup>68</sup> Burden and Grieger eventually met in the early 70s and were social acquaintances. Burden interacted with Nauman, however marginally, when the two exhibited together at the La Jolla Museum of Art in the Spring of 1971, before Burden performed *Locker Piece*. Mowry Baden, who also exhibited in the three-man show with Burden and Nauman, remembers that he and Burden did not really interact with Nauman at all. Mowry Baden, personal communication, May 17, 2017.



calling to mind the post-minimalist practice of earthwork sculpture, which was en vogue at the time (Fig. 57). Kinmont's stark verticality juxtaposed with the vast expanse of deserts and canyons especially calls to mind the work of Michael Heizer and Walter De Maria, who used similar types of locations.<sup>69</sup> The handstands were a physical challenge that posed both risk (in one photo he is poised at the edge of a cliff) and difficulty for the artist.<sup>70</sup> Kinmont was also close to Bruce Nauman, when the two both lived in the Bay Area and studied with William T. Wiley in the mid-60s. Taken together, Nauman, Le Va, Grieger, Kinmont, and Burden represent a particularly Californian response to Minimalism, which substituted obdurate, blank objects with the artist's body in the process of performing feats of poise and muscular control. (Though not discussed here, I would add Dennis Oppenheim, Charles Ray, and William Wegman to this list, as well.) Like the post-Minimalist mode sometimes called Eccentric Abstraction, embodied Minimalism adopted the formal language of the reductive turn in sculpture, while advancing the conversation in a different direction. These artists reintroduced the dance, task, and chance elements of Robert Morris's early work back into the Minimalist canon and followed the conceptual turn by producing ephemeral, experiential, and performative work with their own bodies.

By 1971, Minimalism's moment as a vibrant new sculptural movement was well and done, and many of its signature figures had moved on to producing earthworks and other site-specific installations. In an essay influenced by his time teaching at UC Irvine, Robert Morris

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<sup>69</sup> In the recent reevaluation of the canon of Earthworks and Land Art, Kinmont's *8 Natural Handstands* has been included; see Philipp Kaiser and Miwon Kwon, *Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2012), p. 212.

<sup>70</sup> "A Conversation between Robert Kinmont and Aoife Rosenmeyer," in *Robert Kinmont* (Milan: Mousse, 2013), p. 13.

officially disavowed Minimalism's "polished metal boxes" and their factory reproducibility.<sup>71</sup> For years, Morris had been trying to forge a new identity for the artist, which involved working on spec, rather than alone in the studio. He had already been asking curators and exhibition venues to simply refabricate his plywood sculptures, rather than pay to ship them, when, in 1969, Morris started to simply phone-in instructions for creating his pieces. For instance, Morris communicated the arrangement of his scatter piece *Threadwaste* (1968) via telephone for the "Earth Art" exhibition at Cornell University in 1969.<sup>72</sup> In his well known *Continuous Project Altered Daily* (1969), Morris turned Leo Castelli's uptown Manhattan warehouse space into a worksite, where the artist came each day, adding, subtracting, and reassembling the exhibition's contents until he eventually removed everything from the gallery, save for photographs of the work in progress—visual traces of what had been performed in the space.

During his search for a new artistic identity, Morris briefly assumed the role of art dealer by striking an arrangement with the Whitney Museum of American Art to buy (presumably American) work and resell it to European collectors and dealers at a profit. This venture, titled *Money*, was ostensibly financed by the Whitney on commission for the "Anti-Illusion" exhibition in 1969. As Julia Bryan-Wilson describes in her article "Hard Hats and Art Strikes," Morris's most significant occupational experiment was his adoption of the role of construction

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<sup>71</sup> Robert Morris, "The Art of Existence. Three Extra-Visual Artists: Works in Process" (1971), in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), p. 95.

<sup>72</sup> Paice, "Threadwaste, 1968," in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, p. 226. See also *Earth Art* (Ithaca, NY: Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art, 1970). Morris also communicated instructions for the creation of the film *Slow Motion* for the 1969 exhibition "Art by Telephone" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

worker or foreman for his 1970 retrospective, also at the Whitney.<sup>73</sup> Here Morris assumed the well-worn stereotype of the Minimalist sculptor as working-class laborer, appearing alongside workmen who assisted him in making two colossal scatter pieces with industrial-scale components (uncut timbers, concrete block, and steel). In all of these pieces, Morris transfers the creative work from the studio to the museum gallery, exemplifying the post-studio condition defined particularly by land artists who worked predominantly on site, rather than in the studio. Morris's code switching culminated with his November 1970 advertisement for The Peripatetic Artists Guild, which was distributed through a number of art magazines. The ad "Announces Robert Morris Available for Commissions Anywhere in the World," and then goes on to enumerate a "partial" list of possible activities, as well as the terms and conditions of the arrangement. Morris's ad serves as a kind of job description for a new generation of transient artists, whose occasional employment resembled the careers of the craftsman they so admired.

As post-studio practice became widespread in the early 70s, the methodology had a particularly Southern California inflection, immortalized by the CalArts program of the same name, which was run by Allan Kaprow, John Baldessari, Douglas Huebler, and Michael Asher. Although CalArts has dominated the conversation about the post-studio turn in Los Angeles, professors at UC Irvine were teaching it by example before CalArts officially opened in 1970. Morris taught at Irvine sometime between January and March of 1970, just before his Whitney retrospective was scheduled to open. At the time, he was at work on the essay "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making," which was published that April in *Artforum*. Morris shared the essay with the graduate students at UCI and had them read some of the texts that inspired it, such as Morse Peckham's *Man's Rage for Chaos* (1965) and George Kubler's *The Shape of Time*

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<sup>73</sup> Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Hard Hats and Art Strikes: Robert Morris in 1970," *The Art Bulletin* 89:2 (2007), pp. 333–359.

(1962).<sup>74</sup> In the essay, Morris advocated for a reduction of the “existential gap between the studio preparation and the formal presentation” of works of art, emphasizing the means of production over the end product. He could have been describing *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* when he asserted that a work should “fold into a static, ‘constructed’ object its own means of production.” At the end of the essay, which we can take as the curriculum for Morris’s seminar at UC Irvine, he endorses recent trends in time-based practices, such as dance, music, and film, which were also foregrounding process.<sup>75</sup> Burden, who attended Morris’s seminar, undoubtedly walked away with a focus on “the artist-as-maker” and the work as an expression of an embodied action—if not that action itself.

Although he is not normally recognized for his contribution to post-studio practice, Burden’s thesis advisor, Robert Irwin, was also in the midst of a major turning point in his journey as an artist in 1970. While Morris’s Peripatetic Artists Guild was less than successful,<sup>76</sup> Irwin’s “inquiries” or site-conditioned pieces have come to define the second half of his career. In these works, Irwin responds to the architectural environment of the gallery by making subtle alterations to spaces using a variety of light sources, usually in tandem with string, wire, or scrim. The artist explained,

In 1970 I began again by simply getting rid of my studio and all its accompanying accouterments and saying that I would go anywhere, anytime, *in response*. [...] During this period I tried to respond directly to the quality of each situation I was in, not to change it wholesale into a new or ideal environment, but to attend directly to the nature of how it already was.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Barbara T. Smith, personal communication; Nancy Buchanan, personal communication.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Morris, “Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making: The Search for the Motivated” (1970), in *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, pp. 89–91.

<sup>76</sup> Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 95.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Irwin, “Notes Toward a Model,” in *Robert Irwin* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1977), p. 23.

In fact, Irwin inaugurated this stage of his career by the rather drastic intervention of knocking out the street-facing wall of his Venice Beach studio for a series of three environments that he designed in collaboration with Larry Bell, DeWain Valentine, and Frank Gehry for the First National Symposium on Habitability, which Irwin organized in tandem with his Art & Technology collaborator, Dr. Edward Wortz in 1970.<sup>78</sup> Exploding the wall of the studio and opening it up completely to life on the street is as good a metaphor as any for Irwin's assumption of a distinctly post-studio method. Over the following two years, Irwin spent most of his time on the road, "travelling in response to both exhibition invitations and speaking engagements at art schools and colleges."<sup>79</sup> Echoing Morris's advertisement, Irwin referred to his newfound *raison d'être* as a "project of general peripatetic availability," opening himself to a similar type of artistic engagement.<sup>80</sup>

It is important to see *Locker Piece* as an extension of both Minimalism and Light and Space, but it is also a seminal example of post-studio practice. On Morris's encouragement, Burden folded the process of making into a non-objective piece that existed only so long as the artist worked on it. Like Le Va's *Velocity Piece*, *Locker Piece* filled a pre-existing box with an embodied, task-based procedure with duration and finite temporal limits. Like Irwin's

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<sup>78</sup> *First National Symposium on Habitability*, 4 vols (Los Angeles: AiResearch Manufacturing Co., 1971); Edward Wortz, "Habitable Environments," *Choke* 1:1 (1976), pp. 20–22, 32; Weschler, *Seeing is forgetting*, pp. 135–137; Donna Conwell, "First National Symposium on Habitability," in *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art, 1945–1980* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), p. 223; Evelyn C. Hankins, ed., *Robert Irwin: All The Rules Will Change* (Washington, DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 2016), pp. 41–42; Matthew Simms, *Robert Irwin: A Conditional Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 81–91.

<sup>79</sup> Jan Butterfield, "The State of the Real," in *Arts Magazine* 46:8 (Summer 1972), p. 47; Ira Licht, *Robert Irwin* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1975), p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> Hankins, *Robert Irwin*, p. 45.

architectural inquiries, Burden's piece interrogated institutional spaces by making only the subtlest changes. In the case of *Locker Piece*, Burden's breakthrough moment came when he realized that rather than introduce even the slightest new sculptural material, he could enhance the room simply through his own presence. This move signaled Burden's evolution beyond the sculptural object—even a fleeting or impermanent one—and into the burgeoning field of performance art.

### ***Locker Piece* as Institutional Critique**

Though the practice of Institutional Critique encapsulates a range of sometimes disparate methodologies, most historians of the conceptual or dematerializing turn in the late 1960s attribute the impetus towards Institutional Critique to Minimalism and its concentration on “the architectural, institutional, and discursive conditions of perception.”<sup>81</sup> Julia Bryan-Wilson has argued that “[M]inimalism was the pivotal movement which ‘activated the viewer’s space’ and thus catalyzed an awareness of the institutional frameworks of the gallery and museum system.”<sup>82</sup> In *Locker Piece*, Burden called attention to the institution of the art school most forcefully through the spatial frame of the locker (and by extension the classroom it was in), which invoked what Benjamin Buchloh called, in relation to Institutional Critique, “an administrative style” or “aesthetic of administration.” Although Buchloh’s category denotes primarily “linguistic conventions and legalistic arrangements,” he acknowledged that Institutional Critique also relied upon “an experience of architectural contingency” in order to

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<sup>81</sup> Frazer Ward discusses this, particularly with regard to *Five-Day Locker Piece*, in *No Innocent Bystanders*, pp. 30–31.

<sup>82</sup> Julia Bryan-Wilson, “A Curriculum for Institutional Critique, or the Professionalization of Conceptual Art,” in *New Institutionalism*, ed. Jonas Ekeberg (Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2006), p. 96.

situate critique within the literal walls of the institution.<sup>83</sup> The blankness and lack of visual incident characteristic of the administrative aesthetic was attributed to Marcel Duchamp's Readymade procedure of artistic nominalism. In Buchloh's genealogy of Institutional Critique, Duchamp's famous anti-retinal disavowal of painting and turn to the Readymade "negated [...] figurative representation, authenticity, and authorship while introducing repetition and the series (i.e., the law of industrial production) to replace the studio aesthetic of the handcrafted original."<sup>84</sup> Minimalist painting and sculpture fully endorsed the industrial aesthetic and its logic of serial repetition, which is perfectly captured in the "one thing after another" (Donald Judd) arrangement of the bank of lockers—what Thomas Crow called their "bureaucratic regularity." Crow read Burden's locker as a "microcosm to the macrocosm of factitious master planning," represented by the "cookie-cutter pavilions" of UC Irvine's late modernist architecture.<sup>85</sup> While Buchloh holds that conceptual artists tending towards Institutional Critique eventually dispensed with the "aesthetic of industrial production and consumption," for *Locker Piece* that institutional element was the crux of the work's bridge between Minimalism and Institutional Critique. As Frazer Ward has stated, the regular, prefabricated rectangular boxes of the lockers, repeated three high and fifteen long, were an ideal type of Readymade Minimalist structure, which required no fabrication and produced no aesthetic object.<sup>86</sup> In *Locker Piece*, the attention that Minimalism

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<sup>83</sup> Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), pp. 119, 132.

<sup>84</sup> Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," p. 119.

<sup>85</sup> Crow, "Mind-Body Problem," pp. 51–53.

<sup>86</sup> Ward, *No Innocent*, pp. 29, 45, 47. This argument was first made by Johannes Lothar Schröder, "Science, Heat and Time: Minimalism and Body Art in the Work of Chris Burden" in *Chris Burden: Beyond the Limits*, ed. Peter Noever (Vienna: MAK, 1996), p. 193.

sought to turn upon the gallery space and the phenomenology of viewing is here directed squarely at the physical and bureaucratic structure of the art school.

Although Chris Burden's work persistently challenged the institutions of the art world, from his early performance work to his mature sculptural installations, it is not normally associated with the practice of Institutional Critique, even though Burden began working conterminously with Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, and Michael Asher, the first generation of artists who, in the late 1960s and early 70s, critically exposed the logic or inner workings of art museums and galleries.<sup>87</sup> Take, for instance, later work such as *Working Artist* (1975) and *Natural Habitat* (1976), in which Burden—the latter piece in tandem with his partner at the time, fellow UC Irvine graduate Alexis Smith (BA 1970)—brought the artist's studio into the gallery and set up shop to live and work over a period of several days; or *Samson* (1985), a 100-ton jack apparatus, connected to a turnstile, that pushed against the load-bearing walls of the museum in direct, but infinitesimal proportion to the number of visitors who entered the gallery, threatening to topple the museum with a blockbuster exhibition; or *Exposing the Foundation of the Museum* from the following year, wherein Burden excavated an area underneath the Frank Gehry-designed Temporary Contemporary at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, creating a space in which the participant-viewer interacts in an investigation of the museum's

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<sup>87</sup> On the first generation of Institutional Critique, see especially Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," pp. 105–143; Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique" (2005), in *Andrea Fraser*, ed. Sabine Breitwieser (Salzburg: Museum der Moderne, 2015); Andrea Fraser, "What is Institutional Critique?" in *Institutional Critique and After*, ed. John C. Welchman (Zurich: JRP Ringer, 2006); Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009). Burden's work "is rarely invoked in discussions of institutional critique," according to Johanna Burton, "I Guess You'll Buy A Gun/ You'll Buy It Secondhand," in *Chris Burden: Extreme Measures*, ed. Lisa Phillips (New York: New Museum, 2013), 137. Exceptions that discuss Burden's work as Institutional Critique include Stiles, "Burden of Light," pp. 29, 31; Jenny Moore's short essay "Power Play," in *Chris Burden: Extreme Measures*, 195–196; and Earnest, "Applying Pressure."



literal moorings. In the latter piece, Burden railed against the construction of major new museum projects designed by star architects, which overshadowed the art they were constructed to house.

Burden's absence from the canon of Institutional Critique is puzzling, but not altogether surprising given the marginalization of Los Angeles-based artists from major postwar movements, such as Minimalism and Conceptual Art. In an essay that takes up the canonization of Institutional Critique, Julia Bryan-Wilson argues, "A certain set of established influences and standard artists—the reiteration of familiar names [...] has begun to harden into cliché—threatens to obscure other precursors."<sup>88</sup> One reason Burden has never been considered under the banner of Institutional Critique is because his early and still most well known work was in performance art, which was not really included in the cannon until Andrea Fraser entered the field in the late 1980s.<sup>89</sup> However, performance art's radical dematerialization, unlike conceptual art's more subdued photographic and textual practice, made it particularly off-putting to relatively conservative institutions of art in the early 70s. For that reason, curator Jane Livingston considered Burden's early work as "a protest or revolt against the American art establishment."<sup>90</sup> Performance art contested prior conceptions of the museum as a bastion of codified, cultural

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<sup>88</sup> Julia Bryan-Wilson, "A Curriculum for Institutional Critique, or the Professionalization of Conceptual Art," in *New Institutionalism*, ed. Jonas Ekeberg (Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2006), 92–93.

<sup>89</sup> One of Fraser's most well-known institutional performances, *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk*, was presented at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1989; see Andrea Fraser, "Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk," in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005), 95–114. This is not to forget another important contribution in performative institutional critique that is almost always ignored in the discussion of the discipline: Lorraine O'Grady's *Mademoiselle Bourgeoise Noire* (1980–1983); for an exception see Bob Nickas, "Museum of the Void (Castles in the Sand)," in *The Anti-Museum*, eds Mathieu Copeland and Balthazar Lovay (London: Fri Art and Koenig Books, 2016), pp. 366–367.

<sup>90</sup> Richard Nemeč, "The Conceptual Artist: He's Been Shot, Crucified and Nearly Electrocuted," *Independent Press Telegram* (February 2, 1975), p. 10.

relics. The threat that performance art posed to cultural institutions was in large part a function of the institution's inability to control or rein in unruly artists.<sup>91</sup> The second reason that Burden's *Five Day Locker Piece*, in particular, has not been considered Institutional Critique, is because the canon is defined primarily as a practice of confrontation with and within museums and art galleries. Very little scholarship treats Institutional Critique within the context of educational institutions, in particular those bastions of higher learning that educate fine-art professionals.<sup>92</sup>

Burden said that he thought *Locker Piece* would isolate him, but it actually had the opposite effect.<sup>93</sup> A 90-minute audio recording, which Burden made with a tape recorder enclosed with him inside the locker, captures a representative sample of the conversations he had on the first day of the piece.<sup>94</sup> Burden, of course, spoke a lot about the situation he was in: the water filtration system, his cramped legs, if he would be able to sleep or not. The majority of the conversations Burden recorded were with his fellow grad students. Quite a few of the discussions treated the reaction of various professors to the news of *Five Day Locker Piece*: John Mason characteristically refrained from comment, although he reportedly checked in on Burden with

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<sup>91</sup> Lynn Zelevansky, "From Inside the Museum: Some Thoughts on the Issue of Institutional Critique," in *Institutional Critique and After*, ed. John C. Welchman (Zurich: JRP Ringer, 2006), p. 176.

<sup>92</sup> Adrian Piper's 1983 essay "Power Relations Within Existing Art Institutions," is a trenchant critique of the art school's process of "aesthetic acculturation" or indoctrination of otherwise autonomous individuals into the "ranks of art practitioners," a process founded upon a host of unacknowledged ideologies, which cut to the core of the very notion of free and equal access in a democratic society. However, Piper's piece is more of a manifesto and does not treat any particular strategies for intervention within the education system; reprinted in Alberro and Stimson, *Institutional Critique*, 246–274.

<sup>93</sup> Willoughby Sharp and Liza Béar, "Chris Burden: The Church of Human Energy," *Avalanche* 8 (Summer/Fall 1973), 54; *Willoughby Sharp Videoviews Chris Burden*; Chris Burden, Artist's talk; Schröder, "Science, Heat and Time," p. 195.

<sup>94</sup> All quotations from the audiotape of *Five Day Locker Piece* are courtesy of the Chris Burden Estate.

regularity;<sup>95</sup> Tony DeLap came by but did not even acknowledge Burden in the locker; and Ed Moses “freaked out,” calling the work dangerous. The students also talked about upcoming exhibitions, museum and gallery openings, and future employment, much like we can imagine they would have on any normal day at school. Finally, Burden hosted his MFA class for the critique of his work and he also held art historical discourses with his colleagues, some of whom brought their undergraduate students to discuss the piece with the artist.<sup>96</sup> Much of the latter predictably consisted of polemical discussions about whether Burden’s action constituted art. To this question, Burden took the Duchampian stance that an act is art if it is done by an artist in an art context: “I don’t think the content [determines] whether something is art or not. It’s the fashion that it’s carried out in.”<sup>97</sup>

With several of his visitors, Burden conducted what I would call art-world business, above and beyond the semi-personal hallway chatter that made up many of the conversations he taped. Along with Barbara Smith, Nancy Buchanan, and other UCI MFAs, Burden was running a cooperative gallery called F Space, which they operated out of an industrial complex in nearby Santa Ana, two doors down from Burden’s own studio.<sup>98</sup> The need for the students to have a place to exhibit their work, experiment, and develop as a community of artists galvanized the creation of F Space, which was one of the most fruitful products of the early years at UCI. F Space has gone down in history as the site of several of Burden’s early performances, including

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<sup>95</sup> Crow, “Mind-Body Problem,” p. 57.

<sup>96</sup> Visits by classes are not recorded on the tape and must have taken place later in the week. By Robert Walker’s account, they took place at Burden’s request. See Burden and Butterfield, “Chris Burden,” 69; Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden; Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Robert Walker, November 9, 2010, Laguna Art Museum.

<sup>97</sup> Carroll, “Masterpieces of Modern Art.”

<sup>98</sup> F Space opened in January 1971 and lasted at least through the summer of 1972.

*Shoot* (1971), and it was a radical DIY space for the time, garnering significant regional attention. What needed taken care of the week Burden was in the locker, was the scheduling of who was going to sit in the gallery during open hours for upcoming shows, in particular, how to devise a better system and chain of responsibility for keeping the space open. Apparently, the weekend before *Locker Piece* began, there was some confusion as to who was supposed to sit in the gallery for the last weekend of an exhibition by Gary Beydler. While he was in the locker, Burden informed other members of F Space that Beydler was “really pissed off” about the mix-up, because Sunday had been Easter and his show was closed two days that weekend. In his role as de facto organizer of F Space, it fell on Burden to spread the word that a new sign-up sheet would be available at Thursday’s opening (which he would, of course, miss because of *Locker Piece*). Furthermore, Burden and his colleagues discussed a change in the management of the building, rising rents, and the feasibility of staying there after they graduated. While Burden was in the locker, he also entertained a reporter from the *Los Angeles Times*, who interviewed him and his classmates for a feature article on F Space, which ended up being as much about Burden and *Locker Piece* as it was about the gallery.<sup>99</sup>

Secondly, Burden coordinated with professor John Mason in order to plan his contribution to the MFA thesis exhibition, which was upcoming in UCI’s art gallery. That work, called *Bicycle Piece*, was a durational occupation of the gallery space, much in the same vein as *Locker Piece*. During the full run of the show, excluding the opening night, Burden careened through the gallery on his 10-speed around a designated path laid out on the floor (Figs 58–59). In short, this necessitated the rearrangement of the gallery and it required Mason to tailor the layout of the exhibition to Burden’s needs. Mason, who had advised Burden as an undergraduate

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<sup>99</sup> Marjie Driscoll, “Zany Gallery Offers Art Without Price Tags,” *Los Angeles Times* (June 2, 1971).

at Pomona College, as well as teaching him at Irvine, was remarkably accommodating to the artist's challenging requests, working with him to devise the best route through the gallery. Burden then took up the logistics of spending so much time on the piece with his wife Barbara, who, it seems, was often put out in her role as a collaborator in Burden's audacious work. At the same time Barbara dutifully fed her husband V8 and celery juice through a straw, coming to the locker several times a day to keep him company, Burden asked her to alter her work hours in order to accommodate his schedule while performing *Bicycle Piece*. Presumably she needed a ride home at four, while Chris was going to be busy until the gallery closed at five. Burden goaded her: "Maybe you can work [late]. That's a good idea! Listen to that. I don't know. You'd have to do it. You could work an extra hour or a half hour. What time do you usually get off, four? You could work until five and in 2 weeks you get an extra 2 days."

Andrea Fraser has said that some of Institutional Critique's canonical works take "artistic practice itself" as the object of critique.<sup>100</sup> *Five Day Locker Piece* is de facto a work about artistic practice, insofar as it, like other performance art, puts practice on display by making the artist's embodied creation of the work its subject. What the conversations between Burden and his visitors add to the appreciation of this piece is that the discussions held in and around the locker touched on all of the myriad things that are involved with being an artist: getting and paying for a studio, materials, and cars to haul everything around, exhibiting work, receiving feedback, going to openings, and getting teaching jobs. Artistic practice was foregrounded in all of Burden's dialogs by the sheer fact of the institution in which the work took place: the art school.

The rise of the art school in Southern California produced opportunities for a new professional class of career artist-educators. Such positions sustained even the region's most

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<sup>100</sup> Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions," pp. 53–54.

commercially successful artists, of which the faculty at Irvine is proof. The stated aim of most of UCI's Studio Art faculty was to train professional artists, understood as those who could teach as well as exhibit their work, or what Paul Karlstrom called the "strategic art-career professional."<sup>101</sup> However, during *Locker Piece*, Burden talked with more than one of his colleagues about their inability to find teaching jobs, in part because of the unorthodox training they received at Irvine. While the higher education system was changing in pace with progressive schools like UCI, the first graduate students that the school turned out did not fit the traditional model of the art educator. Helen Molesworth has argued that the shift from an emphasis on craft to a privileging of communication in MFA programs resulted in "a generation of college-educated artists whose skills were no longer manual and visual but largely theoretical and verbal," thus making them unfit candidates for jobs at most schools.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, one discussion that took place around the locker concerned how Burden's confrontational, non-object-based, conceptual art practice would undoubtedly hurt him on the job market. A friend outside the locker said, "They don't want any nuts," and another responded, "Sure. You tell them you've been sleeping in lockers, they're going to think twice [about hiring you]." The same voice continued, suggesting that Burden learn how to do something with his hands, like woodworking, in order to get a teaching job. This male student, along with Burden and another male voice on the recording, also complained about losing job prospects because they wore their hair long. In a later interview, Burden said that in his final year at Irvine, he "applied to every

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<sup>101</sup> Karlstrom, "Art School Sketches," p. 98. See also Judith E. Adler, *Artists in Offices: An Ethnography of an Academic Art Scene* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1979), p. 14; and Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>102</sup> Helen Molesworth, "Work Ethic," in *Work Ethic* (Baltimore: The Baltimore Museum of Art, 2003), p. 33.

junior college in the state of California,” but only got one interview. When the unnamed school learned that Burden was made in the mold of his professors—an artist who teaches rather than a teacher of art—he was withdrawn from consideration.<sup>103</sup> Unlike the privilege that Adrian Piper saw as being not only a prerequisite, but a consequence of proper institutional acculturation in art school, it seems that Burden and his colleagues viewed their education, in the face of a vibrant market for post-secondary teachers, as marginalizing, rather than empowering.<sup>104</sup>

Chris Burden was fond of saying that the first class of MFAs at Irvine were orally guaranteed that they could do anything they wanted for two years and still receive a degree, indicating that acceptance into the program essentially “constituted a degree.”<sup>105</sup> The theory looming behind this cynical interpretation of the MFA was that you could not teach someone to become an artist; they have to want it and work to achieve it of their own volition.

What the people at Irvine were saying—and they were all practicing artists—was that your MFA is basically worth diddly-squat. It’s a breathing space for you to become an artist. So you’re either going to become an artist and want to make art, or you’re not.<sup>106</sup>

In a review of an exhibition celebrating Irvine’s tenth anniversary that featured the work of professors and students in Studio Art, a reviewer suggested that the MFA degree was only as good as the paper it was printed on, a comment which reflects the general sentiment at the time

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<sup>103</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden.

<sup>104</sup> Piper, “Power Relations.”

<sup>105</sup> Chris Burden interview with Glenn Phillips; Muchnic, Oral history interview with Chris Burden; Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden; Akers, “Chris Burden,” p. 48.

<sup>106</sup> Melrod, “Interview: Chris Burden,” p. 51. See also R.J. Smith, “The Sculptor of Dreams,” *Los Angeles* (November 2012), p. 146.

Burden started at Irvine.<sup>107</sup> The purpose of the newly conceived professional MFA was to give artists something to fall back on in case they did not make it in the creative sector. In characterizing his beloved professor, John Mason, Burden observed that the taciturn manner with which Mason slumped through the workday at Pomona and Irvine actually bore a very valuable lesson about what it means to be an artist: teaching was an inevitable necessity for artists to make a living and have the freedom to work in untraditional and non-commercial formats.<sup>108</sup> So, the degree granting the credentials that were required to teach at the university level was like any other tool that the artist needed in order to earn a living at their work.<sup>109</sup>

The shift from the artist as a solitary denizen of the studio to the artist as an academic administrator was part and parcel of the aforementioned post-studio turn in the late 60s and early 70s. Long-time CalArts professor and foundational figure in post studio practice, John Baldessari, once referred to himself as a “‘nine-to-five artist,’ reflecting his daily routine of going to the studio.”<sup>110</sup> In the conception and titling of *Five Day Locker Piece*, Burden made a blatant reference to the work of such professional artists by referring to the length of the standard workweek, which he further indicated through the piece’s endpoints: 8am Monday and 5pm Friday.<sup>111</sup> It is as if Burden was suggesting that being an artist involves simply coming into the

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<sup>107</sup> Sandy Ballatore, “Irvine Graduates,” *Artweek* 6:35 (October 18, 1975), p. 3. See also Adler, *Artists in Offices*, pp. 1–3.

<sup>108</sup> “Chris Burden Interviewed by Glenn Phillips,” in McGrew, *It happened at Pomona*, p. 272.

<sup>109</sup> Adler, *Artists in Offices*, p. 10.

<sup>110</sup> Marcia Tucker, “John Baldessari: Pursuing the Unpredictable,” in *John Baldessari* (New York: The New Museum, 1981), 15; as quoted in Molesworth, “Work Ethic.”

<sup>111</sup> Burden later said, “The locker piece needed to be a working week, that’s the premise of it. It started on Monday morning and it ended on Friday at five.” See Melrod, “Interview: Chris Burden,” 51.



office or studio, week in and week out, and discussing the experience of being an artist with anyone willing to listen, which is a perfect characterization of the pedagogical atmosphere of UCI. Of the related *Bicycle Piece*, Burden said, “The hours were pretty long—seven hours a day—so it was just like going to a job. I’d just get up and do this.”<sup>112</sup>

Furthermore, Frazer Ward rightly suggests that *Locker Piece* challenged the “process of legitimation” represented by the MFA degree, because Burden metaphorically withdrew from qualification, exhibiting no work, in the traditional sense, and instead portraying himself as caged or bound within a minimalist-conceptualist idiom.<sup>113</sup> Such a critique is analogous to the healthy skepticism about the university’s efficacy in training students for life beyond college, which was a cornerstone of pedagogical reform in the late 1960s, and a standard refrain for those concerned about the MFA program’s ability to produce successful working artists.<sup>114</sup> Some, including the faculty members who opposed awarding Burden his degree in 1971, might argue that the artist’s performance calls their profession, as well as the institution issuing the credentials to teach, into question.<sup>115</sup> If there is a dark humor to *Five Day Locker Piece*, which, by his own admission, is present in many of Burden’s early performances, it is surely this ironic double bind, which he and his peers faced upon graduation: needing the university to support

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<sup>112</sup> Chris Burden, Artist’s talk.

<sup>113</sup> Ward, *No Innocent Bystanders*, p. 49.

<sup>114</sup> Howard Conant, “Season of Decline,” in Battcock, *New Ideas in Art Education*, pp. 149–169.

<sup>115</sup> Where individual faculty members stood in terms of being for or against Burden receiving his MFA is largely unknown. Burden said “the New York art historians on the faculty at the time,” specifically Barbara Rose, were “staunchly opposed” to awarding him his degree; see Juan Augustin Mancebo, “Hacer arte es verdaderamente una actividad subversiva,” *Sin titulo 3* (September 1996), p. 53; Chris Burden interview with Glenn Phillips; Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden; Ward, *No Innocent Bystanders*, p. 161, n. 71. Tony DeLap confirmed that Rose was not a fan of *Locker Piece*; see Oral history interview with Tony DeLap, John Mason, and Hal Glicksman.

their immaterial artwork, but being disqualified because they were too avant-garde. As CalArts professor and post studio pioneer Allan Kaprow proposed, echoing *The Communist Manifesto*, “Artists of the world, drop out! You have nothing to lose but your professions!”<sup>116</sup>

Another critique immanent in *Locker Piece* indicts “[t]he institutional architecture of the art school,” and particularly Irvine’s lack of studio space for graduate students.<sup>117</sup> Burden recently commented “that the lack of facilities at UCI forced students to find their own studios and buy their own equipment[, which] helped students mature professionally” by teaching them what it was like to be a professional artist on one’s own.<sup>118</sup> Certainly this eventuality supported the aim of training students for the real world, but it had a correlative negative effect upon the sense of community amongst both students and faculty, who Melinda Wortz described as alienated, atomized, and fragmented as a result of both the architecture of the University and the loose structure of the MFA program.<sup>119</sup> Many of the Irvine graduate students have noted the profound isolation they experienced in school, but it was conversely a catalyst for F Space and a circumstance that actually resulted in camaraderie amongst the students. By occupying a locker, which was potentially the only personal space the MFAs commanded on campus, Burden was making an implicit statement about how limiting the lack of studios could be to the development of the students, both individually and as a group. According to Thomas Crow, Burden “act[ed] out the incompatibility between the architectural envelope and the lives it was designed to

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<sup>116</sup> Allan Kaprow, “The Education of the Un-Artist, Part I” (1971), in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 109.

<sup>117</sup> Ward, *No Innocent Bystanders*, p. 48.

<sup>118</sup> Chris Burden, paraphrased in Akers, “Chris Burden,” 48. See also Fran Preisman, “Irvine, 1965–75—A Sense of Communication,” *Artweek* 6:42 (December 6, 1975), p. 9; Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, p. xiv; Frank, “Context, Attitude, Community,” p. 24.

<sup>119</sup> Wortz, *University of California Irvine*, pp. 8–9.

program and contain.”<sup>120</sup> Paul Brach, the original Dean of the School of Art at CalArts, said that, in designing his new program he was weary of “the depersonalized effect of multi-use classrooms,” where “[s]tudents live out of their lockers and remove their work from the studio after each session.”<sup>121</sup> Artist Robert Watts made a similar recommendation in favor of studio space: “Students and staff need places where they can carry on their own work without the interruption of incoming classes or the constraints of dormitory space. [...] Artists like [older space] and prefer it to sterile, non-useful, contemporary buildings.”<sup>122</sup> Arriving at a similar critique of the space in which he was supposed to exhibit, Burden indeed removed all his work from the classroom and entered his metaphorical studio—the locker—to carry on working on his MFA exhibition, nine-to-five, Monday through Friday.

By treating the locker as his de facto studio, Burden enfolded the process of creation into the finished product, making the nine-to-five work of the artist the content of the piece. In a sense Burden was exposing a reality of artists’ lives at UCI, where he and other students used to sleep in the disused offices of their professors, appropriating them as multi-purpose spaces where they lived, worked, took classes, and even occasionally exhibited.<sup>123</sup> Richard Newton, who studied in the Art Department at Irvine as an undergraduate and graduate in the late 60s and early 70s, said that the offices of Vija Celmins, John Paul Jones, and John Mason “became a kind of mini studio” for him at a period of time in which he was periodically living out of his car and

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<sup>120</sup> Crow, “Mind-Body Problem,” p. 53.

<sup>121</sup> Brach made this comparison in insisting on the availability of private studio space for the students at CalArts; see Paul Brach, “Cal Arts: The Early Years,” *Art Journal* 42:1 (1982), p. 29.

<sup>122</sup> Robert Watts, “The Artist as Teacher,” in *The Arts on Campus: The Necessity for Change* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1970), pp. 57–58.

<sup>123</sup> Richard Newton, quoted in Wertz, *University of California Irvine*, 84; Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Charles Hill, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum.

dumpster-diving for food.<sup>124</sup> Tony DeLap recalled coming into the office some mornings to be surprised by Chris Burden, sleeping under his desk in what we could call research or training that the artist would make use of in *Five Day Locker Piece*.<sup>125</sup> Despite, or perhaps because of, the University's unwelcoming physical plant, the graduate students in Studio Art at UCI made do in a liberal environment where they were allowed to commandeer school property for their own ends without anyone on the faculty raising an eyebrow.

Burden's *Locker Piece* conflates the labor of the artist, working and sometimes living in their studio, with the labor of the artist-professor and its offices, lockers, and classrooms, showing the two to be coextensive. As Helen Molesworth has written, "Many artists staged the tension of the changing definitions of labor by mimicking the logic of labor's division into mental and manual realms."<sup>126</sup> In this case, the mental work is that accomplished by the conceptual art professor, whose mentoring comes in a purely dialogic form, something that Burden could comfortably do from inside the locker. The manual labor or studio work is encompassed by the physical ordeal to which Burden submits: the time, patience, and presence of mind it took to endure five days confined in a luggage locker. Molesworth continues, "By establishing a task and then performing it, these artists acted out the roles of both manager and worker," thus effecting a power-play, whereby the subordinate student, taught as though he was a peer of his professors, turns the tables on the faculty by assuming responsibility for his own education and literally taking his own life in his hands.

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<sup>124</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history with Richard Newton and Tony Rouff, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum.

<sup>125</sup> Tony DeLap, personal communication, October 7, 2015.

<sup>126</sup> Molesworth, "Work Ethic," p. 39.

Perhaps *Locker Piece*'s most cogent allusion is to the student protest movement of the late 1960s and early 70s, which crippled campuses across the country, but especially in California, where Irvine's fellow state university at Berkeley was arguably the movement's center. The May 15, 1969 invasion of a student-occupied parcel of the Berkeley campus named People's Park and the subsequent rally and riot that left one dead and over 100 injured, was met at UCI with a week of unrest, which included faculty strikes, sit-ins, and a University-sanctioned teach-in (Fig. 60).<sup>127</sup> Protest on the UC Irvine campus peaked that year when students rallied, marched, occupied administration buildings, and boycotted classes for a five-day "live-in" to protest the firing of three popular English teachers.<sup>128</sup> "With the opening of the 1969–70 academic year," when Chris Burden started at UCI, "attention shifted toward Washington, D.C., the Vietnam War, and the rise of the New Left,"<sup>129</sup> and protest came in the form of moratorium strikes that Irvine observed in solidarity with schools across the country. A special late-summer issue of the campus newspaper, *New University*, carried an article on striking as a form of institutional protest in the August 1969 issue, which the editorial introduction said was "of special interest to freshman," suggesting that it was something of a guidebook to the new collegiate landscape.<sup>130</sup> The most significant protest that Burden may have experienced while at Irvine happened in May 1970 in response to the U.S. bombing of Cambodia and the lethal

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<sup>127</sup> Richard Sharp, "UCI on Strike," *New University* 1:52 (May 26, 1969), pp. 1–2; Richard Sharp, "Irvine Votes to Continue Strike," *New University* 1:53 (May 29, 1969), p. 2; McCulloch, *Instant University*, pp. 128–130.

<sup>128</sup> Frank McGee, *UCI: The First 25 Years* ([Irvine]: The Regents of the University of California, 1992), p. 54; McCulloch, *Instant University*, pp. 122–128, 148–149.

<sup>129</sup> McCulloch, *Instant University*, p. 132.

<sup>130</sup> Eric Solomon, "Opinion—A Change in Protest," *New University* 2:special issue (August 1969), p. 5.

shooting of six American students at Jackson State and Kent State Universities. Sociologist Mona Jacqueney, who analyzed student protest in the years 1969–1971, said that these developments in the war and the movement “produced the largest and most extensive” confrontations of the era.<sup>131</sup> Irvine joined fellow campuses throughout California in closing for four days, during which time, according to Barbara Smith, the students “took over” the school.<sup>132</sup> Both Smith and Nancy Buchanan participated in protests at UC Irvine, which were generally galvanized by the school’s SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) chapter, but like most schools where activism was prevalent, Irvine was host to various other protest organizations, including Black Nationalists, Feminists, and guerrilla theatre troupes.<sup>133</sup>

In a well-known early interview in which Burden reflected on his performance work from 1971–1973, the artist alluded to the People’s Park riots in Berkeley as an example of the kind of violence that informed his work.<sup>134</sup> In *Locker Piece*, Burden borrows the methodology of the occupational protest as what Rosalind Krauss would call the work’s technical support.<sup>135</sup> Beginning in 1964, with the occupation of administration buildings at UC Berkeley by proponents of the Free Speech Movement, students used the tactic of occupying administration buildings and classrooms in order to sabotage the normal day-to-day operations of the university.

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<sup>131</sup> Mona G. Jacqueney, *Radicalism on Campus: 1969–1971* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972).

<sup>132</sup> McCulloch, *Instant University*, 150; Barbara T. Smith, personal communication.

<sup>133</sup> Oral history interview with Nancy Buchanan, February–March 2010, Getty Research Institute, Institutional Archives. Buchanan protested as an undergraduate at UCI with the SDS (1967–1969). They called themselves “fear leaders” and went by the acronym PHUCI; Buchanan, personal communication.

<sup>134</sup> Sharp and Béar, “Chris Burden,” p. 56.

<sup>135</sup> On the technical support, see especially Rosalind E. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011).

Students who struggled for control over their education and a voice within the dehumanizing collegiate atmosphere of Cold War America used occupational protest as a tool to both raise awareness and agitate for change. The call to arms of the Free Speech Movement was Mario Savio's famous provocation for direct action, occupation, and sabotage:

When the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part, you can't even tacitly take part, you've got to put your bodies upon the gears, and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people that run it, the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all.<sup>136</sup>

One of the student movement's primary issues was the status of education and the social and political forces underlying institutions of higher learning, in particular. The early speeches of SDS leaders and their declaration, "The Port Huron Statement," made pedagogical reform one of the top priorities. During teach-ins and through workshops and other informal modes of education, students assumed teaching roles and demanded access to subjects they deemed pertinent. By interrupting the smooth functioning of the university, student protesters begged faculty, students, and administrators alike to self-reflexively examine the construction of knowledge and power upon which academic institutions are based. In employing the technique of occupying space within the University, Burden, too, threw his body on the gears of the educational institution and challenged not only the process of artistic legitimization, but also its very ideological foundations.

Chris Burden was well aware of the implications of his piece. No less than five times in the conversations he recorded on the first day of *Locker Piece*, Burden invoked the Dean of the School of Fine Arts, Clayton Garrison, whom he knew was going to find out about the

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<sup>136</sup> Mario Savio, from an address to the Free Speech Movement rally at Sproul Plaza, University of California Berkeley, December 2, 1964, quoted in Irwin Unger, *The Movement: A History of the American New Left 1959–1972* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 71–72.

unauthorized infiltration and occupation. On the tape, Burden seems to be seriously worried that Dean Garrison could disrupt the piece by forcibly removing him from the locker if the right person were to object, such as a regent or donor. Burden was especially concerned that the situation might necessarily turn violent. He said, "I don't know how they'd get me out. They'd have to bring a bolt cutter and drag me out, bodily. That'd be pretty hard with me kicking." If the University Police were going to break the lock and yank him out of the locker, Burden was going to go down kicking and screaming, no doubt causing a scene and attracting desirable attention to the work. He later recounted that it took until Thursday before Dean Garrison heard about the piece from word of mouth, at which point there was, according to Burden, talk of crowbars and the use of force.<sup>137</sup> However, it seems that Burden posited the Dean as an adversarial force from day one, spreading some of the very rumors that would attract people to come see him and eventually make their way to Dean Garrison's office on the top floor of the Fine Arts Building, thereby validating themselves. Garrison recalled that Burden "sent word" through the grapevine to inform him about the piece, but the Dean said his first call was not to the University Police, but to the campus physician, because he was concerned about the potential health risks Burden was facing.<sup>138</sup> Later, Burden suggested that the contentious relationship he posited with the Dean in *Locker Piece* was a kind of rhetorical device that was not based on any actual confrontation, but rather used for effect. In relation to *Locker Piece* and Dean Garrison, Burden said, "Those

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<sup>137</sup> Burden subsequently repeated the story with emphasis on the Dean's role in *Willoughby Sharp Videoviews Chris Burden*; Chris Burden, Artist's talk; Burden and Butterfield, "Chris Burden," 68; Robert Horvitz, "Chris Burden," *Artforum* 14:9 (May 1976), p. 27; Mancebo, "Hacer arte es verdaderamente una actividad subversiva," 53; Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden.

<sup>138</sup> Oral history interview with Clayton Garrison, July 18, 2011, Laguna Art Museum.



authority figures are really important [...] you need someone to push against [...]. So, they serve a function.”<sup>139</sup>

The student protest movement functioned by and large the same way, relying on the institution to push back and respond to choreographed provocations. Mona Jacqueney argued, “The success or failure of [student revolt] is seen as depending upon the predictable response of those in authority as the method of transforming the passive state from issue to action.” If successful, she says, student activists turn an issue into an “attack on the institution.”<sup>140</sup> In other words, there is a symbiotic relationship between the student and the authority figure that functions as a kind of trope that Burden plays out with Dean Garrison. In the realm of Institutional Critique, Andrea Fraser has written about the co-dependent relationship between institutions and Institutional Critique, which need and validate one another. She said that in pieces of Institutional Critique “the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals.”<sup>141</sup> In *Five Day Locker Piece*, Burden performed the institution’s own objection to his work by provoking the Dean to rein him in and by insinuating that a standoff, not unlike the sit-ins and student protests of the era, was afoot.

There were plenty of instances of Garrison stepping in to interfere with the students’ work and Burden’s paranoia, feigned or not, was not unfounded. Barbara Smith said that there was a general perception amongst the students that Garrison wanted to shut down the department of Studio Art in favor of his own performing arts programs. In the spring of 1971, he intervened and threatened to expel Smith when she used a UCI gallery for an overnight participatory piece

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<sup>139</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden.

<sup>140</sup> Jacqueney, *Radicalism on Campus*, pp. 65–66.

<sup>141</sup> Fraser, “From the Critique of Institutions,” 58.

called *The Celebration of the Holy Squash* (1971), which occasioned some shenanigans amongst fellow students who were participating in the work.<sup>142</sup> Nancy Buchanan also recalls that Garrison “fought [the graduate students] every inch of the way, rejecting [their] every request.”<sup>143</sup> In particular, she remembers that Garrison initially refused to allow Burden to ride his bike through the gallery for *Bicycle Piece* during the MFA thesis exhibition, which was scheduled to open less than a week after Burden emerged from the locker. Buchanan and the other graduate students banded together in support of Burden and threatened to boycott the thesis exhibition unless Burden was allowed to do his thing.<sup>144</sup> The confrontation between the graduate students and Dean Garrison over Burden’s *Bicycle Piece* transpired just as the artist was entering the locker and must be seen as the background for Burden’s provocation of the Dean in *Five Day Locker Piece*. John Mason’s visit to the locker to discuss the logistics of *Bicycle Piece* was, according to the audio recording, the first indication that Dean Garrison was relenting. Burden told his wife, “I guess they’re going to let me do the bicycle piece. Mason came by to talk to me about it.”

The students’ intense encounter with Garrison may have to do with the fact that during the tenure of the first MFA class (1969–1971), the Studio Art department at Irvine did not have a

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<sup>142</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden; Barbara T. Smith, personal communication. On *The Celebration of the Holy Squash*, see Rebecca McGrew and Jennie Klein, eds., *The 21st Century Odyssey Part II: The Performances of Barbara T. Smith* (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2005), pp. 33, 35 n.12, 52–53; Moira Roth, ed., *The Amazing Decade: Women and Performance Art in America 1970–1980* (Los Angeles: Astro Artz, 1983), pp. 138–139; Jennie Klein, “Feeding the Body: The Work of Barbara Smith,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 21:1 (1999), pp. 28–29; Cole Akers, “Barbara T. Smith,” in Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, pp. 94–95.

<sup>143</sup> Nancy Buchanan, quoted in Wortz, *University of California Irvine*, p. 85.

<sup>144</sup> Burden and Butterfield, “Chris Burden,” 68; Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Robert Walker and Nancy Buchanan; Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Nancy Buchanan, November 9, 2010, Laguna Art Museum; Oral history interview with Marcia Hafif; Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots from F Space,” 50.

stable chair. In the fall of 1968, former director of the Jewish Museum, Alan Solomon, took over as chair of the Art Department and director of the Art Gallery, after John Coplans went to work at the Pasadena Art Museum. However, Solomon was only at Irvine for a little over a year, when he retired to New York in the fall of 1969, and died in February 1970. Thus, Solomon had little contact with the new MFAs and after he left, Coplans, Garrison, and Barbara Rose variously ran the department and curated at the gallery, while the position of chair and gallery director remained empty.<sup>145</sup> The vacuum of leadership left by Coplans and Solomon may explain Dean Garrison's more instrumental role in the administration of the Studio Art department and consequently his run-ins with the MFA students. Garrison said that he met with the graduate students individually to discuss the feasibility of their intended projects.<sup>146</sup> It was likely at this point that he vetoed *Bicycle Piece*.

For Burden, the crux of the situation was absolutely power: who had the power to determine the content of his work and the manner in which it was carried out. Adapting to what he learned through the dispute over *Bicycle Piece*, Burden said,

You don't ask, you just do it. [You] don't ask the Dean whether it's okay to do this, you do it, because if you ask them it gives them the power to say no. It's implying that they have the power to say yes or no, which they don't.<sup>147</sup>

Frazer Ward has suggested that the threat posed by Dean Garrison brought to light the liminality of space within the University, which was ostensibly private and free to be used by artists in any way possible, yet authoritatively monitored and regulated by the administration—in the case of

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<sup>145</sup> "Dr. Alan Solomon Dies at 49; Ex-Director of the Jewish Museum," *The New York Times* (February 19, 1970); Frank, "Context, Attitude, Community," pp. 25–26.

<sup>146</sup> Oral history interview with Clayton Garrison.

<sup>147</sup> Carroll, "Masterpieces of Modern Art." Burden made a similar remark in Sharp and Béar, "Chris Burden," 59.

the graduate students at Irvine, access to personal space on campus was simply denied.<sup>148</sup> In defining the practice of Institutional Critique, Alexander Alberro wrote that one of its methods was to “[put] pressure on the disjuncture between the self-presentation of the art institution (as democratic and free of [...] ideology) and the [...] ideology that actually permeates it.”<sup>149</sup> *Locker Piece* exemplifies this form of critique by opening up an egalitarian dialog between the artist and his interlocutors, while at the same time its progenitor is a kind of prisoner of the educational institution, subject to its strictures and limitations regarding space. In her ethnographic study of CalArts in the 1970s, Judith Adler said that this tension was definitely felt at the time:

The contrast between the employed artist’s dependency upon the organization owning the means of his production, and the older occupational image of the artist as a “free” [...] professional—as a self-employed craftsman who could never be locked out of his own workshop through firing, graduation, or other unfortunate contingencies—made this wry metaphor of bondage a favored bit of folk humor.<sup>150</sup>

The bondage of which Adler speaks in terms of satire is enacted by Burden as a biting parody that critiques the liberal assumption of creative license on which the hallowed space of the artist’s studio, not to mention the modern education system, is founded. The genius of *Five Day Locker Piece* is that Burden brought the modus operandi of occupational protest to bear on his program and the wider art school by formulating the distrust of institutional power as a question equally faced in the aesthetic realm.

In spirit, the occupational protests of the student movement in the late 1960s resembled workers’ strikes, and it is therein that Burden’s *Locker Piece* can be related to art-world protests

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<sup>148</sup> Ward, *No Innocent Bystanders*, p. 48.

<sup>149</sup> Alexander Alberro, “Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique,” in Alberro and Stimson, *Institutional Critique*, p. 12.

<sup>150</sup> Adler, *Artists in Offices*, p. 6.

from the same era, which make up the core of the canon of Institutional Critique.<sup>151</sup> Here the double meaning of the adjective “occupational”—related to both the occupation of space and to a profession or trade—is most operative, insofar as occupational protests on college campuses in the late 60s and early 70s questioned the occupations held by university faculty and staff, not to mention the students’ own future employability. Indeed, they were often referred to as “student strikes,” implying a disruption of the labor economy and all of the leftist political rhetoric and symbolism conjured by such an association. In solidarity with the student movement for civil rights and against the Vietnam War, the Art Workers’ Coalition and splinter groups, such as the Guerilla Art Action Group and Art Strike Against War, Racism, and Repression, used the workers’ strike as a means of calling attention to New York City museums’ social inequality and collusion in the war effort. The tradition of artists protesting museums in New York began conterminously with the student movement in the early 60s with Henry Flynt, Jack Smith, and Tony Conrad’s “From ‘Culture’ to Veramusement” picket in front of MoMA (February 27, 1963) and the “March for Freedom of Expression,” organized by Julian Beck and Diane di Prima, which culminated at Lincoln Center (April 29, 1964).<sup>152</sup> In Los Angeles, The Artists’ Protest Committee (APC) disrupted exhibition-opening events on La Cienega Boulevard’s gallery row, starting a picket line and stopping traffic (May 15 and 17, 1965). APC protests against the war in Vietnam continued on La Cienega into 1967.<sup>153</sup> In the spring of 1970, protest

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<sup>151</sup> See, for instance, Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); and Alan W. Moore, *Art Gangs: Protest and Counterculture in New York City* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2011).

<sup>152</sup> On the former, see Copeland and Lovay, *The Anti-Museum*, pp. 180–185. For the latter, see Michael Smith, “Drizzle Does Not Dim Ardor of Arts Marchers,” *The Village Voice* 9:28 (April 30, 1964), available online at <https://www.villagevoice.com/2009/07/08/allen-ginsberg-artists-march-for-freedom/> (accessed March 5, 2018).

<sup>153</sup> *Pacific Standard Time*, pp. 167, 172.

against the War reached a boiling point with the bombing of Cambodia and shootings at Kent and Jackson State, as previously noted. On May 17, Robert Morris successfully pressured the Whitney Museum to close his retrospective exhibition three weeks early in accordance with the “Art Strike” that he led at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on May 22. Morris and many of his colleagues renounced work and participation in the museum economy, demanding that institutions recognize a list of demands, including symbolically closing their doors in a one-day moratorium to raise awareness for the cause.<sup>154</sup>

As Blake Stimson has argued, the artistic practice of Institutional Critique was “a child of 1968” and the spirit of anti-institutionalism that it represented.<sup>155</sup> One of the discipline’s most emblematic works, Marcel Broodthaers’ *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1968–1972), in fact derived from the May 1968 student protests in Europe. As a “reluctant leader” of the movement that occupied the Salle des Marbres at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels in solidarity with the concurrent student uprising, Broodthaers first ordered the empty art crates that were featured in his *Section XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* as furniture for people to sit on during a meeting of protestors in his apartment.<sup>156</sup> With his *Musée d’Art Moderne* project, Broodthaers created a counter institution that critiqued the museum through the performance of functions proper to it: exhibiting, moving and storing displays, labeling, and publicity. With the full background behind Chris Burden’s *Five Day Locker Piece* now available, we can see that the work was equally born

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<sup>154</sup> Bryan-Wilson, “Hard Hats and Art Strikes,” pp. 350–353.

<sup>155</sup> Blake Stimson, “What was institutional critique?” in Alberro and Stimson, *Institutional Critique*, p. 20.

<sup>156</sup> Christian Rattemeyer, “Musée-Museum,” in *Marcel Broodthaers: A Retrospective*, eds Manuel J. Borja-Villel and Christophe Cherix (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2016), p. 166. See also, Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964–1976* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2010), p. 112.

from the student movement and translated agitation against the University into an artistic context in which issues of access to the art world and occupational training were at stake.

## Chapter Four

### F Space and *Shout Piece*, Santa Ana, 1971

At the beginning of 1971, as they were rounding out the final two quarters of their MFA program, the graduate students in the University of California, Irvine's Studio Art Department opened their own alternative gallery called F Space in a light-industrial park located in nearby Santa Ana. As discussed in the last chapter, the UCI MFA students were not provided with studios on campus, nor did they have their own graduate-student gallery. However, learning to run an exhibition space through participation in a graduate fine art program was a key pedagogical experience, which students would need if they intended to continue working in academia. Both schools that Burden attended, Pomona College and UCI, had separate, professional art galleries that were, at times, administered by experienced curators hired for the express purpose of running the gallery. In many cases, for instance those of Mowry Baden and John Coplans, the director of the gallery was often a high-ranking faculty member, who taught as well as chaired the department. At smaller colleges without such well-established galleries, faculty members could certainly expect that they would be called on to fill hybrid roles or share the duties of running the art gallery. They would also be responsible for imparting knowledge about exhibition practices to their students, and thus the student-run, graduate gallery was often an essential feature of MFA programs in fine art, whose intention was to train artists that were also accredited to hold faculty positions at the post-secondary level.

Galvanized by Chris Burden, who initiated the idea and organized his peers, the Irvine MFA students went in together on an industrial studio, where they could do virtually anything they wanted. Participants and observers characterized F Space as a kind of laboratory for



experimentation, for which there was adequate necessity. As discussed in the last chapter and further elaborated herein, the Irvine MFA students had several clashes with the Dean of the School of Fine Arts, Clayton Garrison, who more or less censored some of their work. At F Space, the members assumed an anything-goes attitude; permissiveness was part of their founding philosophy. The work made at F Space explored nudity, gunplay, soil, food, fire, electricity, and roller skates in installations and performances that would have pushed the limits of any art institution at the time. One of the quintessential functions of F Space was to allow students to make work that they could not make anywhere else. Artists who were otherwise accustomed to working in conventional mediums took advantage of the opportunity to create installations that utilized the whole space. Often pieces combined performance by the artist and audience interaction in installations, such as in Burden's *Being Photographed, Looking Out, Looking In* and *Shout Piece* (both 1971), which are discussed in this chapter in reference to the other work being presented at F Space.

In his first several pieces at F Space, Burden continued to explore the idea of the artist occupying the gallery space for extended durations, during which the audience would interact with him in some way. This was the thinking behind both *Five Day Locker Piece* and *Bicycle Piece*, which Burden performed at UCI the same year, as well as the later *Prelude to 220, or 110* (1971) and its pendant, *220* (1971), not to mention *Jaizu* (1972), which were all performed at F Space. In *Shout Piece*, Burden perched on a platform that hung from the ceiling, from which he bombarded anyone who came into the gallery with his own distorted voice, shouting, "Get out! Get the fuck out at once!" This chapter posits *Shout Piece* as a type of guerrilla theater, akin to the stunts of Yippie agitators Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman. If, as Allan Kaprow argued in his 1971 essay "The Education of the Un-Artist," Hoffman used "the intermedium of Happenings"

to carry out acts of protest, then Burden builds on that tradition by bringing Yippie-style troublemaking back into an art context.<sup>1</sup> Like *Locker Piece*, *Shout* had formal similarities with protest culture in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in that Burden used a public address (PA) system and dressed up like a Native American. Burden's absurd attire (shirtless, braided hair, face paint) was reminiscent of the Yippie predilection for costumes, and his yelling related to the anti-social quality of the Yippie ethos. The stance the artist assumes—that everyone must leave the gallery immediately—can also be linked, through Burden's dress, to New Communalism, which was a haven for dropouts from the social movements of the day. These back-to-the-land hippies were prime targets for Burden's particular brand of satire, in that their utopian dreams were just as fraught with hubris as the circumstances that produced them. Thus, *Shout Piece* paints a cynical picture of the protest movements waning in appeal and tending towards territorial pissing, which is precisely the situation that student activism faced in 1971.

## **F Space**

It initially took a while for the graduate students in UC Irvine's first MFA class in Studio Art to coalesce as a group, on the one hand because of the unorthodox nature of pedagogy in the department, and on the other because of the lack of studio and exhibition space available to them on campus. Instead, the students first came together afterhours at parties in Laguna Canyon, hosted by Nancy Buchanan and Robert Walker, and in the storied Venice Beach studios of their

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<sup>1</sup> Allan Kaprow, "The Education of the Un-Artist, Part I" (1971), in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 105. Around the same time, Les Levine also called Hoffman an "environmental theatrical" artist; see his essay "The Great American Art Machine," in *New Ideas in Art Education: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1973), p. 16. Recently, Michael Fallon commented that Burden's work, in general, captured the zeitgeist of the Yippie generation; see his *Creating the Future: Art and Los Angeles in the 1970s* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2014), p. 101.

professors, like Larry Bell.<sup>2</sup> As I discussed in the last chapter, building a community of artistic peers was one of the stated aims of the Irvine MFA program, and the new university's dearth of facilities necessitated that these burgeoning artists find a community outside the walls of university and fulfill that educational promise on their own. Influential professor Robert Irwin emphasized to the students, "the single most important factor for success in art and among the artists was mutual support."<sup>3</sup> Thus, in the second-to-last quarter of their master's program at UCI, Chris Burden and several of his classmates started an experimental gallery in Santa Ana, a larger, more urban city northwest of Irvine in Orange County, about a 15-minute drive from campus.

There are many words for this type of endeavor—artist-run, D.I.Y., cooperative, alternative— which Julia Bryan-Wilson defined as

an independent, community-based, artist-run venue that offers a place to make and view work outside of museums and for-profit galleries. Alternative spaces are often defiantly non-commercial, and they are fertile testing grounds that foster experimental art and reach new audiences.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most common expressions in the 1970s was to refer to the alternative spaces as laboratories for art in which collaborative practices would produce inherently superior results. Burden's colleague, Nancy Buchanan, described F Space as "a laboratory of 'pure research,'"

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<sup>2</sup> Amelia Jones, Oral history interview with Chris Burden, January 20, 2010, Getty Research Institute; Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Marcia Hafif, August 27, 2010, Laguna Art Museum; Barbara Smith, personal communication, October 26, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Smith, quoted in Melinda Wortz, *University of California Irvine, 1965–1975* (La Jolla: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1975), p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Introduction," in *Collaboration Labs: Southern California Artists and the Artist Space Movement*, ed. Alex Donis (Santa Monica: 18th Street Arts Center, 2011), p. 7.

picking up on the former's use of such terms to define his own practice.<sup>5</sup> This ethos of experimentation was wedded to a contemporaneous concept of inter-disciplinarity as the cornerstone of innovation, which had swept the nation during a fervent period of post-secondary educational reform in the late 1960s.<sup>6</sup> Howard Singerman has written that the alternative space movement in the 1970s was a by-product of changes in the standards for artistic accreditation that took place a decade earlier, when the professional MFA became required to teach in a growing number of fine art programs in colleges and universities across the country. Once the number of college-educated artists exceeded the number of teaching jobs that were available, Singerman explains, MFA-holders sought to recreate the communities and opportunities (to exhibit and receive feedback) that they had enjoyed in school, by founding alternative galleries that functioned like cooperatives. He said, "Schools have not only created the constituency of alternative spaces, they have also certainly informed the structure and desires of the new spaces and their artists."<sup>7</sup> Singerman contended that students transferred knowledge about curating, construction, maintenance, and management, gained through the experience of working in a university gallery, to the alternative space. In the case of UCI, the MFA students were not afforded such opportunities on campus, and thus F Space served as a proxy for the foundational experience of running a gallery that was part and parcel of the master's degree education, and something the students would definitely be asked to do as future college professors.

An F Space mission statement, written by an unknown member of the collective, reads,

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<sup>5</sup> Nancy Buchanan, "A Few Snapshots from F Space Gallery, 1514 E. Edinger, Santa Ana," in *In the Canyon, Revise the Canon: Utopian Knowledge, Radical Pedagogy, and Artist-Run Community Art Space in Southern California* (Annecy, France: ESAAA Editions, 2015), p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Levine, "Alternative Spaces and the University," in *The New Artspace* (Los Angeles: The Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, 1978), pp. 28–29.

<sup>7</sup> Howard Singerman, "Opting Out and Buying In," *LAICA Journal* 19 (June–July 1978), p. 41.

F Space is a cooperative gallery which was organized by a group of young artists [...], as a place to exhibit our work outside our studios. We feel that most museums and commercial galleries, because of political and economic reasons, place severe restrictions on the nature of the work shown.<sup>8</sup>

This text is not in Burden's words and was likely composed by one of his more committed colleagues, such as Barbara Smith or Nancy Buchanan. Its brash defiance of museums and galleries is a crystalline manifestation of alternative-space posturing, as these young artists had yet to engage very much with the art establishment in Orange County and beyond. When they did, the experience could be far from restrictive, which was the case with Burden's first institutional exhibition at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art.<sup>9</sup> The museum was liberal enough to allow audience interaction with his dangerous apparatus pieces, something that would be unheard of in this day and age. However, the most notable gallery in Orange County at the time, Jack Glenn in Corona del Mar, while it showed the most avant-garde painting and sculpture from New York, would not give performance art a chance because it was not a commercially viable medium. On account of that fact, Barbara Smith sent guerilla performers from the MFA class to the gallery during business hours to "lie down on the floor and roll [around...] or jump up and down."<sup>10</sup> That said, Glenn and his wife Connie were close with and supportive of the UCI

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<sup>8</sup> "F Space," *Avalanche Magazine Archives*, II.114, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

<sup>9</sup> The exhibition was called "Body Movements" and it ran March 27–April 25, 1971.

<sup>10</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Barbara Smith, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum. See also Cole Akers, "Barbara T. Smith," in Grace Kook-Anderson, ed., *Best Kept Secret: UCI and the Development of Contemporary Art in Southern California 1964–1971* (Laguna: Laguna Art Museum, 2011), p. 94.

MFA students, showing several of the artists who worked in traditional media, as well as guiding their clients to visit F Space.<sup>11</sup>

Although it does not name the university, the F Space mission statement also makes sense as an affront to the authoritarian attitude of UC Irvine's Dean of Fine Arts, Clayton Garrison, who, as recounted in the previous chapter, put several restrictions on graduate-student work when Burden was getting his MFA. In a later interview, Richard Newton, another Irvine student at the time, directly attributed the existence of F Space to Garrison's reticence to let the graduate students have their own gallery on campus.<sup>12</sup> A graduate gallery was established at UCI out of necessity when the first class of MFA students were graduating in the spring of 1971, and it was the site of Burden's legendary *Five Day Locker Piece*, which took issue with the availability of space on campus and the freedom of the students to pursue radical methods and mediums (see chapter 3).

Singerman attributed proclamations like the F Space mission statement to a pronounced "moral tenor" to the way alternative spaces justified their existence in the 1970s. With respect to their position with relation to the art world, alternative spaces located themselves "outside or beside a system seen as both outdated and corrupt [...] closed and intransigent."<sup>13</sup> In Singerman's view, this brand of self-fashioning had political implications related to the 1960s student uprisings and the further distrust of institutions that carried over into the 1970s. In the case of F Space, political statements resounded in the performance and installation work of

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<sup>11</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Connie Glenn, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum.

<sup>12</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Richard Newton and Tony Rouff, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum.

<sup>13</sup> Singerman, "Opting Out," p. 40.

numerous artists. Richard Newton further described F Space as participating in “the whole milieu of that time: the sense of participating, the sense of going into the streets, the sense of being whole in one.”<sup>14</sup> Even if the political messages of the F Space artists have somewhat faded over time, the cooperative spirit and the premium placed on engagement, interaction, and commitment to ideals still resonates today through the rich tradition of alternative spaces in the U.S.

In addition to being “married” to colleges and universities, the alternative space movement was based on a radical change in mediums, from painting and sculpture to “performance, intermedia, and installations.”<sup>15</sup> Singerman observed that, historically, performance art was “the catalyst of modern art movements,” and, in the case of F Space, it was performance art by Barbara Smith, Nancy Buchanan, and Chris Burden that put it on the map. Michael Fallon recently wrote, “these artists’ seeming ambivalence toward the uncertain Los Angeles art market of the early 1970s would eventually become a distinct advantage.”<sup>16</sup> At F Space, they did not have to wait long for critical acclaim in the local press. Enthusiastic art critic Phyllis Lutjeans, who worked at the nearby Newport Harbor Art Museum and would later be the unwitting participant in Burden’s *TV Hijack* (1972), raved that F Space was “the first and *only* avant garde gallery” in Orange County, snubbing Jack Glenn in the process.<sup>17</sup> She went on to paint a picture of a conservative commercial gallery scene that would not support the kind of experimentation envisioned by the students of UC Irvine, and moreover the need for “a platform on which to express and exchange ideas,” amongst themselves. Writing during Chris Burden’s

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<sup>14</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Richard Newton, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum.

<sup>15</sup> Singerman, “Opting Out,” p. 40.

<sup>16</sup> Fallon, *Creating the Future*, p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> Phyllis J. Lutjeans, “All About Art,” *The Irvine World News* (February 18, 1971), p. 5.

first solo exhibition at F Space—and only the gallery’s second show—Lutjeans anticipated non-visual and experiential artwork from the burgeoning venue. Needless to say, she expected a lot from the young vanguard, whom she hoped would inject the local art scene with new blood.

The argument presented in the previous chapter rests on the fact that UC Irvine was unable to provide its first class of MFA students with studios on campus, due to the school’s recent foundation (1965) and slowly evolving physical plant. Nancy Buchanan said, “Luckily, there were many nearby industrial units available at a reasonable cost, and all of us who wished to secure one found adequate workspace.”<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of their second year at UCI, Burden propositioned his colleagues to go in with him on a space in the same complex in Santa Ana where he rented his own studio (Burden was two doors down in unit H). His idea was that if twelve people each paid one month’s rent of \$100, then they could have the space for a year and exhibit their work on their own terms.<sup>19</sup> The facility at 1519 E. Edinger, called Saddleback Industrial Park, had just gone up near the house Burden rented, and he was one of the first tenants.<sup>20</sup> Barbara Smith explained that in Irvine, Costa Mesa, and Santa Ana, residential and light-industrial zoning was mixed, because these areas were unincorporated parts of Orange County at the time.<sup>21</sup> Saddleback, like other light-industrial parks in Southern California, was cheaply constructed from prefabricated material and featured rows of workshops that had roll-up

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<sup>18</sup> Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots,” pp. 50, 54.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden, April 14, 2011, Laguna Art Museum.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara Smith, personal communication.



garage doors, organized around a central, drive-in courtyard (Figs 61–62).<sup>22</sup> The individual studios were approximately 1000 ft.<sup>2</sup> and designated alphabetically. Hence, the name of the Irvine students' gallery, F Space, was derived from this system of industrial classification. Thomas Crow observed that the naming of F Space “bore all the traits of the impersonal formal order espoused by contemporaneous Conceptual artists in their charts, grids, and typewriter sheets.”<sup>23</sup>

At the same time F Space heralded a new order in the fine arts (dematerialization and administration), it also looked back and was firmly rooted in the tradition of West Coast Minimalism, of which the faculty in Studio Art at UC Irvine was emblematic. John McCracken, who taught at UCI in its inaugural year (1965–1966), said that one of reasons the art school at the university worked was “the local small industry environment peculiar to the [...] area.”<sup>24</sup> F Space's suburban setting in Orange County calls to mind the proliferation of such complexes, which were populated by, among other things, boat builders, auto restorers, and machinists.<sup>25</sup> These professions, as well as hobbies such as surfboard shaping, were the cottage industries of Southern California that are most associated with the so-called “finish fetish” refinement of sculptors like Irvine's McCracken, Craig Kauffman, and Tony DeLap. The types of small businesses that inhabited the light-industrial parks of Orange County were imbued with craftsmanship and the for-hire or project-based labor of their tenants. Burden recounted that

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<sup>22</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden; Thomas Garver, personal communication, November 3, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Crow, “Mind-Body Problem: Chris Burden's Performances,” in *Chris Burden: Extreme Measures*, ed. Lisa Phillips (New York: New Museum, 2013), p. 48.

<sup>24</sup> John McCracken, quoted in Wortz, *University of California Irvine*, p. 83.

<sup>25</sup> Barbara Rose, *Tony DeLap: Painting, Sculpture & Works on Paper, 1962–2013* (Santa Fe: Radius, 2014), p. 36.

when he was making his apparatus sculptures at Irvine, it was easy for him to have things fabricated, simply by hiring his neighbors with machine shops and other tools.<sup>26</sup> Tony Rouff, who also attended Irvine and participated in one of Burden's performances at F Space (220, October 9, 1971), kept his racecar and presumably worked on it in his similar 1000 ft.<sup>2</sup> studio in Costa Mesa.<sup>27</sup> In the early 1970s, Lewis Baltz, who was a graduate student and then professor at Pomona College, set about photographing such spaces in his "landmark" series, "The New Industrial Parks near Irvine, California,"<sup>28</sup> a project whose "deadpan" photography and focus on functional architecture in the L.A. area recalled Ed Ruscha's seminal publications of the late 1960s (Fig. 63).<sup>29</sup>

There ended up being only 11 original members of the F Space cooperative, who comprised the majority of the first MFA class from Irvine.<sup>30</sup> Each member initially contributed one month's rent and exhibiting artists paid extra to cover publicity, installation fees, and

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<sup>26</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden.

<sup>27</sup> Rouff also lived in his studio ca. 1969–1972. See Kook-Anderson, Oral history with Richard Newton and Tony Rouff.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Crow was the first to make the connection between Baltz's photos and F Space; see "Mind-Body Problem," p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere, Baltz's "bleak" images of generic industrial sprawl have been compared to John Baldessari's photographic paintings from the same era, which focus on mundane, even shabby, and distinctly un-romantic corners of his hometown, San Diego; see Howard N. Fox, "Tremors in Paradise, 1960–1980," in *Made in California: Art, Image, and Identity, 1900–2000*, eds. Stephanie Barron, Sheri Bernstein, and Ilene Susan Fort (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2000), p. 199.

<sup>30</sup> They were Gary Beydler, Nancy Buchanan, Chris Burden, Bruce Dunlap, Kathy Mennealy, Debbie Peck, Larry Shep, Barbara Smith, Robert Walker, George Williams, and Margaret Wilson.

utilities. Nancy Buchanan said F Space “was amazingly democratic and simply run.”<sup>31</sup> Once the students had established the premise and the scheduling of the space, all they had to do was let it play out over the initial 6-month period of 1971, when all of the members exhibited in one or two-person shows, as well as the opening group exhibition in January 1971. Burden said,

It was sort of like a neutral territory. It was pretty loose. [...] There was no one person in charge. There were some hassles about cleaning up sometimes, but other than that it was a good thing. You could do anything you wanted to: cut holes in the ceiling, chop holes in the wall, mutilate the place in any fashion you wanted to.<sup>32</sup>

As he suggests, even amidst the liberating environment of the collective, F Space did not always run smoothly. From the audio tape that Burden recorded during *Five Day Locker Piece*, in which he discussed the management of F Space with his colleagues, it is clear that the students had not devised an adequate system for scheduling attendants to open the gallery. During exhibitions, F Space was open Thursday and Friday evenings, as well as Saturday and Sunday afternoons.<sup>33</sup> When Burden entered the locker, a solo exhibition by Gary Beydler had just wrapped up at F Space, and it appears that some shifts were missed over the weekend, resulting in the gallery being closed during its posted hours. Buchanan later wrote that an important aspect of the learning experience encapsulated by F Space involved working as a gallery attendant, because the students learned to handle the public and talk about other artists’ work.<sup>34</sup> Thus, sitting in the

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<sup>31</sup> Amelia Jones, Oral history interview with Nancy Buchanan, February–March 2010, Getty Research Institute, Institutional Archives.

<sup>32</sup> *Willoughby Sharp Videoviews Chris Burden* (New York: Electronic Arts Intermix, 1975 [1973]) 27:45 min., b&w, sound.

<sup>33</sup> Marjie Driscoll, “Zany Gallery Offers Art Without Price Tags,” *Los Angeles Times* (June 2, 1971).

<sup>34</sup> Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots,” p. 51.

gallery served a pedagogical, as well as a pragmatic function, and was integral to the cooperative nature of F Space.

For the remaining year of its life as an alternative gallery (July 1971–July 1972), F Space hosted short-term performances by Burden and several of his associates, as well as occasional exhibitions by members and invited artists. Moira Roth wrote that after the first run of exhibitions, F Space “was increasingly available to anyone willing to chip in on the rent.”<sup>35</sup> According to documents contained in Barbara Smith’s archives, F Space faced fundraising challenges around the beginning of 1972, when the initial rent money dried up. The collective attempted to regroup by getting founding members to recommit, as well as soliciting new members.<sup>36</sup> F Space hosted programming through February 1972, at which point it appears to have gone dormant for several months. The gallery had its last hurrah in June and July of that year, when the collective co-presented Thomas Garver’s exhibition “The New Art in Orange County” with the Newport Harbor Art Museum. Over the course of about 40 days, F Space hosted a whirlwind of twelve individual solo presentations, each lasting 1–3 days.<sup>37</sup> Here the regular members of the co-op shared their space with other artists working in non-traditional formats, including sound and film installation.

After “The New Art in Orange County,” F Space shuttered its doors in lieu of another DIY gallery, Newspace, which was operated by painter Jean St. Pierre, who had studied at CalArts and was acquainted with the artists of F Space. Newspace was initially located in a

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<sup>35</sup> Moira Roth, “Toward a History of California Performance: Part Two,” *Arts Magazine* 52 (June 1978), p. 115.

<sup>36</sup> Barbara T. Smith papers, box 163, folder 4, Getty Research Institute.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas H. Garver, ed., *The New Art in Orange Country* (Newport Beach: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1972).

similar industrial space in Newport Beach (adjacent to Irvine, due southwest), but St. Pierre notably tried to run a commercial gallery, rather than a cooperative. In 1973, Newspace relocated to West Hollywood and in 1975 Joni Gordon bought out St. Pierre and ended up having much more success with the gallery. Burden had one solo exhibition at Newspace (*B.C. Mexico*, May 25–June 10, 1973), showed in at least one group exhibition there, and the gallery distributed his self-published catalog, *Chris Burden 71–73* (1974). Under St. Pierre, Newspace exhibited several UC Irvine graduates, including F Space members Gary Beydler, Barbara Smith, and Robert Walker, as well as John Baldessari and Paul McCarthy. During Gordon’s tenure, Newspace thrived until 2006, showing quintessential L.A. artists, such as Mike Kelley and Judy Fiskin.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, even though it survived for only a couple years, F Space’s legacy of innovation was carried on in subsequent iterations of the gallery, which played a formative role in the careers of multiple artists of note.

As many, including the students themselves, have observed, the work of the Irvine graduates was “extremely eclectic,”<sup>39</sup> “diverse and unrelated,” and even “disparate.”<sup>40</sup> A lot of the work coming out of the Studio Art Department at Irvine was fairly conservative in nature, despite the progressive methodologies championed by the faculty. As the review of their MFA thesis exhibition in 1971 suggested, some of the students “worked over tried-and-true paths to arrive at the same solutions as their precursors.”<sup>41</sup> Imitation came mostly in the form of work that

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<sup>38</sup> On Newspace, see Oral history interview with Joni Gordon, July 8–September 23, 2002, Archives of American Art; Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots,” pp. 53–54.

<sup>39</sup> Oral history interview with Nancy Buchanan and Robert Walker, n.d. (ca. 2010–2011), Laguna Art Museum.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Frank, “Context, Attitude, Community: The Early Years of the UCI Art Department,” in Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>41</sup> James Ervin, “Masters of Intention,” *New University* 3:46 (May 14, 1971), pp. 6–7.

emulated minimalist aesthetics and, in particular, the “finish fetish” characteristics of the movement’s West Coast adherents, whom made up the bulk of UCI’s faculty. One of the graduate students, Don Karwelis, exhibited a sculpted-glass installation at F Space, not unlike his professor Larry Bell. Larry Shep worked in clay, demonstrating the influence of two of Southern California’s masters of the medium—both professors at Irvine—John Mason in terms of its size and Ken Price in its figuration and glazing. Shep and other members of F Space, including Gary Beydler (who later worked in performance, photography, and film, but was still a painter at the time) and Robert Walker (painter), still worked in traditional formats upon graduating from Irvine, although through their involvement with the collective gallery they began to work in ever more ephemeral arrangements.

Innovation at F Space showed up first and foremost in the adoption of non-traditional mediums for sculpture and installation work. For instance, in 1972 Bruce Dunlap, the lesser-known marksman who shot Burden with a .22 caliber rifle in *Shoot* (1971), arrayed slices of all different kinds of bread, covering the floor and walls of F Space in a kind of decomposing minimalist grid (Fig. 64). That same year, his colleague Kathy Mennealy hauled 10 tons of earth into the space and spread it across the floor in a similarly gridded pattern, in a prefiguration of Walter De Maria’s *Earth Room* (1977).<sup>42</sup> Nancy Buchanan’s graduate work included some scatter pieces made from human and animal hair, which were reminiscent of Robert Morris’s anti-form sculpture, but with distinctly gendered or feminist overtones.<sup>43</sup> Buchanan was explicit about trying to forge a kind of Minimalism by other means, mainly through her selection of materials. Like Morris’s famous interactive retrospective at the Tate Gallery in London (1971),

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<sup>42</sup> On Dunlap and Mennealy’s installations, see Garver, *The New Art*, n.p.

<sup>43</sup> E.g. *Twin Corners* (1970); see Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, p. 47.

Buchanan encouraged the audience to walk on and feel the difference between the human and non-human (dog) hair in her MFA thesis project, *Hair Piece* (1971–1972; Fig. 65).<sup>44</sup> Critic Barbara Rose, who was not impressed with Burden’s *Locker Piece*, was also disdainful of *Hairpiece*, which Buchanan showed in room 167 of the Fine Arts Building the week before Burden had the space. Rose’s disgust brought to light the abject nature of the hair clippings and focused attention upon Buchanan’s critique of Minimalism. Buchanan has explained that freedom from the traditional artistic mediums of painting and sculpture opened up her understanding of the work of art as having social significance. She said, “I realized that if you expand this notion of art, including context, then you can include the social as well.”<sup>45</sup> In the 1971 MFA thesis exhibition held in UC Irvine’s art gallery, Buchanan exhibited an embroidered towel made from tampons and one line of her graduate work was preoccupied with using so-called “women’s work” critically, in a fine art context. As noted in the last chapter, Buchanan was a committed activist in her roughly 6 years at Irvine (B.F.A. 1969; M.F.A. 1971), and “[s]he believed that ‘we were going to end war, sexism, racism, inequality, poverty, hunger, homelessness.’”<sup>46</sup> Through her engagement with F Space, Buchanan transitioned to performance art and her later work at F Space, notably *Hair Transplant* (w/ Robert Walker, 1972), and the Woman’s Building, is foundational for the feminist art canon.

Beyond static installations, which were to be viewed from a comfortable remove, several of the more experimental projects at F Space involved the participation of the artists and/or the audience. Buchanan’s earliest performative piece was the interactive installation, *At Home* (May

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<sup>44</sup> Jones, Oral history interview with Nancy Buchanan.

<sup>45</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Nancy Buchanan.

<sup>46</sup> Nancy Buchanan, quoted in Janet Blake, “Nancy Buchanan,” in Kook-Anderson, *Best Kept Secret*, p. 46.

20–June 6, 1971), which she made in collaboration with her partner at the time, Robert Walker (Fig. 66). Together the artists filled part of the floor and covered the walls with heaps of shredded newspaper (purchased from a recycling facility), creating a sort of hamster- or birdcage, which alluded to heterosexual, domestic normativity. Buchanan referred to *At Home* as “a kind of nest,” which implies nesting, hominess, and settling down.<sup>47</sup> In the turbulent late 1960s and early 1970s, when gender roles were being reexamined and domesticity was a favored pressure point for those advocating for women’s rights, *At Home* walked the fine line between an utopic/dystopic romantic partnership. As an undergraduate, Buchanan gave birth to her son and suffered the loss of her mother, who lived in nearby Laguna Canyon. She, perhaps more than the other students, had firsthand experience trying to manage a non-traditional household, which came with very adult responsibilities.<sup>48</sup> The fact that she collaborated on the piece with her real-life domestic partner brings home the social significance of the installation. However, *At Home* was also a playful piece, which encouraged the audience, through its sheer materiality, to “burrow into the paper” and carve out their own nest.<sup>49</sup> Buchanan recalls that, after the profile of F Space appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, their audience temporarily swelled. In particular, she recounted the reaction of one woman, who was ecstatic with the piece, laughing and rolling around in the installation.<sup>50</sup>

*At Home* began its run at F Space on the day the MFA thesis exhibition at UCI closed (May 20), and it has important parallels to Burden’s concurrent work for that show, *Bicycle*

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<sup>47</sup> Nancy Buchanan, personal communication, March 15, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Nancy Buchanan; Oral history interview with Nancy Buchanan and Robert Walker; Blake, “Nancy Buchanan,” p. 46.

<sup>49</sup> Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots,” p. 52; Nancy Buchanan, personal communication.

<sup>50</sup> Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots,” p. 52.



*Piece*. Like its pendant, *Five Day Locker Piece*, *Bicycle Piece* entailed the physical occupation of space in the university, specifically a 1-foot wide course or track that was laid out in black along a serpentine and circuitous route through the gallery, out the back door of the building, and then around and through the front door again (Figs 58–59). Burden rode his ten-speed bicycle around the gallery from opening until closing for the full run of the exhibition (2 weeks). In addition to the path, Burden posted signs in the gallery that read, “Danger Do Not Stand on Black Roadway Because High Speed Bicycle.”<sup>51</sup> Both the designated route and the signs were concessions to which Burden acceded so that he would be allowed to perform the piece (see chapter 3). One day, Burden accidentally ran down professor Barbara Rose as she and Robert Morris were viewing the thesis exhibition. Burden said,

I came whipping around the corner and there she was standing there on the thing, and I couldn't help from hitting her, knocked her down. [...] It wasn't malicious or intentional in any [way]. I had no control over it. I mean that's why I had these Day-Glo signs that said, “Stay Off The Track High Speed Bicycle Coming Through.”<sup>52</sup>

It seems that the critic, who, while she taught at Irvine, insisted that painting was dead, was so engrossed with what was on the walls that she neglected her surroundings.<sup>53</sup> Although this incident was likely inadvertent, as Burden claimed, he nonetheless spoke about *Bicycle Piece* as being “fairly aggressive” for that very reason. He stated that it was through that aggression that the piece was intended to distinguish itself from the work of his peers.

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<sup>51</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Oral history interview with Nancy Buchanan and Robert Walker; Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Connie Glenn; Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Robert Walker, November 9, 2010, Laguna Art Museum.

I think that piece had to do with making a point at that time, which was that the other artists in the show had paintings on the walls[, but] this piece was [...] active, and in a sense aggressive, as opposed to being passive and on the wall.<sup>54</sup>

If Burden's work was aggressive, and even perilous, Buchanan and Walker's installation was its polar opposite, providing instead a nurturing environment where such risk was out of the question, and shelter was easily procured amongst the shredded paper. Thus, *At Home* acted as a kind of salve for *Bicycle Piece* and demonstrated the way in which extreme personalities balance each other out in collective or cooperative situations.

It was in fact Chris Burden who, even before *Five Day Locker Piece*, introduced the idea of the artist occupying the gallery with his first piece at F Space, which was subsequently titled *Being Photographed, Looking Out, Looking In* (February 4–20, 1971, Fig. 67). *Being Photographed* was a three-part, interactive piece, which began when the unsuspecting audience stepped through the door of F Space and the gallery attendant snapped their photo with a Polaroid camera and then pinned the print to the wall (Fig. 68).<sup>55</sup> In this, only the second exhibition at F Space, Burden fully involved the gallery attendant in the piece, because in addition to taking the photographs, the attendant had to be ready at all times in anticipation of the next person to walk through the door. In a performance relic for the piece that Burden created in 2006, each photo was arrayed in a grid, like a calendar accounting for the attendance each day the gallery was open. There were 140 Polaroids in total—and even more visitors, because some were shot in groups—documenting a remarkable amount of traffic for a brand new, alternative gallery. The framed relic is over 11 feet long and its calendrical layout must reflect the way in which the Polaroids were displayed during the exhibition.

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<sup>54</sup> Donald Carroll, "Masterpieces of Modern Art" interview with Chris Burden, n.d. [1974], Chris Burden Estate.

<sup>55</sup> Buchanan, "A Few Snapshots," p. 51.

The second facet of the piece, *Looking Out*, begged the viewer to climb a rickety, 14-foot, A-frame ladder and then wriggle or “slither” onto a 4 x 8-foot, wooden platform coated with white Formica, which was suspended several feet from the ceiling beams by four chains. There, Burden installed a pyramidal scope, with a rubber eyepiece that fit snugly around the eyes, pointing down from the ceiling, where he had cut a rectangular hole in the roof. Turning on their back, the participating viewer had to carefully inch along the platform until their head was underneath the scope, through which they could contemplate the sky, the stars, and the passing clouds. Burden said, “basically it looked like the sky was racing by you, because [...] you didn’t have any peripheral vision,”<sup>56</sup> and he later wrote, “the sensation is, floating, high speed travel through the sky.”<sup>57</sup> The artist was the first to admit that it was “a little scary being on your back”<sup>58</sup> up on the platform, and that “participating in the piece was both difficult and frightening.”<sup>59</sup> Suspended by chains, the viewing platform swayed slightly, and when one of the chains would lock up under the viewer’s weight, it could jerk enough to eject the person perched on the slippery Formica. “Bob Walker recalled being terrified while navigating the rickety ladder and slippery platform,” wrote Nancy Buchanan. She said, “It was perhaps luck that nobody fell off the platform to the concrete floor below.”<sup>60</sup>

In addition to the shifting platform, the experience of looking out of the scope was sensorially disorienting and thus posed danger to the viewer. Thomas Garver, who served as the

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<sup>56</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden.

<sup>57</sup> Fred Hoffman, ed., *Chris Burden* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), p. 19.

<sup>58</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Chris Burden.

<sup>59</sup> Chris Burden, “Explanation of Some Recent Pieces,” unpublished document, Chris Burden Estate.

<sup>60</sup> Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots,” p. 51.

director of the Newport Harbor Art Museum at the time and hired Burden and some of his colleagues to install art at the museum, said that the rubber eyepiece on the scope totally blocked out any stray or ambient light. Thus, the piece functioned as a semi-sensory deprivation experience, which played upon the disjunction between a restricted visual field and the body's altogether unrelated experience.<sup>61</sup> Garver went in at night and said that he could feel a breath of cool air while gazing up at the stars. He commented that the experience was quite disjunctive, given the clapboard, industrial construction of the building. "It was a transcendent experience to then see the majesty of the night sky through the viewing device."<sup>62</sup> The precarious position of the body and the restricted vision afforded by the scope could also be potentially disturbing to the viewer upon looking away and realizing where they were. Visceral physical reactions to the juxtaposition between such sensorially distinct experiences are not unheard of, and could have been detrimental to the viewer suspended 15 feet above the concrete floor. As Garver describes it, though, Burden's *Looking Out* was more akin to James Turrell's later "Skyspaces" (ca. mid-1970s), however rudimentarily. In that it used partial sensory deprivation to achieve a heightened perception of the natural world, the *Looking Out* segment of this piece could, like *Locker Piece*, be retrospectively considered as a work of the Light and Space movement.

The third part of the piece, *Looking In*, involved the artist's occupation of the small bathroom (with sink and toilet) in the back corner of F Space. The bathroom door was locked, but Burden installed a reverse fish-eye lens (standard on exterior doors) on it, inviting the audience to look in upon him. Inside the 4 x 5-foot space, the viewer would have seen Burden, fully clothed, sitting on the lid of the toilet, motionless. Burden wrote that he "could not tell

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<sup>61</sup> Fred Hoffman discusses this aspect in his description of the piece; see Hoffman, *Chris Burden*, p. 17.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Garver, personal communication.

whether [he] was being observed or not,” thus turning the viewer into a voyeur.<sup>63</sup> In play with the first section of work, where the audience was photographed, the *Looking In* component “explor[es] the two sides of relations of power” by making the “audience, but also himself, explicitly vulnerable.”<sup>64</sup> Amelia Jones contended that in accepting the invitation of the viewing apparatuses, the audience complicity entered a state of vulnerability through which the confined artist relates to them. It is to share in the vulnerability that the piece engenders, which constitutes the relational aspect of the work.

For much of his career, Burden did not acknowledge *Being Photographed*, *Looking Out*, *Looking In* as a mature work, as it fell somewhere in between his apparatus pieces and his performance-sculpture, *Five Day Locker Piece*. One of the reasons Burden reinvigorated the work for his 2007 catalogue raisonné was that “using the bathroom as a [prefabricated] container” prefigured his use of the locker in the subsequent piece.<sup>65</sup> The editor of Burden’s catalog, Fred Hoffman, as well as Barbara Smith, who owns part of the work, both consider *Being Photographed* to be Burden’s first performance.<sup>66</sup> If so, it also set the stage for Burden’s fourth performance, *Shout Piece* (discussed below), in which this time Burden occupied the platform high above the floor. Though no images of the installation for *Being Photographed* were taken, an archival photograph of *Shout* shows both the situation of the platform, as well as the old ladder that was used to mount it (Fig. 69).

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<sup>63</sup> Hoffman, *Chris Burden*, p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> Amelia Jones, “Chris Burden’s Bridges, Relationality, and the Conceptual Body, in Phillips, *Chris Burden*, pp. 129–130.

<sup>65</sup> Andrew McClintock, “In Conversation with Chris Burden,” *San Francisco Arts Quarterly* (October 5, 2013), <http://sfaq.us/2013/10/in-conversation-with-chris-burden> (accessed March 28, 2018).

<sup>66</sup> Hoffman, *Chris Burden*, p. 17; Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots,” p. 52.

Barbara Smith was by far the most experienced artist amongst the founders of F Space.<sup>67</sup> In the mid-1960s, Smith entered the art world as a patron of, and docent at the Pasadena Art Museum (PAM), and she quickly became a known quantity in the L.A. scene. Upon starting at UCI, Smith was already social acquaintances with several of the faculty members, as well as UC San Diego (UCSD)'s Allan Kaprow, who was a close friend. In 1968, Smith took a workshop led by Alex Hay at Dwan Gallery in LA, which introduced her to the world of performance art and led to her participation in an Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT) program at Caltech (California Institute of Technology) the following year.<sup>68</sup> All throughout graduate school, Smith made performance work in patrons' homes, on the beach, in her studio, as well as at institutions such as UCSD and PAM. Her signature work from the period was the interactive sculptural installation, *Field Piece* (1968–1972), which was fully installed at F Space (June 10–28, 1971), Cirrus Gallery (September 9–27, 1971), and the Long Beach Museum of Art (March 26–April 23, 1972). *Field Piece* was composed of 180 monumental fiberglass blades that resembled “a forest of grass” for miniaturized people (Fig. 70).<sup>69</sup> The blades were translucent and connected to a grid with computer switches on the floor. As the participant walked through the installation, the blades would illuminate as they passed.<sup>70</sup> The sound component of the piece was the continuous humming of a four-channel sine wave oscillator with overtones and undertones produced by a tape loop. Although it premiered at F Space the summer after Smith, Burden, and Buchanan

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<sup>67</sup> Barbara Smith, quoted in Wortz, *University of California Irvine*, p. 79.

<sup>68</sup> On the pieces that Smith and others performed for Hay's workshop, see Roth, “Toward a History of California Performance,” p. 115.

<sup>69</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Marcia Hafif.

<sup>70</sup> Alex Donis, “California Dreamin’: Performance, Media Art, and History as Gossip,” in Donis, *Collaboration Labs*, p. 34; Buchanan, “A Few Snapshots,” p. 51.

graduated, the UCI MFA students first encountered *Field Piece* in the artist's Costa Mesa home/studio, when she hosted Larry Bell's sculpture class in the fall of 1970 for a review of her progress. Like other Irvine fine art faculty members, Bell conducted graduate "master classes" by visiting his students' off-campus studios and critiquing their work one-on-one, as well as with a whole class. The evening Smith invited her class over, as well as when *Field Piece* was exhibited at F Space, the artist staged a happening of sorts, where everyone was required to disrobe in order to interact with the piece. Bell, Burden, and the other students all complied, as did cameramen Richard Newton and Charles Hill, who documented the interactions for a series of films related to, and exhibited with the work.<sup>71</sup> Curator Alex Donis recently called this event "a nude sit-in," picking up on the generational trope of occupational protest, which enveloped Irvine along with the entire University of California system in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Perhaps it was a protest in advance of the offense, because when UCI Dean Clayton Garrison heard about the comingling of nude students and their professor at a school-sanctioned meeting, he forbade the MFA students from using live nude bodies in their subsequent work. In fact, it was this prohibition, among others that Garrison doled out, which led Buchanan and Walker to stage a photo for the *Los Angeles Times* in which they appeared to be naked in their *At Home* installation at F Space, as a cheeky farewell to the mutually disliked administrator (Fig. 66).<sup>72</sup>

By all accounts, F Space was an incredibly idyllic situation for all of those involved. For instance, Burden's uncharacteristically cheery assessment of F Space was that it had been "a very meaningful experience to all of us. Nobody has any negative feelings—even the problems

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<sup>71</sup> Kook-Anderson, Oral history with Richard Newton and Tony Rouff; Barbara Smith, personal communication.

<sup>72</sup> Driscoll, "Zany Gallery"; Buchanan, "A Few Snapshots," p. 52, n. 6.

have been positive.”<sup>73</sup> The common refrain of those who remember the first MFA class at UC Irvine was that the students were all very supportive of one another. While it was circumstance that brought them together, it was exuberance and determination that possessed them to strike out on their own and found an alternative exhibition space. Although many of the members of F Space were quick to point out that their work was heterogeneous, the group shared certain community values, which they have voiced clearly and with purpose in interviews over the years. The installations discussed above evidence the artistic ideals fostered by the avant-garde members of the collective. In particular, the work of Burden, Buchanan/Walker, and Smith used participation as a means of engaging more than just the visual sensorium. F Space artist George Williams said, “We are aiming for action and reaction between the artist’s ideas and the person [who experiences the work].”<sup>74</sup> Sound, changing light, and tactile elements expanded notions of medium specificity and the objective work of art. Most importantly, F Space was a venue for experimentation, where the Irvine MFA students could flaunt the rules and restrictions that the university placed on their work. One way in which all four of these artists tested the limits of the university was through the occupation of space, in the nude, or, in Burden’s case, locked alone inside a pre-existing enclosure. F Space was an outlet for work that was too risky for the college campus, and thus it served an important function in the education and development of UCI’s first MFA class.

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<sup>73</sup> Driscoll, “Zany Gallery.”

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



## *Shout Piece*

In the aforementioned *Los Angeles Times* feature article on F Space from June 1971, more than one of the members postulated that after the summer shows, scheduled through July, the gallery would probably close.<sup>75</sup> By that date, each of the 11 founders would have each participated in one solo or two-person show, as well as the opening group show, which featured work by all of the members. Most of them also would have graduated from UCI by that time, but the space remained open and was predominantly used by Burden through the end of 1971, when he created the seminal performances *Prelude to 220, or 110* (September 10–12), *220* (October 9), and *Shoot* (November 19). The first performance in this series at F Space was *Shout Piece* (August 21). Prior to *Shoot*, *Shout Piece* stood out for its brief duration, only occurring on one night, while *Being Photographed*, *Five Day Locker Piece*, and *Bicycle Piece* took place over many days, in which the artist accomplished a repetitive or stationary action. Like *Being Photographed*, *Shout* opened with Burden turning the tables on the audience and confronting them with something difficult to physically, socially, and psychically withstand.

For *Shout Piece* (Fig. 71), Burden sat roughly 15 feet from the floor on the 4 x 8-foot platform he previously installed for *Being Photographed*. He was absurdly attired, naked (from the waist up, at least) with his face painted red and his long hair braided, which was intended to evoke the trend sardonically referred to as the “countercultural Indian.” Using a public address (PA) system mounted on the platform with him, Burden bombarded any visitor brave enough to enter the gallery with a cacophony of shouting and harsh electronic feedback. High-wattage studio lights, focused on the entrance, blinded and disoriented the audience—mimicking police searchlights—and turned them into the ones on view. On the floor in the center of the space, a

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

single road flare burned, giving off smoke and an eerie red light. The deafening sound of Burden screaming, “Get out! Get the fuck out!” and the inhospitable sensorial atmosphere was enough to prompt most viewers to either quickly exit or simply remain outside the gallery. Moira Roth characterized Burden’s shouting as a threat to the audience and, indeed, it was a harsh pill for many of Burden’s colleagues to swallow.<sup>76</sup> Robert Walker told me that he simply stayed outside, because he could hear what awaited him in the gallery.<sup>77</sup> The director of the Newport Harbor Art Museum, Thomas Garver, who sometimes employed Burden as a preparator, remembers the artist calling him by name and instructing him to “Get out!”<sup>78</sup>

In *Shout*, Burden took the occupation of space to an extreme by sonically accosting visitors and forcing them to leave the premises. In *Locker Piece*, Burden’s protest was quiet and could only be heard in the collegial confines of the social space around the locker. In *Bicycle Piece*, he was aggressive, as he said, but avoidable if one stayed clear of his route. In *Shout*, Burden went after the audience the second they set foot in the space, and he did not relent until they left the gallery. Writing in the mid-1970s, critic and artist Brian O’Doherty said that Burden’s work punished the “Spectator” by making them identify with the art through the medium of the artist’s body.<sup>79</sup> I would rather follow Amelia Jones, whose more nuanced interpretation was that Burden punished both parties equally—he was seated next to the speakers and got the worst of it—and coerced the audience into being a party to their own punishment.

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<sup>76</sup> Roth, “Toward a History of California Performance,” p. 115.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Walker, personal communication, December 18, 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Garver, personal communication.

<sup>79</sup> Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999 [1976]), p. 64.

This relational reading of Burden's work is the one Frazer Ward followed in his landmark study of *Shoot*, "Gray Zone," and it is applicable to some of the artist's other early performances.<sup>80</sup>

As O'Doherty was pointing out, punishment of the "Spectator" was in the air at the time; he called it "a theme of advanced art."<sup>81</sup> Whether Burden was aware of them or not, *Shout Piece*, had a few notable predecessors in the vein of audience alienation and the occupation of space. One of the most striking comparisons is to Bruce Nauman's sound installation *Get Out of My Mind, Get Out of This Room* (1968). Speakers embedded in a blank white wall issued the eponymous commands in a variety of vocal intonations. In the Spring of 1971, before he received his MFA, Burden exhibited with Nauman and Mowry Baden in a three-man show at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art called "Body Movements," but Baden said that he and Burden had little to no contact with Nauman.<sup>82</sup> The latter had been showing at Nicholas Wilder's gallery in LA since the mid-1960s, and he moved to Pasadena in 1969, but he was socially removed from the Venice Beach contingent of artists who made up the UCI faculty, with the exception of Tony DeLap, who taught Nauman at UC Davis. Burden was undoubtedly familiar with Nauman's work, but *Get Out of My Mind* is a more obscure piece that may have been known to Burden only secondhand. However, as discussed in chapter 2, Nauman's work from the period, especially his surveillance corridors, was intended to alienate the audience in a variety of different ways. A more obscure precursor of *Shout Piece* was Les Levine's *White Sight*

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<sup>80</sup> Frazer Ward, "Gray Zone: Watching Shoot," *October* 95 (Winter 2001), pp. 114–130; reprinted in Frazer Ward, *No Innocent Bystanders: Performance Art and Audience* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2012).

<sup>81</sup> O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, p. 64.

<sup>82</sup> Mowry Baden, personal communication, May 17, 2017.

installation at Fischbach Gallery in 1969, where he hit the visitor with high-intensity, monochromatic, sodium-vapor lights, disorienting them and disrupting their sense of color.<sup>83</sup>

Burden would soon have a foot in the door in New York, but before he met his ambassadors to that world, Tom Marioni of San Francisco's Museum of Conceptual Art and Willoughby Sharp of *Avalanche* magazine, Burden knew the New York art world only through magazines like *Artforum*. In August 1971, Burden was likely still unaware of Vito Acconci, who was undertaking some very similar actions in parallel with him. In 1971, Acconci performed *Claim* in the basement of 93 Grand Street in New York, virtually contemporaneous with *Shout Piece*. *Claim* is well known today because of its visceral violence, which can be seen in the video recording the artist made available. It shows Acconci sitting at the bottom of the stairs, blindfolded, holding and banging a long pipe, while obsessively muttering to himself, "I'll keep anyone off the stairs. When I hear someone come down the stairs I'll start swinging. [...] I don't want anybody to come down in the basement with me."<sup>84</sup> A video feed of the artist was played aboveground in the gallery, so the audience had the menacing premonition of what might have happened if they descended below. When he heard someone approach, Acconci swung hard, and erratically, at the stairs with his weapon, creating a ruckus, though he did not shout or scream. He carried out his vigil methodically, as if he was really entranced by his own mantra.

Unlike these comparable works, *Shout Piece* featured a handful of formal elements and details that had social significance in the early 1970s. As remarked in the previous chapter, Burden indicated that there was a fascination with the Berkeley riots at People's Park underlying

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<sup>83</sup> O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, p. 97.

<sup>84</sup> Vito Acconci, *Claim Excerpts* (New York: Electronic Arts Intermix, 1971) 62:11 min., b&w, sound, available online at [http://www.ubu.com/film/acconci\\_claim.html](http://www.ubu.com/film/acconci_claim.html) (accessed March 28, 2018).

his early work, and, in proximity, Burden's most notable protest action, *Five Day Locker Piece*. *Shout* also referenced social unrest, as expressed through occupational protest. Again, Burden used demonstration rallies and marches as a technical support for his work. Sociologist Mona Jacqueney proffered that, at the time, protest itself was the medium through which students expressed dissatisfaction with their education, the Vietnam War, and social inequality.<sup>85</sup> In addition to the underground press, protest was the main medium through which the Baby Boomer generation expressed themselves outside of mass media streams. The PA system was one of the major tools protesters usually employed at the pre-march rally, where speakers addressed the crowd from a static location. Permits for sound amplification at protests and demonstrations had to be obtained from the authorities and were often a point of pressure that municipalities used to deter them, because public address was necessary in order to gather and organize the marchers, as well as deliver the ideological message of the protest. In combination with other elements of *Shout Piece*, the PA system positions Burden as a countercultural speaker, a motivator, and a collective voice, however his is clearly a travesty of the protest speech, which devolved into yelling.

At some point—perhaps from the very beginning—violence became a notable feature of the 1960s protest culture. Whether it was protesters or reactionary security personnel and police who initiated the skirmishes, conflict raised the visibility of any protest, but it also begged questions about the supposedly pacifist persuasion of most anti-war advocates. Public opinion in the late 1960s tended to frown upon political protest at American universities, whether peaceful or otherwise, and a 1968 Gallop poll found that a majority of those surveyed supported the use of

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<sup>85</sup> Mona G. Jacqueney, *Radicalism on Campus: 1969–1971* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972), p. 21.

force against demonstrators at Chicago's Democratic National Convention.<sup>86</sup> Accustomed to being physically threatened at marches, protesters started to dress for battle when they went to a demonstration, sporting helmets (motorcycle, construction, football), sturdy boots in which one could run, no jewelry, no pockets (for cops to plant drugs), and no forms of identification.<sup>87</sup> Violence at protests was a double-edged sword, for while it drew attention to causes and dissenting opinions, it brought the wrong kind of attention. There was an argument made at the time, which held that the fringes of the far Left overlapped with the far Right in their rush to violence and their denial of basic freedoms of speech and assembly to those with whom they did not agree.<sup>88</sup>

Gradually, as student's left school and the issues addressed by the student movement became more inclusive, the ranks of the protesters ballooned well beyond the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the student movement started to morph into the counterculture. In 1967, the Youth International Party, or Yippies, helmed by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, were organizing massive protests and getting a lot of national press, indicating that from an early date the movement against the Vietnam War had an established radical fringe, which deviated from the Marxist and otherwise political focus of the SDS. Campus radicals and student protesters hailed from the tradition of the Old Left and sought to affect society through top-down revolutionary actions and grass roots organizing, while the Yippies were disillusioned with

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<sup>86</sup> Carl Brown, "A Creeping Doubt: Public Support for Vietnam in 1967," Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Cornell University (n.d.), <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/public-support-vietnam-1967/> (accessed March 28, 2018). This is an admittedly one-sided view of the Chicago DNC; many reporters and columnists showed support for the protesters, as well. See Mark Lane, *Chicago Eyewitness* (New York: Astor-Honor, 1968), pp. 17–26.

<sup>87</sup> "Fighting Fashions," *Time* (July 18, 1969), p. 55; Abbie Hoffman, *Steal This Book* (New York: Pirate Editions, 1971), pp. 146–157.

<sup>88</sup> Jacqueney, *Radicalism on Campus*, pp. 50–52.

politics and advocated an apolitical, anarchistic social philosophy. Jacqueney's study of campus unrest in 1969–1971 found that there were defined “tensions between militant activists and hippies” in the movement.<sup>89</sup> In sum, conflicting beliefs produced a division between countercultural hippies and politicized protesters, or what Laurence Leamer called the “Heads” and the “Fists,” respectively.<sup>90</sup>

With respect to Chris Burden and his colleagues at UC Irvine, it is pertinent to follow the Yippie vein of anti-social activism and its core tenet, guerrilla theatre. From the beginning, the Yippies were conceived as a marriage of two factions: college-educated political protesters and the countercultural freaks. According to Hoffman, the Yippie movement “blend[ed] the political and cultural revolutions” into an inclusive front that had wide purchase and broad popularity in the late 1960s, evidenced by the so-called levitation of the Pentagon on October 21–22, 1967, which was attended by 100,000 protesters.<sup>91</sup> Unlike the New Left, the Yippies did not pretend to any political ideology, nor did they espouse any issues. They had no platform and one of their many slogans was, “Write your own slogan. Protest your own issue. Each man his own yippie.”<sup>92</sup> The cornerstone of the Yippie method was civil disobedience in the form of sensational actions, whose combined daring and audacity captivated the press. The singular accomplishment of the Yippies was to elevate protest to a kind of art form by creating spectacles that were disseminated through the mainstream media. They embraced television and news programs that played up the

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<sup>89</sup> Keith Melville, *Communes in the Counter-Culture: Origins, Theories, Styles of Life* (New York: Morrow, 1972), p. 53.

<sup>90</sup> Laurence Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries: The Rise of the Underground Press* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972).

<sup>91</sup> Abbie Hoffman, quoted in Pat Thomas, *Did It! From Yippie to Yuppie: Jerry Rubin, an American Revolutionary* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2017), p. 41.

<sup>92</sup> Jerry Rubin, *Do It! Scenarios of the Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p. 84.

student menace, and they sought to infiltrate the news feed by creating their own pseudo-events.<sup>93</sup> As a former cub reporter for his hometown paper, the *Cincinnati Post*, Rubin knew that the media thrived on confrontation. Thus, when he became an organizer, first as part of the University of California, Berkeley's Free Speech Movement and Vietnam Day Committee, and later as a leader of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, Rubin concentrated on searching out focal points at which the movement could put pressure on the institutions they sought to persuade.<sup>94</sup>

Arguably the first Yippie piece of guerrilla theatre was Jerry Rubin's appearance before the then-waning House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) on August 16, 1966. Rubin rented an American Revolutionary War costume, complete with tri-cornered hat, entered the congressional hall handing out copies of the Declaration of Independence, and launched into a prepared statement about the country's delinquency from the ideals of 1776. The young activist was summarily silenced and dismissed without even testifying, but the act alone was enough to rile up the press, who took it upon themselves to spread the news of Rubin's outrageous stunt throughout the country. Returning a few days later to recommence his testimony, Rubin was again shut down and had to be physically carried out of the room as he yelled, "I want to testify!"<sup>95</sup> For Rubin, his later partner in disobedience, Abbie Hoffman, and the White Panther Party leader John Sinclair, the media's reaction to Rubin's gag precipitated a major shift in the methodology practiced by certain fringe elements of the protest movement.<sup>96</sup> These rabble-

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<sup>93</sup> Rubin, *Do It*, pp. 106–108.

<sup>94</sup> Major targets included military depots in the Oakland area, which were shipping troops and supplies to the war in Southeast Asia.

<sup>95</sup> See Rubin's account of kerfuffle in his book *Do It*, pp. 57–65.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas, *Did It*, pp. 30–31.



rousers realized that through outlandish acts they could garner significant media attention and thereby “turn on” others, as the saying went.

In the hands of the Yippies, humor and irony proved to be dangerous weapons against the establishment, because they were hard to argue with, detrimental to dismiss, and difficult to counter. Spontaneous acts of guerrilla theatre did not assume a position of rebuttal, but rather went on the offensive, directly attacking symbolic institutions, such as the New York Stock Exchange. Jim Fouratt organized the famous Yippie Stock Exchange action because he wanted to draw attention to the fact that it was on Wall Street where the Vietnam War was funded. Calling out the military-industrial complex behind the war effort was one strategy of “bringing the war home,” which became a rallying cry of other marginal, but vehement protest organizations, such as the Weatherman, in the late 1960s. On August 24, 1967, Fouratt, Hoffman, Rubin, and several other men and women mounted the visitors’ gallery at the Stock Exchange and showered dollar bills down on the trading floor, causing a near riot that halted the morning’s trading. This act of guerrilla theatre also included the protagonists elatedly burning money and virtually holding a press conference before TV cameras that immediately descended on the Stock Exchange as a result of the commotion (Fig. 72). Speaking to the *New York Times* outside, Fouratt facetiously, but with a straight face, said that he had raised the money to rain down on the Exchange from General Westmoreland’s mother, who was beside herself at the thought of all the carnage for which her son was responsible.<sup>97</sup> The Stock Exchange action was an incredibly successful spectacle and it played on the evening news throughout the country that night. The outlandishness of the Yippies’ behavior went unpunished, as the nation watched,

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 40–41.

slack-jawed, while hippies defiled U.S. currency and made a mockery of the bedrock of the American financial system.

As a result of his organizational strategy, Jerry Rubin was dubbed the P.T. Barnum of the Left, and Abbie Hoffman was his press agent.<sup>98</sup> Rubin very clearly described the Yippie movement as a myth that was created to inspire others to join their merry band. Together, Rubin and Hoffman's great strength was creating prophetic moments of ecstatic protest, such as the Pentagon and Stock Exchange events, which built up and spread the myth of the Yippie agitator. Rubin said, "The myth is real if it builds a stage for people to play out their own dreams and fantasies."<sup>99</sup> However, not every play in the Yippie handbook was designed to have captivating media potential. Hoffman's *Steal This Book* (1971) was a guide to many long-term strategies of guerilla survival, action, and counter-action, which espoused sabotage and the destruction of property, among other anarchistic behavior. Rubin and company were not above running amok through the streets of New York, throwing paint on cars and setting fire to garbage cans, and their texts encouraged others to do likewise.<sup>100</sup> The more mundane or simply less spectacular manifestations of Yippie anarchy were largely illegal, and thus clandestine, so a myth about brothers- and sisters-in-arms was undoubtedly reassuring to those whom they wanted to motivate.

At the time, Rubin and Hoffman's conception and application of guerilla theatre did not fit the common interpretation of the term. Guerrilla theatre, as it was popularly understood in the late 1960s, was largely still an expansion of the traditional theatre, in which the fourth wall was

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>99</sup> Rubin, *Do It*, p. 83.

<sup>100</sup> See the chapter titled, "How to be a Yippie," in Rubin, *Do It*, pp. 81–86.

broken to carry out conscious-raising exercises with the audience.<sup>101</sup> As such, guerilla theatre combined stagecraft with motivational speaking in public performances, typically on the street or in common spaces on college campuses. Groups such as The Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe popularized the genre and traveled around the country performing in the late 1960s.<sup>102</sup> Inspired by a visit to campus from the Mime Troupe, students in UC Irvine's SDS chapter organized their own guerrilla theatre group. Active from about 1967 to 1969, they called themselves "fear leaders" and went by the acronym PHUCI (i.e. FUCK UCI). As an undergraduate at Irvine, Nancy Buchanan was an organizer with PHUCI and she said that they typically did "skits to gather and entertain a crowd [before] the 'serious' presenters would speak."<sup>103</sup> They also hosted film screenings, which was a popular tool for raising awareness at universities. Buchanan remembers that nearly everyone was involved in SDS as undergraduates, "even artist and faculty member Craig Kauffman joined a UCI protest, unrolling long banners of black plastic on the main quad."<sup>104</sup>

Most of PHUCI's work was in protest against the Vietnam War, but at Buchanan's suggestion the group also went after the new governor of California, Ronald Reagan (1967–1974). As governor, Reagan was an ex-officio member of the UC Board of Regents and as such he sought to fulfill his campaign pledge to discipline or get rid of unruly students, as well as the

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<sup>101</sup> R.G. Davis, "Guerrilla Theatre," in *The Tulane Drama Review (TDR)* 10: 4 (Summer 1966), pp. 130–136.

<sup>102</sup> Michael William Doyle, "Staging the Revolution: Guerrilla Theater as a Countercultural Practice, 1965–68," in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, eds. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 71–78.

<sup>103</sup> Nancy Buchanan, personal communication. See also Jones, Oral history interview with Nancy Buchanan.

<sup>104</sup> Buchanan, "A Few Snapshots," p. 49.

faculty and administrators who permitted them to run amok in the state's higher education system. One of Reagan's first acts as governor was to slash the University of California's budget and repeal the historically free tuition at state schools, which fueled campus unrest and caused a confrontation with charismatic UC President Clark Kerr (1957–1967), who was summarily relieved of his position, something Reagan had vowed to do when he was on the stump.<sup>105</sup> The governor wasted little time wresting the power to hire and fire faculty, grant degrees, and control enrollment away from the satellite campuses, so that he could impose consequences for demonstrating, striking, and otherwise disrupting university business.<sup>106</sup> The brand-new presidential administration of Richard Nixon (1969–1974) also played its part in curbing campus unrest by inserting a provision into the Congressional appropriation for Health, Education, and Welfare in 1969, stating that anyone convicted of a crime related to the protest or occupation of universities was subject to lose federal student aid.

In the first collegiate protest of his young governorship (not even 3 weeks old), students at UC Berkeley demonstrated against the Board of Regents meeting by hanging an effigy of Reagan outside of University Hall.<sup>107</sup> At UCI, Buchanan and her colleagues exploited a loophole in the Governor's intended regulations by creating a sculptural protest instead of holding a demonstration where students could risk arrest and potentially jeopardize their educational future. In Reagan's honor, PHUCI held a "Garbage-A-Thon," where they collected trash, stole

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<sup>105</sup> Seth Rosenfeld, *Subversives: The FBI's War on Student Radicals and Reagan's Rise to Power* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), pp. 369–376.

<sup>106</sup> John Buntin, "Reagan to Propose Campus Power Coup," *New University* 1:17 (November 21, 1968), p. 1; John Buntin, "Reagan's Emergency Bill To Curb Protests," *New University* 1:30 (February 13, 1969), p. 8; Floyd Norris, "Regents take veto power," *New University* 1:42 (April 22, 1969), p. 1.

<sup>107</sup> Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, p. 372.

plates and silverware from the dining halls, and erected a monument to the governor.<sup>108</sup> Their protest was in the age-old spirit of hanging one's enemies in effigy, but it also tapped into a regional precedent for sculptural protest, exemplified by the *Peace Tower* (1965–1966), an anti-war monument erected on a vacant lot at the corner of La Cienega and Sunset Boulevards near the city's vibrant arts district. The *Peace Tower* was created by a group called the Artists' Protest Committee (artists Mark Di Suvero and Irving Petlin, and architect Kenneth H. Dillon were the principals on the project), but its collective spirit engendered collaboration between scores of artists, both local and international. The Artists' Protest Committee solicited small paintings (2-foot square) from artists and hung them on a 50 x 100-foot frame structure. Judy Chicago, Leon Golub, Philip Guston, Eva Hesse, Donald Judd, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Motherwell, Alice Neel, Louise Nevelson, Philip Pearlstein, Ad Reinhardt, James Rosenquist, Nancy Spero, Elaine de Kooning, Sam Francis, Larry Rivers, Mark Rothko, Frank Stella, George Segal, and Claes Oldenburg, among others, all contributed work to the project.<sup>109</sup> The *Peace Tower* was built in the months after the 1965 Watts Rebellion and its message was intended to hit home, as well as abroad. At UCSD, Newton Harrison, Fred Londrier, and Allan Sekula later created a sculptural installation with all the trappings of a piece of Yippie-style guerrilla theatre. For *Body Bags* (1970), the artists made "surrogate body bags," filled with raw meat, newspaper, and rocks, and

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<sup>108</sup> Carole Ann Klonarides, "Nancy Buchanan," in *California Video: Artists and Histories*, ed. Glenn Phillips (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2008), p. 58.

<sup>109</sup> On the *Peace Tower*, see Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics, and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 15–107; Peter Selz, *Art of Engagement: Visual Politics in California and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 46–47; Ken D. Allan, "The Artists' Protest Committee," in *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art, 1945–1980* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), p. 167; Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise: The Los Angeles Art Scene and the 1960s* (New York: Henry Holt, 2011), pp. 146–148.

arranged them in the main plaza on campus, where they were set on fire (Fig. 73).<sup>110</sup> Artists taking a guerrilla approach to creating public, protest artwork was a popular form of expression in Southern California during the Vietnam War era, and it warrants further research, especially insofar as it sets a precedent for important feminist work, such as Suzanne Lacy's *Three Weeks in May* (1977), which had a sculptural component and public, conscious-raising performances.

The turn to inflammatory acts of guerrilla theatre and sculptural forms of protest were symptoms of the student protest and youth movement waning around 1970, after six students were fatally shot in May Day protests against the U.S. bombing of Cambodia. Campus activism reached its pinnacle that year, but at the same time the SDS was fracturing and public opinion started to categorize activists as enemies of the state. As Todd Gitlin argued in his influential study of the media's coverage of protest in the late sixties, *The Whole World Is Watching*, Yippie spectacle and media-oriented protests spelled "the very death of the new left."<sup>111</sup> Student protests were increasingly criticized as being self-fulfilling, insofar as they attracted the media's attention, but they were also self-defeating, in that they aroused hostility from the general public.<sup>112</sup> Among the rank and file in the various strands of the movement, disillusionment with the ineffectiveness of anti-authoritarian youth culture was fast becoming a cliché. By the fall of

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<sup>110</sup> Karen Moss, "Beyond the White Cell: Experimentation/Education/Intervention in California circa 1970," in *State of Mind: New California Art circa 1970*, eds. Constance M. Lewallen and Karen Moss (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 157–158; Pamela M. Lee, "There was no radicalization...It was normal for us': Teaching and Learning with the Visual Arts Department, 1967–1976," in *The Uses of Photography: Art, Politics, and the Reinvention of a Medium*, ed. Jill Dawsey (La Jolla: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 2016), pp. 89–91.

<sup>111</sup> This quotation comes from Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Hard Hats and Art Strikes: Robert Morris in 1970," *The Art Bulletin* 89:2 (2007), p. 354. See Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

<sup>112</sup> Jacqueney, *Radicalism on Campus*, p. 54.

1968, observers were already talking about “the decline of the hippies” and speaking of them in the past tense.<sup>113</sup> Underground newspapers, like *RAT* and *Fifth Estate*, portrayed the anti-war movement as dead at the beginning of 1969.<sup>114</sup> University administrators were quick to sound the death knell of the student protest movement as early as the beginning of the 1971 school year. In a piece dated to August of that year, conterminous with Burden’s *Shout Piece* performance, the Provost of Hofstra University averred that the mood on campus had shifted “from active protest to alienated withdrawal on the part of many students,” and protest had virtually “disappeared.”<sup>115</sup> Jeremy Varon has argued that “disenchantment with liberalism” was widespread in the protest movement even in the late 1960s, especially amongst the more radical fringe elements, like the future Weatherman.<sup>116</sup>

One answer for the idealistic, but disillusioned young person “was to ‘drop out,’ to leave the city and search for both an alternative means of effecting social change and alternative life styles.”<sup>117</sup> The premiere advocate of dropping out in the United States was Timothy Leary, a defrocked Harvard psychologist who advocated the use of the psychedelic chemical LSD as a means of mind expansion. Leary had a bleak view of the efficacy of activism, saying “I think [we] should be sanctified, drop out, find our own center, turn on, and above all avoid mass

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<sup>113</sup> Jesse Kornbluth, ed., *Notes from the New Underground* (New York: Ace, 1968), pp. 10–13.

<sup>114</sup> Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, The Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 98.

<sup>115</sup> William P. McEwen, “Forward,” in Jacqueney, *Radicalism on Campus*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>116</sup> Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, pp. 27–28.

<sup>117</sup> Melville, *Communes in the Counter-Culture*, p. 22.

movements, mass leadership, mass followers.”<sup>118</sup> Leary’s rallying cry, “Turn on, tune in, drop out,” became emblematic of a whole generation of disaffected youth who wanted to take control over their own destinies, rather than wait for the rusty gears of change to motivate America’s entrenched institutions. Leary’s call to “drop out” coincided with what is known as New Communalism, a practice of moving back to the land, which was characterized by a refusal of not only contemporary politics, but of modern life in general. Communes “were not aimed at cultural confrontation, but simply were a turning away to build a new society apart from the old.”<sup>119</sup> “Between 1965 and 1972 [historians and sociologists] have estimated that somewhere between several thousand and several tens of thousands of communes were created” outside American cities and in even more remote locales throughout the country.<sup>120</sup> Some of its better-known establishments included Drop City, near Trinidad, Colorado, and a host of communes outside Taos, New Mexico, such as the Lama Foundation and Hog Farm.<sup>121</sup> Closer to home, for Burden, was the Brotherhood of Eternal Love’s Palm Springs ranch, where Leary moved his Millbrook commune in 1968. The Brotherhood was a gang of drug-smuggling surfers, who ran their operations out of Laguna Canyon.<sup>122</sup> In addition to importing huge quantities of marijuana and hash, the Brotherhood is best known for making and distributing the popular LSD strain,

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<sup>118</sup> Timothy Leary, quoted in Melville, *Communes in the Counter-Culture*, p. 23.

<sup>119</sup> Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), p. 8.

<sup>120</sup> Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 32.

<sup>121</sup> Richard Fairfield, *Communes USA: A Personal Tour* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972), pp. 113–130; 185–220.

<sup>122</sup> Nicholas Schou, *Orange Sunshine: The Brotherhood of Eternal Love and Its Quest to Spread Peace, Love, and Acid to the World* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2010).



Orange Sunshine. Nancy Buchanan's sister, who lived off-and-on with her in their parents' Laguna Canyon home (where Buchanan lived with Robert Walker when they were going to UCI), was involved with the Brotherhood, and Chris Burden, who was close with Buchanan and Walker back then, may have been familiar with the gang's activities.<sup>123</sup> After all, he and his classmates had house parties up in the Canyon, too.

Young, idealistic communards latched onto the "figure of the American Indian as a countercultural touchstone representing a more authentic spiritual connection between man and nature."<sup>124</sup> They lived in teepees and shared the work of keeping their communities alive, as well as all of their worldly possessions and money (Fig. 74). Communal groups, as well as other countercultural factions, frequently self-identified as "tribes," a designation that was codified in the subtitle to the famous Human Be-In in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park: "A Gathering of the Tribes."<sup>125</sup> These youngsters were participating in a quintessentially American form of mythic identification with Native Americans, stretching at least as far back as the writing of James Fenimore Cooper in the early nineteenth century.<sup>126</sup> In that tradition, settler Americans appropriated the Native American, as a sign of otherness, to indicate their rejection of straight society or the status quo. The tribal reorganization of society during the late 1960s was similarly

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<sup>123</sup> Robert Walker, personal communication; Nancy Buchanan, personal communication. Buchanan said that she herself had no contact with the Brotherhood, at least none that she was aware of.

<sup>124</sup> Andrew Blauvelt, ed., *Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2016), p. 11.

<sup>125</sup> According to Jerry Rubin, the tribes referenced in the name of the festival were the Berkeley politicians and the Haight-Ashbury hippies; see Rubin, *Do It*, pp. 54–55.

<sup>126</sup> Naomi Feigelson, *The Underground Revolution: Hippies, Yippies, and Others* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1970), p. 64.

a reaction against traditional family structures, which were guided by religious and moral conventions.<sup>127</sup>

One way in which youth culture outwardly manifest its newfound identification with Native Americans was through sartorial expression. “Wearing Indian clothes [was] an easy form of rebellion” against Western society and culture, one that fell fully within the contemporary doctrine of dropping out.<sup>128</sup> Fringed garments, headbands, beads and feathered accessories, and body paint were distinct characteristics of countercultural attire, particularly at festivals and concerts, which in their own way represented temporary communities, or tribes (Fig. 75). Protests were another event at which “countercultural Indians” could be found, such as *East Village Other* publisher, Walter Bowart, who dressed up like a Native American during the weekend of the Pentagon levitation protest.<sup>129</sup> The Yippie ethos was founded upon Rubin’s costume drama at the HUAC hearings in 1966, and dress-up, whether for camouflage or instigation, was a centerpiece of their guerrilla theatre. Hoffman wrote, “Every movement organization should have a prop and costume department.”<sup>130</sup>

For *Shout Piece*, Burden braided his long hair and covered his face with red body paint, mimicking the countercultural trope of the “White Indian,” “neo-Indian,” or “pseudo-Indian” (Fig. 76). Within the New Communalism movement, the cultural appropriation of Native American styles of dress and ways of life frequently sounded trite and demeaning coming from privileged young adults, many, if not most of them descended from the Europeans and the

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<sup>127</sup> Miller, *The Hippies*, pp. 90–93.

<sup>128</sup> Feigelson, *The Underground Revolution*, p. 64.

<sup>129</sup> Melville, *Communes in the Counter-Culture*, p. 53.

<sup>130</sup> Hoffman, *Steal This Book*, p. 2. See also Rubin, *Do It*, p. 128.

settlers that colonized North America.<sup>131</sup> At the Brotherhood of Eternal Love ranch, one member snidely commented that “everyone liv[ed] in teepees” and talked “to each other like Indians in a bad western movie.”<sup>132</sup> In this regard, *Shout Piece* can be considered a satire of protest culture, New Communalism, and the ancillary fad of dressing up like a Native American. However, Burden’s shouting demonstrates the evacuation of any “tribal” message related to communal living, the sanctity of land, or some other stereotypical topic. In relation to the cacophony of Andy Warhol’s Exploding Plastic Inevitable, which assaulted the audience with a “barrage of sounds, lights, images, and performance” not unlike Burden’s *Shout Piece*, Branden W. Joseph has argued that viewers “did not feel returned to tribal unity or subjective self-possession so much as uprooted and disoriented by the incessant bombardment of audiovisual shocks.”<sup>133</sup> As noted above, Burden actually sought to alienate his audience so thoroughly that they left the room, thereby refusing the kind of community that the F Space gallery might otherwise represent. Turning the tables on one’s supposed allies was an essential component of Yippie shock tactics, such as when they nominated a sow named Pigasus to the presidency in 1968, rather than supporting neither Democratic nominee Hubert Humphrey (moderate) nor Eugene McCarthy (anti-war). Devolving a protest into riot, by instigating fear was also part of Rubin’s platform, as well as the subject of a frightening position paper written by William Burroughs in

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<sup>131</sup> E.g. Jan Hammermeister, “The Hippie Tribe,” in *Utopia U.S.A.*, ed. Richard Fairfield (San Francisco: Alternatives Foundation, 1972), p. 116.

<sup>132</sup> Schou, *Orange Sunshine*, p. 151.

<sup>133</sup> Branden W. Joseph, “My Mind Split Open”: Andy Warhol’s Exploding Plastic Inevitable,” *Grey Room* 8 (Summer 2002), p. 91.

1970–1971, titled “Electronic Revolution.”<sup>134</sup> *Shout Piece* taps into these highly anti-social, anarchistic behaviors and wraps them up in his cynical evaluation of countercultural protest.

However apolitical it was, a related argument links Burden’s action to the American Indian Movement (AIM), which, along with the Chicano Civil Rights Movement (very prevalent in the Los Angeles area), was picking up steam as student-led protest was in decline around 1971.<sup>135</sup> Yelling at visitors to exit the gallery and, as Vito Acconci phrased it, staking a claim to the land, dovetailed with the hippie identification with Native Americans and their indigenous right to territory. However, the self-righteousness that infused the hippies’ appropriation of a Native American subject position had the deleterious effect of overshadowing a contemporaneous civil rights movement that was struggling for recognition. AIM emerged out of the Occupation of Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay, which lasted for 19 months between 1969 and 1971. While the reclamation and occupation of ancestral lands was foundational to AIM actions at Mount Rushmore (1971) and Wounded Knee (1973), media visibility was low for such protracted stand-offs. The leaders of AIM studied the techniques employed by preceding protest movements and decided that the Yippie method of creating media spectacles was the best way to voice their demands. Accordingly, AIM organized acts of guerrilla theatre, such as disrupting Thanksgiving Day ceremonies in Boston by stealing a replica of the Mayflower

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<sup>134</sup> Burroughs advocated the use of taped sounds, played back on concealed recorders, as well as a type of closed-circuit loop of live sounds in riot situations in order to instigate violence from either side; see his essay “Electronic Revolution,” in *Ah Pook is Here, and Other Texts* (London: J. Calder, 1979), pp. 125–126.

<sup>135</sup> On the Chicano Civil Rights Movement in Los Angeles, see Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican Students por La Raza: The Chicano Student Movement in Southern California, 1967–1977* (Santa Barbara: Editorial La Causa, 1978); Ernesto Chávez, “*Mi raza primero!*” (*My people first!*): *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966–1978* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Mario T. Garcia, *The Chicano Generation: Testimonies of the Movement* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

(1970). They also led the The Trail of Broken Treaties protest in 1972, which occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington D.C. and forced President Nixon to negotiate with them. While it is more appropriate, given Burden's own apolitical stance in the early 1970s, to associate *Shout Piece* with the guerrilla theatre of the Yippies, his feigned Native American garb could also reference AIM protests. Whether he was aware of it or not, by occupying the gallery space, standing his ground, and refusing intruders (in the form of gallery-goers), Burden pursued some of the same strategies used by the American Indian Movement.

In *Claim*, Acconci wielded a metal pipe. At Wounded Knee, AIM activists shot at state troopers with rifles. In *Shout Piece*, Chris Burden used his own voice, augmented by an Echoplex delay effect and ravaged by microphone feedback, to scare unwanted visitors into leaving the gallery. Hippies who dropped out and moved into communal living situations were plagued by problems, chief among them hostility from conservative neighbors and the cyclical deluge of "weekend hippie" freeloaders.<sup>136</sup> At Drop City in 1968, a sign hung at the entrance, "exactly like those outside the ramshackled [*sic*] Southwestern Indian Reservations: NO PHOTOGRAPHS, VISITING HOURS WEEKENDS ONLY 8 AM to 8 PM."<sup>137</sup> Communards had to defend themselves from not only potential members and tourists, but also local residents, who were known to attack and damage their property. Abbie Hoffman instructed communalists to bear firearms, learn how use them, and be familiar with gun laws, in case they had to use force in self-defense. He said, "Let them know you are willing to defend your way of living and your chances of survival will increase."<sup>138</sup> Burden's occupation of F Space during *Shout Piece*

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<sup>136</sup> "The Commune Comes to America," *Life* 67:3 (July 18, 1969), cover, pp. 16–23.

<sup>137</sup> Fairfield, *Communes USA*, p. 208.

<sup>138</sup> Hoffman, *Steal This Book*, pp. 48–49.

formulated the very same type of showdown between the artist-as-communard and those he irrationally pegged as trespassers. The overzealousness of Burden's harsh intonations, which he repeated until viewers left the space, is in line with the serious security risks faced by communes, as well as their antithetical prohibition of new members.

Archival photos of *Shout Piece* show some visitors milling around and a few, including Barbara Smith, sitting down and trying to have a conversation in the gallery (Figs 77–78). Smith said that she always accepted Burden's challenges in the F Space years, and so she went in and sat down, not intending to leave and give him the satisfaction.<sup>139</sup> The photos also show an element of the piece that Burden left out of his description of *Shout* and cropped out of the photographs he circulated to represent the piece in the 1970s (compare Figs 71 and 79).<sup>140</sup> After Burden mounted the platform, an assistant lit a road flare in the center of the room, which glowed red and emitted a moderate amount of smoke. From the photos, it does not appear that the smoke from the flare really clouded the room, but the introduction of this piece of emergency equipment further solidified *Shout Piece*'s relationship with protest marches and demonstrations. Various forms of what Hoffman called "chemical warfare gases" were deployed as a means of crowd control in late 1960s. Tear gas, pepper gas, smoke, and other irritants were disbursed with aerosol canisters and repurposed flamethrowers in order to force crowds of people to disperse.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Barbara Smith, personal communication.

<sup>140</sup> Chris Burden, *Chris Burden 71–73* (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1974), pp. 8–9. The exception to this is Burden's 2007 catalogue raisonné, which published never-before-seen, archival photographs (many in color of work heretofore only ever glimpsed in black and white) of the artist's performances. Therein, the full view of *Shout Piece* appeared for the first time; see Hoffman, *Chris Burden*, p. 204. On the value of these images for the interpretation of Burden's work, see Anne M. Wagner, "Then and There," *Artforum* 50:2 (October 2011), pp. 223–225.

<sup>141</sup> Abbie Hoffman provides a table of different kinds of gases and their effects, as well as ways to guard against and treat them; see *Steal This Book*, pp. 151–153. Disbursal via flamethrower is documented in Lane, *Chicago Eyewitness*.

As commonly used on the road, flares signal a stopped vehicle or other traffic obstruction, and they indicate that approaching motorists should keep their distance. As an element of the full ensemble of *Shout Piece*, the flare evokes blocked off streets and police barricades, which were often encountered by marchers. It is a line in the sand, so to speak. The smoke in the air and the emergency signal, in tandem with Burden's amplified voice, Native American costume, and the hot lights pointed in the audience's direction, recreate the experience of being on the front lines of a Vietnam War-era demonstration.

Another method of crowd control that had domestic, as well as military applications, was the use of sonic warfare. In the human record, sound has been employed in war going back several millennia, sometimes as a destructive force, as in the biblical trumpet of Jericho, but most often in the form of grunts, shouts, and battle cries, "called the paeon, [and] designed to embolden [warriors] and frighten the enemy."<sup>142</sup> In the modern era, as in ancient times, militaristic yelling during battle was associated with supposedly barbarous ethnic and racial groups, such as the Native Americans, whose distinctive "war whoop" is well mythologized in American popular culture. As one military historian put it, "The most primitive of acoustic weapons may be the human voice itself."<sup>143</sup> During the Vietnam War, American Psychological Operations (PSYOP) forces similarly undertook to scare opposing fighters with the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) by using amplified sound, which they pumped into the jungle via helicopter, as portrayed in a famous scene from Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Various tactics were employed in Vietnam and Laos, including audible and inaudible

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<sup>142</sup> Phillip S. Meilinger, "Pump Up the Volume," *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* (Winter 2012), p. 15.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

frequencies at high decibels, and an oscillator called The Curdler that could deafen at short range. Steve Goodman explains,

When used with a public address system and a 350 watt sound amplifier, it was possible to direct intelligible speech to a range of 2.5 miles. The Curdler was also capable of unleashing siren frequencies of between 500 and 5,000 hertz and of inducing panic.<sup>144</sup>

The name of the PSYOP mission to deploy such sonic weapons, the Urban Funk Campaign, encapsulates the bridge between the theater of war and the streets of American cities, where protests were most fervent. According to Goodman, “The Curdler was also said to have [...] been used by police in the Bay Area of California in the 1960s to dissolve crowds.”<sup>145</sup> At protest marches all over the country, the police and national guardsmen used sirens, bullhorns, and other forms of sonic intimidation to disperse protesters, as well as root out fugitives who were holed up or in hiding. Like their countrymen fighting in Vietnam, American law enforcement agents attempted to weaken the resolve of their opponent by attacking them on the auditory front. In his use of not only harsh invective, shouted at high decibels and run through an echo effect, Burden’s microphone fed back into the amplifier, which was positioned next to him on the platform in *Shout Piece*, and created a sharp, screeching sound. With these touchstones in mind, I would not hesitate to label *Shout Piece* a symbol of the sonic warfare that was being waged simultaneously in the jungles of Southeast Asia and the cities of the United States when Burden was coming up as an artist.

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<sup>144</sup> Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2010), p. 19.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206, n. 12.



## Conclusion

The close readings in this dissertation demonstrate not only the interrelation between Chris Burden's collegiate sculpture and first performances in a teleological progression, but they also serve as the foundation upon which later, and better known work by the artist can be reevaluated. Take for instance, Burden's most legendary performance piece, *Shoot* (1971). Burden originally intended to perform *Shoot* at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), having been invited back to his alma mater the fall after he graduated by art historian and performance scholar, Moira Roth. However, Burden said that he changed his mind at the last minute and performed *Shoot* at F Space instead, inviting only friends, most of whom were members of the collective or MFA students at UCI.<sup>1</sup> Given what we now know, through the oral histories conducted with the artists involved in F Space, Burden's decision to change the venue for *Shoot* follows a pattern of Dean Clayton Garrison opposing certain kinds of radical behavior on the part of the graduate students at Irvine. I argue that such prohibitions were part of the reason the students needed a space of their own in which to experiment, free of such regulations. There is no doubt that prior restrictions, such as the one Burden faced when the Dean initially refused to allow him to perform *Bicycle Piece* (1971) in the university's Art Gallery, informed the artist's subsequent caution with regard to presenting risqué material at the school. It also relates to the reactionary response that Burden received when he returned to his other alma mater, Pomona College, the following spring. Helene Winer, then curator of the Montgomery Gallery, invited Burden to do the performance *Match Piece* (1972), wherein the artist lobbed matchstick rockets at his naked wife, who lay prostrate on the floor. The performance was amongst a string of

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<sup>1</sup> Burden's thought process is captured in a letter he wrote to Willoughby Sharp and Liza Béar of *Avalanche* magazine, dated November 19, 1971, the day Burden performed *Shoot*; *Avalanche* Magazine Archives, folder II.114, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

events that directly led to the Winer's firing in 1972, due to the outrage expressed by the relatively conservative Claremont community that supported the gallery.<sup>2</sup>

Burden's choice to withdraw *Shoot* from the festival at Irvine at which he was supposed to perform it ended up being a fateful one for his career in another later episode, which begged the question, "What can and cannot be done in a performance on a college campus?" In 2005, Burden and his wife, artist Nancy Rubins, resigned from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where Burden had been teaching for 25 years, over an incident in which a student brought a gun onto campus and into a classroom for a performance.<sup>3</sup> The student, who Burden claims to only have met once, allegedly pulled a revolver out of a paper bag, spun the chamber, and played Russian roulette. After the hammer depressed and no shot was fired, the student ran out of the building and discharged the weapon with either real bullets or blanks. Rubins and Burden, who was in Europe at the time of the performance, appealed to their department to expel the student for bringing a gun onto campus, not to mention firing it in a classroom where they endangered others. Burden insisted that it was not the act itself that prompted he and Rubins to resign, but rather their colleagues' reaction. When they refused to appropriately discipline the student, the artists quit.

The incident at UCLA raised a good deal of consternation from many who claimed that Burden had done something similar in *Shoot*. How could he of all people disapprove of gunplay

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<sup>2</sup> "Helene Winer Interviewed by Rebecca McGrew," in *It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969–1973*, ed. Rebecca McGrew (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2011), pp. 173–175.

<sup>3</sup> Boehm, Mike. "2 Artists Quit UCLA Over Gun Incident," *Los Angeles Times* (January 22, 2005); Jenny Hontz, "Gunplay, as Art, Sets Off a Debate," *The New York Times* (February 5, 2005); Mat Gleason, "Chris Burden: Falling into the Resignation Trap," *Coagula 73* (March 2005), pp. 20–21; Mike Boehm, "The 'shot' heard round UCLA," *Los Angeles Times* (July 9, 2005); Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (London: Granta, 2008), pp. 65–66.

in art? Burden was very clear in his justification: he was not a student when he performed *Shoot* and he did not do it on campus, having made a concerted decision not to do so. The latter fact made all the difference to Burden, who seemingly paradoxically said, “you don’t have total freedom as a student because you have a responsibility to the class, to the art department, and to the university as a whole.”<sup>4</sup> Was this the same artist that thumbed his nose at the administration and occupied a locker for his MFA thesis exhibition, in protest against such restrictions? This later episode, in which Burden was forced to stand by principles he established in his youth, does not contradict the image of the artist as an anti-institutional force, but rather it solidifies the dynamic between artist and institution that is essential to works of Institutional Critique. As Burden said of *Five Day Locker Piece*, he needed the university to push back against him by threatening to extract him from the locker, so he started the rumor that he was in confrontation with the Dean. That there are limits to what can and cannot be done in the context of an educational institution seems to be precisely the point of *Locker Piece*. Burden audaciously tested those boundaries and went as far as he could before being reprimanded. Thus, the kerfuffle at UCLA can be better understood in light of these seminal works by Burden, which were both in dialog with institutional power.

In his important essay on *Shoot*, Frazer Ward argued that Burden’s act of being shot implicated the spectators in attendance by virtue of how the piece was set up, thus putting them in the uncomfortable position of having to justify their own non-intervention in the piece.<sup>5</sup> This study shows that forcing the audience, viewer, or participant into a precarious position, whether physical or ethical, had its origin in Burden’s earliest sculpture and the phenomenological

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<sup>4</sup> Amelia Jones, Oral history interview with Chris Burden, January 20, 2010, Getty Research Institute, Institutional Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Frazer Ward, “Gray Zone: Watching Shoot,” *October* 95 (Winter 2001), pp. 114–130.

interpretation of Minimalism that posited the viewer as an body engaged in a spatial relationship with the work. I argue that the impetus for Burden's involvement of the participant-viewer emerged out of the minimalist tradition, rather than the standard reading of the European, modernist *épater la bourgeoisie*. There is little evidence that Burden's education in the late 1960s entailed much art history, except for a twentieth-century art class at Pomona for which he wrote about his own work in relation to his immediate predecessors. Rather, the focus at both Pomona and Irvine appears to have been thoroughly of the moment and focused—in sculpture anyway—on minimalist and post-minimalist approaches.

Burden's first "attack" on the audience came, through the influence of Mowry Baden, in the formless operation of lowering ("horizontal") that forced the participant to the ground to get through the artist's first corridor piece. The second corridor, with tall black walls that enveloped the participant, was also a disorienting experience for the viewer and the piece ended up injuring several people when it was installed at Pomona. Allegedly unbeknownst to Burden, on April 26, 1969, the third annual "Claremont Love-In"—alternatively called the "Claremont Wash-Out" because it was held on the fields beyond The Wash—was scheduled to take place in the field he was using to exhibit his work.<sup>6</sup> This folk-rock festival, headlined by blues legend Lightning Hopkins, also featured the attraction of Burden's black corridor, which was still installed at the time of the show (the white corridor, built first, had already been de-installed). Hundreds of students, intoxicated by drugs, love, and music, experienced the corridor that day. According to Burden, students ran, not only through the corridor to create an air bubble in the plastic walls, but from one end to the other outside the structure in order to perform the piece

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<sup>6</sup> "Claremont Loves In," *Pomona College Student Life* 80:22 (April 22, 1969).

again. While running around to reenter the corridor, several people were tripped by the guy-wires that held the vertical walls upright, falling and injuring their feet and ankles.<sup>7</sup>

To my knowledge, the only other piece of Burden's that hurt a member of the audience was *Bicycle Piece*, in which the artist inadvertently knocked over Barbara Rose in the UCI Art Gallery. While these two episodes are not well known, they certainly speak to the artist's early reputation as dangerous. Burden's apparatuses, not discussed here, could also be included in this lineage. After *Shout Piece*, Burden said that he performed a mea culpa for his hostility, by turning the tables and putting himself in danger with *Prelude to 220, or 110* (1971), wherein buckets of electrified water were placed close to the artist, who was shackled to the floor. But, as its title suggests, *110* was also a prefiguration for Burden's next performance at F Space, *220* (1971), and he was trying to enlist others to join him in tempting the power of a pool of water charged with 220-volts. Together with Irvine graduate student Tony Rouff and Claremont Graduate University alum Michael Brewster, who shot a super 8 film of the piece, Burden mounted a ladder in his flooded studio and dropped a live wire into the water. He and the others stayed on the ladders overnight "trying to stay comfortable and talk and not fall asleep" until morning, when Burden's wife Barbara cut the power.<sup>8</sup> As Burden wrote in his description of *220*, "[t]here was no audience except for the participants,"<sup>9</sup> and they were all in immediate danger of falling off their ladders, into the electrified water. Like *Locker Piece*, *220* was a test of endurance in an uncomfortable situation, but the piece's endangering of the entire audience was something altogether new in Burden's work. However, the social relationship of artists in and around F

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<sup>7</sup> Chris Burden and Thomas Crow in conversation, Pomona College, March 24, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Grace Kook-Anderson, Oral history interview with Richard Newton and Tony Rouff, n.d. [2010–2011], Laguna Art Museum.

<sup>9</sup> Chris Burden, *Chris Burden 71–73* (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1974), p. 18.

Space and the MFA program at UCI produced the community in which students, Burden chief among them, tested liminal situations and pushed each other to take their practice to the next level. In other words, the restrictive conditions of the university were just as constitutive of *220* as they were of *Locker Piece* and *Shoot* (all three works were produced within a 7-month period).

While Rouff and Brewster were willing participants in *220*, and Barbara Burden in *Match Piece*, Burden went to a much darker place and created two simulations of terrorism that threatened the lives of unsuspecting participants, before he abandoned the practice of attacking the audience altogether. In *TV Hijack* (1972), Burden turned a television appearance with his friend and Newport Harbor Art Museum (NHAM) colleague, Phyllis Lutjeans, into a hostage situation by bracing the host with a knife and threatening to kill her. Since it was only a taping of the program, Burden's audience consisted solely of Lutjeans, in a sense, but when the artist demanded that the taping be switched onto live TV, Burden strong-armed his way into a larger audience. According to the fear-based logic of terrorism, Burden's symbolic threat was transmitted to anyone randomly tuned into the public access station from which they were broadcasting. The following year, Burden went out to the sand dunes near Los Angeles International Airport and fired a .22 pistol at a passing aircraft in *747* (1973). Burden described the intended audience for the piece as the people on the plane, who may have occasioned to look down as they were landing or taking off and seen a man firing a gun at them. Burden said, "If the people in the airplane could see me shooting at them, even if the bullet didn't get to them, they'd just die."<sup>10</sup> They would die metaphorically, of course, as a small-caliber handgun could never strike a plane in flight from that distance, a fact that Burden was sure of in advance. Such acts

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<sup>10</sup> Willoughby Sharp and Liza Béar, "Chris Burden: The Church of Human Energy," *Avalanche* 8 (Summer/Fall 1973), p. 58.

led to overstatements in the press, such as C. Carr's contention that "Burden's work is terrorism," and the perpetuation of the myth that Burden was a hazard to spectators.<sup>11</sup> Burden attempted to play up, but at the same time contradict that image of his work with the performance *Back to You* (1974), in which he let the audience insert push-pins into his body, but only after making them risk getting in an elevator alone with the artist. In *Back to You*, Burden's threat was denuded by a closed-circuit video feed in the gallery, reversing the analogous relationship between artist and audience at work in Vito Acconci's *Claim* (1971).

Although Lutjeans claims, to this day, that she was not angry at Burden for putting her through an incredibly frightening ordeal, she did have recourse, two years later, to have one of Burden's pieces canceled.<sup>12</sup> Burden was supposed to perform the piece *Fire by Friction* in a series of one-evening events at NHAM, where Lutjeans worked as an administrator, as part of a 1974 exhibition of artists from Newspace gallery, the successor of F Space. In *Fire by Friction*, the audience was supposed to watch live and on a television monitor, as Burden started the eponymous fire in a gallery in which he had covered the floor with hay.<sup>13</sup> The artist got so far as to hang the monitor and spread the hay around the gallery, when Lutjeans inquired as to what he intended to do. The museum had just had an exhibition of paintings by Mark Rothko and they were still on the premises, so Lutjeans went to the museum director out of concern for the precious inventory and he canceled the performance.<sup>14</sup> Burden's was the first of four

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<sup>11</sup> C. (Cynthia) Carr, "This is only a test: Chris Burden," *Artforum* 28:1 (1989), p. 121.

<sup>12</sup> Clark Polack, "Chris Burden—Canceled," [*Los Angeles*] *Free Press* (March 22, 1974); "Picasso's Fakes and Other Stories," *ArtNews* 73:6 (Summer 1974), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Burden subsequently performed *Fire by Friction* at UCLA in 1982 for a satellite teleconference called "The Artist and Television."

<sup>14</sup> Phyllis Lutjeans, personal communication, October 11, 2016.

performances, including one each by F Space members Barbara Smith and Margaret Wilson. When NHAM canceled the performance on the afternoon of the day it was scheduled, Newspace director Jean St. Pierre informed the museum that if Burden was not allowed to perform, then none of the other three artists would perform either. Individual artists also wrote to the director of the museum to express their solidarity with Burden. Barbara Smith's letter reads,

It is with regret that I am writing to inform you of the cancellation of my performance April 9 in the Newport Harbor Art Museum. I do this in protest of the handling of Chris Burden's performance last Tuesday night. It is regrettable that an artist of such stature and power was treated in such an unprofessional way, and I can only sympathize with his position.<sup>15</sup>

This situation was exactly the same one Burden and Smith faced at UC Irvine, when Dean Garrison censored Burden's *Bicycle Piece* from the MFA exhibition. Burden's hot ideas had once again gotten his work banned and his colleagues stood by him and boycotted the show in an act of "protest."

Early in his career, Burden combined the tactics of subjecting the audience to physical and ethical precariousness in *Being Photographed, Looking Out, Looking In* (1971). First, Burden's gallery assistant accosted the audience by taking their photograph without permission, an act that invaded their privacy and put them on the spot. *Being Photographed* replicated the experience of being knowingly surveilled, which was well under way to becoming a social reality at the time.<sup>16</sup> The *Looking Out* section of the installation involved both physical risk for the participant, as well as partial sensory deprivation that disrupted the body's equilibrium. In the final aspect of the piece, *Looking In*, the viewer-turned-voyeur was faced with an ethical quandary when they assumed the role of overseer and surveilled the artist in the ostensibly

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<sup>15</sup> Barbara T. Smith papers, box 165, folder 6, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

<sup>16</sup> Abbie Hoffman comments on the use of such surveillance techniques by "the pigs" in *Steal This Book* (New York: Pirate Editions, 1971), p. 141.



private space of the gallery's bathroom. Following Frazer Ward, the audience of *Being Photographed*, *Looking Out*, *Looking In* had a choice as to whether they submitted to letting the artist turn them into witnesses. As in *Shoot*, the ethical decision was whether or not to go along with Burden, but regardless of one's choice, the artist still succeeded in putting the viewer in the ethical position of having options.

Watching Chris Burden endure strenuous trials of his mental and physical resolve was a central aspect of the artist's work, which began with the *Looking In* portion of the aforementioned work, wherein Burden sat still in the bathroom for several hours each night the gallery was open. In *Five Day Locker Piece*, visitors could not see the artist, but they were encouraged to visit and talk with him about what it was like to be so confined. In Burden's provocation of Dean Garrison through conversations with his colleagues at the locker he issued a clear directive that no one was to interfere with the piece for fear of his health or safety. Burden assured them that, if need be, he could kick out the door and free himself, although that seems unlikely, since his head was facing the door. The following year, in *Bed Piece* (1972), Burden made it the express responsibility of gallery owner Josh Young to keep him alive, while he did nothing but lay in bed in the gallery for three weeks. Burden wrote that he had given Young no instructions and thus he completely relied on the gallerist's sense of human empathy to provide him with food and water.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes Young forgot and Burden suffered silently. As in *Locker Piece* and *Bed Piece*, the ethical imperative of *Doomed* (1975) fell more upon the institution in which the work was performed than on the audience. Again, Burden did not inform the museum of their responsibility in advance, leaving it up to them to intervene on Burden's behalf and end the piece. For nearly two days, Burden lay beneath a plane of glass, on full view to the audience,

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<sup>17</sup> Burden, *Chris Burden* 71–73, p. 44.

and did nothing—no eating or drinking. A few hours prior to the 48-hour mark, a sympathetic museum guard approached Burden and placed a pitcher of water near where he lay. Upon that interruption of the piece on the part of the museum, Burden emerged, ending the performance, and handed curator Ira Licht a copy of a contract, stating the terms of the work, but only after the fact. Licht had goaded Burden to not make a short-duration piece, so that the museum's patrons would get their money's worth, so Burden undertook to test how long was too long, by leaving its duration up to the museum. Would they allow the artist to die from dehydration? Or would they step in to save him? If we continue to follow Ward's lead, such pieces forced audiences and institutions into an ethical "gray zone," where they had to decide when and how much to intervene, if at all. I argue that this trend in Burden's work began before *Shoot*, with the artist's first performances.

The co-dependent relationship between artist and institution in *Locker Piece*, *Bed Piece*, and *Doomed* evidenced one of the common traits of Institutional Critique, which was a fundamental methodology Burden employed throughout his career. For *Kunst Kick* (1974), Burden created a brilliant metaphor of the artist-gallerist relationship by asking his New York dealer, Ronald Feldman, to kick him down a couple flights of stairs at the Basel art fair in Switzerland (Feldman declined to participate, so Burden's friend Charles Hill did it instead). Like *Locker Piece*, *Kunst Kick* portrayed artists as both beaten down by and beholden to the mechanisms—dealers, galleries, and art fairs—they relied on in order to advance their career. For *Shadow* (1976), Burden parodied the visiting artist in his role as such for an appearance at The Ohio State University, where he was expected to do a performance. Dressed in a costume he "thought would fit people's preconceptions of an avant-garde artist," Burden "acted distant and aloof," avoiding interactions with students and faculty during his visit. His stated aim was "to

make my personal presence almost superfluous by revealing little or no information about myself that was not already available publicly.”<sup>18</sup> By resisting engagement with his hosts, Burden contradicted the function of the visiting artist in university fine art programs, where the journeyman artist is paid to share their own work and sometimes teach or participate in critiques of student work. *Shadow* not only recalls the parody of fine art training programs that Burden carried out in *Locker Piece*, it also reflects the cynical and anti-social subject position of the artist in *Shout Piece*, wherein he refused the art-world community that had formed around his work and collective F Space gallery.

In several performance pieces, Burden fed off the expectation that he was going to do something violent or dangerous to the audience, a fear which had been stoked by the fantastic coverage of his work in the press. More to the point, the audience anticipated that the artist would subject them to some uncomfortable situation, including the kinds of physical and ethical risk discussed above. This interplay between artist and audience, present as early as Burden’s interactive corridor sculptures at Pomona College, is akin to the interconnection of artist and institution in works of Institutional Critique, insofar as one is dependent upon the other for the work to have meaning. For instance, in *Back to You* Burden knew that the audience in New York, which was not all that familiar with his work, was expecting him to literally attack them somehow. Burden once again turned the tables on the audience by figuring them as the aggressors, just as he had previously turned them into voyeurs, confessors, witnesses, and caregivers. In *The Visitation* (1974) and *La Chiarificazione [The Clarification]* (1975), Burden locked himself in gallery rooms with visitors and talked to them in solo and group situations, respectively. These were both very social works and they were dependent upon open

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<sup>18</sup> Chris Burden, *Chris Burden 74–77* (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1978), n.p.

communication between the artist and his audience. Describing *La Chiaraficazione*, Burden wrote,

I spoke to the eleven people in Italian and convinced them to stay in the room until someone broke in from the outside. I told them that they were the sculpture and that the responsibility for the success of the piece rested with them.<sup>19</sup>

Here again Burden turned the audience into hostages, of sorts, but he also entreated them to join him in making a durational piece, without a fixed length, where they were all in it together, so to speak. Furthermore, *La Chiaraficazione* relied on the audience members who were excluded from the room to break down a false wall over the doorway and release them. In many ways, this piece puts the same kind of pressure on the institution to safeguard the health and safety of its patrons and artists, as the works discussed above.

In addition to art-world institutions, such as museums, galleries, and audiences, Burden went on to apply the methodology of Institutional Critique to several other powerful systems, including the economy (*Diecimila*, 1977), the government (*Full Financial Disclosure*, 1977), the security state (*Wiretap*, 1977), and the military-industrial complex (*The Other Vietnam Memorial*, 1991), among others. Another early work, *TV Ad* (1973), took on the reigning communication superpower of the day, television. As Burden related, he and his friends were wondering how to get themselves on TV, presumably to promote their art. Besides hijacking airtime, as he had done the year before, Burden also infiltrated the televisual stream through the medium of a 10-second, spot ID commercial, in which he showed a short clip of his performance *Through the Night Softly* (1973). Despite the fact that commercial airtime was usually not sold to individuals for self-promotion, Burden convinced a salesman at KHJ-Channel 9 in Los Angeles that he was a legitimate artist and he bought \$550-worth of advertising for his spot, which ran

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<sup>19</sup> Anne Ayres and Paul Schimmel, eds., *Chris Burden: A Twenty-Year Survey* (Newport Beach: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1988), p. 158.

five times a week for a month during the *Phil Donahue Show* and right after the eleven o'clock news. When the station director happened to catch Burden's ad on television one night, he was incensed, pulled the spot off the air, and fired the salesman who was responsible. Burden, who was staying up each night to insure that they were playing his commercial, called the station and eventually hired a lawyer to compel them to honor their contract with him. It worked; Burden's ad was reinserted into the lineup and even run a number of extra times. Burden said, "that was a great feeling of power because here is Chris Burden in his \$90 a month studio on the Venice Boardwalk pushing a bunch of TV executives around."<sup>20</sup> Thus, *TV Ad* can also be read as a work of Institutional Critique in the same vein as *Five Day Locker Piece*, since it entailed a power struggle between Burden and the television station over the content of his advertisement.

Injecting oneself into the TV feed the way Burden did, with outrageous actions like taking someone hostage and crawling through broken glass, was in the spirit of the Yippie movement, which employed a similar technique to get free publicity for their countercultural antics. In addition to causing a scene that would attract media attention, Abbie Hoffman also advocated for pirate or "guerrilla television," which he argued was "the vanguard of the communications revolution," because of the sizable potential audience that could be reached.<sup>21</sup> Burden perhaps took the term guerrilla television literally in *TV Hijack*, when he used the insurrectionary tactic of terrorism to beam an image himself live over the airwaves. As he did in *Shout Piece*, Burden seems to have taken a page out of the Yippie handbooks, such as Hoffman's *Steal this Book* (1971), which were guides to living the countercultural dream.

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<sup>20</sup> Jones, Oral history interview with Chris Burden.

<sup>21</sup> Hoffman, *Steal This Book*, pp. 141–145.

Following *Shout Piece*, Burden performed two pieces that also invoked the Yippie predilection for dress-up, both as a strategy of irreverent guerrilla theater and as a technique of blending in with straight society. Traveling to the Museum of Conceptual Art in San Francisco about 6 weeks after *Shout*, Burden performed *I Became a Secret Hippy* (1971), in which he traded his normal clothes for a stereotypical “G-man” outfit and had his long, hippie hair buzz-cut. Here, Burden camouflaged himself, the implication being that he was going undercover in order to carry out covert operations on behalf of the counterculture. Throughout *Steal this Book*, Hoffman advises would-be Yippies to disguise themselves as straight in order to carry out various confidence schemes or outright robberies. This approach to blending in was also used at the time by the Weatherman organization, when it split away from the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and its members went underground to carry out acts of sabotage and terrorism against the state. Wanted by the FBI, the Weather Underground were constantly changing their appearances and falsifying their identification in order to avoid capture. In the spring of 1971, the Feds cracked the group’s ID system, leading to the raid of a San Francisco cell, where Weatherman leaders Bernardine Dohrn, Jeff Jones, and David Gilbert were living.<sup>22</sup> In *I Became a Secret Hippy*, Burden seems to have pointed the way forward for such revolutionaries, who were increasingly forced to alter their appearances. When he traveled to Kansas City a month later for a performance at the Morgan Gallery, Burden again concealed his identity, this time by wearing a ski mask the entire 2 days he was in town. The performance, *You’ll Never See My Face in Kansas City* (1971), consisted of Burden occupying the gallery space for three hours, during which time he sat mute and partially concealed behind a partition. The artist in a ski mask, or balaclava, similarly conjured up images of resistance fighters in a

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<sup>22</sup> Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006), pp. 157–158.

phenomenon that swept the Western world in the early 1970s, as movements such as the Red Army Faction and Black September waged guerilla warfare in European cities. Hijackers, kidnappers, robbers, and terrorists could all be lumped into the ranks of those associated with this style of camouflage on the battlefield. As a series of actions with *Shout* as their progenitor, *Secret Hippy* and *You'll Never See My Face* take on special significance within this social interpretation of Burden's early work, wherein his form of dress-up resonated with revolutionary fashions of the day.

As this study shows, in many cases the stories surrounding Chris Burden's performances are the key to their significance, above and beyond the terse descriptions of them the artist always provided. Close reading, archival research, and oral histories with participants provide opportunities to expand upon the common understanding of Burden's work, which the artist tightly controlled in his lifetime. These examples, of which there are many more, demonstrate the way in which Burden's early work can be used to elucidate later periods in the artist's career. They also reinforce my contention that Burden's work be included in the canon of Institutional Critique. This study is the foundation upon which further investigations of Burden's rich oeuvre can build more robust readings based on social trends, situational circumstances, and art-historical precedents.





Fig. 1  
Exhibition announcement  
"Kenneth Price"  
Ferus Gallery  
October 16–November 4, 1961



AN EXHIBITION OF RECENT WORK BY BILLY AL BENGSTON  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13th UNTIL SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2nd  
AT THE FERUS GALLERY 723 NORTH LA CIENEGA BOULEVARD  
LOS ANGELES 69, CALIF. • OPENING NOVEMBER 13th 8 UNTIL 10 P.M.

'61



Fig. 2  
Exhibition announcement  
"Recent Work by Billy Al Bengston"  
Ferus Gallery  
November 13–December 2, 1961





Figs 3–4  
John Mason working in his Silver Lake studio, 1960



Fig. 5  
John Mason  
*Blue Wall*  
Ceramic  
84 x 252 x 5 inches  
Installation in the courtyard of the Ferus Gallery  
1959





Figs 6–7  
Chris Burden  
Untitled  
Bronze  
6.5 x 5 inches  
Fall 1966  
Private collection

© 2018 Chris Burden / licensed by The Chris Burden Estate and Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
New York



Fig. 8  
John Mason  
*Geometric Form, Dark*  
Ceramic  
59 x 43 x 25 inches  
1966



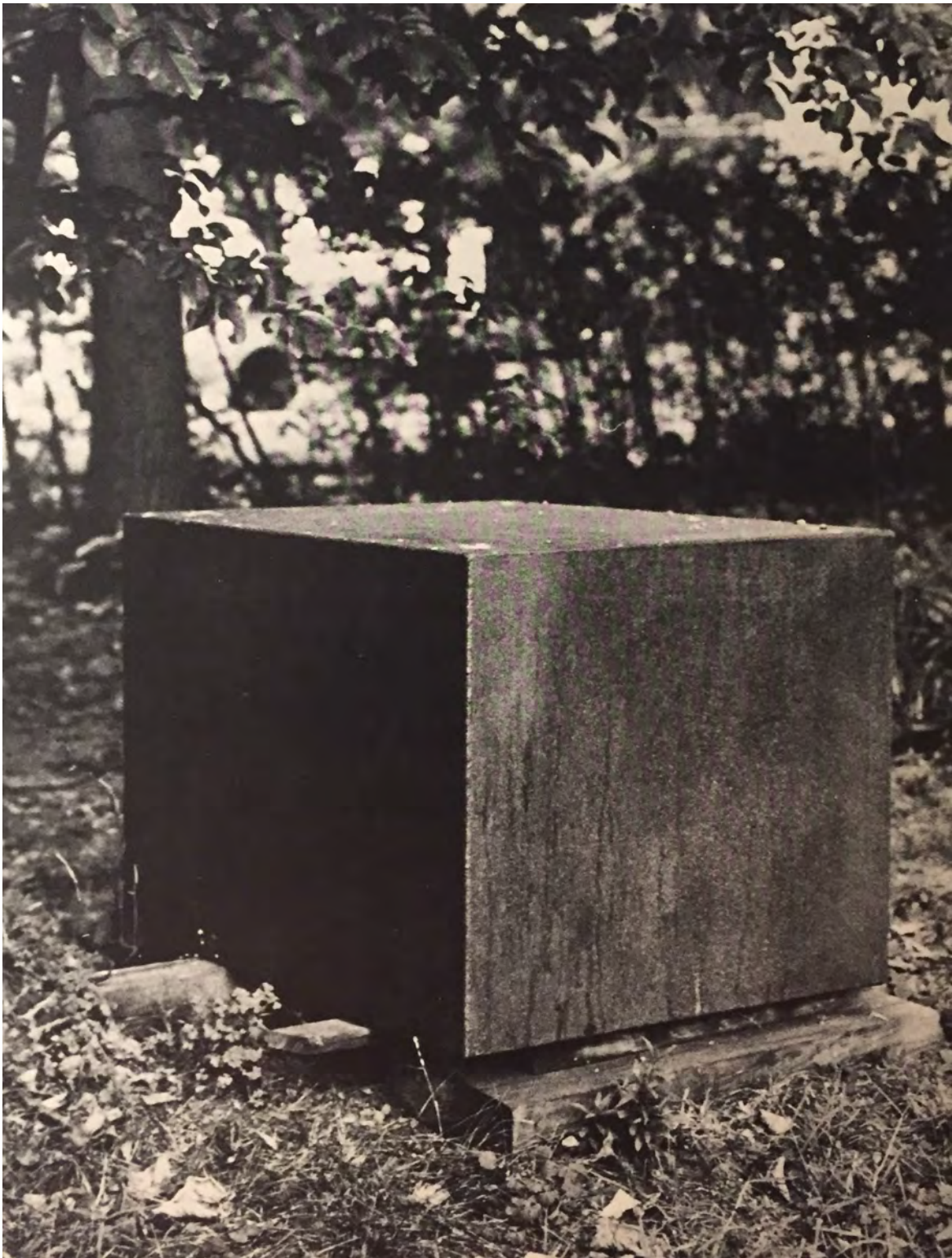


Fig. 9  
Tony Smith  
*The Black Box*  
Cor-Ten Steel  
22.5 x 33 x 25 inches  
1962





Fig. 10  
Tony Smith  
*Die*  
Cor-Ten Steel  
6 x 6 x 6 feet  
1962

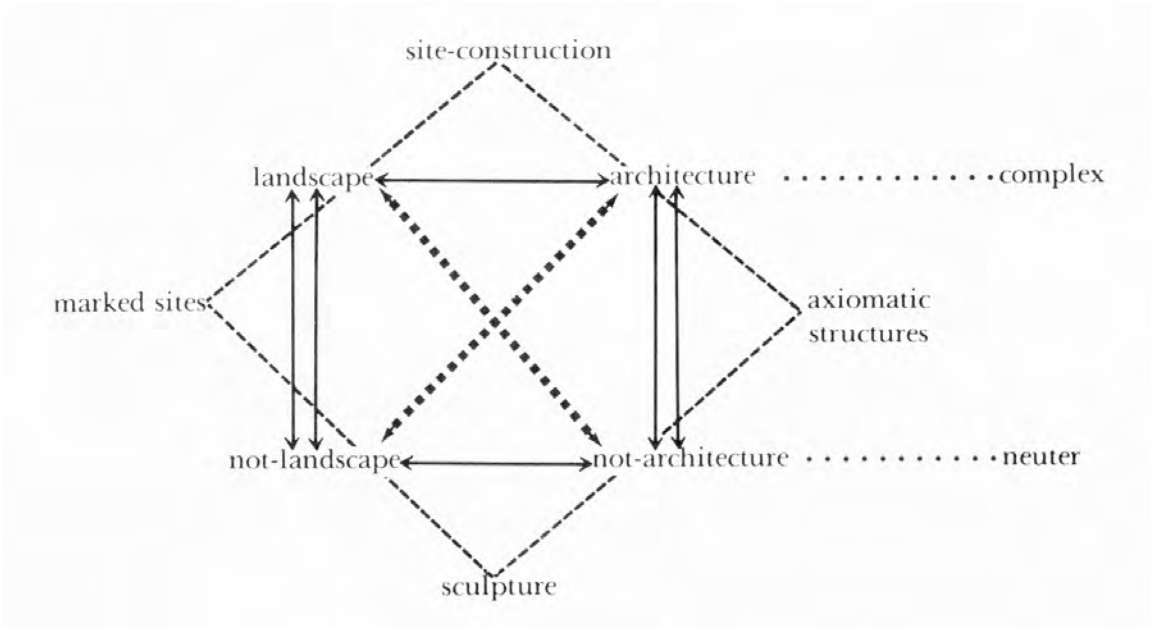


Fig. 11  
 Rosalind E. Krauss  
 "Sculpture in the Expanded Field"  
 From *John Mason: Installations from the Hudson River Series* (Yonkers, NY: The Hudson River Museum, 1978).





Fig. 12  
David Gray  
*L.A./5*  
Welded steel, lacquer, chrome plate, and flock  
13.5 x 9 x 9 inches  
1965  
Pomona College Collection. Gift of Pam Gray and DJ Gray  
© Estate of David Gray  
Photograph by Robert Wedemeyer

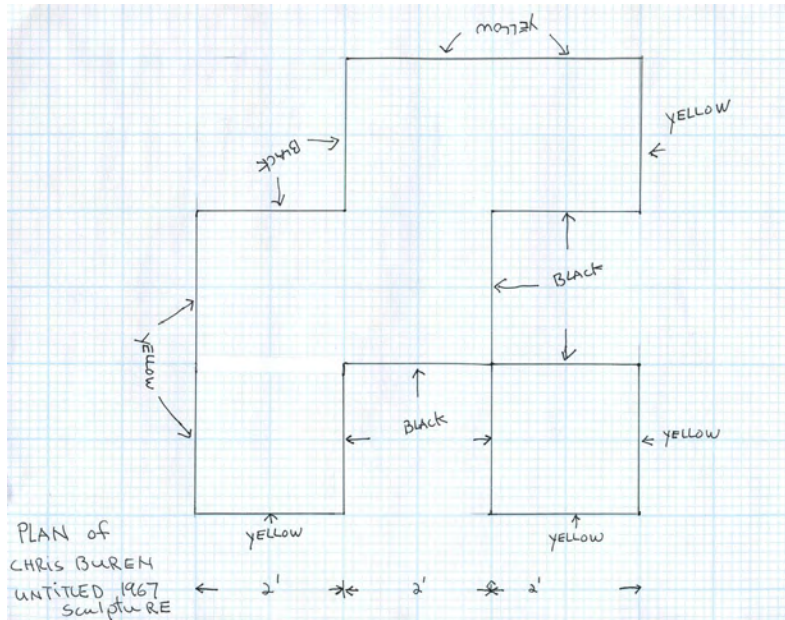


Fig. 13  
 Chris Burden  
 Plan for untitled sculpture, 1967  
 Pen on graph paper  
 Chris Burden Estate  
 © 2018 Chris Burden / licensed by The Chris Burden Estate and Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

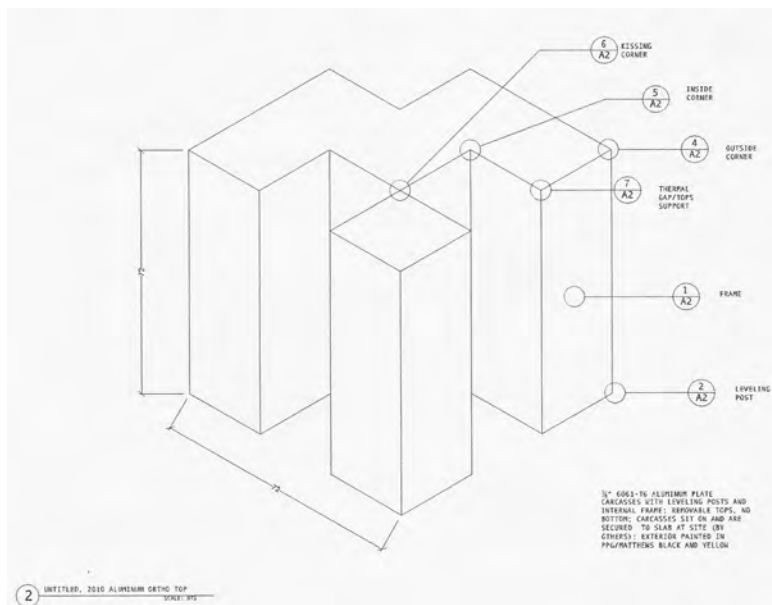
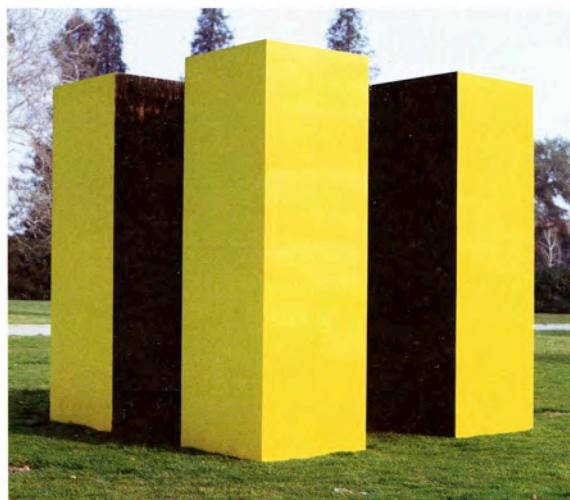
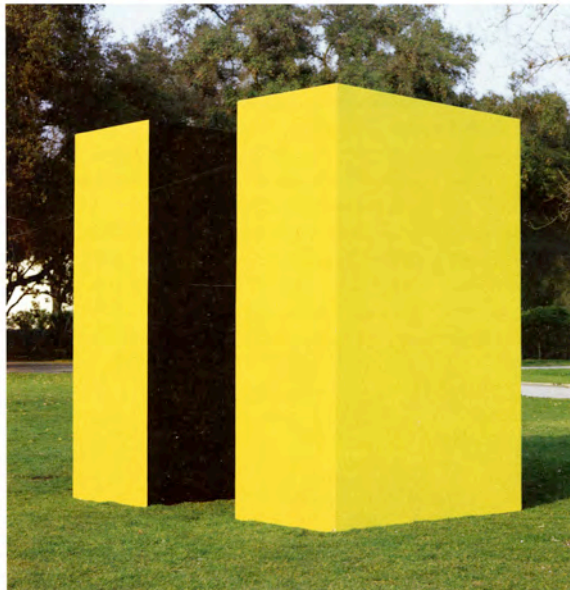


Fig. 14  
 Architect's rendering of Chris Burden's untitled 1967 sculpture for refabrication in aluminum, 2012  
 Chris Burden Estate  
 © 2018 Chris Burden / licensed by The Chris Burden Estate and Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Figs 15–19  
Chris Burden  
Untitled  
Plywood and lacquer  
6 x 6 x 6 feet  
Installation on Marston Quadrangle, Pomona  
College  
Fall 1967 (destroyed)  
Reconstructed in aluminum 2012  
Pomona College Museum of Art  
© 2018 Chris Burden / licensed by The Chris  
Burden Estate and Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
New York

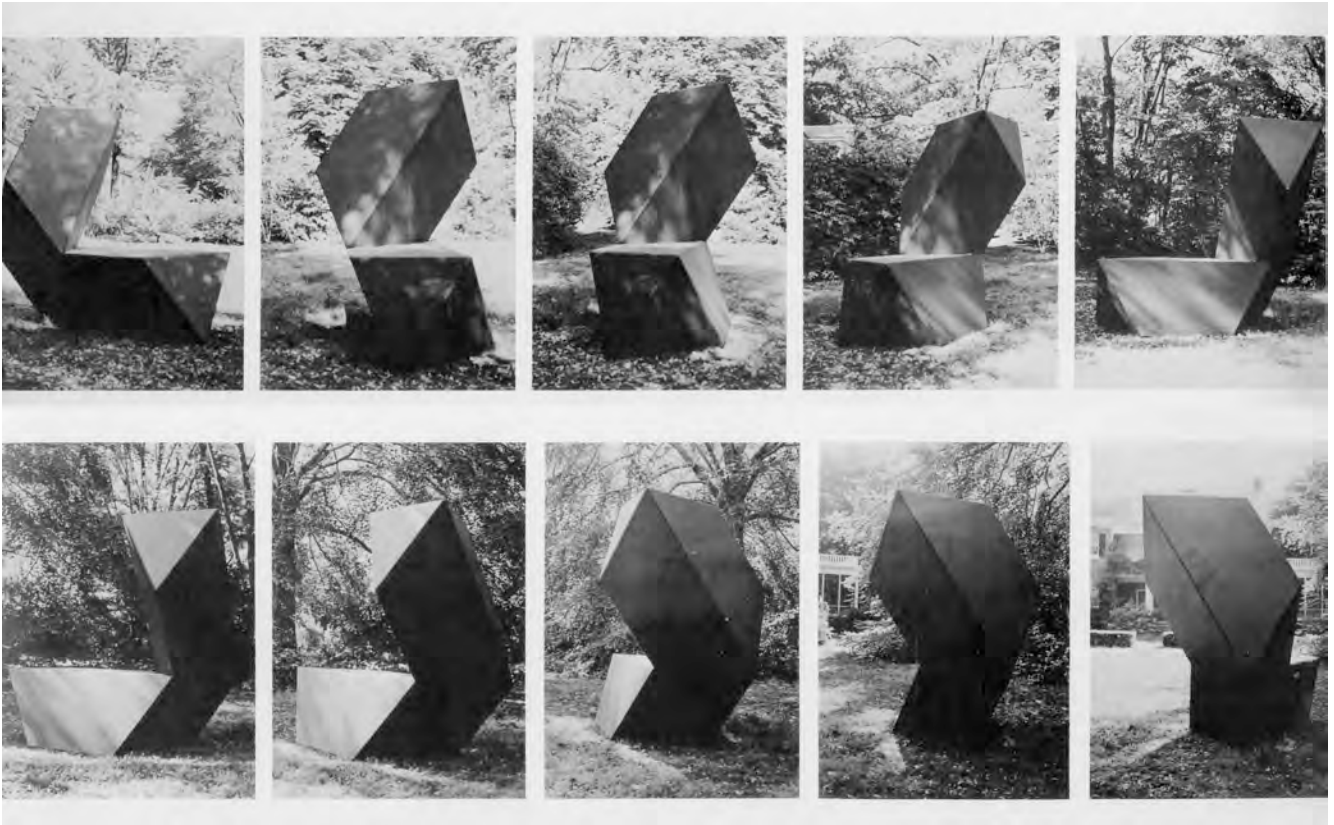


Fig. 20

Tony Smith

*Amaryllis*

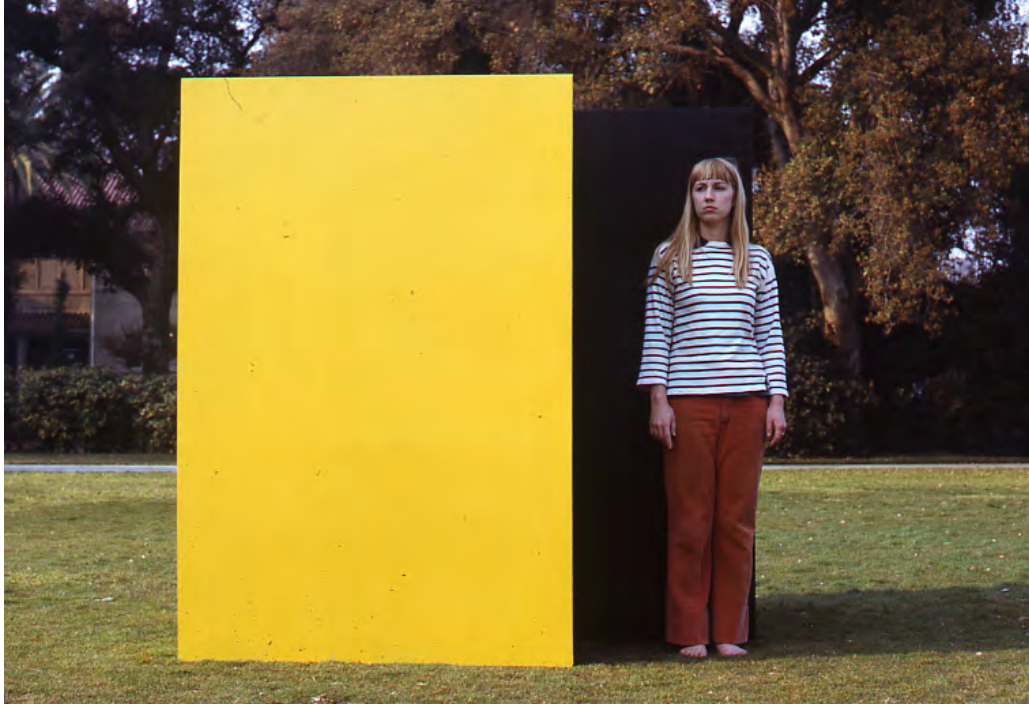
Plywood and lacquer

11.5 x 7.5 x 11.5 feet

1965

From Samuel Wagstaff, *Tony Smith: Two Exhibitions of Sculpture*  
(Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1966).





Figs 21–22  
Archival photographs showing a model  
interacting with Chris Burden's  
untitled 1967 sculpture on Marston  
Quadrangle, Pomona College  
Fall 1967  
Chris Burden Estate  
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The Chris Burden Estate and Artists  
Rights Society (ARS), New York



Fig. 23  
John Mason  
*Yellow Cross*  
Ceramic  
63.5 x 54.5 x 25 inches  
1966



Fig. 24  
John Mason  
*Red X*  
Stoneware  
58.5 x 59.5 x 17 inches  
1966  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art

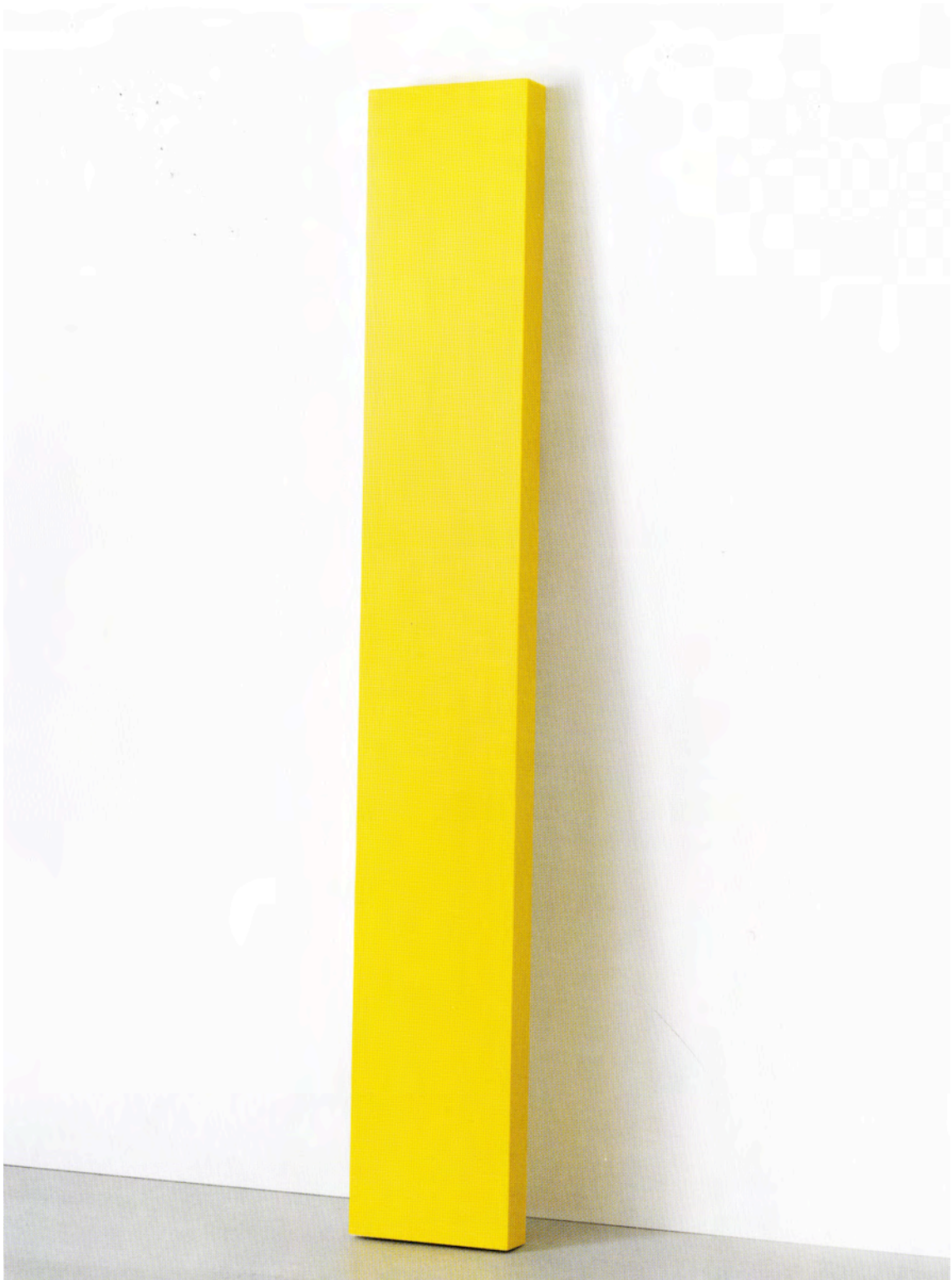


Fig. 25  
John McCracken  
Untitled (yellow)  
Polyester resin, fiberglass, plywood  
94 x 14 x 1.25 inches  
1967





Figs 26–28

Chris Burden

Untitled

Polyethylene sheeting, pipe, galvanized wire

96 x 12 x 6.5 feet

Installation at Pomona College

Spring 1969 (destroyed)

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New York





Figs 29–30  
Chris Burden  
Untitled  
Polyethylene sheeting, pipe, galvanized wire  
200 x 9 x 3 feet  
Installation at Pomona College  
Spring 1969 (destroyed)  
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Society (ARS), New York

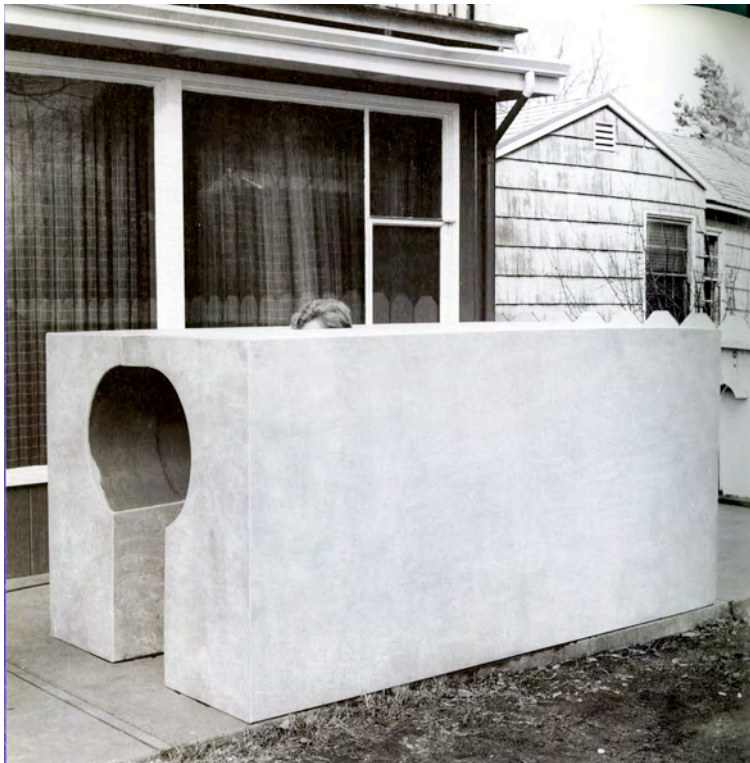


Fig. 31  
Mowry Baden  
*Delivery Suite*  
Steel and fibred polyester resin  
49 x 77 x 75 inches  
1965  
Private collection





Fig. 32  
Mowry Baden  
*Auger*  
Fibered polyester resin  
96 inches  
1967  
Private collection



Figs 33–34  
Mowry Baden  
*Phantom Limb*  
Fibred polyester  
54 x 96 x 45 inches  
1967  
University of Lethbridge

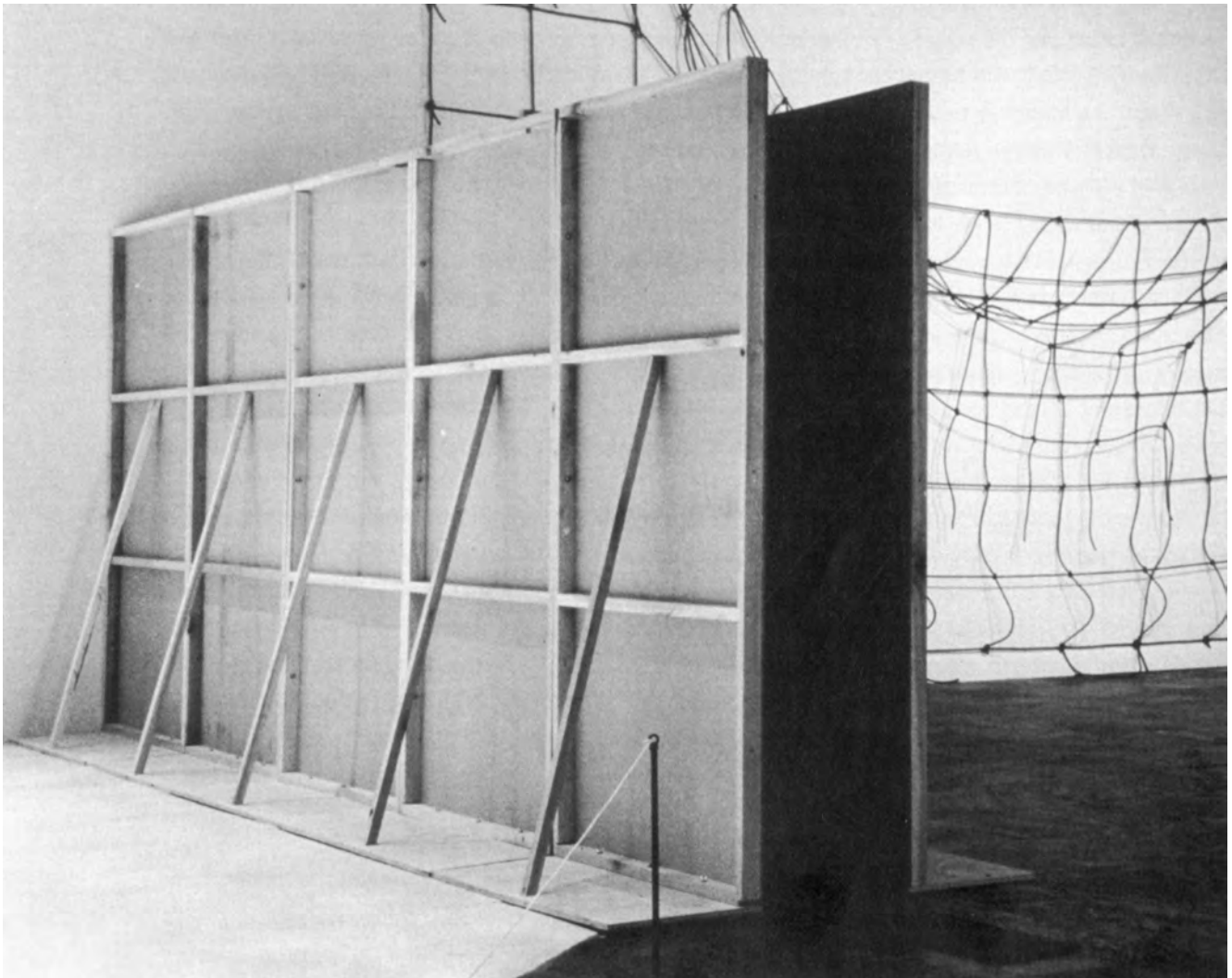


Fig. 35  
Bruce Nauman  
*Performance Corridor*  
Wallboard and wood  
8 x 20 x 1 2/3 feet  
1969  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum



Fig. 36  
Bruce Nauman  
*Walk with Contrapposto*  
Video  
60 minutes  
1968



Figs 37–38

Experimental corridor apparatus intended to test the effects of perceptual stimuli on moving subjects in a semi-sensory deprived environment.

Early–mid 1960s

From Richard L. Gregory, “On not having our feet on the ground,” in *The Neuropsychology of Spatially Oriented Behavior*, ed. Sanford J. Freedman (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1968).





Fig. 39  
Mowry Baden  
*I Walk the Line*  
Wood, steel, and carpet  
41 x 240 x 204 inches  
1967  
Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego





Fig. 40  
Mowry Baden  
*Instrument*  
Aluminum and steel  
192 x 96 inches (height variable)  
1969



Fig. 41  
The discovery of the Lascaux caves  
Archival photograph  
From Mario Ruspoli, *The Cave of Lascaux* (New York: Abrams, 1987).



Fig. 42  
"The Pit Scene" from Lascaux  
Manganese oxide on rock  
42 inches long  
15,000 BP



Fig. 43  
Gail Scott, Maurice Tuchman, Robert Irwin, and James Turrell (left to  
right) examine a Ganzfeld device  
Garrett Corporation, El Segundo  
1969

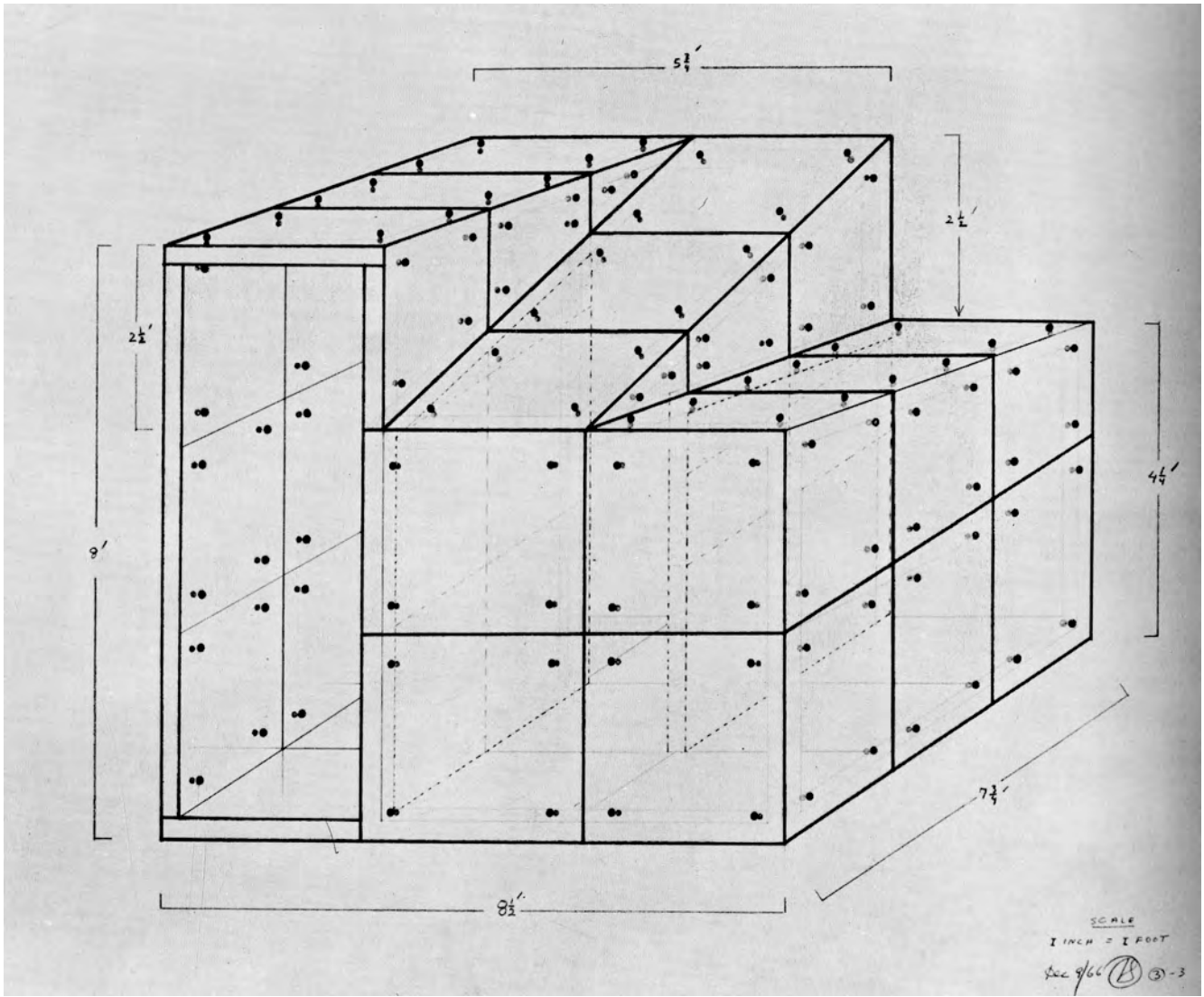


Fig. 44  
Lucas Samaras  
Drawing for *Corridor #1*  
1966-1967

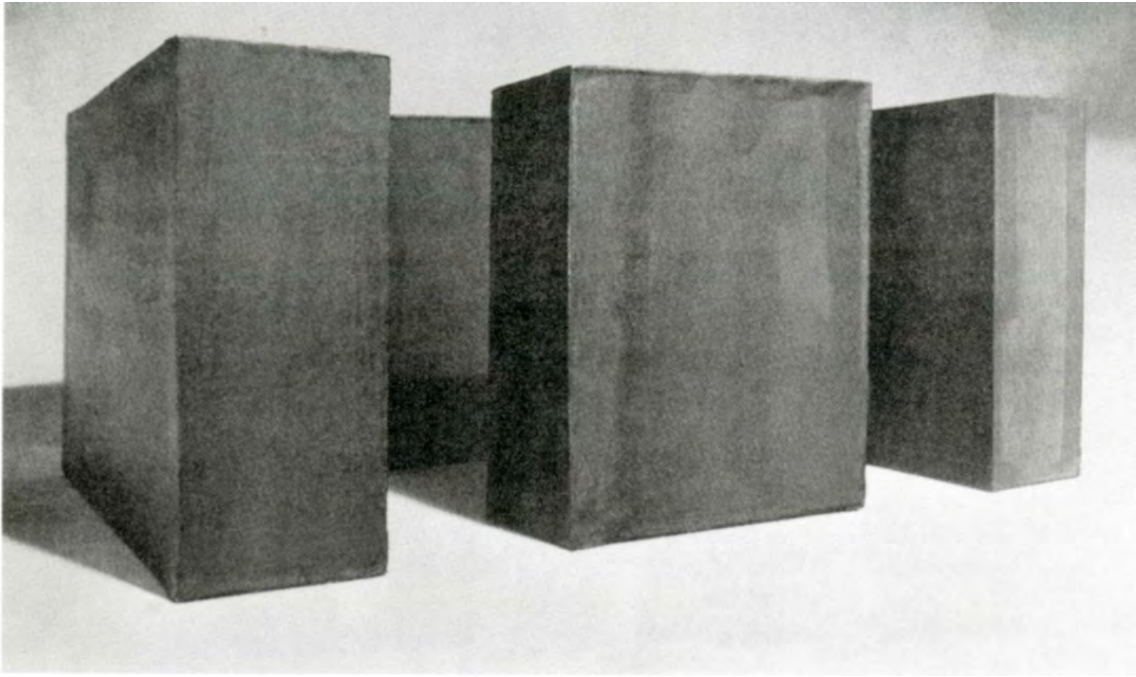


Fig. 45  
Tony Smith  
*The Maze*  
Environment  
Finch College Museum of Art  
1967 (destroyed)



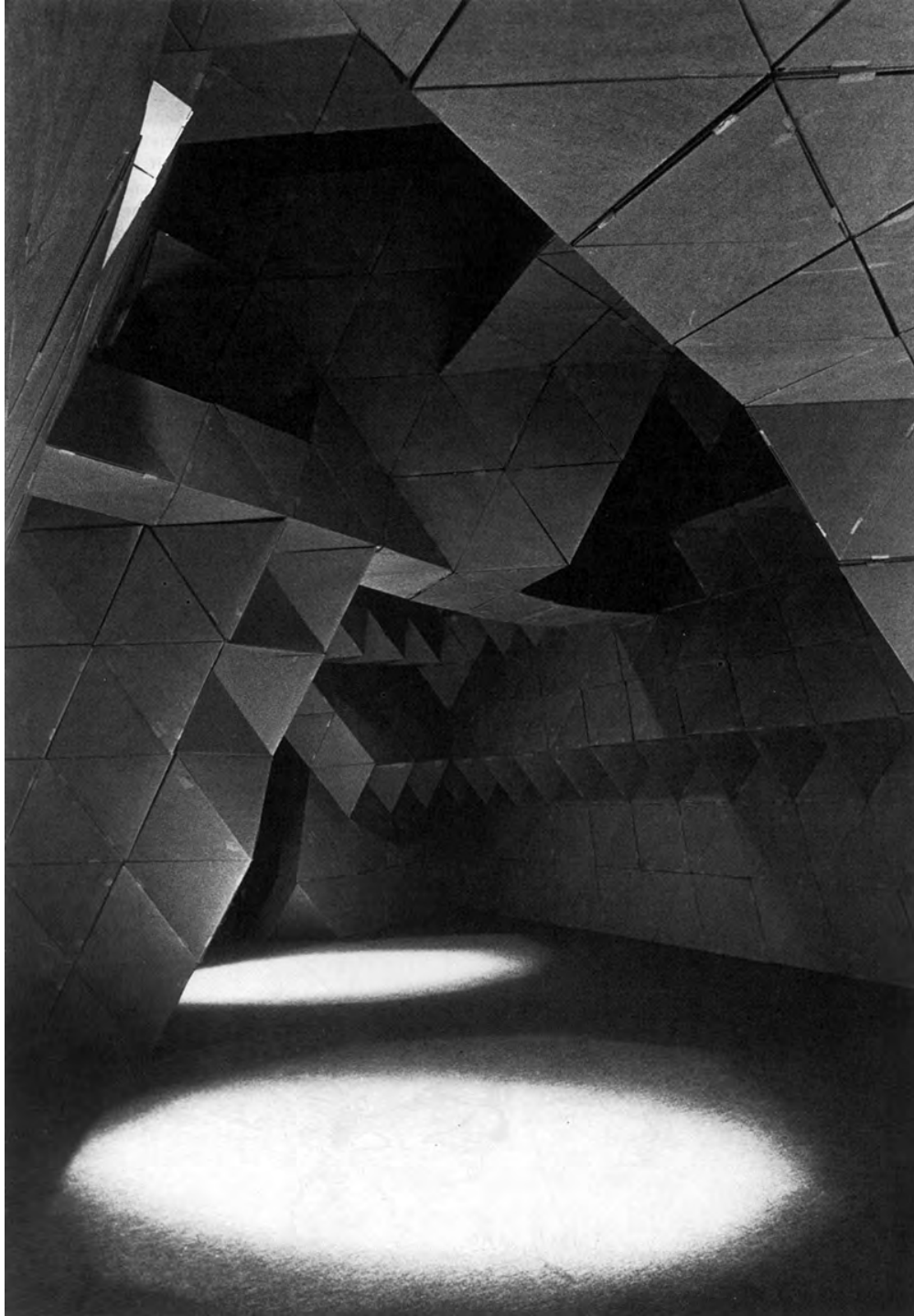


Fig. 46  
Tony Smith  
*Bat Cave*  
Environment  
Expo 70, Osaka, Japan  
1970



Fig. 47  
Jean Toche  
*Labyrinths and Psychological Stress*  
Environment  
Judson Gallery, New York  
1967  
Photo: Julie Abeles



Fig. 48  
Les Levine  
*All Star Cast*  
Environment  
Time-Life Building, New York  
1967





Fig. 49

Chris Burden

*Five Day Locker Piece*

Performance/Sculpture

University of California, Irvine

April 26–30, 1971

Photo: Diana Zlotnik

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Fig. 50

Promotional photo for the University of California, Irvine, showing students in art class, one of whom appears to be meditating, using their meager studio equipment as furniture to hold a discussion.

Late 1960s

University Communications Photographs (AS-061). University of California, Irvine Libraries. Special Collections and Archives. Courtesy of the University of California, Irvine.



Fig. 51  
Aerial view of the Fine Arts Building at the University of California, Irvine  
Late 1960s  
University Communications Photographs (AS-061). University of California, Irvine Libraries.  
Special Collections and Archives. Courtesy of the University of California, Irvine.



Fig. 52  
Chris Burden  
Announcement for *Five Day Locker Piece*  
Xerox  
14 x 8.5 inches  
1971  
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and Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.





Fig. 53  
Archival photograph of Barbara Burden feeding Chris juice through  
the louvers of the locker  
Chris Burden Estate  
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Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

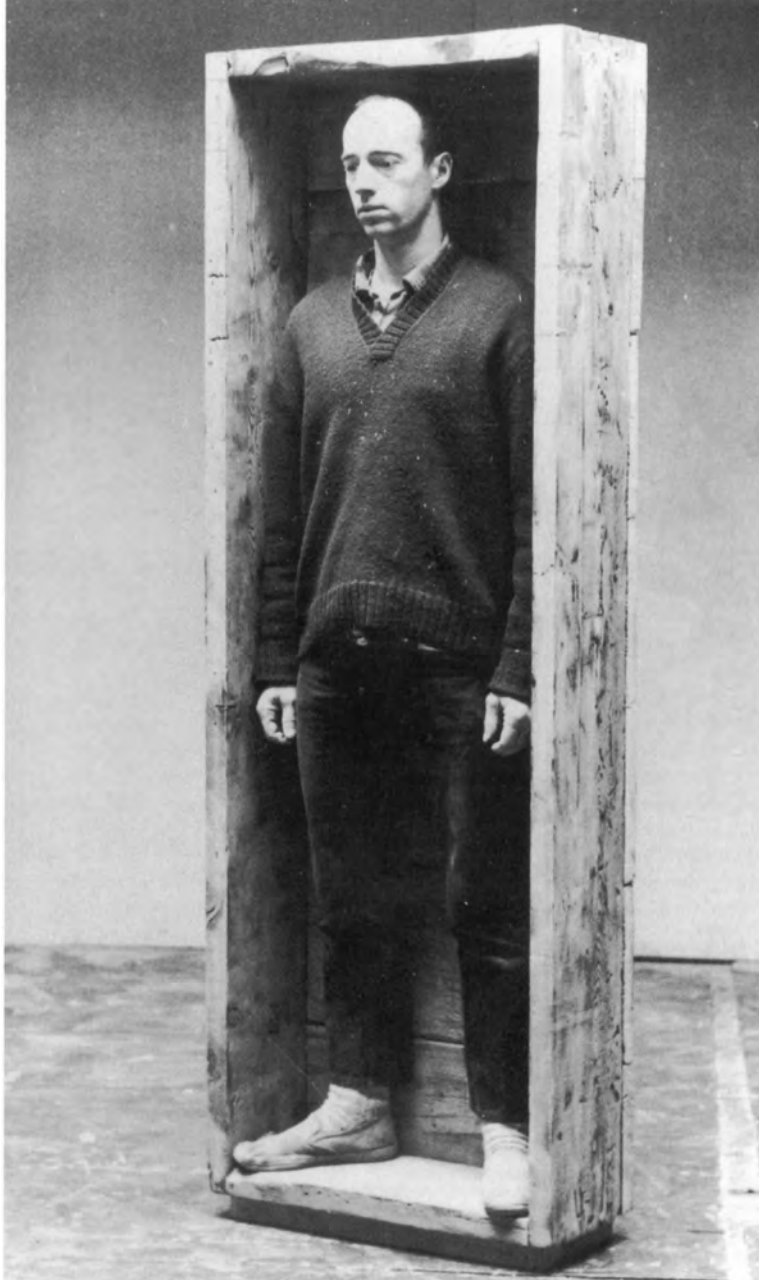


Fig. 54  
Robert Morris  
*Untitled (Box for Standing)*  
Fir  
74 x 25 x 10 inches  
1961



Fig. 55  
Paul Thek  
Untitled  
Wax, paint, polyester resin, nylon microfilament, wire, plaster, plywood, melamine laminate, and rhodium-plated bronze  
14 x 15 x 7.5 inches  
From the series "Technological Reliquaries"  
1966  
Whitney Museum of American Art



Fig. 56  
Scott Grieger  
*Ronald Bladen*  
From "Impersonations"  
1970





Fig. 57  
Robert Kinmont  
*8 Natural Handstands* (detail)  
Set of 9 silver gelatin prints  
Each 8 x8 inches  
1967/1969



Fig. 58

Chris Burden

*Bicycle Piece*

Performance

Art Gallery, University of California, Irvine

May 6–20, 1971

Photo: Judy Herzog.

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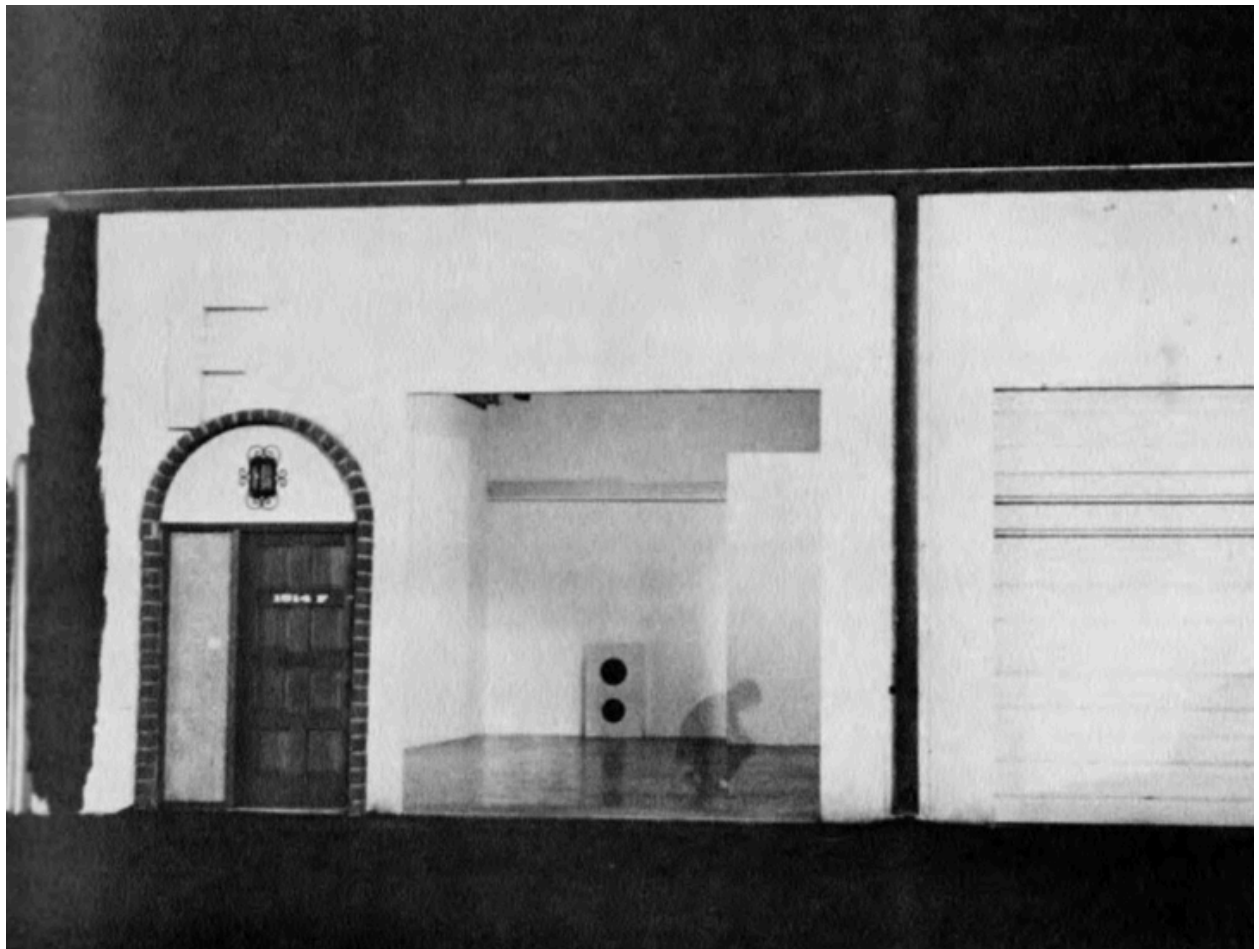


Fig. 59  
Chris Burden  
*Bicycle Piece*  
Performance  
Art Gallery, University of California, Irvine  
May 6–20, 1971  
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Fig. 60  
May Day protest on Gateway Plaza at the University of California, Irvine  
May 1, 1969  
University Communications Photographs (AS-061). University of California, Irvine Libraries.  
Special Collections and Archives. Courtesy of the University of California, Irvine.



Figs 61–62  
Archival photos of F Space  
1972



Fig. 63  
Lewis Baltz  
*Industrial Structure, during Painting, Irvine*  
Photograph  
From "The New Industrial Parks near Irvine, California"  
1974

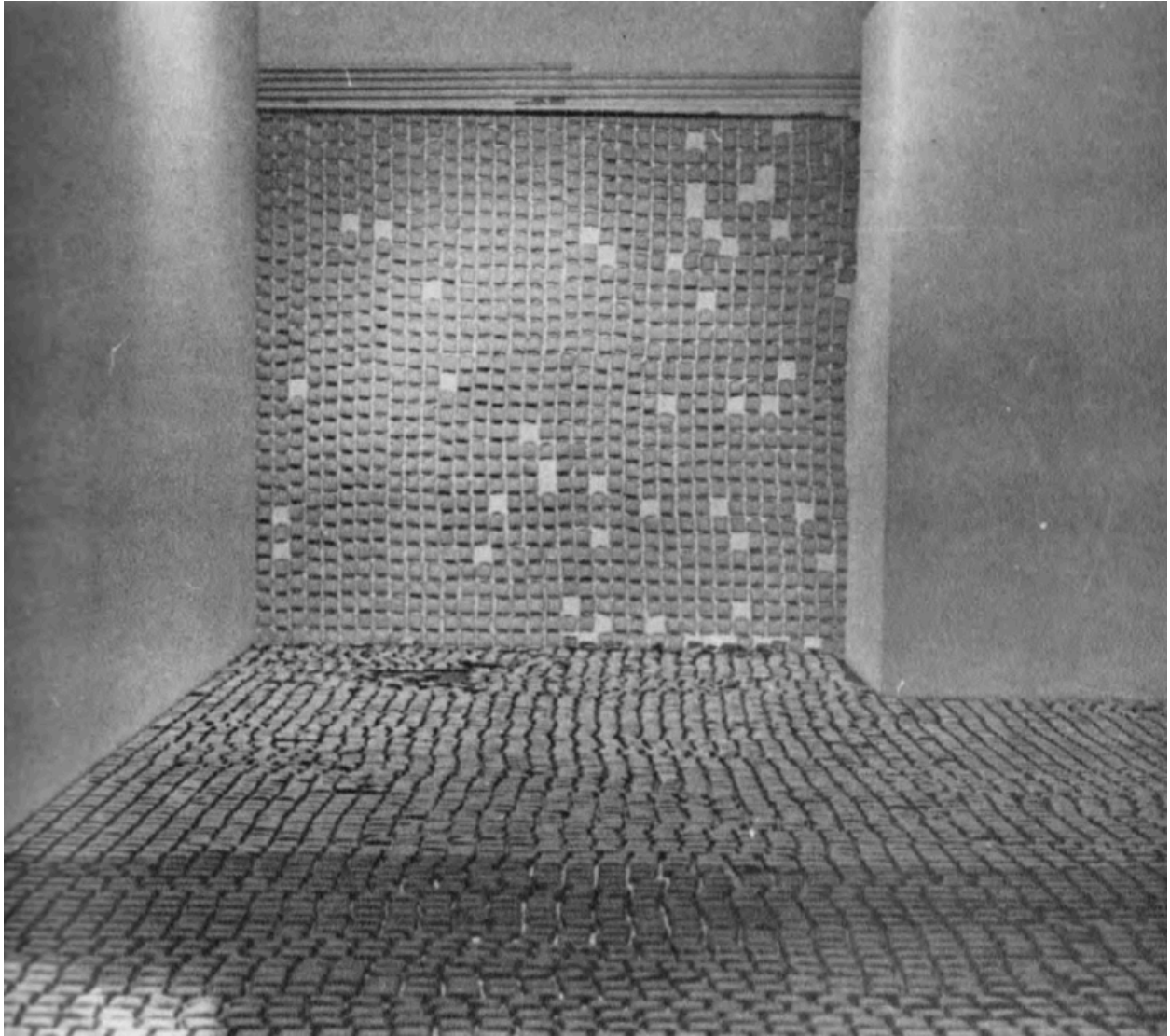


Fig. 64  
Bruce Dunlap  
*Bread Piece*  
Installation  
F Space, Santa Ana  
July 9–11, 1972

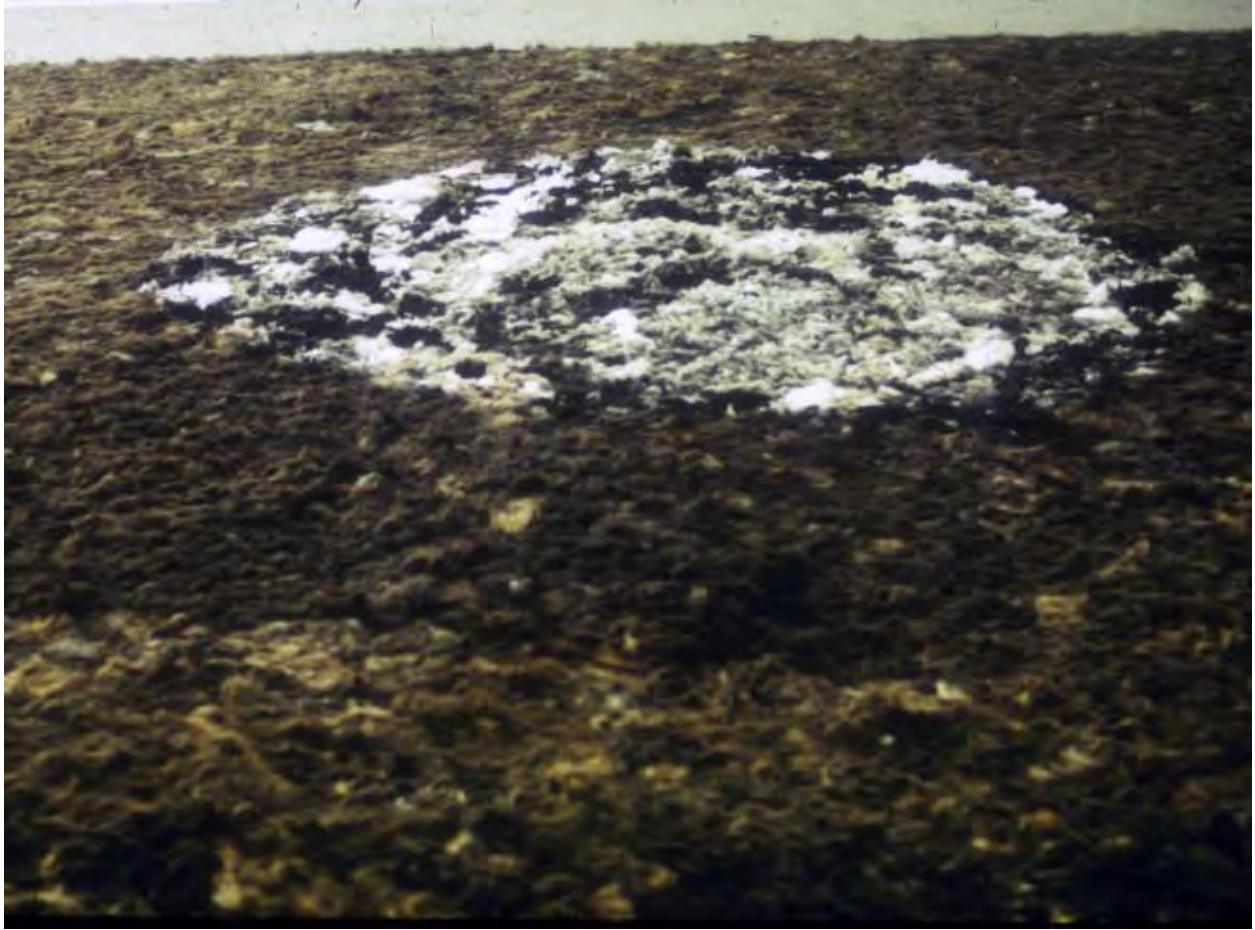


Fig. 65  
Nancy Buchanan  
*Hair Piece*  
Human and poodle hair  
Installation  
University of California, Irvine  
1971  
Photo: Barbara T. Smith





Fig. 66  
Nancy Buchanan and Robert Walker  
*At Home*  
Shredded paper  
Installation  
F Space, Santa Ana  
1971  
Photo: Doris Jeannette

# SCHEMATIC FOR PERFORMANCE/INSTALLATION, F SPACE 3 ELEMENTS EVERY NIGHT

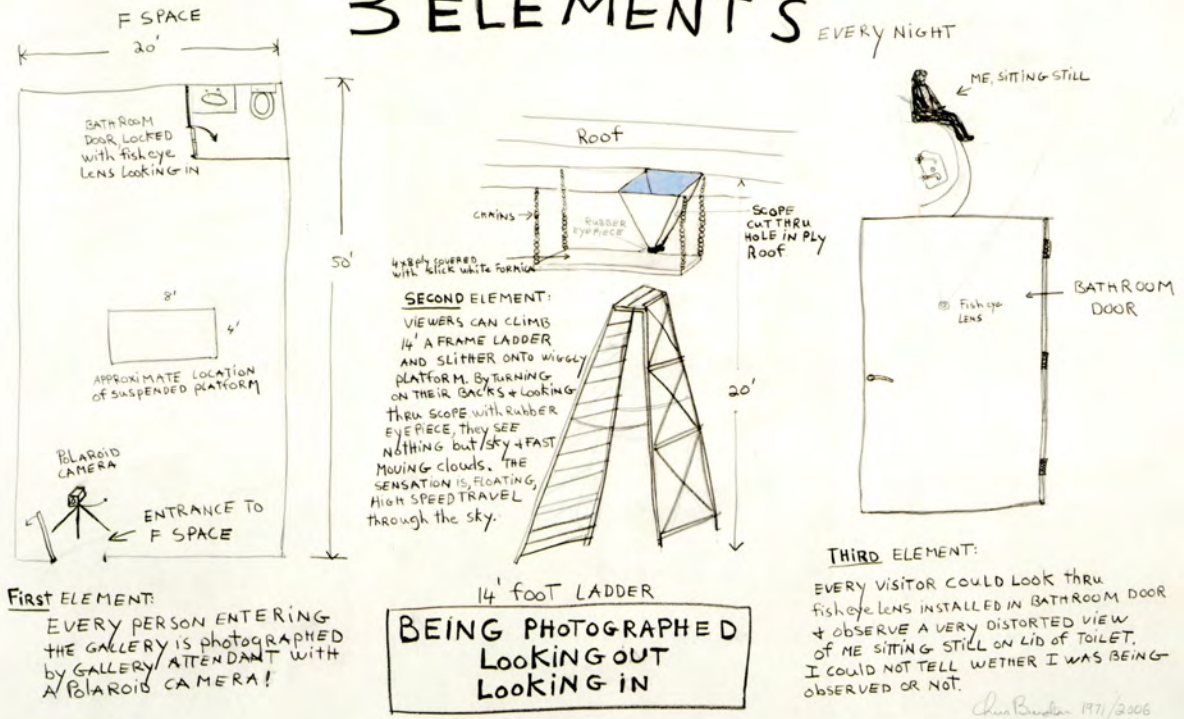


Fig. 67  
Chris Burden  
Drawing for *Being Photographed, Looking Out, Looking In*  
Ink, pencil, and colored pencil on paper  
22.5 x 30 inches  
1971/2006  
© 2018 Chris Burden / licensed by The Chris Burden Estate and Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Fig. 68  
 Chris Burden  
*Being Photographed, Looking Out, Looking In* (detail)  
 Polaroid photographs  
 1971

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Fig. 69

Archival photograph of *Shout Piece*, showing the ladder and platform used in *Being Photographed, Looking Out, Looking In*.

Chris Burden Estate

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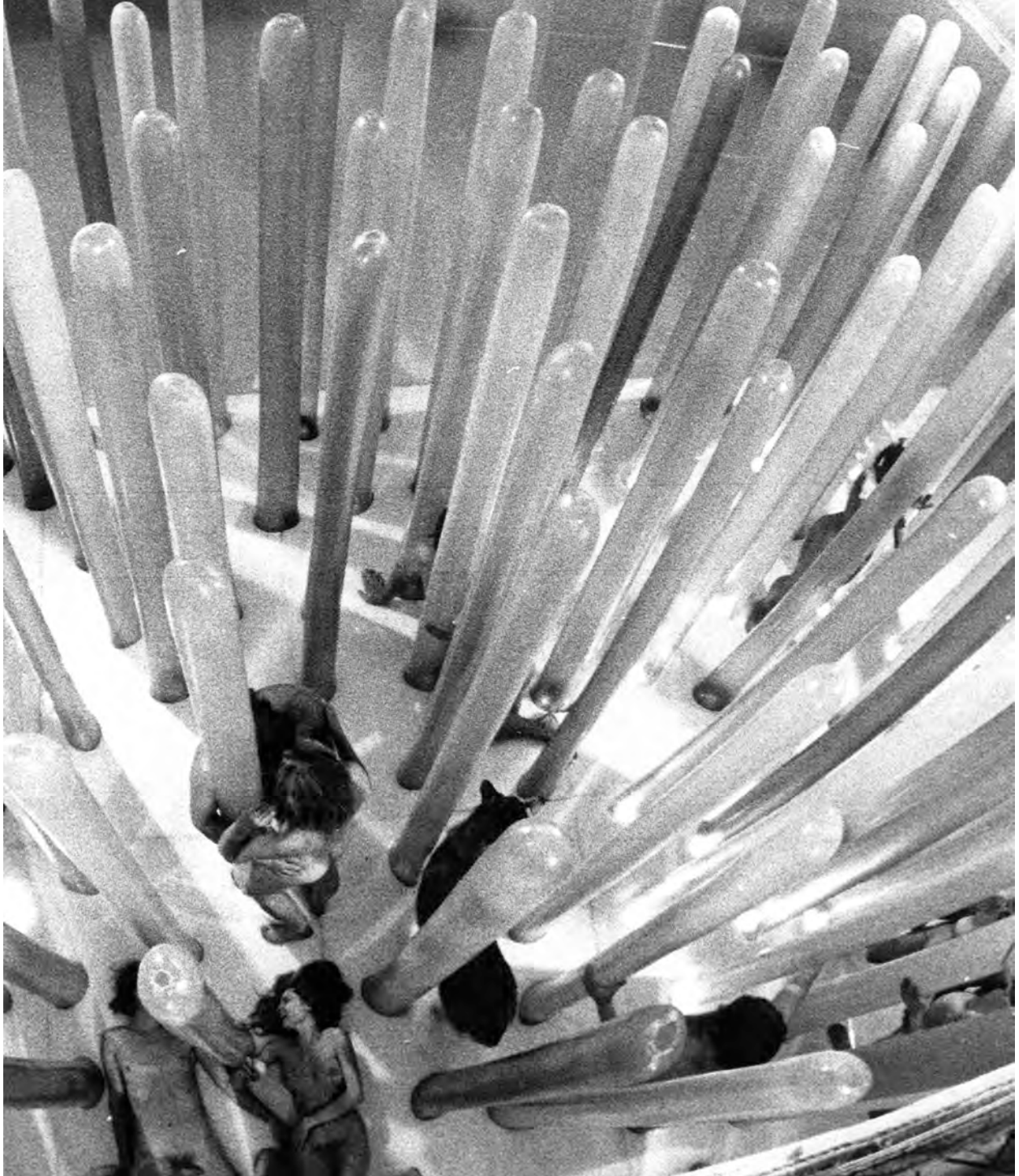


Fig. 70  
Barbara T. Smith  
*Field Piece*  
Environment  
F Space, Santa Ana  
June 10–27, 1971



Fig. 71  
Chris Burden  
*Shout Piece*  
Performance  
F Space, Santa Ana  
August 21, 1971  
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Fig. 72  
Yippie activists Abbie Hoffman (center-left) and Jerry Rubin (right) burn money at the New  
York Stock Exchange  
August 24, 1967



Fig. 73  
Newton Harrison, Fred Londrier, and  
Allan Sekula  
*Body Bags*  
Installation  
University of California, San Diego  
1970





Fig. 74  
A commune somewhere in Virginia.  
From "The Commune Comes to America," *Life* (July 18, 1969).

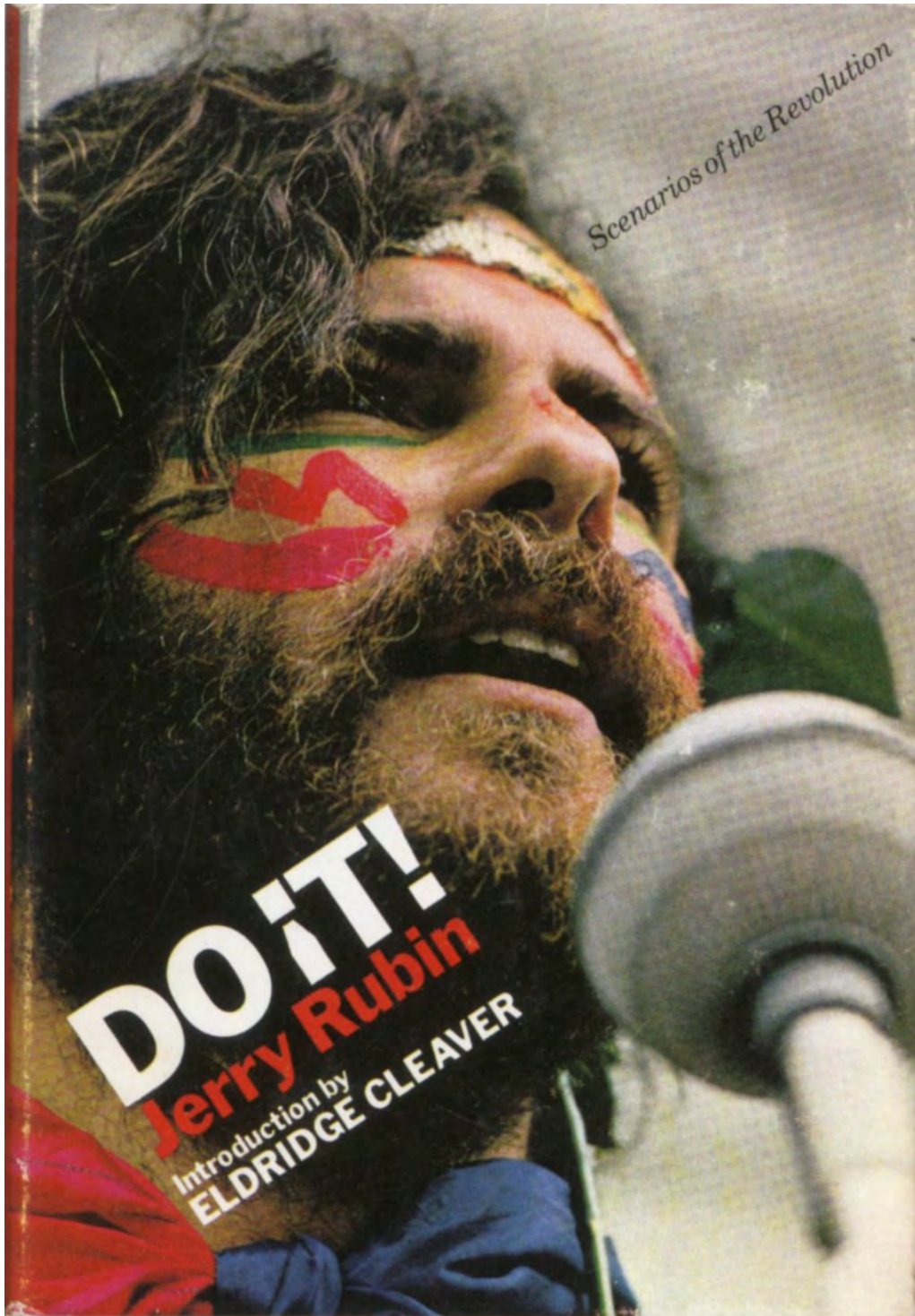


Fig. 75  
The cover of Jerry Rubin's 1970 book *Do It!*, featuring the activist in a beaded headband and face paint, typical styles of the "countercultural Indian."



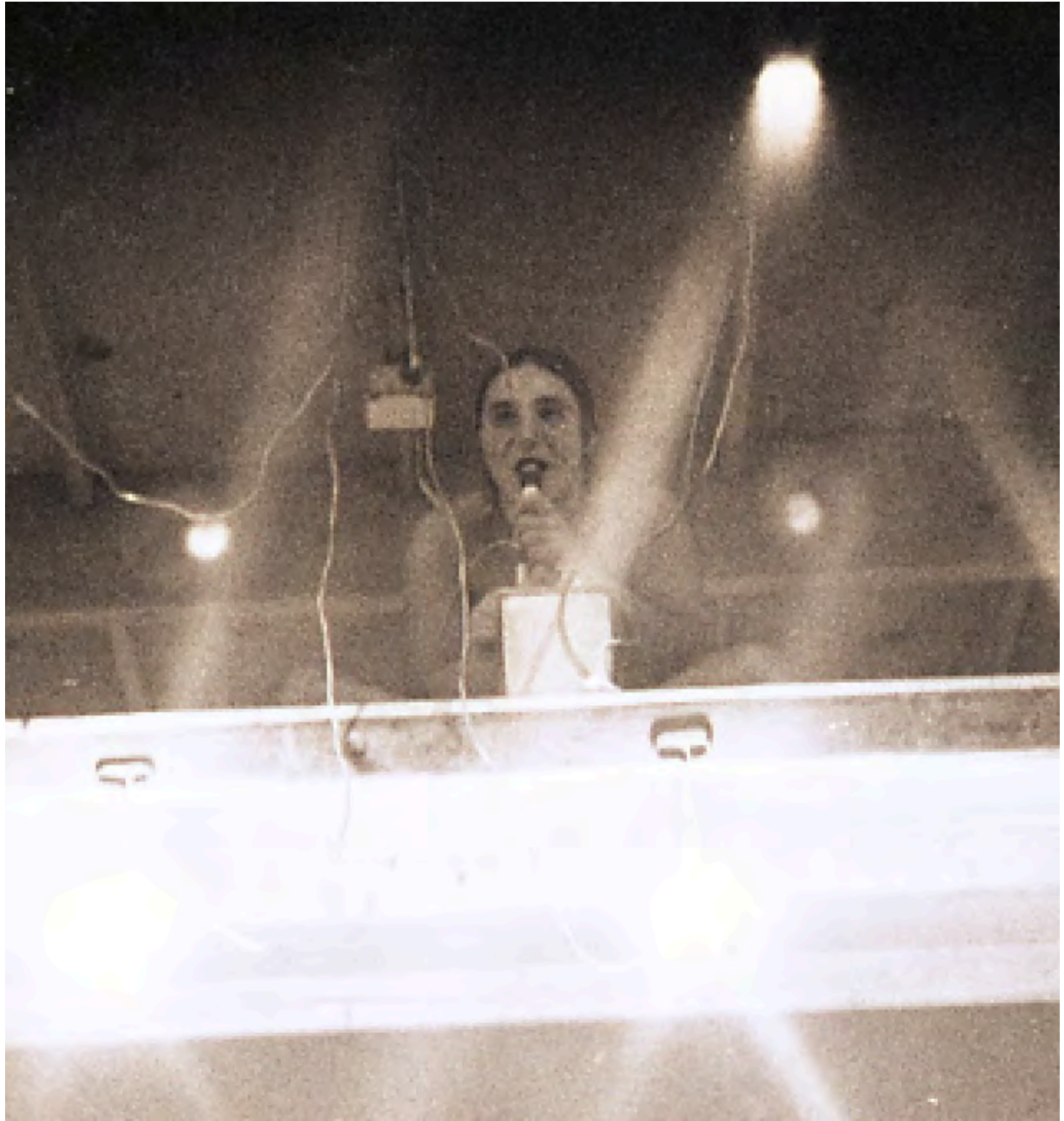


Fig. 76  
Detail from an archival photograph of *Shout Piece*, showing Burden's Native American costume  
Chris Burden Estate  
© 2018 Chris Burden / licensed by The Chris Burden Estate and Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
New York



Figs 77–78

Archival photographs of *Shout Piece*, showing audience reactions

Chris Burden Estate

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Fig. 79  
Installation shot of Chris Burden's *Shout Piece* from the artist's first catalog, *Chris Burden 71-73* (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1974).  
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