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**The politics of experience: Robert Morris, minimalism, and the
1960s**

Berger, Maurice, Ph.D.
City University of New York, 1988

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A

**THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE:
ROBERT MORRIS, MINIMALISM, AND THE 1960s**

**by
MAURICE BERGER**

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City
University of New York.**

1988

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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INTRODUCTION

Robert Morris Outside the Institution of Art History

The mimeographed invitation to view Robert Morris's first large-scale sculpture in early June 1961 was simple and direct: AN ENVIRONMENT at Yoko Ono's studio, 112 Chambers Street, top floor. Just beyond the front door of Ono's Lower Manhattan loft (she had lent Morris her space for the spring), the viewer was invited to enter a narrow passageway, a fifty-foot, semicircular channel that graduated to a point so sharp that one could not pass into the last quarter of its length. The faint recorded sounds of a clock ticking and a heart beating emanated from an unknown source.

In many ways, Passageway, as Morris's claustrophobic "environment" was called, was generative of a whole range of activities in the years following its execution. The copious sheets of plywood used to build the floor-to-ceiling structure, for example, were literally recycled into the smaller cubes, beams, and plinths that would become the trademark of Morris's orthodox minimalism. Aside from its scaled-down progeny, Passageway presages much of what was to become the complex intellectual and stylistic program of Morris's oeuvre: the

engagement of phenomenology, temporality, and theatricality, the transgression of classical form and logic, the desublimation of the psychosexual, the liberation of the art object from the museum, the parody of modernist aesthetics, the reevaluation of the artist's place in the labor economy, the acknowledgement of the individual as the subject of a decentering industrial social order. Most of the writing on Morris, emphasizing as it does stylistic differences, either characterizes his development as a series of discrete and unrelated stylistic shifts or, more likely, ignores the diversity and concentrates on a few compatible sectors of his production. While there is no coherent center for Morris's œuvre (and only traditional art historical methods would attempt to find one), various synchronic categories emerge only after a careful reevaluation of underlying intellectual and philosophical concerns. Such categories do not always evolve in neat, linear patterns but recur throughout the œuvre. For example, the culminating work of Morris's minimalist phase--a structure built thirteen years after Passageway--was a 500 foot labyrinth constructed for the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia in 1974. As such, the labyrinth can be seen as an important structural category for Morris's art, an issue explored in the epilogue of this dissertation.

At the outset of Morris's career as an artist, Passageway announced a radical departure from the traditions of late-formalist sculpture. The autonomous art objects of David Smith, Anthony Caro, and Alexander

Calder were now replaced with a fully integrated environment: The spectator, no longer expected to view passively a reverential object, was aggressively engaged in the act of viewing. It is this shift in the intellectual axis of viewing--from the static object to the theatrical experience--that constitutes an early and critical break with formalist practice. That this rupture would occur throughout the intense social, cultural, and political setting of the 1960s is not merely coincidental; unlike the hermetic formalist discourse that attempted to define him, Morris was continually open to the complex ideas and culture of his time. It is the point of this dissertation to trace the social and historical origins of Morris's radicalism, a radicalism that often existed outside the institutional hierarchies of art history.



...The main materials of social history are very restricted in their medium: they consist in a mass of words and in a few--in the case of the Renaissance a very few--numbers. These cover some kinds of activity and experience respectively and neglect others. Much of the most important experience cannot conveniently be encoded into words or numbers, as we all know, and therefore does not appear in the documents that exist. Besides this, many of the Renaissance words we must rely on are now almost completely worn out: it is difficult to close with Machiavelli's words about what was important in the Renaissance because so many other words, comment and reformulation have since got in the way. It is very difficult to get a notion of what it was to be a person of a certain kind at a certain time and place.

Michael Baxandall, Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy [1972]

In an essay published in Artforum magazine in 1977, the critic Phyllis Tuchman attempted an analysis of the relationship between minimalism and its "critical response."¹ In the course of her argument, Tuchman raised a particularly curious question: Could the similar life experiences of Donald Judd and Robert Morris--they were born and grew up in the same part of the country, for example--have had a bearing on the "similar stance" of their art? After reeling-off certain biographical coincidences, Tuchman, through second-hand information, drew the following hyperbolic conclusion: "[Judd and Morris's] parallel experiences during the 1930s, '40s, '50s, and early '60s probably were as significant for 20th-century art as the actual exchanges of Picasso and Braque or Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. Without knowing one another, they would simultaneously arrive at strikingly similar stances, perhaps because they had so much in common."² Yet Judd and Morris's conflicting, even opposed, positions in the minimalist movement of the 1960s would seem to contradict Tuchman's assessment.

Tuchman's naïve speculations were ultimately a logical extension of the canonical view of minimal art established a decade earlier by its critical partisans. In fact, the parameters of the movement as drawn by critics in the 1960s and '70s continue to obtain, parameters presumably so stable as to elicit the following observation from the critic Hal Foster: "After two decades minimalism can be grasped objectively, even

historically: It is too late in the day for another play-by-play monograph on this minimalist or that movement."³ What monograph one might ask Foster, since none has as yet been written on any minimalist artist. This refusal to locate disparate attitudes within the so-called minimalist camp serves the logic of traditional art history and the institutional interests of "High Art," hierarchies that have historically demanded, in the spirit of modernity or of the avant-garde, the establishment of discrete stylistic movements. The collapsing of the relatively conservative enterprise of Donald Judd into the socially critical program of Robert Morris, for example, suggests that the problem with the historical bracketing of minimalism lies neither in the work nor in the careers of its practitioners but in the act and in the method of writing art history.

Art historical analysis of the complex culture of the 1960s has fearfully distanced itself from the political and social issues of the period.⁴ Despite the abundance of "archives" that might contribute to our understanding of the values shared by art and politics in the 1960s, art historians have systematically avoided addressing such a connection. As Michel Foucault has observed, when modern society is subjected to historical analysis--a reading manifestly conditioned by the demands of its upper-class patrons--it is constituted through the "archives" of a culture defined by modern institutions of confinement: the asylum, the clinic, and the prison.⁵ Most modernist art, as well, existed to serve the cloistered interests of yet another kind of modern prison--the museum.⁶

As such, the most liberated minimal and postminimal production--the dances and writings of Yvonne Rainer, the performances of Robert Morris, the anti-form work of Eva Hesse, the films of Richard Serra, the photographs of Dan Graham, the land reclamation projects of Robert Smithson--remain ignored or underestimated by art historians trained to protect the sanctity of the autonomous museum object. The repression of the social praxis through formalist analysis and its concomitant fetish of the object--the refusal to consider the political conditions that surround and sustain cultural production--is consistent with the general motives of a history written specifically for the upper-class consumers of "High Art."

By continuing to rely on institutionally validated readings of minimalism--evaluations honed on the formalist pages of Artforum magazine in the 1960s--art historians have consistently ignored alternative resources that might reclaim minimalism's more radical side. Activist journals,⁷ the socially-aware criticism of Ursula Meyer, Lucy Lippard, Gregory Battcock, and Barbara Reise,⁸ the social texts of an ubiquitous New Left, the tracts of artists' protest movements against the museum and the Vietnam War, the Art Worker concept, as well as artists' individual archives collectively contribute to a more socially-oriented picture of '60s culture. Fredric Jameson's effort to "periodize" the 1960s--to mark it as a determinate historical situation--is motivated by this need to transgress the limitations of traditional history: "What is at stake then is not some proposition about the organic unity of the '60s

on all its levels, but rather a hypothesis about the rhythm and dynamics of the fundamental situation in which those very different levels develop according to their own internal laws."⁹

This is not to say that socially bounded readings of minimalism do not exist but that such readings, by refusing to look beyond clichés, allow formalist criticism to determine historical context. Hal Foster, in a recent essay that placed minimalism at the crux of "postmodernism," speculated on the status of minimal art within the broader cultural context of late-capitalism.¹⁰ His provocative argument remains unconvincing precisely because his concept of minimalism emerges as an abstraction unbounded by an historical context. Foster blindly accepts the standard argument, for example, that associates Judd's repetition of units and factory fabrication with the readymades of Marcel Duchamp, a rather strange assessment since the voluptuous, aestheticized quality of Judd's objects, the formalist methods of his critical writing, and his eventual repudiation of the readymade concept distance him from Duchamp's transgressive strategies. Even Rosalind Krauss's seminal Passages in Modern Sculpture insists on a central philosophical point of reference for minimal art: a phenomenology rooted in the history of modernism.¹¹ But at least for Robert Morris, the interests of phenomenology joined forces with another more immediately grounded discourse: the socio-political texts of Herbert Marcuse.¹²

Understood through these alternative discourses, minimalism often reveals itself in critical relation to the apolitical field of formalist art. While Donald Judd was producing consummate museum objects, the Marcusean dialectic on the economy of labor and production explored in Robert Morris's dances, films, and process art had evolved into a complex questioning of the conditions of industrial society. In lieu of the "authoritative" retrospective requested by the commissioners of the Tate Gallery in London in 1971, for example, Morris designed a raucous "participatory" installation, relegating his 1960s work to a slide show in one of the rear galleries. The installation--in its reversal of traditional expectations of the obedient and reserved museum-goer--caused a scandal that captivated journalists in Europe and the United States. The near riot effected by the newly liberated patrons as they climbed onto and into the work coupled with the adverse publicity was simply too much for the Tate commissioners to handle. The exhibition was closed several days after it opened in order to "protect the public."¹³

Diverse in its stylistic and intellectual perspectives, Morris's œuvre of the 1960s and early '70s resists a univocal classification: The early paintings, the Duchamp-inspired objects, the dances and performances, the orthodox minimalist objects, the large-scale installations and labyrinths, the earth and land reclamation works, the anti-form pieces, the films and videos, the political acts against the museum, the labor economy and the Vietnam War, and the sound environments attest to this

diversity. The philosophical sources for Morris's art (he was a philosophy major at Reed College in the late-1950s) are equally broad: Herbert Marcuse, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Noam Chomsky, Michel Foucault, Jean Piaget, Claude Levi-Strauss, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Paul Goodman represent some of the voices that reecho throughout his development, a plurality of influences that contradicts the idea of a monotheistic minimalism staunchly tied to the interests of phenomenology. To trace the complex interrelation between form and idea, style and content in Morris's oeuvre requires an act of historical reclamation that would be virtually impossible without access to the artist's archives.¹⁴ By allowing this reclamation to hinge on a few objects organized according to the retrograde critical practices of late-formalism, previous surveys of Morris's work (with the exception of Annette Michelson's remarkable catalog essay for his 1969 retrospective at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C.)¹⁵ merely reiterate the official portrait of minimalism as a coherent movement while underestimating the intellectual rigor of its most philosophically oriented practitioner. The two major attempts at discussing Morris's work of the 1960s--Michael Compton and David Sylvester's extended catalog entries for the artist's 1971 Tate Gallery "retrospective" and Marcia Tucker's essay for Morris's Whitney show in 1970--relegate his production to narrow categories based on stylistic observations.¹⁶ Surprisingly, Compton and Sylvester virtually ignored Morris's attempt at the Tate to overturn both the structure and the meaning of the retrospective, opting instead for

undeveloped arguments about the phenomenological direction of his sculpture. In any case, the complex social implications of the œuvre are almost never discussed by art critics, even in more recent arguments.

The need for a revisionist reading of Robert Morris in the context of the minimalist movement has ramifications beyond the corrective. The point of this dissertation is not that it presents a truer or more accurate history of Morris's career (although its relation to the archive may indeed render it so) but rather a means for rethinking a complex problem already suggested by minimalism's ambivalence toward the belief systems of formalism: Could the more radical aspects of the movement represent a critical break, or "rupture" as Michel Foucault might have called it, with the aesthetic practices of late-modernism?¹⁷ Armed with a broad and complex range of information, both public and private, minimalism's problematic attack on the hierarchies of late-modernist art can be more accurately assessed. If "the central purpose of art and criticism since the early 1960s has been the dismantling of the monolithic myth of modernism and the dissolution of its oppressive progression of great ideas and great masters,"¹⁸ then what role might minimalism's more radical, activist dimension have played in that change? Was the emergence of new structures and forms for art in the 1960s independent of the political scene or could it have been influenced by the intense social climate of the period?¹⁹

In his impressive reading of the role of Edouard Manet and his followers in the emergence of modernism, T.J. Clark asked this same question about the political exigencies of the 1860s. By resuscitating the alternative archives of the nineteenth century--the political and social texts of critics, journalists, and artists generally ignored by art historians--Clark reinterpreted Manet's complex ideological program in relation to the demands of official French culture at mid-century²⁰ The central thesis of The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers is that modern art developed from a desire to represent the uncertainty and class tensions of Paris' new urbanism. Centering on three figures of the late nineteenth century--Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, and Georges Seurat--Clark explores the convergence of form and content in early modernism. He argues, for example, that Manet's Olympia [1863], through its imagery and surface detail, signifies the subliminal connection between prostitution and class struggle, thus negating the myth of the courtesan perpetuated by the salon. Manet's Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère [1882], he suggests, represents the increasing alienation of a new consumerist culture built on a rank of workers (e.g., clerks, shop assistants) that existed outside the traditional categories of class. And finally, as a corrective to Manet's correlation between the modern and the marginal, Clark points to Seurat's Un Dimanche après-midi à l'île de La Grande Jatte [1884-86], as a preeminently successful attempt to "find form for the appearance of class in a capitalist society."²¹

In the end, Clark ascribes a moral aspect to most advanced painting of the late-nineteenth century: Manet and his followers wished to expose a vital truth, to represent the debased polarization of the classes that was a consequence of Baron Haussmann's restructuring of Paris. Ultimately the radical spirit of early modernist painting, interpreted as stylistic revolution by a century of formalist art history, was entirely commensurate with the social revolution that characterized the class struggles of the nineteenth century. Like the "spectacle" of modernity portrayed a century before in the images of Manet, Robert Morris's "spectacles" center on the decline of industrial society in the era of late-capitalism. From his deconstructive re-creation of Manet's Olympia in his dance piece Site [1963] to his electrified interrogation room Hearing [1972], Morris tests the dynamic of an intransigent industrial social order. Ultimately, this dissertation will demonstrate that even the artist's more abstract works--his cubes, plinths, and beams and his anti-form pieces--reflect a desire to critique the social and cultural dynamics of late-capitalism, a critique based as much on the activist writings of Marcuse (ignored by art history) as the more ideologically neutral philosophy of Merleau-Ponty (validated by art history as the intellectual "source" for minimalism). Morris's labyrinthine form, in the end, functions ideologically as it attempts to recreate the decentering conditions of late-industrial society--the space of labor, commerce, and production--in an effort to engender in the viewer a sense of uncertainty

and resistance.

A reconstructed cultural history of the 1960s can contribute to our understanding of the greater social issues underlying the political economy of recent advanced art. Rather than removed from culture, the radical political activities of the period--events that played an important role in Morris's intellectual and stylistic development--were in themselves a reaction to the founding principles of the modern aesthetic and social order. Minimalism, like the provocative painting of Edouard Manet a century before, might indeed have been complicitous in the "war" against an authoritative high art.²² To subject the culture of the 1960s to the kind of archival scrutiny suggested by this dissertation--at a moment when neo-conservative academics relentlessly attack the social optimism of the 1960s as immoral and degraded--is to strengthen our understanding of the social and cultural battle of advanced art in the age after modernism.

Notes

1. "Minimalism and Critical Response," Artforum, 15 (May 1977); rpt. in Amy Baker Sandback, Looking Critically: 21 Years of Artforum Magazine (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), pp. 200-203.

2. Ibid., p. 202.

3. Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism" in Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art, 1945-86 (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1987), p. 162.

4. An early and important attempt to correct this problem in the humanities occurs in Sohnya Sayres, et. al., eds., The 60s Without Apology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984). See especially the editors' "Introduction"; Stanley Aronowitz, "When the New Left was New"; Cornel West, "The Paradox of the Afro-American Rebellion,"; and Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s".

5. See "Panopticism" in Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp.195-230. For more on the general categories of industrial society see Michel Foucault, The Order of Things (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

6. See, for example, Michel Foucault, "Fantasia of the Library," Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1977), pp. 91-95. For more on the role of the museum in the role of the modernist aesthetic see Douglas Crimp, "On the Museum's Ruins," October, no. 13 (Summer 1980), pp. 41-58 and "The End of Painting," October, no. 16 (Spring 1981), pp. 69-88.

7. Examples of these publications include Avalanche, Conceptual Art, and underground newspapers such as The New York Element, Studio International, while not activist in the political sense of that word, nevertheless devoted space to reports on social protests in the art world.

8. See, for example, Ursula Meyer, "The Eruption of Anti-Art" in Idea Art, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: Dutton, 1973), pp. 116-34; Lucy Lippard, "The Art Workers' Coalition: Not a History," Studio International, 177 (November 1970), pp. 171-74 (rpt. as "The Art Workers' Coalition" in Battcock, Idea Art, pp. 102-115); Gregory Battcock, "Marcuse and Anti-Art," Arts Magazine, 43 (Summer 1969), pp. 47-50; and Barbara Reise, "A Tale of Two Exhibitions: The Aborted Haacke and Robert Morris Shows," Studio International, 182 (July-August 1971), p. 30.

9. Jameson, p. 179.

10. See Foster.

11. "The Double Negative: A New Syntax for Sculpture" in Passages in Modern Sculpture (New York: Viking Press, 1977), pp. 243-288.

12. The influence of these and other political philosophers will be discussed at great length in this dissertation. See especially chapters two and three.

13. See chapter three, "Art as Act: Vietnam, the Museum, and the Art of Protest," for a history of these events.

14. With the exception of Thomas Krens's short catalog essay on Robert Morris's drawings ("The Drawings of Robert Morris" [Williamstown: Williams College Museum of Art, 1982]), all critical and historical writing on Morris has functioned outside the artist's archives. Krens also produced an unannotated catalogue raisonné of Morris's work from 1957-82. The catalogue, now in the artist's archives, remains unpublished.

15. "Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression," in Robert Morris (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery, 1969).

16. See Marcia Tucker, Robert Morris (New York: Whitney Museum, 1970) and Michael Compton and David Sylvester, Robert Morris (London: Tate Gallery, 1971).

17. In the opposition I have established throughout this dissertation--that between Morris's diverse production and the interests of "modernism"--the word modernism is synonymous with the critical and stylistic practices of late-formalism as exemplified by the writing of Clement Greenberg. It is the Greenbergian view of modernist culture that Morris (and a number of his contemporaries) reacted against. For an introduction to Greenberg's brilliant and influential criticism, see Clement Greenberg, Art and Culture: Critical Essays (Boston: Beacon, 1961).

18. Brian Wallis, "What's Wrong With This Picture?: An Introduction" in Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), p. xiii.

19. This possibility has been suggested by some of the essays in Sayres, et. al., and in the recently published anthology by Jonathan Arac, ed., Postmodernism and Politics (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986). Arac's collection, unlike Sayre's, continues to rely on the now questionable category of "postmodernism" to set the historical tone of his collection. In doing so, the most radical sectors of modernist production are underplayed in order to constitute a false and distortive opposition between "modernism" and "postmodernism."

20. T.J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers (New York: Knopf, 1984).

21. For Clark's discussion of La Grande Jatte, see Ibid., pp. 259-268.

22. The use of the word "war" is here meant as a paraphrase of the formalist critic Michael Fried's contention that minimalism (or literalist art as he called it) as a theatrical rather than object-based art was at "war with art." See "Art and Objecthood," Artforum, 5 (June 1967); rpt. in Gregory Battcock, ed., Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology (New York: Dutton, 1968), pp. 116-147.

CHAPTER ONE

Against Repression: Towards a Minimalist Aesthetic

I seem to speak, it is not I, about me, it is not about me.

Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable

In its ironic relationship to representation, Robert Morris's I-Box [1962, Fig. 1] invokes Samuel Beckett's drained vision of the world, where "I" is simply a word, a verbal sign that seeks to assume an eloquent silence while still clinging to the vestiges of life. The work, a small box with a door in the shape of the letter "I," is not so much about a human "I" as it is about the futility of representation itself. The door opened, the phonetic "I" yields to a silent one--a photograph of the artist naked and grinning. The unchaste polemic waged in I-Box, on the preeminence of one category of signs over the other, is ironic; the signs themselves, never able to be the represented objects, are trapped on the surface, engaged in a self-directed and incestuous dialogue.

Like Beckett, Morris wished to divest the art object of the kind of a priori intellectual determination rooted in logical rationalist thought.

"Disengagement with preconceived enduring forms and order for things," Morris has written, "is a positive assertion. It is part of the work's refusal to aestheticize form by dealing with it as a preconceived end." Morris's refusal to deal with art as a "preconceived end" suggests, as well, the collapse of his conviction of the sanctity of the art object. His production during this early stage of his development was wrought with frustration and doubt about the mechanisms of repression and belief that had sustained the formalist vision.

I. The Ground of Development: 1956-1960

Untitled [Box with Lock] [1963, Fig. 2] a small patinated bronze box locked shut with a heavy-duty padlock, bears the following instruction embossed on its lid: LEAVE KEY ON HOOK INSIDE CABINET. Morris's gambit is indeed ironic, for the spectator is confronted with an impenetrable and hopeless artifact--a participation piece which, like Morris's claustrophobic Passageway, ends in a dead end. Rather than logic or knowledge, such pieces travesty positivist convictions in the ability to subject the world to the instruments of reason in order to understand the conditions of our existence.

In 1963 Morris constructed a lead box with a loop of keys hanging on its lid. The piece, entitled Litanies, was accompanied by a leather-bound, typed and notarized "Statement of Esthetic Withdrawal": "The undersigned ROBERT MORRIS, being the maker of the metal

construction entitled LITANIES, described in the annexed Exhibit A, hereby withdraws from said construction all esthetic quality and content." This statement, which parodies formalism's obsession with the aesthetic object, recalls the central paradigm of the Dadaist readymade: The disruption of the notion of individual creation and of the boundaries that separate art from the rest of production. Peter Bürger, in Theory of the Avant-Garde, his seminal analysis of the avant-gardist rejection of the metaphysical pretensions of certain sectors of modernist production, discusses the readymade's mechanism of provocation: "In its most extreme manifestations, the avant-garde's reply to [the pseudo-romantic doctrines of inspiration] is . . . the radical negation of the category of individual creation. When Duchamp signs mass-produced objects (a urinal, a bottle drier) and sends them to art exhibitions, he negates the category of individual production. The signature, whose very purpose it is to mark what is individual in the work, that it owes its existence to this particular artist, is inscribed on the arbitrarily chosen mass product, because all claims to creativity are to be mocked. Duchamp's provocation not only unmask[s] the art market where the signature means more than the quality of the work; it radically question[s] the very principle of art in bourgeois society to which the individual is considered the creator of the work of art." ¹ In Litanies, Morris's signature, in a play on Duchamp's readymade strategy, represents a purely contractual and contingent negation of artistic value--an affirmation of Morris's own waning conviction in the artist's (and object's) magical powers. The work, as well--in its explicit reference to the space of exhibition--rhetorically

distances itself from the institutional frame of the art world, from the imperative of the gallery or museum to determine its validity as art.²

The intellectual stimulus, the source of Morris's inversionist gambit was, of course, Marcel Duchamp, a figure who, as Morris himself suggested, provided the avant-garde of the early 60s with "an arsenal against modernism."³ "Duchamp showed that you can only define art as an operational situation," Morris stated in an interview in 1971. "It is a situation where most people want to consider it as something else."⁴ Morris's Duchampian strategies were realized almost as soon as he was introduced to the artist's work in 1959, the year of the American publication of Robert Lebel's pioneering oeuvre catalog Marcel Duchamp.⁵

Morris's break with the traditions and forms of high modernism was both swift and complete. While living and exhibiting in San Francisco between 1956 and 1959, he produced dozens of paintings and over 200 large drawings influenced by Abstract Expressionism and, in particular, the paintings of Clyfford Still and Jackson Pollock [Fig. 3].⁶ Building on Pollock's innovations, Morris began to explore the material values of paint, both by varying the viscosity of the medium and by continually changing the breath and character of his gestures (Like Pollock, he worked on a horizontal surface, placing a low scaffolding over paper or canvas unrolled on the floor.⁷) In these works, Morris explored the dynamics of painting by making a priori decisions only about tools and application rather than working towards a predetermined image. These

paintings, while departing little from late modernist practice, nevertheless represent Morris's disenchantment with the static, precious art object; in the end, the operational dynamic of his painting technique was consistent with his interest in process and labor, a sensibility that was to become preeminent in his work.

The Duchampian strategies which followed Morris's rejection of painting (strategies influential to a number of his contemporaries, including Shusaku Arakawa, Arman, Art & Language, Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, Marcel Broodthaers, John Cage, Allan Kaprow, Yves Klein, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Daniel Spoerri, and Andy Warhol⁸) were driven by a will to overturn shopworn notions of an autonomous art object that existed outside the reality of daily life. This avant-gardist reading emphasizes the socio-political dimension as opposed to the rationalist or conversely transcendental aims that characterize various sectors of modernism. "Modernism may be understandable as an attack on traditional writing techniques," writes Jochen Schulte-Sasse, "but the avant-garde can only be understood as an attack meant to alter the institutional commerce with art. The social roles of the modernist and the avant-garde artist are, thus, radically different."⁹ Rather than accepting the social determination of art as the product of cultural differences and dominant ideologies, modernist abstraction (and particularly the manifestations of the New York School in the period following the Second World War) often celebrated its privileged status as hermetic and free of immediate social concerns.¹⁰

By the time Morris moved to New York in 1961 to assume permanent residence, the art scene was just beginning to emerge from the metaphysical pretensions of the first and second generation Abstract Expressionists. Nowhere, in fact, was the post-War flight from materialism more preeminent than in the "avant-garde" in New York. The New York-based cultural community, desperate to find its own voice, searched for an alternative to the European tradition. Ancient myth, the writings of Carl Jung (and his ideologically impacted concept of the "collective unconscious"), and Native American art all served as vehicles of escape from Europe¹¹: "It is becoming more and more apparent that to understand modern art one must have an appreciation of the primitive arts," wrote Barnett Newman in a catalog essay for an exhibition of Northwest Coast Indian Painting, "for just as modern art stands as an island of revolt in the stream of Western European aesthetics, the many primitive art traditions stand apart as authentic aesthetic accomplishments that flourished without the benefit of European history."¹² Commensurate with the tendency of the American avant-garde to avoid direct political or ideological issues, such appropriations of the "primitive" willfully ignored the social and ritualistic context of tribal art within its native culture.

This aesthetic imperialism was also consistent with the pervasive desire in the United States to see art as detached from daily life. The very condition of the urban, industrial space which much advanced art of

the 1960s and '70s wished to critique--its potential to isolate and alienate people--was understood in the 1940s to offer the artist a way out, a means of transcending bourgeois systems and values. For the artists and writers of the New York School, alienation possessed a positive dimension; it became a "token of liberty," since it was felt that only the alienated person could be truly free to express himself. This understanding of alienation, moreover, became a central dogma of avant-garde literature and criticism: "The privilege of alienation is to offer a new mode of communication: alienation is not a kind of isolation but a way of being in a world which engages the individual, the society and the public Alienation is a way of communication on a symbolic plane. In reality the alienated person is not indifferent to the world; if he isolates himself, the reason is that he is too sensitive to the environment." ¹³

Clement Greenberg, for example, was convinced that contemporary painting needed to rise above the din of everyday life: "The American artist has to embrace and content himself, almost, with isolation if he is to give the most to honesty, seriousness, and ambition to his work. Isolation is, so to speak, the natural condition of high art in America Isolation, or rather the alienation that is its cause, is the truth--isolation, alienation, naked and revealed unto itself, is the condition under which the true reality of our age is experienced. And the experience of this true reality is indispensable to any ambitious art." ¹⁴ Or, as Greenberg had written a year before, in 1947: "In the face of current events painting feels, apparently, that it must be epic poetry, it must be theater, it must be the

atomic bomb, it must be the rights of Man. But the greatest painter of our time, Matisse, preeminently demonstrated the sincerity and penetration that go with the kind of greatness particular to twentieth-century painting by saying that he wanted art to be an armchair for the tired businessman."¹⁵ Thus Henri Matisse--the painter who spun decorative and exotic webs while Europe entered into the bloody reality of the First World War--became Greenberg's exemplar.¹⁶ For Greenberg--whose support of abstract art in the 1960s extended only to formalist painting and sculpture--"painting could not be important unless it returned to the same ivory tower that artists in the previous decades had been so intent on destroying."¹⁷

II. Strategies of Subversion: The Duchamp Imperative

It was on the heels of this post-War celebration of the mythologies of "high art," that Robert Morris's expressionist machinations abruptly ended. Initially, the objects and ideas of Duchamp served as Morris's vehicle of escape from the aesthetic conservatism of Abstract Expressionism. Ceasing altogether to paint by 1959, Morris produced his first Duchampian pieces in 1960--a small game box with an internal mechanism and Performer Switch, an oak box with a mechanism and mirror inside, inscribed with a convoluted and frustrating set of instructions: "To Begin Turn On--Continue Doing What You Are Doing--Or Don't--Do something Else. Later Switch May be Turned Off--After A Second, Hour, Day, Year, Posthumously." A similar absurd task was taken

up by Morris himself several months later in a text drawing entitled Litanies [1961, Fig. 4]] in which the artist wrote repeatedly for two and a half hours the "Litanies of the Chariot" from Duchamp's Green Box (a typographic version of the Green Box--Duchamp's notes and Drawings relating to La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même [Le Grand Verre], [1915-23]--was published in English in 1960). The Sisyphean task of reduplicating Duchamp's prose--his enumeration of instructions for the building of a sleigh, made of rods of "emancipated metal," for the realm of the bachelors--merely reiterated Dadaist operational strategies that ultimately would assure Morris's own emancipation from the aesthetic restraints of object making.¹⁸

The source of Morris's questioning of the viability of the art object went beyond Duchamp. For one, his interest in the arts was, almost from the beginning, oriented towards the temporal media--dance, performance, theater and film (Morris's relationship to the strategies of performance will be explored in chapter II). It was, in fact, through the composer John Cage--a figure aggressively involved in overturning deflated modernist notions about the spirituality and autonomy of art--that Morris was introduced to the New York art scene in the early 1960s (among others, Cage was Morris's liaison to Jasper Johns, Frank Stella, and the progressive art dealer Illeana Sonnabend). Years before, in 1954, while studying philosophy and psychology at Reed College, Morris met, and shortly thereafter married the dancer and choreographer Simone Forti. By 1957, the couple had formed an improvisational theater and

dance group. At this point, Morris's confidence in painting began to falter:

I slowed down in painting around 1958. I really wasn't doing much. I was involved in these theater things, more involved in doing some writing, just reading and not painting much. Painting ceased to interest me. There were certain things about it that seemed very problematic to me. I couldn't solve the problems. There was a big conflict between the fact of doing this thing, and what it looked like later. It just didn't seem to make much sense to me. Primarily because there was an activity I did in time, and there was a certain method to it. And that didn't seem to have any relationship to the thing at all. There is a certain resolution in the theater where there is real time, and what you do is what you do.¹⁹

In 1959, while on a visit to New York, Morris made his first films in response to his disaffection from painting. The films, essentially records of the visual and temporal conditions of fire, water, smoke, and dirt, were executed in a method structured on a chance distribution of relationships--a method related to the Duchampian model.

Fundamentally, Morris's shift from painting to sculpture gained momentum through his involvement in the theater, "a directly temporal medium in which the articulation of process was far less problematic."²⁰ His first major sculptural works (both executed in 1961)--Column and Box with the Sound of its Own Making--were both specifically theatrical in their presentation. Column [Fig. 5] was designed for a performance with LaMonte Young at the Living Theater in New York City (see chapter two). The Box With the Sound of its Own Making [Fig. 6], a nine-inch walnut cube containing a three-hour tape recording of the sounds of its being constructed, represents the first work by Morris to be fully involved with process. John Cage, the first person in New York that

Morris invited to see the piece, approached it as a fully theatrical experience: "When [Cage] came, I turned it on. I said this is something I made. I turned it on and he wouldn't listen to me. He sat and listened to it for three hours and that was really impressive to me. He just sat there."

²¹ The piece literally interposes a temporal historical supplement into the viewer's experience, a kind of non-verbal version of Duchamp's notes for the Large Glass. Rather than allowing a text to intercede, a text which is in itself a kind of object, Morris resorted to a resolutely temporal setting. In referring to Duchamp's last and most theatrical work, Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau. 2° le gaz d'éclairage [1946-66, Fig. 7], Morris expressed his dissatisfaction with what he felt (perhaps incorrectly) to be Duchamp's object-oriented paradigm: "Most people I talk to are so amazed at that piece. They like it so much. But again I think it is the strategy that is interesting. He restricts you to those two holes [a nude female mannequin reclining in a landscape is viewed voyeuristically, through two holes in the barn door that conceals her] and when you move away you remember the piece. [Unlike most of Duchamp's small objects] it doesn't exist for you except in [memory], and it is that kind of move that he ultimately makes all the time--choice, restrictions, etc. . . . And those things are interesting. But to take that thing [as an object] and to take it seriously as a theme or an attitude about life is boring." ²²

Morris's Fountain [1963, Fig. 8], a play on Duchamp's readymade of a urinal placed on its back, consists of an ordinary galvanized steel bucket hung above eye level. Unlike Duchamp's inverted urinal, Morris's homage

refuses to function as a static object; inside the bucket, and well above the viewer's line of vision, water noisily circulates through a pump.²³ What might have been a silent pun on modernist history instead becomes an endless performance piece, a kind of bizarre ballet mécanique. In contrast to Duchamp's participatory assisted-readymade, Bicycle Wheel [1913], Morris's Wheels [1963, Fig. 9], made of fir readymade, Bicycle Wheel measuring over four feet high, are vastly oversized in order to avoid an intimate and fetishistic relationship to the spectator as it engages its ambient space in much the same way as large-scale props transform a proscenium.

Card File [1963, Fig. 10] exploits the Duchampian strategies of process and documentation. The work consists of a flat desk file mounted on wood with notations inscribed on its cards, enumerating, as in Box with the Sound of its Own Making, the phases of its construction. The sub-headings, clearly visible to the spectator even when the file's leaves are closed, offer a list of operations and transitions: the words "accidents," "alphabets," "categories," "changes" can be read along its plastic tabs.²⁴ Card File also parodies modernism's autonomist ambitions: in 1961, Morris was employed at the New York Public Library, often working in a veritable maze of card files filled with notations concerning the condition and location of the library's holdings. Since the internal dynamic of Card File is, in contrast, entirely self-referential (i.e., the operational information refers only to the making of the file itself), it is ultimately a "useless" object created purely for its own existence--a

"file for file's sake."

In yet another tactic of subversion--that of deconstructing the role of standard measure--Morris would again employ Duchampian devices in a critique of rationalist thought. From 1961 until 1964 Morris produced no less than two dozen objects and drawings of rulers, rods, and other devices for measurement. In 1972, the artist executed an audio-visual environment--Hearing--for the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York. His script for the sound track, a mock courtroom inquisition, contains the following passage in which the defendant, who appears to represent Morris himself, responds to a question concerning the origin of unidentified readouts obtained by the prosecution: "These readouts . . . are from a person whose corpus calosum had been severed. He would recognize certain things, tools, a hammer, for instance, but he could not name the tool. Here is an interesting one . . . taken from a person who thought he had invented a whole new method of measurement. He took three threads and dropped them onto some glass sheets . . ." ²⁵ The person whose "corpus calosum had been severed"--the pathetic soul whose brain literally had been cut in two--indulges in a delusionary act of chance not unfamiliar to students of Dadaism, a task described in the following passage: ". . . They should be seen horizontally instead of vertically because each strip shows a curved line made of sewing thread, one meter long, after it had been dropped from a height of one meter, without controlling the distortion of the thread during the fall. The shape

thus obtained was fixed onto the canvas by drops of varnish Three rules . . . reproduce the three different shapes obtained by the fall of the thread and can be used to trace those shapes with a pencil on paper."²⁶ The speaker is, of course, Marcel Duchamp referring to the Trois Stoppages-Étalon [1913-14, Fig. 11]. "Étalon," or "standard" serves as the operative word as Duchamp's absurd technique of measurement parodies our dependency on a priori systems. "One meter," Duchamp has said of his "experiment," "was changed from a straight-line to a curved-line without losing its identity. . . and yet casting a pataphysical doubt on the concept of a straight-line as being the shortest route from one point to another."²⁷

Morris's position toward the scientific was, like Duchamp's, dialectical. On one level, he was fascinated with nature and science, seeing them as a means of escape from the stasis of the traditional art object.²⁸ In 1964, employing scientific conditions as a kind of readymade, Morris recorded with graphite on paper the patterns formed by metal shavings caught in a magnetic field (Untitled [Magnetic Field]), perhaps an allusion to Duchamp's Elevage de poussière [Dust Breeding] [1920, Fig. 12] in which several months accumulation of dust was affixed to the area occupied by the "Sieves" in the Large Glass.²⁹

The artist's "ruler" pieces, however, fundamentally challenge "objective" or "fixed" standards. In Three Rulers (Yardsticks) [1963, Fig.

13], Morris confounds the objectivity of measurement as each "yardstick," of a different actual length, "measures" 36 inches: standardized relations of scale are suddenly relegated to individual perception and subjectivity as the concept of measure becomes our percept of it rather than a mechanism of mathematical norms. In Enlarged and Reduced Inches [1963], Morris shifts the action from predetermination to perception as the spectator views a ruler through two different lens apertures—one magnifying, the other reducing. In a painted construction from 1964 [Fig. 14], the "objective" ruler, which can now slide back and forth, is juxtaposed with the words "SWIFT NIGHT RULER." The ironic relationship of the poetic (and undoubtedly erotic) non sequitur to the hard-edged object below it further undermines the ruler's pristine status as a vehicle for truth. As in the phenomenological games that would preoccupy Morris throughout the 1960s, these early works suggest the extent to which he wished to upset normative structures--the a priori systems that precondition and even determine our responses. The conventions that had demanded our faith had become grist for Morris's insurrection.

Another social structure that Morris wished to question was the relation of objects to an ubiquitous commodity system. "The artist as counterfeiter was condemned to seeing his work turn to gold," writes Annette Michelson in reference to Marcel Duchamp. "Midas appears then not as collector, as one might have thought, but rather as artist." ³⁰ The counterfeit to which Michelson refers is the elegantly hand-lettered

Cheque Tzanck issued by Duchamp for \$115.00 on December 3, 1919 in payment for dental treatment in Paris [Fig. 15]. Duchamp had also fabricated coupons that were issued to friends in order to raise money for a gambling spree in Monte Carlo.³¹ These acts represent the artist's inherent awareness of the commodity status of the art object--the ability of a signature to validate and hence value an object. A project by Morris, displayed at the Whitney Museum's "Anti-Illusion: Process Materials" exhibition in 1969, for example, was a business contract: a typed and signed agreement, related correspondences, and a canceled check--evidence of a transaction between Morris and the museum's directors. In lieu of a traditional art work, Morris proposed an investment plan to the museum. In effect, he wanted to buy blue-chip art in order to turn a profit by reselling to European collectors and dealers. This venture into speculation was in part rejected by the museum, whose trustees insisted on screening all of Morris's purchases.

Several years before, in 1963, Morris had subjected the human body to a similar consideration of value. Brain [1963], a plaster cast in the shape of a brain and papered-over with dollar bills, was placed in a pristine glass case, further emphasizing its status as "high art." Untitled (Silver Brain) [1963], a plaster brain covered in silver leaf and encased in glass, similarly converts a disembodied organ--an object generally free of economic qualification--into a precious, and hence, commodified object. These works inherently acknowledge the hegemony of the commodity in industrial society, a status that extends even to the most radical art

object. (The Cheque Tzanck was, in fact, bought back by Duchamp and resold to Dr. Daniel Tzanck several years later.³²) Jean Baudrillard has described the commodity's entrenchment within modern culture: "Marx set forth and denounced the obscenity of the commodity, and this obscenity was linked to its equivalence, to the abject principle of free circulation, beyond all use value of the object. The obscenity of the commodity stems from the fact that it is abstract, formal, and light in opposition to the weight, opacity, and substance of the object. The commodity is readable: in opposition to the object, which never completely gives up its secret, the commodity always manifests its visual essence, which is its price. It is the formal place of transcription of all possible objects; through it, objects communicate. Hence the commodity form is the first great medium of the modern world."³³ Unlike the classic formalist object which was meant to conceal its place in the grimy socio-economic space of the real world, Morris's fabricated body parts are outfitted in the signifiers of monetary value. Enclosed in glass cases--displayed like food in a coffee shop or pieces of precious jewelry--the Brain pieces tempt rather than repulse, speaking to the embarrassment of our greed. In the end, Morris's unlikely objects are debased; they appear as vulgar commodities to be bought and sold, continually manifesting their visual essence, their secret, which, as Baudrillard says, is their price.

Several other works of the early 1960s deal with the ecological opportunism of enterprises that convert natural phenomena into use

value.³⁴ Fresh Air [1963] consists of twelve sealed glass bottles with calling cards inscribed: "The Arm Horse Air Works, Natural and Artificial Fresh Air for All Occasions." Morris's work directly appropriates Duchamp's act of bottling air in Air de Paris (50 cc of Paris Air) [1919, Fig. 16]: "At the end of . . . 1919," Duchamp recounts, "I left again for America, and wanting to bring back a present for the Arensbergs, I asked a Parisian pharmacist to empty a glass container full of serum and seal it again This is the precious ampoule of Air of Paris I brought back to the Arensbergs in 1919."³⁵ Morris's notation about "natural and artificial" air alludes to the inherently ecological tone of Duchamp's position: "Establish a society," writes Duchamp in the Green Box, "in which the individual has to pay for the air he breaths/airmeter: imprisonment and rarefied air, in case of non-payment/simple asphyxiation if necessary (cut off the air)"³⁶ Another work of the period, Metered Bulb [1963, Fig. 17], in which a meter records a light bulb's expenditure of intangible electricity, extends this idea of consumption and payment to include the idea of time itself.³⁷

The conversion of natural phenomena into commodities, as well, suggests Morris's negation of the organic metaphor, a central formalist conceit which likened the art object to an organism teeming with paradox and meaning. Clement Greenberg, in arguing the "naturalism of Impressionist painting draws such an analogy: "The Impressionists, as consistent in their naturalism as they knew how to be, had let nature dictate the over-all design and unity of the picture along with its

component parts, refusing in theory to interfere consciously with their optical impressions. For all that, their pictures did not lack structure; insofar as any single Impressionist picture was successful, it achieved an appropriate and satisfying unity, as much as any successful work of art."³⁸ Morris's Duchamp-inspired objects aggressively avoid, if they do not overtly parody, these metaphors of organic unity and integrity. His Self-Portrait [1963], for example, exists only in proxy as an electroencephalogram with lead labels identifying the patient--a frigid contradiction of formalism's investment in expression and temperament. Portrait [1963], denies the organic metaphor by offering up a framed display of small bottles, each containing a different bodily fluid. The dead-ended walk through Passageway was accompanied by the faint sounds of a beating heart and a ticking clock. And in Heart [1963], the organ materializes not as an organic form but as a wooden box with a rubber membrane and throbbing mechanism. If the formalist close reading aspired to cut through the crust of the narrative or surface of the canvas to reveal a "beating heart" of significance, these objects read as little more than a "cold-hearted" rejection of such illusions.

III. Spaces without Centers: Shifters, Indexes, and Traces

And he wondered what the artist intended to represent (Watt knew nothing about painting), a circle and its centre in search of each other, or a circle and its centre in search of a centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and its centre in search of a centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and its centre in

search of a centre and its circle respectively, or a circle and its centre not its centre in search of its centre and its circle respectively, or a circle and a centre not its centre in search of a centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and a centre not its centre in search of its centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and a center not its centre in search of a centre and its circle respectively, in boundless space, in endless time (Watt knew nothing about physics)

Samuel Beckett, Watt

The decentered presence of the self in works like Self-Portrait , Portrait, or I-Box suggests another central Duchampian strategy: the inversion of linguistic shifters, those features of speech that assign personal identity. "Shifter" is Roman Jakobson's term for "that category of linguistic sign which is 'filled with signification' only because it is empty."³⁹ The word "this" is a shifter, its meaning fully dependent on its referent; it is only when we qualify such a shifter--"this pen" or "this cup," for example--that meaning can exist at all (hence, that which signifies "only because it is empty"). And, in relation to this argument, , the personal pronouns "I" and "you" are also shifters, since their referents are entirely contextual, shifting in meaning as the conversation volleys back and forth between speakers (the "I" belongs only to the person who is speaking; the "you" only to the person being addressed).

Insofar as a shifter's meaning depends on the presence of a given speaker--the "I" or "you" of the conversation--it can be relegated to that category of signs termed the index. In contrast to abstract signs, such as symbols, the index must maintain a physical relationship to its referent in order to represent it. The category of indexical signs would include

physical traces (footprints, fingerprints, scars, strap marks on suntanned skin), medical symptoms, cast shadows, or the actual referents of shifters. Also, photography as a technique predicated on surface imprints of light and shadow, is principally an indexical medium.⁴⁰

Perhaps more than any other early twentieth-century artist, Marcel Duchamp exploited the operations of indexes and shifters. In 1918, he executed a kind of "panorama" of the index, a painting entitled Tu m' [Fig. 18]. Deployed across its ten-foot wide surface, the artist's readymades--his hat-rack, corkscrew, and bicycle wheel--are projected as cast shadows, signifying their referents by means of indexical traces. As if to accentuate the indexical condition of the work, a realistically painted hand is placed at the center of the work, "a hand that is a pointing index finger enacting the process of establishing the connection between the linguistic shifter 'this' . . . and its referent . . . [The work's] title [then] should not surprise us. Tu m' is simply 'you'/'me'--the two personal pronouns which, in being shifters, are themselves a species of index."⁴¹

Duchamp's indexical strategies, however, are mostly convoluted. The sense of psychological centering inherent in the correct use of personal pronouns, the operation of smoothly gliding shifters that demarcate the territorial boundaries of a conversation, often collapses in his work. In the development of speech in children, the ordering and application of personal pronouns is, in fact, difficult to master. In very young children,

the acquisition of the correct use of "I" and "you" is one of the last things to be learned. In cases of aphasia, where the ability to correctly orient speech is lost entirely, personal pronouns are among the first things to break down. Bruno Bettelheim observes that the problem of naming an individuated self is also central to the condition of autism in children. It is precisely this collapse of control over the qualifying factors of language, a condition symptomatic of the syndrome of autism, that characterizes Duchamp's very special use of the shifter. In drawing this analogy, Annette Michelson points to Bettelheim's description of the autist's obsession with revolving disks (as in an electric fan), the fantasy that he or she is a machine, and the withdrawal from coherent speech into a world of private allusions and riddles: "Duchamp's persistent interest in Rotary Spheres, in the forms of rotation and motion, the insistence upon the usefulness of objects (exemplified in his joy at the possibility of Anémic Cinéma being considered as a therapeutic device to be used in the restoration of Vision), the elaborate linguistic play, the recasting of natural laws into highly artificial and controlled codes, the subversion of measure, the constant movement between alternatives which support his esprit de contradiction, the disdain of community, the extreme interest in scientific discovery, the enchantment with the pseudo-science of pataphysics, represents only a few strategies of the autistic economy so remarkably converted by him to uses of art and speculative thought."⁴² In addition to strategies already discussed in Tu m', or to the rotary disks and inverted puns of Duchamp's film Anémic Cinéma [1926, Fig. 19], the artist's bifurcation of the self into his alter ego "Rose Sélavy" represents

yet another significant fracturing of the psychological center, this time into the bivalent sectors of sexual identity.⁴³

Duchamp's appropriation of the various aspects of the autistic economy--the extreme interest in scientific and pseudo-scientific discovery, the elaborate linguistic play, the subversion of measure, the obsession with rotating and decentering objects--is characteristic, as well, of Morris's production, an œuvre that constantly asserts the schizo-affective pathology of autism in order to divide or decenter the individuated self. If this sensibility allowed Morris to vividly illustrate the division of the self that is a major feature of alienation in industrial society, he would ultimately see a curative function for this decentering: The possibility of the spectator's connection with his or her psychological center through a liberation from repressive and hierarchical systems of thought--an idea related to his interest in phenomenology. By the late 1960s, for example, Morris accepted the popular, albeit problematic notion that direct experience, freed from the limiting constraints of memory and reason, could serve as a means of contacting a disenfranchized self, a concept that will be examined at length later in this dissertation. Nevertheless, the projection of circular, labyrinthine passageways, the analogy of the human body to machines (Heart), the inversion of standards (the Rulers), and the collapse of linguistic logic into private allusions and riddles ("Leave Key on Hook Inside Box" or "Swift Night Ruler") all participate in Morris's dialectical campaign of disorientation and recovery.

An enigmatic work from 1962, for example, paraphrases the decentering effects of Duchamp's Rotative Demisphere [Fig. 20]. The small construction--Pharmacy-- interposes a glass plate between two circular mirrors [Fig. 21]. A single pharmacy bottle is depicted on each side of the plate, one colored red, the other green--an allusion to the red and green marks added by Duchamp to the print of a winter landscape in the rectified ready-made Pharmacie [1914, Fig. 22] to suggest the bottles of colored liquid which were a common sight in pharmacy windows.⁴⁴ The comparison to devices for rotation goes beyond the formal: by juxtaposing the marked glass plate between the the mirrors, Morris sets up an endless mise en abyme, a spiraling reduplication of red and green marks. Such a compulsion to repeat suggests Morris's own dialectical desire, like Duchamp's, to bring the art object more resolutely into the order of language and out of the realm of mute, magical objects. "I was bored with the deaf and dumb objects of high modernism, objects which, more or less have refused to except their transitive and conditional status." Morris has said in this regard. "My fascination with and respect for Marcel Duchamp relates to his linguistic fixation, to the idea that all of his operations were ultimately built on a sophisticated understanding of language itself."⁴⁵

The reasoning behind the assertion that Morris's reduplicative strategies represent a kind of linguistic imperative relates to Roman Jakobson's observation that the frequent occurrence of reduplication in

infantile language suggests that it may be the sign of the subject's entry into the symbolic order: "At the transition from babbling to verbal behavior, the reduplication may even serve as a compulsory process, signalling that the uttered sounds do not represent a babble, but a senseful semantic entity. The patently linguistic essence of such a duplication is quite explicable. In contradistinction to the 'wild sounds' of babbling exercises, the phonemes are to be recognized, distinguishable, identifiable; and in accordance with these requirements, they must be deliberately repeatable. The repetitiveness finds its most concise and succinct expression in, e.g., papa. The successive presentations of the same consonantal phonemes repeatedly supported by the same vowel, improve their legibility and contribute to the correctness of message reception." ⁴⁶ Significantly, the transition from babbling to linguistic performance is coextensive with the mirror stage of childhood development, the stage just before entering into the symbolic order. "Thus the dispossession of the subject by the mirror is also a law of language, and linguistic reduplication might also be a sign of the capture of the subject by an image."⁴⁷ But the strategy of reduplication inherent to Morris's numerous mirror pieces--like Duchamp's linguistic imperative-- resembles the autistic child who runs around in circles never to find his illusive center, never to connect with the linguistic order that would facilitate his search. While the endless reduplication of red and green marks might serve to reiterate their condition as signifier, the spiraling repetition contributes little to the "correctness of message reception." Instead, the spectator is presented with a baffling,

decentering riddle--an updated version of Duchamp's anemic rotations.

Collapsed shifters proliferate in works of this period. I-Box, Self-Portrait, and Portrait, for example, distort the boundaries defined by the normal use of the shifter, presenting the self--the "I"--through outer-directed, external references. The electroencephalogram of Morris's Self-Portrait, a cold and removed registration of brain activity, stands as an eviscerated trace of the artist's emotional center.⁴⁸ Portrait names its subject with bodily fluids, permitting that which is excreted, literally left-behind, to serve as a proxy for human existence. While I-Box neutralizes language by allowing an index (a door-like aperture in the shape of the letter "I") to eclipse its "referent" (a photograph of the artist and, as such, another index). Once closed, the "I," independent of a referent to activate its role as shifter, "shifts" into another capacity: that of a coffin's lid voiding the implied referent and enshrouding Morris's own conviction in the illusions of representation.⁴⁹

Morris's indexical elaborations overtly reject the metaphoric abstractions of symbolic language, a resistance correlative to his interest in process and action. By insisting on a literal physical relationship between sign and referent, the index is usually obtained through temporal action, inserting the factor of time into the traditionally static space between signs and the things they represent. Morris exploits the contingent, transient state of the shifter in I-Box, for example, as the literal swing of a door determines the sign's ability to transcend the

condition of emptiness. For Morris, process is articulated within the context of indexical traces--the sounds of a box being made, the rubbings of metal shavings caught in a magnetic field, the tangible record of a light bulb's expenditure of electricity.

Morris's ruler pieces, as well, reassert the origin of standard measures in the index. "Overcome this module," John Cage has written in reference to Jasper Johns's equally obsessive projection of rulers, "with visual virtuosity. Or Merce's foot? (Another kind of Ruler?)."⁵⁰ Cage's reference to Merce Cunningham's foot acknowledges that the first rulers were anything but standard. Isaac Asimov writes:

The question arises, what is the measurement of the unit in the first place? How long is a foot, in other words? You might hold up your own foot as an answer, but your foot hasn't always been the same size . . . Even if you are past the age of growth, a foot is slightly longer in hot weather than in cold. And even if that weren't so, your foot isn't exactly the same length as your neighbor's. Which is the real foot?

Obviously, what is needed is some foot measurement that doesn't vary from person to person or from time to time. To settle disputes, the ruler of a city might say, "the foot is as long as my foot and no one else's." (There is a legend that our foot was originally the length of the feet of Charlemagne, who was a tall person.)⁵¹

Morris was indeed conscious of the manner in which the notion of standard measure was "subverted in its origin."⁵² In an untitled lead piece of 1964, two rulers of uneven length, each measuring twenty-four inches and imprinted with a different-sized footprint. In the end, such manipulations question society's imperative to standardize and order, suggesting the extent to which "production in the modern world depends on the accuracy of measure for the identical dimension of bolts, wrenches,

and parts which make mass production possible." 53

IV. The Phenomenal Matrix

Once the experience of spatiality is related to our implantation in the world, there will always be a primary spatiality for each modality of this implantation. When, for example, the world of clear and articulate objects is abolished, our perceptual being, cut off from its world, evolves a spatiality without things. This is what happens in the night . . . Night has no outlines; it is itself in contact with me.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception

A man wearing a gray suit, white shirt, and tie steps behind a gray podium. For the next ten minutes he delivers a lecture simultaneously read by himself and prerecorded on tape. The reechoing words--taken directly from Erwin Panofsky's Studies in Iconology--are about the identification of a single gesture: "When an acquaintance greets me on the street by removing his hat, what I see from a formal point of view is nothing but a change of certain details within a configuration that forms part of the general pattern of color, lines, and volumes which constitute my world of vision. When I identify, as I automatically do, this as an event (hat-removing), I have already overstepped the limits of purely formal perception and entered a first sphere of subject matter or meaning . . . " 54

The speaker of these lines is Robert Morris performing in 21.3, a stringently choreographed dance solo that premiered at the Surplus

Theater in New York City in 1963. Each movement, each motion, each gesture--like the tipping of the hat that is the subject of the Panofsky/Morris text--connects to a specific expression or meaning: "come in with glasses on," "drop left hand," "feel chin," "look at ceiling," "tight lips," "bend over text" are but a few of the cues entered into the script. ⁵⁵ Restating Panofsky's ideas, Morris's parody of art historical manner and method (the piece is named after an art history course number) refuses "the limits of purely formal perception" in order to "enter into a...sphere of subject matter or meaning." Significantly, the final words of the monologue read: "The meaning thus discovered may be called the intrinsic meaning or content; it is essential where the two other kinds of meaning, the primary or the natural and the secondary or conventional, are phenomenal. It may be redefined as a unifying principle which underlies and explains both the visible event and its intelligible significance, and which determines even the form in which this visible event takes shape. The intrinsic meaning or content is, of course, as much above the sphere of conscious volitions as the expressional meaning is beneath this sphere." ⁵⁶ In this strange, hierarchical theater, where even the most benign instance of spontaneity is unacceptable, content yields to the histrionic, A-B-A patterns of Morris's gestures. Like the false, premeditated articulations and gestures of the speaker, the search for "intrinsic meaning" inherent to the tipping of a hat becomes irrelevant.

Ultimately, the clash of Morris's reduplicated voices and the intentional lapses in synchronization (as when the act of pouring a glass

of water does not correspond to its taped sound) frustrates the spectator's to render intrinsic meaning from the mannered gestures or from the now garbled text. For this is a theater of negation: negation of of logic and reason; negation of the iconologist's expressed desire to assign uniform cultural meanings to even contradictory phenomena; negation of a world view that distrusts unconventional forms. Morris's travesty--coextensive with the acceptance of the phenomenology of Charles S. Peirce and Maurice Merleau-Ponty into the American intellectual consciousness of the early 1960s ⁵⁷--suggests that the meaning of experience or even the understanding of the self is ultimately outer-directed. Ultimately, we must turn not to the private space of memory but to the public space of language and experience to locate our place in the world. ⁵⁸

A remarkable essay by Annette Michelson, published in 1969 as the catalogue essay for a joint retrospective of Morris's '60s work held at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. and the Detroit Institute of Arts, represents an early critical attempt to place Morris's work within a phenomenological context. The essay--entitled "Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression" ⁵⁹--acknowledged the problematic nature of the prevailing critical discourse: formalism, with its metaphysical, autonomist aspirations could neither accept nor fully understand the radical, "transgressive" character of the minimalist enterprise. Minimalism's use of everyday materials and factory fabrication, its theatrical and temporal setting, and its refusal to evade gravity in the

service of sculptural illusionism, caused Michelson to "grow suspect" of a "critical enterprise [formalism] founded on a modernist, post-Symbolist allegiance to the primacy of the Imagination and the apprehension-in-immediacy of its works." 60

Michelson called for a radical revision of the critical vocabulary, one which rejected the flourishes of the formalist metaphysician --"the language of our art criticism"--in favor of the language of real experience, the language of phenomenology. Such proliferating claims for art as "saying," "expressing," "embodying," "incarnating," "hypostatizing," and "symbolizing" were more than inadequate; they ultimately undermined minimalism's, and particularly Morris's, resistance to the dominant claims of formalism. Instead, Michelson turns to the phenomenological discussions of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and, most emphatically, to the writings of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce whose concept of "epistemological firstness" she maintains is most relevant to an analysis of minimalism (not coincidentally an inherently American movement): "[Peirce proposed a] quality of immediate, concrete, simple apprehension . . . as the first focus of an investigation of the most general conditions of experience, of knowing and perceiving, as he set about marking off the limits of his phenomenology." 61

Peirce spoke to the condition of absolute presentness, a present unencumbered by the restraints of psychological association or memory: "Imagine, if you please, a consciousness in which there is no comparison,

no relation, no recognized multiplicity...no change, no imagination of any modification of what is positively there, no reflexion--nothing but a simple positive character. Such a consciousness might just be an odor, say a smell of attar; or it might be one infinite dead ache; it might be the hearing of a piercing internal whistle. In short, any simple and positive quality would be something which our description fits that it is such as it is quite regardless of anything else." ⁶² "Firstness," then, is non-cognitive, an experience fully dependent on literal feelings and perceptions and hence wholly incompatible with the collapsed, harmonic, and idealized time of modernist painting and sculpture. (Or as Fried states in "Art and Objecthood": "It is though one's experience of [modernist painting and sculpture] has no duration--not because one...experiences a picture by Noland or Olitski or a sculpture by David Smith or Caro in no time at all, but because at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest.") ⁶³

Discussing Morris's Untitled [1965, Fig. 23], an arrangement of four identical three-foot cubes laminated in mirrors, Michelson interprets the artist's ontology as exposing a central internal contradiction: that between "real" (operational) and "virtual" (idealized, analytical) time and space. ⁶⁴ Because each of the mirrored objects is "dissolved even as it [is] defined, through reflection," ⁶⁵ the mirrored cubes simultaneously reflect their ambient setting--the changes in light and shadow, the movement of the spectators-- while at the same time they dematerialize their environment through the ephemera of reflection.

The emphasis on the reflective process, on the need for the experience of sculpture to be outer-directed and public rather than precious and intimate, was at the core of Morris's phenomenological enterprise. While the vast majority of modernist sculpture existed within the context of virtual time (Vladimir Tatlin, discussed at length by both Morris and Michelson, was a notable exception), Morris's large-scale, non-associative plinths [Slab, 1962], cubes [Untitled, 1965], and beams [L-Beams, 1965-67]--as Fried had observed--demanded a literal, direct interaction between spectator and art object. ⁶⁶ "It is [Morris's] commitment," Michelson writes, "to the exact particularity of experience, to the experience of a sculptural object as inextricably involved with the sense of self and that of space which is their common dwelling, which characterizes these strategies as radical." ⁶⁷

For Morris, whose ideas about perception and experience were rehearsed in a series of writings unprecedented in their influence on 1960s art and criticism, ⁶⁸ spectator behavior and interaction were far more important than traditional concerns with gravity, volume, and mass. Time--the medium by which events literally unfold--became a crucial factor in the interrelation between object and viewer. The device of altering the gestalts, for example, presented a way of stalling perception, of slowing down comprehension, and to some extent stimulating direct engagement. In Morris's opinion, the simple recapitulation of known structures and styles resulted in static and boring objects that were

unchallenging: "If the thing doesn't alter your perception you really don't notice it. I think that's true about art. If art comes around and doesn't give you any shift in your perception, then you ignore it. So I think its got to be there; you have to talk about that, and also the term can mean different things. It can mean altering your structure--some kind of structural notion of what you think art is about, or more practical situations--under what conditions you see." ⁶⁹

Morris's interest in permutable structures offered one way of avoiding a consistent and easily definable gestalt. In "The Phenomenology of the Object," a chapter of Morris's master's thesis, the artist discussed Brancusi's permutation of similar or identical forms. The "permuting possibilities of the stacked, unattached elements," he observed, contributed to a constantly shifting relation between spectator and object that departed from the traditional "hierarchical situation" of modernist sculpture. ⁷⁰ Avoiding Brancusi's transcendental implications, Morris executed a series of large-scale sculptures in the mid-1960s consisting of simple geometric units that could be rearranged into different structures.⁷¹ In 1967, for example, Morris executed a series of untitled works consisting of wedge-shaped units accompanied by diagrams that offered numerous possibilities of manipulation and exchange [Fig. 24]. ⁷² Defying the "Cubist aesthetic of having reasonableness or logic for the relating parts," the permutability of these pieces "takes the relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision." ⁷³ In place of

static gestalts, the spectator is confronted with a field of information that is continually subject to alteration and revision. "Objects in the world are in constant flux and change," Morris has said, "and acknowledging that provides another way of dealing with things. I think I've done that...by permuting things...where they are not the same every day." ⁷⁴

Rather than the systems analysis that some critics have suggested, such work contradicts the static, a priori nature of systemic structure. Instead of logic or mathematics these pieces are about the primacy of experience, as they articulate meaning or understanding by filtering passage and vision through a constantly shifting temporal dynamic. As Rosalind Krauss has suggested, "the project of Morris's sculpture has consistently been to defeat the diagrammatic The notion of a fixed, internal armature that could mirror the viewer's own self, fully formed prior to experience, founders on the capacity of th[e] separable parts [of his sectional fiberglass pieces] to shift or to have shifted, to formulate a notion of the self which exists only at that moment of externality within that experience."⁷⁵ In the end, as Morris has admitted, pieces like Continuous Project Altered Daily [Leo Castelli Warehouse, N.Y.C., January 1969], an environment with an almost inexhaustible set of variations, or Morris's sectional sculptures are more "involved with how things exist than with [classical notions of] art." ⁷⁶

Much of the artist's production in the mid-1960s exchanges complacent objects for perceptual confrontation. Morris's Untitled

(L-Beams) of 1965-67, juxtaposed three L-shaped plywood beams [Fig. 25].⁷⁷ The identical equilateral forms, with their massive eight-foot extensions, are deployed in different positions relative to the ground: one is lying on its side, another is up-ended, while a third is inverted on its two ends. While the fact of their uniformity can be understood, their inconsistent positioning precludes seeing them as the same. And because their similarity must be judged by standards that exist prior to actual experience, the L-Beams--much like Morris's subverted rulers--are particularly challenging in their difference. Rather than relying on reduplication to confirm their gestalt, repetition reaffirms that they are, in their external situation, different. The spectator's private preconceptions, now supplanted by public experience, must be set aside, for what is already known is rendered irrelevant. With such accumulations of memory and knowledge rendered inoperative, the viewer must start from the level of brute perception in order to grasp the reality of what he or she is seeing.

Morris's exploration of the external origin of cognition and self-definition reaffirms the extent to which the meanings we establish are wholly dependent on "the other beings to whom we make them and on whose vision of them we depend for them to make sense."⁷⁸ Such an enterprise shatters the illusion of the self as a contained, independent whole, acknowledging that we must connect with other selves, other minds, and other things to determine our existence.⁷⁹ For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose philosophical writings on perception Morris had

read as early as 1962,⁸⁰ even the mundane experience of a road cannot be predetermined by memory or knowledge: "When I look at a road which sweeps before me towards the horizon, I must not say that the sides of the road are given to me as convergent or that they are given to me as parallel: They are parallel in depth. The perspective appearance is not posited, but neither is the parallelism. I am engrossed in the road itself, and I cling to it through its virtual distortion and depth is this intention itself which posits neither the perspective projection of the road nor the 'real' road."⁸¹ Morris's description of his ground-level encounter with the Nazca lines in Peru, in his essay "Aligned with Nazca" [1975], suggests just such an outer-directed accumulation of external cues in the service of cognition. Without constantly looking up and out toward the horizon, the artist could not have established the special character of the road he was traversing. Conversely, the lines helped Morris to locate himself in the seemingly boundless space of the Peruvian mesa: "What one sees on the ground at Nazca has little to do with seeing objects," he writes. "For if in the urban context space is merely the absence of objects, at Nazca space as distance is rendered visible by the lines and, conversely, the lines become visible only as a function of distance."⁸²

Morris's personal journey into the phenomenal culminated in Blind Time I [1973], a series of ninety-eight drawings that serve as records of visceral processes executed in a state of temporary blindness. Morris's working method for these drawings was consistent: he would define a particular drawing task (related to pressure, distance, location, shape, and

so on), estimate the length of time needed for its completion, and finally close his eyes and draw on paper with his fingers using graphite mixed with plate oil.⁸³ Despite the specificity of the assigned tasks, the sense of being lost in darkness intensified his reliance on lived experience, for the very condition of blindness mandated that spatial orientation occur only by an accumulation of information in time, as other operative senses compensated for the loss of vision.

Morris's gambit suggests another, perhaps even more radical aspect of the Blind Time series: The attempt to undo the compositional claims of the artist over his work. In Blind Time II [1976, Fig. 26],⁸⁴ a woman who had been blind since birth acted as Morris's surrogate. "For many of my projects I've always had assistants," he remarks, "and I somehow thought why not extend this Blind Time series, only have someone else do it."⁸⁵ Consistent with the neutral plinths and permutation pieces of the 1960s, these drawings continue to question art history's obsession with emotional temperament and private expression. Contacted through the American Association for the Blind, the woman--known to us only as A.A.--remains as anonymous as the impersonal fabricators of Morris's sculptures. Uncomfortable with the inherently visual discipline of drawing and unaware of predetermined methods for depicting depth, the blind woman approached her task with skepticism and confusion: "She had no idea of illusionistic drawing. I described perspective to her and she thought that was absolutely ridiculous, that things got smaller in the distance. She had no conception of that. She kept asking me about

criteria, got very involved in what is the right criteria for a thing. And there was no way that she could find any and finally that sort of conflict became very dramatic. She was operating in a way that she wouldn't have to invoke [these criteria]. And at the same time she was aghast that she was not able to." 86

To enter into the realm of darkness--into Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological space of the night, where clear and articulate objects are abolished, where our perceptual being establishes a spatiality without things, where there are no outlines--is to redefine the way our bodies relate to the logic of the world. "[It's] sort of weird, what I'm questioning, what I'm asking in all this...is that just the nature of it?" asks the blind woman in a moment of frustration. "Is there no analogue in the world that I can experience that is as intense?" 87

And yet, while the central concern of nearly all minimalist art was the shift from psychology and memory to perception and experience, it would be naïve to assume that a reductionist object placed in an art gallery could exist entirely without psychological content. The gestalt that Morris wished to question was nevertheless always manifest in his simple geometries. An untitled cube, for example, would ultimately signify a "cube" or a "box," prompting the spectator to make associations beyond the physical, experiential presence of the object. This is what Harold Bloom meant when he used the word swerve in describing the tendency of even the most mundane objects or words to veer-off into a

poetics of metaphor and allusion.⁸⁸ It is in this sense that direct or unmediated experience--a metaphysical ideal typically located in the critical and psychological discourse of the 1960s, including the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Herbert Marcuse, and the British Psychiatrist R.D. Laing--was an impossibility rooted in a newly formed ideology of presence, an issue that will be taken up at greater length later in this dissertation. In expressing contempt for what was thought to be an repressive late-industrial social order, the New Left and others searched for a means for society's recovery from oppression. Substituting one set of modernist myths for another, these dreams of a non-mediated, non-symbolic, pre-linguistic realm became the basis for new visions of transcendence and utopia. It was ironically C.S. Peirce, a century before, who warned us of the shakiness of such propositions: "Thus, any feeling must be identical with any exact duplicate of it, which is as much to say that the feeling is simply a quality of immediate consciousness. But it must be admitted that a feeling experienced in an outward sensation may be reproduced in memory. For to deny this would be idle nonsense."⁸⁹

V. Base Concerns: Sexuality, Repression and the Horizontal Axis

Morris's foray into phenomenology suggests another fundamental direction in his work of the 1960s: an increasing association with the horizontal axis. Such associations work in two central ways as they radically question the meaning and function of many sectors of the

modernist sculptural aesthetic: On one level, the horizontal plane represents a fundamental shift in the way sculpture is normally viewed as vertical forms in vertical relation to the human body. This notion of a shifted field of vision, as we have seen in the Nazca lines, represents an important way in which phenomenology contributed to minimalism's redefinition of the relationship of our bodies to the world around us. On the other hand, the horizontal plane serves as an informational field on which Morris's recognized gravity as a condition (e.g., the inprint of footprints) that suggests a range of meanings about the relationship of art and culture to history, spirituality, and human sexuality.

Untitled [1964, Fig. 27], for example, is a low wooden library ladder with a hinged lid cut into each of its steps. The opened lids reveal single footprints cast in lead, an index of the body's orientation to the ground. Another lead relief from 1964 projects the imprint of both hands and feet, a correctly oriented and spaced reference to the body in its most "base" state--on all fours [Fig. 28]. One work, also from 1964, juxtaposes the imprint of two feet with batteries.⁹⁰ While Untitled (Rope Piece) from 1964 drops a rope from a wooden wedge on the wall to an anchor-like box on the floor, an implicit reaffirmation of the dominance of gravity over illusion [Fig. 29].

Morris's frequent allusion to the "Litanies of the Chariot" section of Duchamp's Green Box reinforces this orientation. As discussed earlier, Morris obsessively rewrote the "Litanies," named several works after it,

and in the 1962 Litanies "key box" (from which all aesthetic value had been withdrawn) inscribed each of the keys with one of the twenty-seven "key" words from Duchamp's inventory.⁹¹ One of those words, near the top of Duchamp's list, is HORIZONTAL--the fundamental condition under which the bride will pass from the realm of the virgin into that of the bride. In the course of the "Litanies," Duchamp elaborates that "the Chariot should be made of rods of emancipated metal; the chariot would have the property of giving itself (without resistance to gravity) to a force acting horizontally upon it," later concluding that "the chariot is emancipated horizontally . . . free of (all) gravity in the horizontal."⁹²

By late 1964, disenchanted with Duchamp's attachment to the object, Morris concentrated on the production of large-scale sculptures that lay directly on the floor--plinths that were literally emancipated from the act of resisting gravity. The qualification "without resistance to gravity" is, in a number of complex ways, applicable to Morris's leveling of form. Initially, Morris's association with the horizontal must be read, in light of his theoretical writing of the period, as a rejection of modernist sculpture's enforced defiance of gravity--Constantin Brancusi's birds in flight, Alexander Calder's whimsical mobiles, David Smith's balancing Cubis, and Anthony Caro's buoyant formalist exercises all reiterated sculpture's historical will to transcend the forces of gravity.

Perhaps the most important insight into Morris's reassessment of

formalist practice appears in one of his least known writings--his unpublished masters thesis "Form Classes in the Work of Constantine Brancusi," written and researched during his studies at Hunter College from 1962 to 1966.⁹³ Built upon the assumption that most Brancusi scholarship had resisted formal analysis, Morris's thesis attempts to articulate "the formal contours of the œuvre."⁹⁴ Morris's method centers on George Kubler's The Shape of Time [1962], a theoretical text which offered a context for "dealing with the dynamics of changing forms distributed in time."⁹⁵ Arising from the study of art history, Kubler presented a new approach to the problem of historical change, one that drew upon related fields such as linguistics and anthropology. In effect, Kubler's analysis replaced notions of style with the idea of a linked succession of works in time as recognizable early and late versions of the same action.⁹⁶ Such reasoning resulted in an understanding of historical sequence predicated on the notion of continuous change rather than on the static concept of style, the usual foundation of art historical thinking.

Morris applied Kubler's ideas to an analysis of the various shifts and repetitions of form throughout Brancusi's development. Following Kubler in eliminating both biographical information and organic metaphors of stylistic evolution, Morris settled on an essentially empirical method; rather than seeing Brancusi's development as continuous, and hence evolutionary, Morris discussed the various "form-classes" that recur throughout his œuvre.

One such classification defines the elaborate bases and pedestals that support the vertical sculptures. The word pedestal--a contraction of the prefix pedis (foot) and the suffix stal (place)--is itself oriented to the spatial coordinate central to Morris's sensibility: the axis of the foot and the horizontal ground of its engagement. For Morris, the usual dismissal of Brancusi's pedestals represented a kind of art historical blind spot, a resistance to acknowledge objects usually considered incidental: "That these bases were not integral to a particular work, and were in some cases interchangeable, is not indicative of a bland or otherwise neutral quality. Indeed, [Sidney Tillim] has described the bases as 'the emotional seat of his art, ritualistically hacked into rough, elementary geometric designs.' Morphologically the bases are nearly always more complicated, if not more complex, than the works which rest on them. This elaboration of elements, together with the fact that the sculptures themselves invariably have inserted just beneath them an element more simple, more neutral, than the rest of the base, may have a special iconographic meaning for Brancusi."⁹⁷

The critic Sidney Tillim, in an essay published in the Kenyon Review in 1958, described this compression of the totem into pedestals as a subordination of the artist's passions, a kind of puritanical repression of sexuality and violence into the sculpture's base.⁹⁸ The threshold of Brancusi's displacement of libidinal energy was, in Tillim's analysis, the top plane of the pedestal--the neutral axis that delineated the horizontal base from the perpendicular vertical sculpture that crossed it: "The use

of the cross . . . as an 'equator' may have a special unconscious meaning since the use to which it is put is determined by a sense other than the formal or aesthetic. It prevents the energy repressed into the pedetals from entering the pure realm, that of the form it supports, and in this respect parallels somewhat Modigliani's habit of employing sinuous elongated necks in his portraits, a habit which revealed according to the psychiatrist and writer on art, Dr. Felix Marti Ibanez, the desire to control his sexual appetites through asceticism."⁹⁹

The association of latent eroticism and violence with the horizontal axis, an axis Tillim equates with the "primitive,"¹⁰⁰ is not without precedent within the history of modernism. The formal innovation of Alberto Giacometti's sculpture produced in the years 1930 to 1933, for example, work that stylistically contradicts the elongated vertical figures of the artist's mature style, was their "ninety-degree turn of the monument to fold its vertical dimension onto the horizontality of the earth."¹⁰¹ In objects like Project for a Passageway [1930-31], Head/Landscape [1930-31], and the gameboard sculptures like Circuit [1931] and On ne joue plus [No More Play, 1933], the work is conceived of as a base. Unlike Brancusi's more traditional pedestals, which serve to elevate the sculptural object off the floor, Giacometti's bases are resolutely horizontal; rather than repressive--a puritanism disparaged by both Morris and Tillim--Giacometti's conception of the sculpture's rotated axis was fully radical. By aligning his sculpture with the ground

plane, by disavowing the pedestal's function to delineate the art object from the real world, and by injecting a temporal, participatory aspect into works like the gameboards or Suspended Ball [1930-31], Giacometti opened sculptural discourse onto a consideration of real space and time.

As Rosalind Krauss notes, the intellectual source for Giacometti's horizontal orientation, his impulse toward a "base materialism," was the Surrealist writer Georges Bataille.¹⁰² As the founding editor of the journal Documents, a full series of which Giacometti guarded his entire lifetime,¹⁰³ Bataille advanced radical and transgressive ideas that were often in conflict with André Breton's more puritanical version of Surrealism. To expose the "baseness" of human sexuality--the violent and primitive component often suppressed in the thinking of the orthodox Surrealist's (as Tillim suggests in his interpretation of Brancusi's bases)--was at the heart of Bataille's writing. On Bataille's notion of the horizontal axis of libidinal energy, Krauss writes: "In the anatomical geography of Bataille's thought the vertical axis emblemizes man's pretensions toward the elevated, the spiritual, the ideal: his claim that the uprightness separating him biologically from the bestial distinguishes him ethically as well. Bataille, of course, does not believe this distinction, and insists on the presence--behind the repressive assumptions of verticality--of lowness as the real source of libidinal energy. Lowness here is both an axis and a direction, the horizontality of the mud of the real. If feet are highly charged objects, Bataille insists in "Le gros orteil" [the big toe], it is because, simultaneously the focus of disgust and eros,

they are part of the body that is mired in the ground." ¹⁰⁴ And so it is the very operation of a vertical rotated into "baseness" that became Bataille's exemplar for the concept of "basesse," a low or base materialism. In Bataille's rotational opposition, the mental axis connects eyes and mouth, issuing the inherently human function of language, while the biological axis connects mouth to anus, locating the baser functions of ingestion and excretion. "To lower the mental, or spiritual, axis onto to the biological one is to think about the real transformation of articulate sounds into bestial ones at the moment of man's greatest pain or pleasure, and to see these in their true operation as excretory." ¹⁰⁵ Thus, in Bataille's equation, it is the plane of horizontality--the axis on which the sexual act itself is enacted--that announces man's deepest or lowest urges. To quote Bataille: "The function of the human foot consists in giving a firm foundation to the erection of which man is so proud But whatever the role played in the erection by his foot, man, who has a light head, in other words a head raised to the heavens and heavenly things, sees it as a spit, on the pretext that he has this foot in the mud." ¹⁰⁶

It was precisely that magical, aspirational aspect of modernist art, and particularly its puritanical repression, that antagonized Morris in the early 1960s. Morris's enigmatic footprints reasserted more than just his fascination with the index: they categorically established, both literally and figuratively, the transgressive direction of his œuvre. Morris's

response to Brancusi was both radical and oedipal. Recently, Morris discussed his disdain for Brancusi's sculpture, a secret disdain that grew as his thesis progressed:

The top element of Brancusi's totems was compulsive, repressed and transcendent. The bases were freer; they were really more important. I was really fascinated with the bases: they were stacked, permuted. As Sidney Tillim's article on Brancusi suggested, all the sexual energy, all the implications of violence, were below a neutral axis, repressed in the base. What lie above these pedestals was absurd--obsessive, repressive, puritanical. While I admired certain aspects of Brancusi's work, I grew increasingly disdainful. Rodin's innovations were far more important to me. Brancusi was simply a magician, producing precious, magical objects. ¹⁰⁷

Tillim's position on Brancusi's pedestals was similarly critical. For Tillim, the sculptor's "peitism" was rooted in self-protection; his ambitions prevented him from exposing the shame of his libidinal drives:

"Manifestly, survival demanded from Brancusi that he compress the totems . . . into pedestals, thus subordinating his passions. It demanded that he deny the extremities of the body, that is, engagement, and that he smooth it to the bone and call it essence. Brancusi spoke of his expression as 'pure joy,' mistaking as essence what the anonymous pebble form becomes when it is arrived at through intense stylization of a particular form, like rocks by the shore smoothed by the incessant tides until their surfaces offer no resistance. Misled by his own compulsive energy, Brancusi mistook as essence what was simply his sentimentality absolutized. . . ." ¹⁰⁸ Tillim's analysis, in a remarkable turn, went on to address the socio-political dynamic of this repression, identifying its basis in ideology: "Such an essence exposes a sensibility other than the primarily aesthetic. For it is also political and social in that it seeks a

relation to authority through quasi-aesthetic instruments-- nature and peity. Now, when the great democracies are so anxiously engaged in promoting what constitutes their ideologies, we find a new insight into this supposed essence. All told, this is sentimentality dressed up as an idea." 109

The allusion to the origin of repression in social and political need reflects an important shift in the analysis of Freudian theory in the 1950s and 60s. Herbert Marcuse in Eros and Civilization, a philosophical critique of Freud, influentially argued the essentially political nature of this repression.¹¹⁰ The work, published in 1955 and widely read in both Europe and the United States, served as an important manifesto of sexual liberation in the 1960s.¹¹¹ Essentially, Marcuse questioned Freud's tendency of identifying civilization with repression. In order to function in an ordered society, Freud reasoned, the individual most often must yield to the conscious and unconscious mechanisms of restraint, constraint, and suppression, must overcome the base urges of "pleasure" for the pragmatic needs of "reality." For Marcuse it is precisely this acquired repressiveness--so central to society that it is handed down from one generation to another like the tenets of law and order--that feeds those forces that seek to prevent freedom and liberation. "What started as subjugation by force," he writes, "soon became 'voluntary servitude,' collaboration in reproducing a society which made servitude increasingly rewarding and palatable."¹¹²

Marcuse's economic analogy was acknowledged by Freud himself. The sacrifice of libido was necessary to stimulate a society oriented toward labor rather than leisure: society's motive in enforcing the reality principle is thus "economic, since it has not means enough to support life for its members without work on their part, it must see to it that the number of these members is restricted and their energies directed away from sexual activities on to their work."¹¹³ This conception provided the most effective rationalization for repression. Instead of rejecting repression as harmful to the integrity of the human spirit, Freudian psychoanalysis to a certain extent invested in its virtues, acknowledging its role in the formation of the symbolic order of language and ultimately of society. Yet such a validation of the mechanism's of repression was counterbalanced by Freud himself, who openly postulated that the very neuroses he sought to cure by psychoanalysis were due to this repression.

Marcuse's understanding of the repressive role of sexual sublimation in an increasingly oppressive society was not entirely absent from Freudian discourse. Freud dialectically postulated in his essay "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness" (1908) that in prohibiting sexual intercourse except in monogamous marriage, "civilization" was contributing to a rapidly spreading incidence of nervous illness in "present-day society."¹¹⁴ This "inverse relation holding between civilization and the free development of sexuality,"¹¹⁵ Freud reasoned, should ultimately be modified in order to assure rather than undermine the furtherance of civilization: "If we regard the vaguer ways of being

'nervous' and consider the specific forms of nervous illness, we shall find that the injurious influence of civilization reduces itself in the main to the harmful suppression of the sexual life of civilized peoples (or classes) through the civilized sexual morality prevalent in them." ¹¹⁶ For Freud, such sexual repression was sanctioned in a number of ways, especially by the church, where "the piece of instinctual satisfaction which each person had renounced was offered to the deity as sacrifice," ¹¹⁷ and by the interests of medicine, where proper "hygiene" insisted that sex be practiced only within the confines of monogamy. This perpetual insistence on sublimation--on the capacity to exchange specifically sexual aims for productive, civilized ones--would, according to Freud, result in an increasing degeneration into neurosis.

Ultimately, Freud trisected the evolution of the sexual instinct into distinct phases of sexuality: [1] the free exercise of the sexual instinct; [2] sex practiced solely for the purpose of reproduction; and [3] the "present-day civilized sexual morality" in which men and women must abstain from sex until marriage, whether children were desired or not. In 1908, of course, the exercise of sexual instincts would rarely occur outside the aims of marriage or reproduction. In contradiction to Marcuse's somewhat narrow assessment, Freud understood that certain forms of sublimation could act as an enemy of mental health: "Experience teaches us that for most people there is a limit beyond which their constitution cannot comply with the demands of civilization. All who wish to be more noble-minded than their constitution allows fall victims to

neurosis; they would have been more healthy if it could have been possible for them to be less good." ¹¹⁸ It is in this sense that Freud was willing to accept the need for a less repressive sexual environment --despite the necessity for true productivity--in order to improve the psychological constitution of society.

Fifty years later, the 1960s opened onto a generation of thinkers who radicalized the cause of liberating the sexual instincts in the service of social and cultural freedom. It was often suggested, for example, that the sensibility that fueled the forces against political oppression was rooted in the discourse of sexual liberation (and the liberation of women from a gender-based power structure). ¹¹⁹ For Marcuse, whose ideas had influenced Morris in this period of cultural upheaval, ¹²⁰ the battle for liberation also would be fought on the turf of sexual freedom. In a revised "Political Preface" for Eros and Civilization written in 1966, at the moment of the great liberation struggles in Vietnam, the Congo, South Africa, and in the ghettos of America's "affluent society," Marcuse restated this connection: "'Polymorphous sexuality' was the term I used to indicate that the new direction of progress would depend completely on the opportunity to activate repressed or arrested organic, biological needs: to make the human body an instrument of pleasure rather than labor. The old formula, the development of prevailing needs and faculties, seemed to be inadequate; the emergence of new, qualitatively different needs and faculties seemed to be the prerequisite, the content of liberation."¹²¹

Even the issue of aesthetic value was conscripted for battle, for as Marcuse observes, the concept of the aesthetic inherently contradicts a reality principle based on utility rather than pleasure. In our repressive world, "the individual comes to the traumatic realization that full and painless gratification of his needs is impossible. The reality principle supersedes the pleasure principle: man learns to give up momentary, uncertain, and destructive pleasure for delayed, restrained, but 'assured' pleasure." ¹²² For Marcuse, the sensuousness inherent to art objects remains, in the hierarchy of things, the "lower" and even the "lowest" faculty; it must be subjected to the operations of cognition, organized by the higher faculty of the intellect, in order to rise to the venerable position of art. (Ironically, Marcuse's aesthetic sensibility was remarkably traditional and conservative, a position that led him to reject work that deconstructed the forms and hierarchies of high art. He claimed, for example, that the radical art forms of the 1960s--guerrilla theater, rock music, conceptual art, film--were neither radical nor revolutionary, because, unlike the art of the Romantic and Classical periods, they lacked the "negating power of art." In other words, such forms were incapable of bridging the gap between "real life" and art.) ¹²³

Morris's theater of the erotic--a space populated by bodily fluids, rubber membranes, "cocks and cunts," and nude bodies--explores the praxis of human sexuality in the realm of "high" art, undertaking an

often scandalous deconstruction of the repressive forces that predetermine aesthetic decisions.¹²⁴ Scandal can aptly describe the scene in Buffalo, New York in the late spring of 1965; the public was indeed "shocked" at Morris's rather "sensational attraction," a work that was cited for its supposedly scandalous use of the bare body. Beyond its shock value, the dance piece in question, Waterman Switch, represents an important instance in Morris's psychosexual explorations. First performed at the Judson Memorial Church in New York on March 23, 1965, the twenty-minute trio was danced by Morris, Yvonne Rainer, and

Lucinda Childs. The Village Voice offers the following description:

The stage is set with . . . fake stones and . . . four plywood sections of a track (visible to begin with in a downstage corner), which are then moved into a position, one by one, for the "walk" by the third party of the dance, a girl dressed as a boy . . . [she] then walks with the nudes, just upstage of them, holding a ball of twine stretched in a taut line over her shoulder into the wing from which . . . the three of them walk to emphasize a horizontal journey that takes four minutes and suggests an eternity [emphasis mine]. The girl-boy image (Lucinda Childs) is entirely functional for set-up and support, but she is also a brilliant device as a neutral foil (familiar in various guises in Morris's sculpture) to the naked Morris and Rainer. Yet the two images seem scrupulously balanced. A girl obviously a girl dressed just as obviously as a boy can be an image no less striking than that public exposure which is immediately understood as vivid by any culture that undresses only in private.¹²⁵

The "horizontal journey" of Morris and Rainer was rhetorically sexual. Never exposing their genitalia, the nude couple was, nevertheless, emphatically erotic: their bodies, glistening in a sheath of mineral oil, remained pressed together in an embrace, their walk accompanied by "a very lush"¹²⁶ love aria from Giuseppe Verdi's Simone Boccanegra. Full frontal nudity without contact would certainly have been far less

scandalous. "It is an absurd love-duet," writes David Antin, "and there is the sense that the artist is 'simulating' . . . being stripped bare."¹²⁸ The scene indeed recalls Duchamp: the woman dressed as a man--a brilliant inversion of the transvestism of Rose Sélavy--guiding the bride and the bachelor beyond the post-virginal point of no return. No wonder, then, that the final scene of Waterman Switch, essentially a duplication of the first, ends with Morris pouring the contents of a bottle of mercury down Rainer's nude, shimmering back. The slithering mass, rudely hitting the floor, serves as a metaphor for the deflowering--a transgressive, voyeuristic passage that implicates both spectator and performer.

Like the nude appearance of Marcel Duchamp and Brogna Perlmutter as Adam and Eve in Francis Picabia's Ciné Sketch, performed during the short run of the ballet Relâche in 1924, the overt sexuality of Morris and Rainer--and especially the bisexuality of Childs--was meant to question the normalizing mechanisms of bourgeois repression. Shortly after Waterman Switch was staged in 1965, Morris asked Duchamp about the nudity in Ciné Sketch. Referring to a documentary photograph that indicated the polite presence of a fig leaf over Adam's genitalia, Morris inquired as to whether that was the case in the actual performance.¹²⁹ Told that it was not, Morris must have felt a sense of relief, for this time, at least, the spectre of constraint and censorship had not won out. Duchamp's unchaste appearance no doubt reminded Morris of his own mission to strip away the ever present fig leaves of our puritanical and judgmental society--to contact suppressed and feared sectors of our

identity.

As one critic has already suggested, Waterman Switch, perhaps more than any other work of this period, "sums up almost all of Morris's aesthetic concerns"¹³⁰; process and labor (at one point Morris rolls the boulders along the stage); passage, temporality, and performance; private allusions (readings from texts by Morris and Leonardo daVinci); and indexical strategies (the implication of feet marking a track). Centering as well on pedal engagement, on the passage of the foot along a horizontal track, and on the relationship of the logic body to the horizontal field it traverses, Waterman Switch brilliantly signals the temporal energy of Morris mature minimalist style, works, as we shall see, that consciously negate the sensibilities of repression and idealism.

NOTES

1. Theory of the Avant-Garde, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 51-52.
2. Morris's questioning of the social and political hierarchies of the gallery and museum will be discussed in chapter three.
3. Unpublished transcript of an interview with Lucy Lippard, December 1971, p. 36. [Morris archives]
4. Ibid.
5. Marcel Duchamp (New York: Grove Press, 1959). A notation in Morris's own copy of the book indicates that he purchased it in 1959.
6. These paintings were the first works of Robert Morris to be exhibited. They were shown in two solo exhibitions at the Delexi Gallery in San Francisco in 1957 and 1958.
7. Morris has said of his painting technique: "The painting I was doing at this time was . . . six by eight, nine, ten, twelve feet. That tended to be their scale. I started working in easel painter's fashion by putting the canvas against the wall . . . I generally used to paint heavy and put it on with a knife or trowel. Then I began to work on the floor. I knew that Pollock had worked on the floor . . . I found that by putting the canvas on the floor, I could get back into the picture if I got stuck and felt that it wasn't finished and yet I didn't quite know how to begin it again. Putting it on the floor . . . allowed me not to have that particular kind of critical focus of seeing all the relationships . . . I finally got to the point where I was just moving the scaffold from one end of the canvas to the other and laying the paint down--it was almost like making a tapestry. I would just move it down a foot and paint that area and then go on so when I got to the end the painting was finished. And I either accepted it or I threw it out. But I didn't go back and adjust it." Transcript of a taped interview with Robert Morris by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, 10 March 1968, pp. 17-19. [Morris archives]
8. For a discussion on Duchamp's influence on post-World War II art see John Tancock, "The Influence of Marcel Duchamp," in Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine, eds., Marcel Duchamp (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), pp. 159-78.
9. My use of the word avant-garde is consistent with that of Peter Bürger. See Jochen Schulte-Sasse's analysis of Bürger's position in "Theory of Modernism versus Theory of the Avant-Garde," in Bürger., pp.vii-xlvii.
10. Douglas Crimp has suggested that the institutional autonomy of

art is a distinctly modernist sensibility. The art of the Italian Renaissance, for example, was essentially art-in-situ--made for churches and palaces. The museum, however, is a modernist phenomenon; the birth of the museum and the discipline of art history share the same time span as modernism. "The idea of art as autonomous," he writes, "as separate from everything else, as destined to take its place in art history, is a development of modernism." See "The End of Painting," October, no. 16, Spring 1981, pp.69-86.

11. See, for example, Maurice Berger, "Pictograph into Burst: Adolph Gottlieb and the Structure of Myth," Arts Magazine, 55 (March 1981), pp. 134-39.

12. The exhibition took place at the Betty Parsons Gallery from September 30 to October 19, 1946. As quoted in Serge Guilbaut, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 120.

13. Pierre Dommergues, L'aliénation dans le roman américain contemporain, vol. I (Paris: Union Générale de l'Éditions, 1976), p.271; as translated and quoted in Ibid. p. 159.

14. "The Situation at the Moment," Partisan Review, 15 (January 1948), p. 82.

15. "Art," Nation, 8 March 1947, p. 284.

16. In fairness to Matisse, his reference to art as an "armchair" appears in his "Notes d'un peintre," an essay written in 1908, well before the start of World War I.

17. Guilbaut, p. 163. On the level of the realpolitik, Greenberg was, in effect, participating in the rhetoric of the "cold war." Under pressure from a realigned intellectual Left (now essentially liberal and progressivist), Greenberg "lashed-out violently at Communism and Stalinism on behalf of Modern Art." He realized that America now had the opportunity to establish itself as the center of world art, a move which capitalized on the weakness of post-War Europe. The universalist, apolitical themes of the new art, the reasoning went, would enhance the possibility of its international acceptance, an understanding that was, in fact, consistent with more widespread shifts in the ranks of American intellectuals. The surviving journals of the Left--Partisan Review, the Nation, and Dwight Macdonald's Politics--where radicalism had once been a central issue, were moving comfortably toward liberalism. Marxist themes yielded to psychiatry as the context of the individual preempted that of social relations. Partisan Review had declared that writers "henceforth wished to be integrated into American society as it was." And with this move toward public acceptance came a deradicalization of the avant-garde: it could no longer sustain the oppositional stance which

had constituted its *raison d'être*. "America was now ready to put forward its own 'high culture,'" writes historian Serge Guilbaut. "In other words, America [in 1948] was . . . on the point of making the transition from colonized nation to colonizer."

This note as well as the preceeding three paragraphs above are indebted to Serge Guilbaut's reading of the formation of the "avant-garde" in New York City after the Second World War.

18. Another work of this type consisted of 1347 pencil strokes drawn on paper painted bronze (1347 Strokes, 1962). Such repetitive, absurd tasks can be seen as re-creations of the pathetic endgames of Samuel Beckett, a sensibility inherent to much of the artist's production (Morris has acknowledged Beckett's influence in a transcript of an unpublished interview with Jack Burnham recorded on 21 November 1975.) For an important discussion of how these tactics invert such rationalist concepts as mathematical intelligibility, see Rosalind Krauss, "LeWitt in Progress," October, no. 6 (Fall 1978), pp. 46-60. For an important alternative views of LeWitt's work, see Donald Kuspit, "Sol LeWitt: The Look of Thought," Art in America, 63 (October 1975).

19. Burnham, p. 4.

20. Annette Michelson, "Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression," in Robert Morris (Washington D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), p. 49.

21. Burnham, p. 11.

22. Lippard, p. 37. Morris's view of this work is somewhat simplistic. The linguistic, perceptual and psychosexual complexities of Etant donnés are entirely missed by his analysis.

23. The circulating pump in Fountain may be a theatrical allusion to the "Water Mill" in the Realm of the Bachelors in Duchamp's Large Glass. Unfortunately, in his emphasis on the theatrical, Morris tends to blur the radicalism of Duchamp's readymade strategy--namely its relationship to use value and commodity fetishism.

24. In its initial installation at the Leo Castelli gallery, viewers were permitted to handle the Card File.

25. Unpublished script for audio tape for Hearing [1972], p. 5. [Morris archives] May not be quoted without permission of the author.

26. Excerpt from notes by Duchamp for a slide lecture, "Apropos of Myself," delivered at the City Art Museum of St. Louis, Missouri on 24 November 1964; rpt. in d'Harnoncourt and McShine, p. 273.

27. Ibid., pp. 273-74. Also see Michelson, p. 51, for a discussion on Morris's relationship to Duchampian strategies of subverting standard

measures.

28. Morris's interest in science as an alternative to art is suggested in the following exchange with Paul Cummings [p. 63]:

PC: I see a Science Journal here. Do you read scientific magazines?

RM: Yes, I take Science Journal, Science News, and Scientific American.

PC: I have a friend who once dropped all his subscriptions to art periodicals and got three science magazines.

RM: Well, I have too.

29. Morris knew of the "Dust Breeding" through Man Ray's photograph of it in Lebel.

30. Michelson, p. 53.

31. Obligations pour la Roulette de Monte Carlo [Monte Carlo Bond, 1924]. Thirty of these bonds were issued by Duchamp "for the exploitation of a system to break the bank in Monte Carlo." See, Marcel Duchamp, "Apropos of Myself," p. 297.

32. Duchamp's self-image as a kind of American style businessman was discussed in Lebel's catalogue raisonné: "In [a letter to Tristan Tzara written from New York in 1921]. . . Duchamp describes 'the possibility of a big project which would very likely bring in some money. This would be to have each of the four letters, D A D A, cast separately in metal and then strung on a small chain . . .

Duchamp proposed selling this insignia for a dollar or more, according to the value of the metal used, and to promote it, he thought of a 'short prospectus (about three pages and in every language). . . there would be an agent in every important city and, if you could assign the jobs in Europe I could attend to the United States . . .

'The act of buying this insignia would consecrate the buyer as Dada..the insignia would protect against certain diseases, against the numerous annoyances of life, something like those Little Pink Pills which cure everything. . . Nothing "literary" or "artistic," just straight medicine, a universal panacea, a fetish in this sense: if you have a toothache, go to your dentist and ask him if he is a Dada . . . ' See Robert Lebel, "Marcel Duchamp: Whiskers and Kicks of All Kinds," in Lebel, pp. 96-97.

33. "The Ecstasy of Communication," in The Anti-Aesthetic, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), p. 131.

34. These early works are examples of Morris's pervasive interest in environments and earthworks centered on issues of ecology and the wastefulness of late capitalist society. See chapter three.

35. Duchamp, "Apropos of Myself," p. 291.

36. The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, a typographic version of Marcel Duchamp's Green Box, ed. Richard Hamilton, trans. George Heard Hamilton (New York: Jaap Rietman, 1976), n.p.

37. Fresh Air and Metered Bulb recall, as well, John Cage's commentary on the absurdity of objects and their respective functions: "The thermostats are fixed to the radiators but lead ineffectually to two bare wires. The Jaguar repaired and ready to run sits in a garage unused . . . An electrician came to fix the thermostats but went away before his work was finished and never returned. The application for the registration of the car has not been found . . . For old trips a car is rented. If it gets too hot, a window is opened. The freezer is full of books. The closet in the guest room is full of furniture. There is, and anyone knows there is, a mystery, but these are not the clues. The relationship between the object and the event. Can they 2 be separated? Is one a detail of the other? What is the meeting? Air?" [emphasis Cage] Cage's statement suggests the composer's long-standing contempt for the elitist, automatist pretensions of modernist culture--the notion of precious objects that can exist independent of function, ideology, and utility. The temporal and contingent relationship of things--the unstable condition of most objects in the world--is reiterated in the act of capturing one of nature's most volatile and elusive substances, the fresh air that is the meeting place of object and event. See John Cage, "Jasper Johns: stories and ideas," Art and Artists, May 1968, p. 39.

38. "Cézanne," in Art and Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 51.

39. For an elaboration of the issue of the shifter in relationship to Duchamp see Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Part 1," in The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1985), pp. 196-209.

40. Since the photograph represents its subject through direct physical resemblance it also belongs to that category of signs called icons. The categories of "index," "icon," and "symbol" are based on the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce: "According to the second trichotomy, a Sign may be termed an Icon, an Index, or a Symbol . . . An Icon is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses, just the same, whether any such Object actually exists or not . . . An Index is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object [i.e., a physical trace of the object such as its shadow]. . . . A Symbol is a sign which refers to the Object it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object [such as a word]." For an expanded discussion of this trichotomy, see Charles Sanders Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs," Philosophical Writings of Peirce, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1940), pp. 98-119.

41. Krauss, pp. 198-99. In a description that suggests Duchamp's

indexical procedures in Tu m', Robert Lebel writes: "Several photographs taken in the studio at 33 West 67th Street in 1917 testify to Duchamp's interest in the shadows of his readymades silhouetted on the walls. He rubbed the full-sized cast shadow of a bicycle wheel on Tu m' in lead pencil, as well as those of a corkscrew and a hat-rack enlarged by a magic lantern. The three shadows, as if superimposed, dominate the light background of this canvas which is one of the most colorful Duchamp ever painted." See Lebel, p. 42.

42. "Anemic Cinema: Reflections on an Emblematic Work," Artforum 12 (October 1973); rpt. in Amy Baker Sandback, ed., Looking Critically: 21 Years of Artforum Magazine (Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Press, 1984), p. 148. Michelson's categories of autistic behavior are taken from Bruno Bettelheim's description of Joey, a severely autistic child who lived for some years in the Orthogenic School of Chicago. Joey, at some time in his early childhood, became so threatened by the human community that he transformed himself into a machine. So fearful of the world was the child that he had "invented a complex apparatus which he had fixed to his bed, making it a car machine that would run him (or 'live him') while he slept." Of the autist's fascination with revolving objects, a fixation Michelson associates with Duchamp's Rotary Spheres, Bettelheim writes: "Circulating objects are fascinating to most autistic children. They seem to be particularly suitable for expressing something that typifies the disturbance in general. I believe it to be that they circle around and around, never reaching a goal . . . [Joey told us on a visit some years after he left us] what we had only guessed up to then, that for him the very shape of those rotating objects suggested the circle he was endlessly caught in. They represented the vicious circle of longing and fear, of wanting so much from others and of being mortally afraid to let his longing be known, either to them or to himself." For a detailed description of this aspect of Joey's case, see Bruno Bettelheim, The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self (New York: 1967), pp. 233-339.

43. The Large Glass, as well, can be seen as another example of Duchamp's bifurcation of his sexual identity. A drawing in the Green Box labels each of the two sections of the Large Glass with the two syllables of Duchamp's first name: "MAR" for the realm of the bride (MARiée); "CEL" for the realm of the bachelors (CELibataires). This division, in effect, renders the Large Glass a kind of psychosexual self-portrait. For a detailed discussion of this issue see Michelson, "Anemic Cinema . . .," pp. 143-44.

44. According to Morris, he learned of this work in Lebel.

45. In conversation with the author, Gardiner, New York, June 21, 1986.

46. "Why Mama and Papa?" Selected Writings, I (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), p. 542. For a discussion of this type of reduplication in relation to

mirrors and photography, see Craig Owens, "Photography en Abyme," October, no. 5 (Summer 1978), pp. 73-88.

47. For more on Jacques Lacan's concept of the "mirror stage" see Jane Gallop, Reading Lacan (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 74-94.

48. Morris has elaborated on Self-Portrait's shifted identification of the self: "I went to N.Y.U. Medical Center and . . . had an electroencephalogram made. I wanted to make a self-portrait. In one second the needle will travel so far so I calculated the time I would have to think about myself for the needle to travel the length of my height. That was considered a self-portrait. I thought about myself for this time and used that kind of output as a drawing." See Cummings, p. 27.

49. Morris's failed convictions are commemorated in a series of tombstones executed in 1961--Untitled [Rough Tombstone] and Stela [Smooth Tombstone].

50. Cage, p. 41.

51. Realm of Measure (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1960), p. 15; as quoted in Michelson, p. 51.

52. Michelson, p. 51.

53. Ibid.

54. Script from 21.3 (1963), n.p. [Morris archives]

55. These notations are penciled into the typewritten script suggesting that such cues were worked out in rehearsal, after the text was completed.

56. The script was appropriated verbatim from Panofsky's Studies, one of the most frequently assigned art history texts during this period.

57. Rosalind Krauss writes: ". . . when the minimalist generation first took up Merleau-Ponty's [Phenomenology of Perception] in the early 1960s, they did so against the background of Pollock and Still, Newman and Rothko. They therefore had a very different understanding of what could be meant by Merleau-Ponty's notion of a 'preobjective experience' than did the artists of the 1940s working in France [under the influence of Jean Paul Satre] . . . The Phenomenology of Perception became, in the hands of the Americans, a text that was consistently interpreted in light of their own ambitions toward meaning within an art that was abstract." For more on the relationship of Merleau-Ponty to the avant-garde in America of the 1960s see Rosalind Krauss, "Richard Serra, A Translation," in The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths (Cambridge, Mass. and London: M.I.T. Press, 1985), pp. 260-74.

58. Aside from Merleau-Ponty, the late work of Ludwig Wittgenstein discussed the primacy of public versus individual experience. Morris was aware of Wittgenstein's work as early as the late 1950s and he directly quoted the philosopher in his soundtrack for the installation room Hearing [1972].

59. "Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression" in Robert Morris (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), pp. 7-79.

60. Ibid., p. 9.

61. Ibid., p.19.

62. Charles Sanders Peirce as quoted in Ibid.

63. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 145.

64. Michelson's idea of "virtual" space is based on Susanne Langer's Feeling and Form (New York: Scribners, 1953). This idealized notion of sculptural time and space was codified in the writings of the nineteenth-century sculptor and theorist Adolf Hildebrand whose view of the dynamics of sculpture was both traditional and pervasive. See, for example, Hildebrand, The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture, trans. Max Meyer and Robert M. Ogden (Leipzig and London: G.E. Stechert, 1907). It was not until the radical work of Rodin that the idealized, narrative time of sculpture yielded to a phenomenological, surface oriented art. By eschewing such a priori constructions as anatomy and narrative, Rodin was able to create expressive surfaces that confronted the spectator with immediate and unencoded information, information that had to be experienced and absorbed in real time. Rosalind Krauss extends Michelson's argument concerning real and virtual time in "Narrative Time: The Question of the Gates of Hell" in Passages in Modern Sculpture (New York: Viking, 1977), pp. 7-37. For early and important source for rethinking Rodin, see Leo Steinberg, "Rodin" in Other Criteria (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 322-403.

65. Michelson, p. 35.

66. The literal directness of Morris's plinths, cubes, and beams was enhanced by the neutrality of their matt gray surfaces, a color used by Morris in an effort to avoid color based associations.

67. Michelson, p. 43.

68. For a complete a bibliography of Morris's published articles see Selected Bibliography section of this dissertation.

69. E.C. Goossen, "Artist Speaks: Robert Morris" [interview] Art in America, 58 (May 1970), p. 109.

70. "Form-Classes in the Work of Constantin Brancusi," unpublished master's thesis, Hunter College of the City University of New York, 1966, p. 86.

71. In the sense that the viewer to some extent has a role in the final disposition of the sculptural object, Morris's gesture can be seen to disrupt the traditional hierarchical relationship between the art object and its patron. Rather than the traditional art work--an object with fixed proportions and with a specific, preset relationship to the spectator--these permutation pieces enter into a dialogue with their environment, a dialogue in a limited way subject to the whims of the patron.

72. When these works were exhibited at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1967, Morris rearranged the units each day to form new configurations.

73. "Notes on Sculpture, part II," Artforum, 5 (October 1966); rpt. in Battcock, p. 232. Robert Pincus-Witten's restating of Richard Serra's assertion that some of Morris's mid-60s work was "an extension of a Cubistic grid idea" is an inversion of Morris's purposes and of the actual structure of these pieces. The specific compositional relationships established by the Cubist grid are decomposed in these sculptures, exposing them to the temporal exigencies of their environment. See Robert Pincus-Witten, "Richard Serra: Slow Information," Artforum, September 1969; rpt. in Robert Pincus-Witten, Postminimalism (New York: Out of London Press, 1977), p. 21.

74. Goossen, p. 106.

75. Rosalind Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility: Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," Artforum, 12 (November 1973); rpt. in Sandback, p. 154.

76. Goossen, p. 106.

77. The L beam pieces were originally conceived as nine units allowing for nine positions and orientations. They were eventually reduced to seven and finally three beams (though in some installations only two were actually shown).

78. Krauss, Passages in Modern Sculpture, p. 267.

79. See Ibid., pp. 260-62 for a discussion of this reorientation of meaning in minimalist sculpture.

80. This information was related by Morris in a telephone conversation with the author on 10 December 1986.

81. Phenomenology of Perception (London: Routledge and Kegan

Paul, 1962), p. xii.

82. "Aligned with Nazca," Artforum, 14 (October 1975), p. 33.

83. This process was discussed in conversation with the author. For more on the Blind Time series see Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Robert Morris: Works of the Eighties (1986), pp. 34-38. For the 1976 "Drawing Now" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City (curated by Bernice Rose), Morris coated his hands, arms, and knees with vaseline and graphite. As he moved along the wall of a long corridor he left a running trace of his temporal passage--the record of a specific phenomenological journey.

84. Morris executed a third Blind Time series in 1985. For a discussion of these drawings see Robert Morris: Works of the Eighties, pp. 36-38.

85. Transcript of Thomas Krens interview with Robert Morris (tape 3/side 10, p. 8. [Morris Archives])

86. Ibid., p. 9-10.

87. Diary notes for the 1976 Blind Time series. [Leo Castelli Gallery Archives]

88. Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 44.

89. "The Principles of Phenomenology," in Peirce, p. 82

90. Untitled [Batteries and Foot Imprint], 1964.

91. Tancock, p. 174.

92. The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, n.p.

93. [Morris Archives] The actual work on the thesis took place from 1963 until 1966.

94. Ibid., p. 1.

95. Ibid.

96. Kubler's deployment of a synchronic rather than a linear, diachronic analysis suggests the more fully developed structuralist methodology of Claude Lévi-Strauss.

97. "Form-Classes in the Work of Constantin Brancusi," unpublished masters' thesis, Hunter College of C.U.N.Y., 1966, pp. 59-60. These pedestals were significant enough to be exhibited independently. As

Morris states in his thesis, five bases were shown by themselves at the Brummer Gallery in New York in 1926.

98. "The Pedestals of Brancusi," Kenyon Review, 20 (Autumn, 1958), pp. 617-27.

99. Ibid., p. 623. Tillim's notion of a horizontal axis, an "equator" that separates the pure from the sexual realm suggests Duchamp's description of the malic molds in the Green Box: "Each of the eight malic forms built above and below a common horizontal plane, the plane of sex cutting them at the point of sex."

100. Ibid., p. 621.

101. Rosalind Krauss, "No More Play," in The Originality of the Avant-Garde, p. 73.

102. See Ibid. for an elaborate discussion of this relationship.

103. Ibid., p. 60.

104. Ibid., p. 80.

105. Ibid.

106. "The Big Toe," in Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939, trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 20.

107. In conversation with the author, Gardiner, New York, June 11, 1985.

108. Tillim, p. 620.

109. Ibid.

110. Eros and Civilization (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

111. See, for example, Elliot Linzer, "On Recurring Debates," in Sohnya Sayres, et. al., eds., The 60s Without Apology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 302.

112. Marcuse, p. xiii-xiv.

113. Sigmund Freud, A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1943), p. 273.

114. Sigmund Freud, "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness," in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. VII,

ed., trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1959), p. 182.

115. See Ibid., pp. 185-191.

116. Ibid., p. 185.

117. Ibid., p. 187.

118. Ibid., p. 191.

119. Feminist discourse was, of course, a central catalyst for these changes. A number of important popular texts--including Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique [1964] and Kate Millet's Sexual Politics [1970]--as well as the formation of the National Organization for Women in 1967 contributed to the beginnings of a realignment of the gender-based boundaries of power. See, for example, Ellen Willis, "Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism," Muriel Dimen, "The Strange Relation Between Sex and Reproduction," Sharon Thompson, "Feminism and Teen Romance: 1966- 1983," Rachel Bowlby, "60s Feminism," and Silvia Federici, "Putting Feminism Back on its Feet," in Sayres, et. al., pp. 91-118, 295-99, 326-27, and 338-46.

120. In a telephone conversation with the author, Morris commented on Marcuse: "I read Eros and Civilization shortly after I left Reed College in the late 1950s. It was an important text; we talked about it and debated it alot in those days."

121. Marcuse, p. xv. This is not to say that Marcuse's utopian position was not problematic within the context of 1960s radical politics. For a critique of the Marcusean dialectic see "Morris Dancing: The Aesthetics of Production" in chapter two of this dissertation.

122. Marcuse's interpretation is based on Freud's "Formulations Regarding the Two Principles in Mental Functioning," in Collected Papers, vol. IV (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), p. 50.

123. Gregory Battcock, "Art in the Service of the Left?," in Idea Art (New York: Dutton, 1973), p. 26.

124. Morris has maintained, for example, that one of his most important formal innovations of the period--the enigmatic lead reliefs from 1964--works that were literally covered with the imprints (i.e., indexes) of process, were essentially erotic metaphors for the human body. See chapter two.

125. In Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp (New York: Viking, 1971), p. 88.

126. Jill Johnston, "Dance: Morris/Childs," The Village Voice, 1963, p. 21. Morris has reconstructed this scene in an unpublished

transcript of a recorded conversation with Thomas Krens [tape 2/side 1] on 29 November 1978 [Morris archives]: "Yvonne [Rainer] and I are locked together in this embrace. We're nude, covered with mineral oil, shining in the light, and standing on a track 8 inches tall, 4 inches wide, and 20 feet long. There are two of them. We walk on the track. She's standing on my feet. She walks backwards. I walk forwards. There's a very lush aria from Verdi's Simone Bocanegra--a woman sings. We walk very slowly across this track. It takes about five minutes. Meanwhile, Lucinda Childs was dressed as a man. She's keeping pace with us upstage so the audience can see her behind us. She has a ball of string which is let out over her shoulder. It is attached offstage, so it makes a line in space as we get across to the other side. The aria ends and there's a blackout." The title Waterman Switch came from the name of a road Morris surveyed in California when he was working as a surveyor. For additional discussion of Waterman Switch see Robert Morris, "Notes on Dance," Tulane Drama Review, 6 (Winter, 1965), pp.179-86.

127. Morris, conversation with Thomas Krens, tape 2/side 1.

128. "Art & Information, 1: Grey Paint, Robert Morris," Art News, 63 (April 1966), p. 58.

129. Morris recalled this exchange in conversation with the author in Gardiner, New York on 21 June 1986. Duchamp's memory on this issue must be questioned since the Ciné Sketch was actually a tableau vivant of Lucas Cranach the Elder's painting of Adam and Eve (Duchamp saw the painting for the first time in 1912 during his stay in Munich while he was working on the Large Glass). In that work, Adam is shown covering his genitalia with a fig leaf and Eve covering hers with her hand. It is also important to add that Duchamp published a series of etchings representing the "Adam and Eve" scene from Relâche. The etchings also indicate the presence of a concealing fig leaf and hand. See also Arturo Schwarz, The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp (New York: Abrams, 1969), pp. 565-66.

130. Antin, p. 58.

CHAPTER TWO

Changing the Discourse: Phenomenology, Performance, and the Aesthetics of Production

A gray plywood column, two feet square and eight feet high, stands on an otherwise empty stage. For three-and-a-half minutes the column remains erect. Suddenly the column collapses to the floor. Another three-and-a-half minutes pass without action. Finally, the stage lights black out, marking the end of the performance.

The circumstances of Robert Morris's first "minimalist" sculpture--the ubiquitous column described above-- unfolded not in the sanctified space of the museum but in a theater. Employed in Morris's debut performance organized by La Monte Young at the Living Theater in New York City in 1961, Column [Fig. 5], like the Passageway that literally generated its form, presages the major concerns of Morris's production. In its fall from illusionism, its rejection of formalist sculpture's defiance of gravity, Column reasserts the horizontal engagement that would become central to Morris's transgressive strategy. The anthropomorphism of the piece--sculpture as a kind of confrontational performer--establishes orthodox minimalism's theatrical integration of

the spectator into the temporal setting of art . The notion of temporality and passage, too, would contribute to the dissolution of formalism's romance with idealized form and time. In the end, Morris's metaphoric toppling of the pillars of late-modernism would announce an emerging crisis within the American cultural scene: the virtual inability of established critical methods to deal with art that radically challenged the conditions of aesthetic purity central to the survival of the formalist object.

I. The Critical Threshold: Formalism's Resistance

Not surprisingly, then, the advent of the minimalist sensibility during the early 1960s precipitated a sharply critical, destructive response from the prevailing formalist circle. Minimalism's resolutely anti-romantic resistance to illusionism, its desire to reinsert sculpture into the praxis of life rather than seeing it autonomously as art for art's sake, was seen to threaten the very conditions upon which modernism (and hence formalism) was predicated. The formalist's response to minimalism was a general and immediate proliferation of epithets coupled with a frustrating search for historical or formal precedents that might facilitate its analysis. The formalist rhetoric, however, did concede that preexisting methods and standards for understanding and evaluating art were rendered irrelevant by the intransigence of the minimalist position (i.e., its resistance to the pretensions of high art). ¹

For Clement Greenberg, the reductivism of modernist sculpture produced an art "almost as visual in its essence as painting itself."² Suggesting that Constantine Brancusi had exhausted the possibilities of the monolith,³ Greenberg celebrated formalist sculpture's inherent illusionism; its anthropomorphic allusions and its defiance of gravity--achieved by optical effects as well as the artificial balancing of welded form--offered the ultimate illusion that "matter is incorporeal, weightless and exists only optically like a mirage."⁴ In the realm of formalist possibilities, sculpture must not succumb to its literal state, as three-dimensional matter inexorably bound to the pull of gravity. Rather than honesty of experience, Greenberg's formalism relegates art to the sphere of autonomy; neither the reality of physics nor the visceral concerns of engagement and tactility are permitted to intercede.

An understanding of minimalism was additionally hampered by formalism's resistance to any discourse which sought out difference rather than unity in the arts. In the formalist equations of Greenberg and later Michael Fried, the enterprise of painting and sculpture were often analyzed as if they were identical. "Here the prohibition against one art entering into the domain of the other," writes Greenberg in relation to formalist sculpture, "is suspended, thanks to the unique concreteness and literalness of sculpture's medium. Sculpture can confine itself to virtually two dimensions (as some of David Smith's pieces do) without being felt to violate the dimensions of its medium, because the eye recognizes that

what offers itself in two dimensions is actually (not palpably) fashioned in three." ⁵ For Morris, this interchange contributed to criticism's inability to read the new sculptural sensibility; rather than unified, the literalist, temporal ambitions of minimalist sculpture specifically negated the pictorial and illusionistic aims of formalist painting. With regard to criticism's homogenizing tendencies, Morris writes: "There has been little definitive writing on present-day sculpture. When it is discussed it is often called in to support a broad iconographic or iconological point of view--after the supporting examples of painting have been exhausted. [George] Kubler has raised the objection that iconographical assertions presuppose that experiences so different as space and time must somehow be interchangeable There may indeed be a general sensibility in the arts at this time. Yet the histories and problems of each, as well as the experiences offered by each art, indicate involvement in very separate concerns. At most, the assertion of common sensibilities are generalizations that minimize differences." ⁶ As Morris suggests, Kubler, while friendly to the formalist position, was one of the first to object to its reliance on unifying structures. "Strukturforschung," Kubler writes in The Shape of Time [1962], "presupposes that the poets and artists of one place and time are the joint bearers of a central pattern of sensibility from which their various efforts flow like radial expressions. This position agrees with the iconologist's, to whom literature and art seem approximately interchangeable." ⁷

In "Art and Objecthood" [1967], Michael Fried presented what was

to become the canonical formalist argument about the "theatricality" of minimalism and its concomitant hostility to traditional painting and sculpture, a position that was, in Fried's words, "at war with . . . art." ⁸ Like Greenberg, Fried emphasized the pictorial and illusionistic possibilities of sculpture: sculpture's survival, like its sister art painting, depended on its ability to distinguish itself as art. Modernist painting, often utopian and spiritualist in its associations, sought to transcend the literal shape of its support. For Fried, modernist painting could be declared art a priori, since the field of the canvas was automatically understood as sacred and reverential; the literal condition of the canvas as object had to be overcome in order for it to rise to the level of art. Because minimal art (or "literalist art" as Fried calls it) relies on actual shape, it exists to "discover and project objecthood as such." ⁹ In other words, literal presence became the principal polemic surrounding the minimalist object. Its "purity" as art was now in question. In this context, "literalist" sculpture confronts the spectator directly, presumably without interference from representational, psychological, or spiritual associations, a phenomenological ideal that is, at best, problematic given the tendency of the mind and eye to form associations rooted in memory.

Nevertheless, Robert Morris's sculptural enterprise of the mid-1960s tended, in part, to corroborate Fried's argument. By liberating sculpture from representing objects in the world, Morris felt that he could avoid psychological references and create a kind of sculptural immediacy (itself

a mythologized, even metaphysical concept). Morris credited the innovations of Vladimir Tatlin and other constructivists with liberating sculpture from the task of representing things in the world: "Tatlin was perhaps the first to free sculpture from representation and establish it as an autonomous form both by the kind of image, or rather non-image, he employed and by his literal use of materials," Morris writes. "He, Rodchenko, and other Constructivists refuted Apollinaire's observation that 'a structure becomes architecture, and not sculpture, when its elements no longer have their justification in nature.'" ¹⁰ Morris's Corner Piece [1964, Fig. 30], like Tatlin's Corner Reliefs, refuses specific allusions. A large wedge made of plywood that literally closes off a corner of the gallery, Corner Piece absorbs a sector of space that could be occupied by the spectator. In keeping with Tatlin's constructions, its effect is neither architectonic nor representational. Fundamentally, Morris wished to force the issue of temporality and experience in sculpture, a position wholly acknowledged by Fried. By espousing sculptural autonomy and insisting on large size as a basic condition, Morris's sculptures avoid a sense of psychological intimacy between spectator and object.

In Untitled [1965, Fig. 31], an arrangement of four identical cubic forms, the artist sloped one side of each cube in order to question the strength of the known shape (the cube)--the gestalt--while at the same making that strength even more visible by affirming the eye's impulse to see the shape as a cube despite the displacement of one of its sides. In "Notes on Sculpture: Part I," Morris discussed his desire to frustrate the

spectator's visualization of sculptural form, a situation that begins with the disruption of three-dimensional gestalts: "In the simpler regular polyhedrons, such as cubes and pyramids, one need not move around the object for the sense of the whole, the gestalt, to occur. One sees and immediately 'believes' that the pattern within one's mind corresponds to the existential fact of the object Complex irregular polyhedrons (for example, crystal formations) if they are complex and irregular enough can frustrate visualization almost completely, in which case it is difficult to maintain one is experiencing a gestalt" ¹¹ He then concludes: "The magnification of this single most important sculptural value--shape--together with greater unification and integration of every other essential sculptural value makes, on the one hand, the multipart, inflected formats of past sculpture extraneous, and on the other, establishes both a new limit and a new freedom for sculpture."¹²

So in experiencing the altered gestalts of Untitled, the spectator could not immediately apprehend the individual shapes in the arrangement; one had to move around the piece in time to fully understand its nuances. This situational status for sculpture conversely affirms the visual strength of the gestalt. Despite the altered side of each polyhedron, the eye continued read its form as a cube, only later realizing its irregularity: "The gestalt seems to be interpreted [by recent art criticism] as an immutable, ideal unit that persists beyond the particularities of experience, becoming through its very persistence the ground for all experience. Yet this is to ignore the most rudimentary

notions of gestalt theory, in which the properties of the 'good gestalt' are demonstrated to be entirely context dependent. The meaning of a trapezoid, for example, and therefore its gestalt, changes upon whether it must be seen as a two-dimensional figure or as a square oriented in depth--a meaning that can in no way precede experience."¹³ And so in contrast to previous art, as Fried notes, where "what is to be had from the work is located strictly within [it]," to experience Morris's minimalist pieces is to experience an "object in a situation--one that, virtually by definition, includes the beholder." ¹⁴

It is this play between the viewer and object that Fried considers "theatrical" and consequently out-of-step with modernism. The minimalist espousal of publicness and its centralization of the spectator within the gallery setting amounts to Fried as "nothing more than a plea for new theater; and theater is now the negation of art."¹⁵ Fried points negatively to the confrontational, aggressive attitude that is central to the minimalist cause. Morris's strategic disorientation of the spectator--with the slope-sided cube, for example--is only one aspect of such aggressiveness. More effectively the viewer is distanced by the objects themselves, objects inserted directly into the ebb and flow of their ambient space; they invade the spectator's space, without allowing pedestals to intercede. "The beholder knows himself to stand in an indeterminate, open-ended--and unexact--relation as subject to the impassive object on the wall or floor," Fried wrote. "In fact, being distanced by such objects is not, I suggest, entirely unlike being distanced

or crowded by the silent presence of another person; the experience of coming upon literalist objects unexpectedly--for example, in somewhat darkened rooms--can be strongly if momentarily disquieting in just this way." 16

II. Morris Dancing: The Aesthetics of Production

Morris's phenomenological explorations, by emphasizing the spectator's experience over the art object's autonomy, radically questioned the relevance of the self-contained aesthetic object in an age of social and cultural realignment. By 1964, Morris ceased making small objects, concentrating instead on dance pieces, films, and installations of simple, large-scale, non-representational structures. The process orientation or transformational quality of the smaller pieces--the mise-en-abyme of Pharmacy, the EEG of Self-Portrait, the traces and marks of the lead "reliefs," the aural record of the Box with the Sound of its Own Making--were eventually translated into the concerns of a series of extraordinary dance projects undertaken from 1963-1965. "The small [objects]," Morris explained, "were involved in various kinds of transformations, or transpositions . . . intended upon an action that's taking place. Well that focus went directly into theater." 17

Most of the art ascribed by art critics to the minimalist movement --with the exception of the work of Dan Graham, Richard Serra, Robert

Smithson, Carl Andre, Eva Hesse, and Robert Morris--merely sustained formalism's aestheticization of the object.¹⁸ Morris's large-scale objects, for the most part, resisted the aesthetic refinements and compositional complexity of late-formalism. Employing simple geometric shapes, large size, and neutral gray surfaces, these pieces refused the relational organization, anti-gravitational illusionism, and anthropomorphism common to late-modernist sculpture (e.g., Anthony Caro, David Smith, Alexander Calder, Mark di Suvero).¹⁹ Morris also resisted such concepts as the "specific object," Donald Judd's attempt to define an aesthetic direction for the post-formalist art object: "I don't think I've ever made what have been called "specific objects," which are not so much involved with recognizing gravity--or they're painted, or they're very much involved in a kind of emphasis on surface properties, and I don't want my pieces to be objects in that sense. I mean they are specific, and they're sometimes object-like, but the term specific objects doesn't apply. It has come to mean a particular thing that my work is definitely not about."²⁰ Morris's fundamental disagreement with Judd is even more surprising given that the work of the two artists is most often linked in minimalist criticism.²¹ The wide scope of the intellectual and formal practices of minimalism--Carl Andre's exploration of horizontal passage, John McCracken's vertical slabs, Robert Smithson's crystalline progressions, Sol LeWitt's denial or, as some critics have suggested his affirmation, of mathematical logic, Anne Truitt's formalist monoliths, Richard Serra's rejection of the aesthetic object, Tony Smith's explorations of metaphor and allusion, Robert Morris's travesty of

metaphor and allusion, Donald Judd's "specific objects"--suggests that the word "minimalism," rather than naming a coherent movement, represents a fiction born of critical partisanship and the avant-gardist imperative to define stylistic movements. The significance of Morris's rejection of the "specific object" lies in his explicit repudiation of Judd's continued support of the highly refined aesthetic object.

An example of this repudiation resides in Judd and Morris's contradictory relationship to Duchamp's readymade strategy. While Morris's entire production of the early '60s was indebted to Duchamp, Judd's elegant structures were much more consistent with traditional sculptural practices. While Hal Foster has recently associated Judd's use of fabrication with the operations of the readymade, this association is clearly specious. Duchamp was not involved with fabricating objects; rather he looked to the world of already existing cultural artifacts. As such, his gesture of proclaiming ordinary things as "art" exists in relation to the cultural codes that define and sustain these objects. Judd's fabrication relates much more directly to the modern tradition of industrially produced applied art (fashion, furniture, architecture) where objects are designed by the artist/designer and are fabricated by skilled workers, a relationship that maintains the capitalist division of labor. Ultimately, Judd's position, both as critic and artist, staunchly upheld the pretensions of the masterful art object and the autonomist principles central to late-modernism.²²

In his essay "Specific Objects" [1965], Judd explored the tendency of 1960s vanguard art to exist in the interstice between painting and sculpture, resisting the modernist aspiration towards specificity. By exceeding painting's two-dimensional limitations, the new objects could explore the expanded range of creative possibilities inherent to three dimensions: "Since its range is so wide, three-dimensional work will probably divide into a number of forms. At any rate, it will be larger than painting and much larger than sculpture, which, compared to painting, is fairly particular, much nearer to what is usually called a form, having a certain kind of form. Because the nature of three dimensions isn't set, given beforehand, something credible can be made, almost anything. Of course something can be done within a given form, such as painting, but with some narrowness and less strength and variation . . ."²³ For Judd, the liberating features of the third-dimension had to remain within the parameters of "high art." Rather than rejecting the terms "painting" and "sculpture," Judd merely modified the concept of sculpture in relation to painting. "Specific objects" reformulated the experience of art while continuing to exist as self-contained, "emotive" objects²⁴; they would not be excused from their traditional role within the modernist oeuvre. To be art at all, such objects would have to remain ambiguous, hovering somewhere between representation and literal experience.

Morris, in contrast, dismantled the modernist object. In effect, large scale led to the dissolution of the object; the dissolution of the object

led to an intense involvement with dance and theater. Calling his performances "dances," Morris stopped short of endorsing the aggressive, radical tactics of the "happenings," those dramatic events of the 1960s where the "professed aim [was] to assault the audience."²⁵ The "happenings" sensibility often advocated the kind of terrorism about which Antonin Artaud spoke in "A Theater of Cruelty," a theater "which like dreams must be bloody." Morris's performances, contrary to the "happenings" of Allan Kaprow or Claes Oldenburg, were much more involved in the passive, operational, and task-oriented games of the New Dance, where emphasis was placed on the performers' temporal actions and interrelationships. ". . . Performers [were never permitted] to confront the audience," writes choreographer Yvonne Rainer of the sensibility she shared with Morris. "Either the gaze was averted or the head was engaged in movement. The desired effect was a worklike rather than exhibitionlike presentation."²⁷

Morris choreographed six dance pieces from 1962 to 1965 : War [1962-63],²⁸ Arizona [1963], 21.3 [1963], Site [1963], Waterman Switch [1965], and Check [1965]. These dances, like the artist's sculptures of the period, passively engaged the spectator. Morris's earliest large-scale sculptures, executed in 1961 and influenced by the artist's participation in Simone Forte's dances, often integrated the spectator into the temporal dynamic of the piece. Works like Passageway, Pine Portal [Fig. 32], and Mirrored Portal--sculptures predicated on the passage of the viewer's body through a channel or doorway--maintained a simplicity, literalness,

and human scale that later would be extended to the dance pieces.

The immediate influences for Morris's dance pieces included the task experiments of Ann Halprin at the Dancers' Workshop Program (established just outside San Francisco in 1955) and the rule-directed dances of Simone Forte, Yvonne Rainer, and the Judson Dance Theater in New York City. The questioning initiated by Merce Cunningham and radicalized through the work of Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forte, Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs, and Deborah Hay and others working in New York in the mid-1960s, led to the establishment of a radically new economy of movement removed from the virtual, idealized time of the balletic style. The revolutionary New Dance demanded a "systematic critique of the rhetoric, conventions, the aesthetic hierarchies imposed by traditional or classical dance form." ²⁹

The operational, task-oriented exercises choreographed by some members of the Judson Group--and simultaneously explored in the dances of Robert Morris--were, to a degree, coextensive with the rise of minimalism. Exploring this connection, Yvonne Rainer, who had been close to Morris in the mid-1960s,³⁰ wrote an evaluation of "some 'minimalist' tendencies in the quantitatively minimal dance activity," establishing direct relationships between minimalist objects and the New Dance. A chart at the beginning of the essay lists the integers of commonality between the temporal perspective of the New Dance and the phenomenological strategies of the new sculpture:

OBJECTS	DANCES
1. factory fabrication	energy equality and 'found' movement
2. unitary forms, modules	equality of parts
3. uninterrupted surface	repetition and discrete events
4. nonreferential forms	neutral performance
5. literalness	task or tasklike activity
6. simplicity	singular action, event or tone
7. human scale	human scale ³¹

Rainer further observed that in her The Mind is a Muscle: Trio A [1966], action is not memetic but literal. Eliminating narrative references and both the imposed, prescribed ordering of balletic time and the narrative time of modern dance, such choreography was "geared to the actual time it takes the actual weight of the body to go through the prescribed motions." ³² In the end, it is the simple task itself and the stresses sustained by the body in expediting that task that determine the work's intrinsic meaning. "The demands made on the body's (actual) energy resources," observed Rainer, "appear to be commensurate with the task--be it getting up from the floor, raising an arm, tilting the pelvis, etc.--much as one would get out of a chair, reach for a high shelf, or walk down stairs when one is not in a hurry. The movements are not mimetic. . . [for] in their manner of execution they have the factual qualities of such actions." ³³ The pedestrian character of Trio A reverberated in the work's dismissal of traditional hierarchies: The position of the principal dancer was withdrawn (Rainer, Steve Paxton, and David Gordon all held equivalent status on stage); the narcissism associated with the "beautiful" dancer's body was suppressed (ordinary clothes were worn); and the

romantic, balletic gestures and flourishes were eliminated. While the work emphasized "the values of dance as a set of possibilities for high quality which the body in motion can achieve," a point made by Robert Morris in a review of Trio A written for the Village Voice, "it did not make use of so many attitudes seen among . . . choreographers at [the] Judson who make work which is indisputably dancelike." ³⁴

Morris's earlier professional association with Simone Forte was central to his developing a performance sensibility that was "anything but the traditional dance type movement." ³⁵ Forte explored "rules" or game-like situations that required the performers to respond to a series of prescribed cues. The complexity of these rules-- requiring the dancer "frantically" to react to a barrage of often contradictory cues--prevented the performers from locking into predictable patterns. In a duet, performed by Morris and another male dancer, these cues resulted in intentional conflict: "[Forte] told me one thing. She told him something else. She told neither one of us what she had told the other person. What she told me was to lie on the floor for the duration of the piece; what she told him was to tie me to the wall. So it created this incredible kind of conflict." ³⁶ In a 1961 concert in New York City, Forte involved dancers in the act of climbing inclined planes with the aid of ropes (a task that Morris would later assign to spectators attending his Tate Gallery "retrospective" in 1971).³⁷ The rules in this dance were now reduced to intentionally simple tasks. The 1961 concert, an important and influential event for Morris, offered "two distinct means by which new

actions could be implemented: rules or tasks and devices...or objects."³⁸

Significantly, Morris introduced objects into his performances as a means to expand upon ideas and problems already manifest in his sculptures. On one level, objects established a relation between movement, space, and duration that was intrinsic to phenomenal discovery. "By the use of objects which could be manipulated," Morris writes, "I found a situation which did not dominate my actions nor subvert my performance. In fact the decision to employ objects came out of a consideration of specific problems involving space and time." ³⁹

Such was the case in Arizona [1963], one of Morris's earliest dance pieces: "The objects I used held no interest for me but were means for dealing with specific problems. For example, the establishment of an inverse ratio between movement, space, and duration was implemented by the use of a "T"-like form which I could adjust and move away from, adjust again and move away from, and so on until the sequence of movements according to the ratio had been completed. Or again, the establishment of a focus shifting between the egocentric and the exocentric could be accomplished by swinging overhead in a fully lighted room a small light at the end of a cord. The lights in the room fade as the cord is slowly let out until finally in total darkness only the moving point of light is visible as it revolves in the large space above the heads of the audience."⁴⁰ The establishment of a shifting focus "between the egocentric and exocentric"--from an internal to an external connection

with the world-- reiterated Morris's concern with collapsed shifters, an interest with implications for the audience as well as the performer.⁴¹ The spectator's psychological center was disrupted in Arizona as the very act of concentrating on the rotating point of light served to suppress a priori responses rooted in narrative or memory. The increasing presence of the spiraling and decentering light gradually narrowed the spectator's field of vision. Vertigo eventually gave way to near blindness as the eye and mind spontaneously fixated on the luminous speck navigating through total darkness.

The problems of process and production, central to Morris's sculptural enterprise of the 1960s, constituted a dominant theme of the dance Site [1963, Fig. 33]. Organized as a kind of tableau vivant, the action on stage was deployed triangularly: upstage and right of center, Carolee Schneemann, naked except for a dusting of white paint and a ribbon around her neck, reclined against a white rectangle in the manner of Edouard Manet's Olympia [1863]. Downstage right, a white box concealed the hardware for the work's soundtrack--a tape of construction workers drilling with jackhammers. And downstage left, Robert Morris manipulated a white rectangular board, moving it within an area no more than several feet square. Dressed in work-clothes, his hands and feet protected by heavy work-gloves and boots, Morris wore a papier-mâché mask designed to reproduce, without expression, his facial features. All psychological nuances were concealed; rather than a narcissistic dancer or an expressive artist, Morris acted as a task-performing automaton, his

masked face covering the pain, tension, or frustration that might register in response to his heavy and intense labor.

Morris's conception of the artist/performer in Site overtly negated the mythologies of "artistic temperament" inherent to most modernist art and dance. Charles Baudelaire, for example, expressed the artist's special role through the concept of the dandy, an expressive figure who, through his elegant and studied dress and manner, embodied the special and rarified features of "art" itself.⁴² The modernist enterprise, dependent on its distance from the grim reality of the new industrial social order, often relegated the artist to the sacred (and sometimes decadent) realm of aesthetics. It was precisely this private and expressive role that Marcel Duchamp blasted with his readymades, a strategy of thought and activity committed to invalidating notions of the master and the masterpiece. Duchamp's influence on Morris reflected the general direction of advanced art and ideas of the late 1950s in rejecting the modernist principles of creative expression and artistic temperament--a direct repudiation of the egotism of Abstract Expressionism's heroic generation. John Cage, for example, was unsympathetic to the Abstract Expressionist conviction that the true sources of art could be found in the artist's psychology, subjective expression, and creative process.⁴³ He questioned (and ultimately undermined) the Existentialist ideal of the artist who forges his or her own identity through the "anguished" act of creating. Cage's refusal to see the artist as master was intensified by his outright rejection of the static art object, a position generative to much

performance art (including the Happenings and the New Dance) of the 1960s. "I was promoting the notion of an impermanent art," Cage said, "something that no sooner had it been used, was so to speak discarded. I was fighting at that point the notion of art itself as something which we preserve." 44

Yvonne Rainer, typical of the Judson Group, actively shifted the emphasis of dance away from the personality and onto the neutral performer. Rainer encouraged her dancers to avoid the expressive illusionism normally associated with ballet or modern dance. "The artifice of performance," she writes, "has been reevaluated in that action, or what one does, is [more] interesting and important than the exhibition of character and attitude, and that action can best be focused on through submerging of the personality; so ideally one is not even oneself, one is a neutral 'doer'" 45 With Cagean stringency, Morris, in an unpublished dance note for Waterman Switch, scrawled a list of things to be "avoided" in the New Dance: "The self-indulgent, The personality, The perverse, The eccentric." 46

By neutralizing the expression of personality, Morris's mask addressed another fundamental issue: the anonymity of labor itself. Neither wealthy nor impoverished, the Baudelairean dandy existed mostly outside the political boundaries of class, his marginality relegating him to the artificial and classless sphere of aesthetics. Morris's obsession with process and task reoriented the hermetic space of art to the public

axis of labor and production, extending the concerns of the artist into the realm of economics. Morris's world was region of industrial materials, temporal operations, and direct interaction, a world where the mystery of artistic creation yielded to the mundane sounds of saws and hammers (as in Box with the Sound of its Own Making), where process was exposed rather than concealed, where the artist and the worker were nearly one and the same, where the means did not merely justify the end.

"Whatever else art is," Morris writes in "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making: The Search for the Motivated" [1970], "[it is] at a very simple level...a way of making."⁴⁷ Written in response to the interest in process manifested in late-minimalist and Conceptual art, the essay explores the systems for the production of art developed since World War II. "What I wish to point out here," he continues, "is that the entire enterprise of art making provides the ground for finding the limits and possibilities of certain kinds of behavior and that this behavior of production itself is distinct and has become so expanded and visible that it has extended the entire profile of art."⁴⁸ Exploring John Cage's systemization of chance events in his music, Morris went on to discuss the work of Duchamp and the extent to which such art enlisted systems of chance "to remove the arbitrary ['taste' or 'quality'] from art activity."⁴⁹ In another essay, "Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide" [1973], Morris related Duchamp's inversion of the work ethic to the art of the 1960s: "...The shadow of Duchamp clouds such acts For every noticeable act of American art which emphasizes the strategies of making

passes through this shadow to learn from Duchamp's uses of processes and materials. While the art of the '60s set systems in motion by the a priori, it was not until Conceptualism that the work ethic was surrendered. Making then looped back to close a circle initiated by the Readymade which had employed the ultimate method of the a priori: choice alone." 50

Another thread of "system-seeking art making"--the controlled, albeit expressive, interaction of materials and action in the choreographic painting process of Jackson Pollock--was seen by Morris as liberating and radical:

Until Pollock," Morris writes, "art making oriented toward two-dimensional surfaces had been a fairly limited act so far as the body was concerned. At most it involved the hand, wrist and arm. Pollock's work directly involved the use of the entire body. Coupled to this was his direct investigations of the properties of materials in terms of how paint behaves under the conditions of gravity. In seeing such work as 'human behavior' several coordinates are involved: nature of materials, the restraints of gravity, the limited mobility of the body interacting with both. The work turned back toward the natural world through accident and gravity and moved the activity of making into a direct engagement with certain natural conditions. Of any other artist working in two dimensions, it can be said that he, more than any others, acknowledged the conditions of accident and necessity open to the interaction of body and materials as they exist in a three-dimensional world.⁵¹

Thus for Morris, Pollock's working process prefigured the task-oriented art of the 1960s.⁵² Morris postulated that the balance between arbitrary and non-arbitrary art making inherent to Pollock's procedure constituted a semiotic basis for process art: "There is a binary

swing between the arbitrary and the non-arbitrary, or 'motivated,'" he writes, "which is . . . an historical, evolutionary, or diachronic feature of language's development and change. Language is not plastic art but both are forms of human behavior and the structures of one can be compared to the structures of the other." ⁵³ Morris reasoned that the bifurcated nature of speech--as it oscillates between arbitrariness and conventional systems and patterns (e.g., grammar, syntax)--paralleled the special nature of a transitive art based on task, process, and duration rather than aesthetic finish. For Morris, automation played an integral role in the production of advanced art: the activity of making art could be truly coherent and important only when accidents and predetermined mechanical processes replaced traditional handwork. "Here is the issue stated so long by Duchamp," Morris concludes, "...art making has to be based on other terms than those of arbitrary, formalistic, and tasteful arrangements of static forms. This was the plea as well to break the hermeticism of 'fine art' and to let in the world on other terms than image depiction." ⁵⁴

Morris's personal campaign to "break the hermeticism of fine art" often engaged mundane, repetitive labor. His manipulation of the T-shaped prop in Arizona, for example, was accompanied by a rambling monologue of instructions. The "method for sorting cows" read aloud during the performance resembled the absurd tasks undertaken by one of Samuel Beckett's protagonists (e.g., Molloy's system for counting sucking-stones): "...The first man continues with cows past the gate. The

second man stops at the gate; he is the gate man. The other man is the head man and makes all the decisions. When sorting cows the gate man's subordinate station should be well understood. He must, for the sake of efficiency and safety, never question the head man's decisions"⁵⁵ Morris's text reiterates the hierarchies of labor inherent to the industrial social order. Workers follow instructions; they do not give them. One begins to realize that in the context of a labor-based economy Morris's litany of instructions are not absurd at all: they offer a feasible means for discharging a difficult job.⁵⁶ In the artist's theater of operations labor is neither heroic nor unusual. In his project for the "Place and Process" exhibition at the Edmonton Art Gallery [Alberta, Canada] executed at the nearby G Bar E Ranch on 7 September 1969, Morris (who had once worked as a wrangler in Wyoming) rode several quarter horses along a line between two posts about two-hundred yards apart [Fig. 34]. His plan was to ride the horses until either he or the horses became too tired to continue (but not until a path had been worn in the grass along the white line). The project was discontinued when the ranch owner noticed the disfiguring path being etched into the turf.

The body's manipulation of things, a "strongly phenomenological strategy of activities [of process and making] seeking natural limits, regulations, [and] closures"⁵⁷ was the central concern of a group of six uncompleted films produced by Morris during a three-year period from 1969 to 1971: Mirror [1969], Slow Motion [1969], Finch Project [1969], Gas Station [1969], Wisconsin [1970], and Neo-Classic [1971].

These films represent a codification of Morris's dance sensibility: "Most of the films carry on and develop concerns from the earlier dance work: the body, its effort, its relation to objects and work. Permutations, extensions and contractions of time evolved out of earlier concerns with both sculpture and dance." ⁵⁸ Each film (which was also to have a mundane soundtrack of everyday sounds) records people involved in simple tasks, exploring the "alignment between the properties of actions and the physical tendencies of a given media." ⁵⁹ Such was the case with Slow Motion [16 1/2 min., silent, black and white] a film made by telephone as Morris's contribution to the "Art by Telephone" exhibition held at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art in 1969. In the manner of Eadweard Muybridge, a high-speed camera was focused on a shirtless, muscular male model as he ran into and finally pushed open a heavy glass door. Seen in super-slow motion and framed from neck to waist following Morris's telephoned instructions, the figure contacted the door with various body parts, including the hands, shoulders, forearm, and back. ⁶⁰

In Mirror [8 1/2 min, silent, black and white], the phenomenological implications of passage and point-of-view were explored as Morris walked in a circle around a Wisconsin landscape, holding up to the camera a large mirror which reflected the surrounding trees, snow, and the shifts in the camera's line of vision. ⁶¹ Finch Project [silent, black and white], executed for the "Art and Process IV" exhibition at the Finch College Art Gallery, recorded simple activities--Morris hanging mirrors at

one end of the gallery as a person at the other end tacks up life-size photographs of faces--through a camera placed on a turntable revolving at two revolutions per minute. Projected onto the same gallery walls with a film-projector that revolved on the same turntable, the presentation of the film reduplicated the decentering point-of-view of the rotating camera and the circular path of the worker's labor.⁶² Wisconsin [14 min., silent, black and white], based on the dispersed choreography of Morris's Check [1965] and Yvonne Rainer's Northeast Passing, captured the collective actions of a group of ninety-five people as they fell, ran, walked, and milled in a large field. Filming the scene from three cameras, Morris later intercut the three tracks in order to examine the individual events simultaneously from various angles and distances. Neo-Classic [14 min., silent, black and white] represented the culmination of Morris's use of film as a temporal record of tasks and processes. Neo-Classic documented the actions of a nude female model as she interacted with a series of participatory sculptures created by Morris for his Tate Gallery Retrospective in 1971.⁶³

Ultimately, these films possessed neither the intellectual nor visual intensity of the earlier dances. By Morris's own description such process-oriented films, like "those made by other plastic artists (excluding Warhol) over the last few years" amounted to "a lot of boring formalism." Yet Morris's films--like the more provocative dances and installations--reflected the growing interest of artists in the 1960s in the ideological meaning of their labor and production.

One example of this debate was the establishment of the Art Worker's Coalition. In the late 1960s, a group of disenfranchised artists in New York began to question their marginality in the economic life of the art world. On 10 April, 1969, the Art Worker's Coalition was officially sanctioned at a public meeting of artists at The School of Visual Arts in New York City.⁶⁴ Carl Andre, a generative force in the AWC and a key ally of Morris in organizing programs against the war in Vietnam, addressed the significance of the Coalition in overturning elitist myths of the artist as separate from the labor economy:

...The Art Worker's Coalition has nothing to do with what your art is like, but it has a great deal to do with keeping the springs and origins of art, which I think are essentially the same for everybody, open and fertile and productive as possible. And this is done by being able to get together, talk about the common social, economic, and political problems [The term artworker is not in] any kind of camp of Marxism, but it includes everybody who has a contribution to make in the art world. A collector can consider himself an artworker, in fact, anybody connected with art would be considered an artworker if he makes a productive contribution to art. I make art works by doing art work but I think the work itself is never truly completed until somebody comes along and does artwork himself with that artwork. In other words, the perceptive viewer or museum-goer who's got some kind of stimulus from the work is also doing artwork...I think [the term artwork] should be as broad as possible because I never liked the idea of an art political, economic, social organization which is limited to artists, because that's just returning to another kind of elitism.⁶⁵

Andre's artworker credo, in populist terms, embodied ideological issues that were important to the minimalists. The bankruptcy of the museum--a central Art Worker battle-cry--as well as the engagement of the spectator inherent to the phenomenological thinking of the 1960s motivated the participatory installations of Morris, Andre, Hans Haacke,

Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, and others. And while the Art Worker's Coalition most often attracted unsuccessful (and often bitter) artists,⁶⁶ the Coalition's will to expose the myth of artistic independence from political or economic reality reflected a dominant avant-gardist position of the period.

The intensive rethinking of the artist's economic condition, both in independent and group efforts, was coextensive with the greater social upheavals of the 1960s, a time when bourgeois dreams of controlled consumption and unproblematic production were violently disrupted.⁶⁷ The struggles of the 1960s, more than any other period in American history, allowed for popular intervention: students, workers, women, gay men and lesbians, minorities, and even middle-class grandparents transgressed the boundaries of power as they seized the streets in protest. Not surprisingly, the art critical and art historical community, slow to disengage from the apolitical, ahistorical and fundamentally bourgeois pretensions of "High Modernism," has tended to ignore the special character of the decade that produced minimalism, Pop, Op, and Conceptual art, as well as the New Dance, Fluxus, video art and other performance options. The interest of advanced art in process and task, as well as the concomitant realignment of the artist's and spectator's role in society, was, in part, predicated on this broader socio-political foundation.⁶⁸

Process and experience were important to a political left committed

to overturning the object and commodity-based dynamic of modernist culture and late-capitalism. Of the '60s cultural and political scene, Stanley Aronowitz observes: "... The nature of the new left, summarized in a single word ... [was] process. It signaled an almost religious return to experience and a converse retreat from the abstractions of the red politics of yesterday ... Rhetorical repetition, procedural debate, moral invocations to kindness and equality were all part of the process of community building, a psychopolitical experience in which duration played a purgative part in transforming traditional political interactions into what was described as 'movement behavior.'"⁶⁹ Experience, duration, and repetition were necessary tools, as well, for the liberation of the visual and performing arts from the repressive, hierarchical conditions of modernist culture and production. Morris's phenomenological games, for example, mandated that the relationship between the art object and the spectator be more-or-less democratic--free of the social and cultural hierarchies of the museum. The psychopolitical experiences of the work of the late 1960s and early '70s (re-creations of autistic states, labyrinths, mirror distortions, large-scale participatory installations) were not unrelated to the artist's radical political activity against the war in Vietnam, his assertion of the artist as worker, and his overt attack on the institutional sanctity of the museum. Morris's involvement with task-performance, both in dance and film, was also an extension of this reevaluation of the function of art and the place of the artist in society, a reappraisal that mostly took place in the very institutions under question--the museum and the gallery.

Morris's most direct statement on the relation of the artist to the labor economy, however, was manifested outside of the museum or the gallery as part of an advertising campaign that appeared in a number of art magazines in November 1970 [Fig. 35]. Morris introduced himself as a worker/artist who could be hired on an hourly basis to design and execute a range of non-traditional art projects: "Explosions," "Events for the Quarter Horse," "Speeches," "Alternate Political Systems," "Earthworks," and "Demonstrations" were listed among the possible selections. Morris's one-person employment agency--"The Peripatetic Artists Guild"--also invited other artists to add their names to the PAG file of workers. The advertisement continued: "A \$25.00 per working hour wage plus all travel, materials, construction and other costs to be paid by the owner-sponsor. Subsequent sales of any project by the owner-sponsor will require a 50% return of funds to the Peripatetic Artist's Guild (PAG) to be held in trust for the furtherance of saleless wage commissions between other artists and owner-sponsors. A contract will be issued for every commission."⁷⁰ The response to Morris's prospectus was less than enthusiastic. While a number of American and European artists--eager to secure work in a highly competitive field--sent formal requests to join the Peripatetic Artist's Guild, few offers came from potential patrons.⁷¹ The absence of refined art objects and PAG stipulations concerning resale of work proved undesirable for collectors. While several inquiries were made, no projects were commissioned. Morris discontinued the expensive advertising campaign in light of the

disinterest that greeted his somewhat naïve venture into a new art world economy.

Successful or not, The Peripatetic Artist's Guild brashly exposed the art world's economic imperative as it postulated an equation between labor and remuneration, between art and money. In the modernist tradition, as Leo Steinberg writes, art could parody its own cultural pretensions without penalty. To expose the economic reality of patronage, however, was to threaten art's purity:

It appears that the freedom enjoyed by modernist art in this century was circumscribed after all. Seen from the centers of real power, even the license to épater le bourgeois was confined to clowing inside the ring . . . whatever fantasy, privacy, or obsession [artists] chose to lay bare, to those at the social controls, these 'histrionics of the art world'...were harmless stuff, like the capers formally permitted to mummers and mountbanks, fir-eaters, sword-swallowers, and their kind. Artists, like fools in motley at the courts of bored princes, had a protected right to their antics--within certain limits. For the old jesters too would take risks and could joke even at their patrons' expense; but never about their patrons' source of revenue. They could peer into the human heart, but not into ledgers; snoop from under the bed, but keep out of the countinghouse.⁷²

Steinberg made these observations in an analysis of the work of Hans Haacke, the German conceptualist whose didactic, hard-edged exposés offer bold commentary on the often obscene, immoral means by which money that supports art is earned.⁷³ Unlike Haacke who almost never referred to himself in his art, Morris's impassive appeal for employment ultimately limited the PAG's political impact by not entirely refusing Duchamp's self-referentiality. More interested in the economic position of the artist rather than the general world of art and business, the

Peripatetic Artist's Guild nevertheless inverted modernist aesthetics: The fiction of peering into the human heart, of peeling away layers of flesh to expose the teeming paradoxes at the core of the formalist object--a fiction already parodied in such works as Heart, Cloud, and Passageway--was exchanged for the realities of a new art world economy. The patron, now denied modernism's comfortable illusions, was left tallying the ledgers, improbably counting the hours and minutes, dollars and cents necessary to produce the desired results.⁷⁴

Within Morris's œuvre, it is perhaps the dance Site that most convincingly explores this interchange between art, labor, and production. Ultimately, Site represented a major and complex commentary on the contemporaneous Marxist-oriented dialectic of work and play, a dialectic centered on an utopian, if not naive, vision of non-repressive labor.⁷⁵ Herbert Marcuse, for example, dialectically divided the labor economy into two sectors of activity: "work" and "non-work." Work, in Marcusean thought, was an entirely desexualized phenomena, a condition of enforced sublimation. Play, conversely, was entirely subject to the pleasure principle as it served no other purpose than that of instinctual gratification. In contrast to Marcuse, post-Freudian theory tended to undermine the importance of play within the economy of production, insisting that work done for the greater society (and not the socially unproductive, autoerotic act of play) allowed humanity to thrive and survive. Post-Freudian theory in the 1930s and 40s, in fact, exhibited a marked tendency to repress the imperative to play while favoring and

glorifying repressive labor as a means of self-realization. In Ives Hendrick's revision of Freud, for example, it was the "mastery instinct"--the self-gratification and pleasure inherent to a worker's efficient performance-- that overcame the need for play and permitted the release of surplus libidinal tension.⁷⁶

Marcuse himself observed that libidinal work--work based on pleasure and gratification--represented a nearly insurmountable contradiction in late-industrial society, where alienated labor was the rule rather than the exception: "In a reality governed by the performance principle," writes Marcuse, "such libidinal work is a rare exception and can occur only at the margin of the work world--as 'hobby,' play, or in a directly erotic situation. The normal kind of work (socially useful occupational activity) in the prevailing division of labor is such that the individual, in working, does not satisfy his own impulses, needs, and faculties but performs a preestablished function."⁷⁷ In refusing the "mastery instinct," Marcuse goes on to insist that the "pleasure [in doing a good job] has nothing to do with primary instinctual gratification. To link performances on assembly lines, in offices and shops with instinctual needs is to glorify dehumanization as pleasure."⁷⁸ If Marxism (not to mention modernism), in its most vulgar form, wished to see labor as transcendent, Marcuse's more-or-less naïve hard-line preached the liberation of production through an acknowledgment of the negativity of labor.

But if Hendrick's gospel of labor, cloaked in the rhetoric of a "mastery instinct," suggests blind idealism, Marcuse's validation of pleasure over the negative repression of labor constituted a removed, aristocratic idealism, an utopianism that called for a virtually impossible realignment of the labor economy. "Play...as [a] principle...of civilization," writes Marcuse, "impl[ies] not the transformation of labor but its complete subordination to the freely evolving potentialities of man and nature. The idea...of play...now [reveals its] full distance from the values of productiveness and performance: play is unproductive and useless precisely because it cancels the repressive and exploitative traits of labor and leisure"79 To completely cancel such "exploitative traits" is, of course, to obliterate the usefulness of work itself. To define play, non-alienated labor, or non-work as a finalities without end, is to aestheticize them in "the extremely Kantian" and modernist sense, "with all the bourgeois ideological connotations which that implies."⁸⁰ Jean Baudrillard's critique of Marcuse reasons that "the end of the end of exploitation by work is this reverse fascination with non-work, this reverse mirage of free time Non-work is still only the repressive desublimation of labor power, the antithesis which acts as the alternative Exactly as the pure institutional form of painting, art, and theater shines forth in anti-painting, anti-art, and anti-theater, which are emptied of their contents, the pure form of labor shines forth in non-labor. Although the concept of non-labor can thus be fantasized as the abolition of the political economy, it is bound to fall back into the sphere of political economy as the sign, and only the sign, of its

abolition."⁸¹

In association with the labor/leisure dialectic of the mid-1960s, ⁸² Site deconstructed the progressivist mythologies of labor and production. Schneemann's portrayal of Manet's reclining Olympia, for example, suggests the kind of "work" that conflates the dynamics of leisure and labor--the libidinal, aestheticized work advocated by Marcuse. But Schneemann's character merely feigned leisure as her facial expression remained fixed and rigid; the reality of the labor that Olympia represents is that it necessarily exchanges the fulfillment and pleasure of sex (the "task" of her vocation) for the emptiness, humiliation, and abuse of prostitution.

As T.J. Clark suggests, many critics in the nineteenth century were content to use the term courtesane--a comfortable and archaic euphemism for an unspeakable profession. Like Baudelaire's artist-dandy, "the courtesane was supposed not to belong at all to the world of class and money; she floated above or below it, playing with its categories, untouched by its everyday needs."⁸³ Olympia, however, was different: she lacked the safety and comfort of the chaste, porcelain Venuses of the salon. Her feet were dirty. A line of hair that extended from her navel to her breasts marred perfection as it accentuated sensuousness. Her eyes stared directly and solicitously at the spectator. Her skin was cast in bluish tones usually reserved for corpses. ⁸⁴

To more than one critic, Olympia belonged not to the indeterminate class of the courtesane but to the world of the faubourgs and the working class. Jean Ravenel imagined her haunting the tables of Paul Niquet's--an establishment on the Rue aux Fers that stayed open all night and catered to a rowdy clientele of ragpickers, idlers, and drunkards.⁸⁵ A radical inversion of its major historical source-- Titian's Venus of Urbino [1538]--Olympia went far beyond the Renaissance realm of "unchaste chastity" to the grim spectre of sexual commerce, where women were most often the victims of abject poverty and disease. According to T.J. Clark, class is the essence of Olympia's modernity⁸⁶: Manet's hardened prostitute serves as an emblem of an alienated and class-conscious Paris, the legacy of a brutal modernization scheme undertaken by Napoleon III and his chief henchman Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann. In the end, the working class of Paris--the material of which Olympia and her world were made--were evicted from the center of the city, relegated to the hill of Belleville or the plains of La Villette, "where the moon was still most often the only street light available." ⁸⁷

A century later, in 1963, the theme of prostitution remained difficult for a genteel art world. "Prostitution is a sensitive subject for bourgeois society," writes Clark, "because sexuality and money are mixed up in it. There are obstacles in the way of representing either, and when the two intersect there is an uneasy feeling that something in the nature of capitalism is at stake, or at least not properly hidden." ⁸⁸ The sociologist George Simmel believed that in prostitution both women and

money are degraded . . . "till the sheer glitter of gold obscures the woman's tarnished reputation." ⁸⁹ But has it not been equally shameful in the history of modernism to admit the status of art as commodity, the extent to which art is inexorably bound to money? This is a question that Morris entertained as early as 1962 in his Brain pieces (plaster models of the human brain covered in silver leaf or dollar bills) and his gold pieces--a series of sculptures and paintings laminated in gold leaf or gold paint (e.g., Golden Arrows [1962], You [1962, destroyed], Content [1962, destroyed], I [1962, destroyed], Morris [1962, destroyed], Golden Memories [1963]). With these objects Morris acknowledged the complex relationship of the art object as commodity in an art world situation, a context that implicates the artist as well as the patron. Earlier in the history of modernism, Marcel Duchamp had explicitly suggested this connection: "What Duchamp was keen to observe," writes Yve-Alain Bois, "is that works of art--as much as oyster pearls or great wines (other examples given by Marx)--are not exchanged according to the common law of the market, but according to a monopoly system maintained by the entire art network, whose keystone is the artist himself. This does not mean that the exchange of works of art is beyond competition or any other manifestation of the law of the market, but that their sometimes infinite price is a function of their lack of measurable value. Value in the art world is determined by the 'psychological' mechanisms which are at the core of any monopoly system: rarity, authenticity, uniqueness and the law of supply and demand. In other words, art objects are absolute fetishes without a use value but also without an exchange value, fulfilling

absolutely the collector's fantasy of a purely symbolic or ideal value, a supplement to his soul."⁹⁰

If Olympia radically exposed the connection between sexuality and commerce, Site undermined an even longer-lived mythology: the artist's removal from the economy of labor. Ultimately, Schneemann's prostitute and Morris's manual laborer, in their unpretentious and unidealized task performance, implicate the artist in the class struggle as neither artist nor worker is seen as heroic or special. No place existed in Morris's anonymous realm of plywood, work clothes, and solicitous prostitutes for the young, elegantly attired dandy who, standing front and center in Manet's paradigmatic Luncheon in the Studio [1868], turns his nose up at the rest of society.⁹¹ Site, like the Peripatetic Artist's Guild that would represent its culmination, waged war against diehard convictions about the role of the artist in society, a battle accompanied not by the perfumed air and frenetic din of a Parisian café-concert but rather the mundane drone of jackhammers breaking up a New York City street.

In the end, Morris's public explorations of production and performance were, in their conscious appeal to the issues of labor and class, political acts. One is reminded of Walter Benjamin's admonishment of the modern intellectual's ambiguous politics. Western intellectuals, he observed, did not see themselves as "members of certain professions" but as representatives of a "certain characterological type,"⁹² a type located somewhere between the classes. Advocating a more activist role for the

intellectual, Benjamin called "for the transformation of the forms and instruments of production in the way desired by a progressive intelligensia-- that is, one interested in freeing the means of production and serving the class struggle," Benjamin continues. "Brecht coined the term Umfunktionierung [functional transformation]. He was the first to make of intellectuals the far reaching demand not to supply the apparatus of production without, to the utmost extent possible, changing it in accordance with socialism. 'The publication of the Versuche,' [Brecht writes] . . . 'occurred at a time when certain works ought no longer to be individual experiences (have the character of works) but should, rather, concern the use (transformation) of certain institutes and institutions.'"⁹³

It is precisely the transformation of modernist culture--institutes and institutions at a point of crisis in the 1960s--that had motivated the more radical artists of the period. With his performance pieces, Morris was finally able to establish a materialist dialectic for his art, a dialectic that even rejected Duchamp's transgressive fetish of the object and obsession with play⁹⁴. Morris now represented himself as a producer, acknowledging his real, if problematic, place in the class structure:

. . . In fact, all art is political and the taking of it and the making of it. . . you cannot avoid the fact that it's...involved in a class situation, and. . . most of modern art itself is a very bourgeois undertaking, and we may have very. . . strong critical feelings about how this whole enterprise proceeds along, nevertheless we have a good deal of allegiance to the kinds of structures and intentions and investigations and changes that have happened within this class structure. There are a lot of oppressive. . . factors built into the way the art world moves along, irrespective of the sensibility or the invention going on.

. . . We may not have made a clear enough distinction

between certain forms, certain social forms, the way the art world is constituted, for example, the fact that certain . . . objects are encouraged to be made, whereas other things like [the] vast changing of the landscape is very difficult to . . . [make] You have to look at economics as soon as you see these kinds of things. [Like] . . . the fact that women don't get as many shows as men . . . [or] the whole question about black people . . . 95

As naïve as such "'60s-style" social awareness might sound today, the concern for the conditions of class contrasted sharply with the regime of cynicism and selfishness that evolved in post-'60s America. By the Reagan-era, the discourse of the class struggle and of the economy of production had, for many intellectuals and artists, become unfashionable and even embarrassing. In the hermetic, formalist space of modern art, such biases, of course, always existed. But for the most advanced artists of the 1960s--for a multitude of social, cultural, and political reasons--the magic, the ambiguity, and the metaphysics of formalism would yield, at least for a moment, to a radical reevaluation of our social and cultural institutions.

III. Anti-form: Sensuality and the Dissolution of the Object

. . . Formless is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal

Georges Bataille in Documents 7 [December 1929]

In "Art and Objecthood" Michael Fried wrote about the threatening, aggressive presence of the minimalist monolith. One observation, in particular, that the disquieting experience of such sculpture was not unlike being "distanced, or crowded, by the silent presence of another person,"⁹⁶ is quite interesting, for while the author's conclusions, sheathed in military metaphors of war, sustained the mythologies and illusions of formalism, his insights about the radical formal and stylistic devices of minimalist sculpture (and how they differed from the canon of late-modernism) were often brilliant and perceptive. His discussion of the confrontational anthropomorphism of Morris's large-scale columns and L-beams, for example, contrasted with phenomenological arguments about minimalism's resistance to memory and representation. Fried was able to recognize what many partisans of the minimalist cause either ignored or suppressed: That all objects--no matter how abstract--ultimately inspire association and allusion.

There is, of course, no question that most minimalist sculpture eschewed figurative allusions. But in its large-size and direct engagement of its ambient setting (i.e., pedestals were eliminated), the minimalist object tended to create a presence parallel to that of the spectator. The body, as Morris observed, had become the ultimate target of minimalism's phenomenology: "The...object[-type art] of the '60s is not so much a metaphor for the figure as it is an existence parallel to it. It shares the perceptual response we have toward figures. This is undoubtedly why subliminal, generalized kinesthetic responses are

strong in confronting object art. Such responses are often denied or repressed since they seem so patently inappropriate in the face of non-anthropomorphic forms, yet they are there. Even in subtle morphological ways, object-type art is tied to the body." ⁹⁷ For Morris, it was scale relationships that established specific connections to the body: "I think the sense of scale that a piece has is always a relation between your body and the object that's external to it. I mean that is where the scale comes in, it seems to me: you relate it to yourself." ⁹⁸ By assuming literal, human scale relationships (Morris rarely worked in a scale larger than the average person) these objects create a direct analogy between themselves and the spectator's body. ⁹⁹

The anthropomorphism of Morris's sculpture and the provocative, even aggressive relationship of his art to the spectator's body, suggests an even more complex level of confrontation--an erotically charged confrontation meant to overturn the purity and aloofness of much formalist sculpture. ¹⁰⁰ For the most part, the psychosexual dimension eluded minimalist criticism, where puritanical formalist methods continued to obtain. The psychosexual possibilities of abstract art would have gone entirely unnoticed in the 1960s had it not been for the general liberalization of sexual practices and mores. "Many observers noted with lip-licking anticipation," wrote critic Lucy Lippard in 1967, "that the 1966-67 season was going to be the "Erotic Season," like the Pop, Op, Primary Structures seasons past. For at least two seasons rumors have been rife of wickedness stored up in the studios waiting for the Trend to

break."¹⁰¹ It never did. Abstract eroticism was a difficult concept to accept: "There will be connoisseurs who will cry pedanticism! and castration! . . .," writes Lippard. "Yet it would seem that an audience visually sophisticated enough to appreciate and at times prefer non-objective works of art as concrete objects in themselves, rather than associative look-alikes, will also prefer the heightened sensation that can be achieved by an abstractly sensuous object."¹⁰² Even so, Lippard was the only critic of the period to apply any kind of erotic reading to abstract art, a reading that nevertheless concluded that the lack of allusiveness in Morris's orthodox minimalist pieces amounted to a "deadpan anti-eroticism."¹⁰³

Lippard's refusal of the sensuality of Morris's geometric forms--executed concurrently with the erotically provocative dance Waterman Switch and Site--relates to her inability to understand the charged nature of Morris's phenomenology: the spectator is confronted by imposing, unfamiliar forms, forms that are inserted directly and aggressively into the rarified space of the gallery or museum. In contrast to Morris's erotic work of the early '60s--the "hide of thick skin"¹⁰⁴ of the lead reliefs, the allusions to sexual organs in the constructions, the nude photograph and swinging door of the I-Box, the overt sexual imagery of Waterman Switch--his large-scale geometric objects avoided explicit erotic content; instead, their sensuality was predicated on the experience of encountering them. In the following exchange with the art critic Jack Burnham, Morris discussed this special relationship:

Burnham: There is a notion...that artists [like everyone else]...are psychically incomplete. So artists constantly attempt to fabricate the missing part of their psyches, that anima or animus representing their missing polarity...in other words [their work becomes] a surrogate love object. If you [agree that there is some truth to this theory]...how do you account for the extreme sensual neutrality of so many of your early works [i.e., 1961-66]?

Morris: I don't know if I've ever thought of about things in those terms. In spite of their grayness, I always thought [the plinths, cubes, and beams] were pretty sensual.

Burnham: Possibly they were for you, but how would you define their sensuality?

Morris: I think it has to do with their shape, how they stand in a space...with the relationship of the body to them in some kind of way that I . . . [can't] really define. I just think that there are certain shapes that one can get that charge from . . . As far as [the early works being sensual], they've always been...physical [for me]: The whole idea of volume, the lightness playing against the volume, there are all these relationships you are manipulating. About the weight, about the lightness, how much you want it to appear as an unknown material. And how much that unknown material, that kind of strange 'otherness' of the material, 'otherness' of the thing, plays against the physical part of it. ¹⁰⁵

While the experience of Morris's cold, gray plinths suggests a compromise between intellectual and visceral responses, the direct, aggressive engagement of these pieces contrasts with the elitist, refined art objects of high modernism. These sculptures must also be understood in relation to Morris's earliest, overtly erotic objects and the later anti-form pieces, works that exchange harsh geometries for organic materials and chance relationships (critical discussions of the so-called minimalist movement tend to exclude these more problematic pieces) .

In the artist's felt pieces, for example, a series of soft sculptures begun in Aspen, Colorado in the summer of 1967 [Fig. 36], sensual references were made explicit; the cold, architectonic exercises of the

minimalist objects had, in relatively short order, dissolved into a new, and perhaps even more radical episode in Morris's oeuvre--anti-form--a name coined by the editors of Artforum magazine in 1969 as the title of an influential and controversial essay by Morris.¹⁰⁶ The organization of the felts was relatively consistent: Each piece would begin with one or more large rectangles of felt. Sometimes the felt would be slit into bands. The basic arrangement was sometimes geometric and regular; other times it was irregular. Some pieces would be hung on the wall, their parts cascading to the floor; others would be entirely floor-bound, organized in arrangements of folded or scattered rectangles. The softness and fragility of the felts resulted in a randomness subject to the temporal conditions of the environment: "There is a...kind of entropy involved in these pieces; for any arrangement of them that is made, slowly dissolves by the effect of weight, humidity, minor accidents...and the arrangement can never be perfectly restored. However, the sculpture can always be completely renewed...by deliberate or accidental acts. Indeed, if the felt itself is quite destroyed, the rules by which it is made are both complete enough and simple enough for the piece to be replaced." ¹⁰⁷

On one level, the felt pieces suggest the bifurcated process of accident and control inherent to the paintings of Jackson Pollock, sharing with them a "partially controlled indeterminacy and a looping rhythm, in each case operated upon by gravity and conditioned by the specific viscosity/ pliability of the medium and by the gestures used in the making." ¹⁰⁸ The felts, however, were far more radical in relation to

traditional art than such historical allusions suggest. Morris himself cautioned against too literalist a reading of anti-form in relation to the past: "But to identify its resultant 'field' aspect very closely with Pollock's work is to focus on too narrow a formalistic reading. Similar claims were made when minimal art was identified with the forms found in previous constructivism."¹⁰⁹ Fundamentally, anti-form overturned the conventions of connoisseurship where the relative quality of sculpture was evaluated on the basis of the beauty and refinement of its form. The felt pieces contrived "to render invalid the notion of judging the quality of a sculpture on the basis of form" selling, in effect, "an indeterminate object with an indefinite set of sculptural possibilities."¹¹⁰ In contrast to the illusionism mandated by traditional sculpture, such "anti-form" pieces yielded to gravity. And, as Michael Compton and David Sylvester observed in their catalog for Morris's Tate retrospective in 1971, the felts differed even from the soft fans, toilets, and other objects of Claes Oldenburg or the felt pianos and suits of Joseph Beuys in that they were neither hollow nor directly representational.¹¹¹

Rather than representing objects in the world, the felts projected a direct and literal presence. In discussing the anti-form sensibility, Morris spoke of the dissolution of the object as an "attack" on the modernist fetish of the object: "Under attack is the rationalistic notion that art is a form of work that results in a finished product. Duchamp, of course, attacked the Marxist notion that labor was an index of value, but readymades are traditional iconic art objects. What art now has in its

hands is mutable stuff which need not arrive at a point of being finalized with respect to either time or space. The notion that work is an irreversible process ending in a static icon-object no longer has much relevance."¹¹² The modernist obsession with quality, as well, was rejected by Morris as yet another condition of commodity fetishism: "...The concern with 'quality' in art can only be another form of consumer research--a conservative concern involved with comparisons between static, similar objects within closed sets." ¹¹³ The anti-form concept--a sensibility derived from Morris's investigation of process and perception--posed a crucial question about the nature of advanced art after minimalism: Could traditional art objects, created solely for the consumption of a specialized upper-class audience, maintain their relevance in an age of radical cultural and social change?

In 1969, Morris organized an "Anti-Form" exhibition at the Leo Castelli Warehouse that, in part, attempted to answer this complex question. The exhibition, however, raised more questions than it answered, and for a number of Morris's critics, helped isolate the formal and intellectual problems associated with the anti-form concept. The exhibition--which included the work of Alan Saret, Claes Oldenberg, Eva Hesse, Keith Sonnier, Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra, and Steve Kaltembach--explored a range of work that refused the limitations of closed forms in favor of an exploration of formlessness and nontraditional materials. The Castelli Warehouse reverberated with piles of felt, rivers of spattered lead, electro-chemical reactions, magnetic fields, sheets of

rubber, latex, and plastic, neon and fluorescent light, and raw steel. And while the liberation of form through chance relationships alluded to the innovations of Surrealism, the critic Gregoire Müller credited the show with "broadening the horizon of minimal art in respect of both form and signification.": "These artists will take stock for us of the emotive power inherent in given materials, given forms, when placed in direct relation to a given space. Underlying this visual inventory-- which interestingly enough refuses to leave anything out of account--are several principles discovered in the heyday of minimal art by reducing to a minimum the internal compositional relations of a work (forms, colors, materials), the 'properties' of a given element come across with much more clarity and strength; similarly, by choosing to relate the work directly to the 'objective' environment, focusing attention on the relation between the work and the space around it, the artist endows it with a more 'real' presence and establishes a closer contact with the viewer."¹¹⁴ For Morris, the well-built completeness of the minimalist object repressed its sensual appeal; rational symmetry would now be exchanged for anti-form's explorations of chance, process, and materials:

In object-type art process is not visible. Materials often are. When they are, their reasonableness is usually apparent. Rigid industrial materials go together at right angles with great ease. But it is the a priori valuation of the well-built that dictates the materials. The well-built form of objects preceded any consideration of means. Materials themselves have been limited to those which efficiently make the general object form.

... Random piling, loose stacking, hanging, give passing form to the material. Chance is accepted and indeterminacy is implied since replacing will result in another configuration. Disengagement with preconceived enduring forms and orders for things is a positive assertion. It is part of the work's refusal to continue estheticizing form by dealing with it as a

prescribed end.¹¹⁵

Anti-form was not without its detractors. Allan Kaprow, an important figure in the Happenings of the mid-1960s, questioned the extent to which such work was against form. In analyzing Morris's Untitled (254 pieces of gray felt, 3/8 " thick) [1967], Kaprow observed that the pile of felt batting had a distinct shape and, like a Jackson Pollock painting, an internal rhythmic composition. The length of the work's upper zone (which was tacked to the wall) roughly equaled that of the lower section on the floor establishing a specific A-B-A division between top, middle, and bottom. Suggesting that the anti-form concept resisted hard-edged geometry rather than form, Kaprow concluded that "despite [anti-form's] . . . dramatic promise, there is nothing militant in either Morris's words or in his works; nothing that could be construed as taking a stand against form."¹¹⁶ A position that Kaprow ascribed to his own radical Happenings (as well as those of Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg, and Robert Whitman) where the space of performance was often entirely filled with refuse in an attempt to avoid the delineation between object and pristine environment associated with the gallery or museum.¹¹⁷

Kaprow's critique exposed an important fallacy in Morris's argument: anti-form, Kaprow reasoned, could not transgress the traditional art object while continuing to exist in relation--even negative relation--to the space of the gallery and museum¹¹⁸: ". . . [This work] was made in a rectangular studio, to be shown in a rectangular gallery, reproduced in a rectangular magazine, in rectangular photographs, all aligned according to

rectangular axes, for rectangular reading movements and rectangular thought patterns Morris's work, Pollock's, Oldenburg's, etc., function strictly in contrast to, or now and then in conflict with, their enframing spaces. Ruled lines and measurable corners in such spaces tell us how far, how big, how soft, how atmospheric, indeed, how 'amorphous' an art work is within these lines we cannot talk about anti-form or non form except as one type of form in relation to another (rectilinear) type."¹¹⁹

In the end, however, Morris's New Dance, performance, and film strategies as well as his interest in land reclamation, earth art, and the social deconstruction of the museum through political acts suggests that anti-form was part of a broader ideological program. While the anti-form concept did not entirely repudiate the institutional hierarchies of the museum, it maintained a strong commitment to dismantle the form and substance of the traditional museum object.¹²⁰

Morris's anti-form projects generally reiterated the spatial orientation of the artist's earlier work: the horizontal axis and its concomitant transgressive associations. This "lateral spread," as Morris called it, helped to "subvert...either a profile or a plan view reading."¹²¹ In pieces such as Untitled [1968, Fig. 37] Morris gathered threads and fibers on a 30 square foot area of the floor, further dematerializing the work's objectness by dispersing several upright mirrors in the field of materials. Other floor pieces involved the scattering of felt, rubber, and/or metal scraps, while Earthwork [1968, Fig. 38] consisted of a 20 by 25 foot low mound of soil, rocks, and driftwood.

With regard to their literalness and horizontality, such work--along with the floor bound or scatter pieces of Barry Le Va, William Bollinger, Richard Serra, Carl Andre, Eva Hesse and Robert Smithson--functions on two levels. Initially, the acceptance of gravity and process associated with scattering materials on the floor reasserts phenomenological interests both in the experiential and the dismantling of composition. On another level, the association with the horizontal--with that plane of engagement in opposition to the transcendental aspirations of high modernism-- constitutes a subversion of the fundamental orientation of formalism. For example, Brancusi's vertical monoliths, which had become the object of Morris's oedipal attack on modern sculpture,¹²² also provoked the stylistic transgressions of Carl Andre: "All I'm doing," says Andre, "is putting Brancusi's Endless Column on the ground instead of in the sky. Most sculpture is priapic with the male organ in the air. In my work, Priapus is down on the floor. The engaged position is to run along the earth."¹²³

This assault on the conventions and pretensions of modernist sculpture goes beyond a mere reorientation of the art object's gravitational axis. Anti-form dismantles the mechanisms of logic and idealism that govern the forms of modernism. Materials--deployed as recognizable, unprecious, ordinary substances--no longer aspire to represent values or things in the world: wood does not suggest flesh, plastic does not embody modernity or technology, and steel does not mean brutality. "It is only

with this type of...work," writes Morris, "that heterogeneity of materials has become a possibility again; now any substances or mixtures of substances and the forms or states these might take--rods, particles, dust, pulpy, wet, dry, etc.--are potentially useable." ¹²⁴ Objects scattered on the floor neither ascend to the sky nor transcend literal earthly conditions. They simply exist in their base material state as the physical residue of the transitive: Richard Serra's splashed molten lead, Barry LeVa's scattered particles of gray felt, Robert Smithson's displaced mirrors, Eva Hesse's spilled latex, or Raphael Ferrer's melted ice.

The conceptual idealizations of modernist sculpture--the analytical expectations of the sculptural enterprise--were withdrawn in anti-form, an art that purposely rejected geometry as the basis of existence. Sculpture was now no longer indebted to the interests of rationalism; it could relinquish its responsibility to reflect the sweeping advances of industrialization, reason, and technology--in short, the philosophical, cultural, and social conditions that sustained the spirit of modernity. Anti-form overturned the concept of art as the embodiment of ideals, an inversion that recalls Georges Bataille's concept of base materialism:

Base matter is external and foreign to ideal human aspirations, and it refuses to allow itself to be reduced to the great ontological machines resulting from these aspirations. But the psychological process brought to light by Gnosticism had the same impact: it was a question of disconcerting the human spirit and idealism before something base, to the extent that one recognized the helplessness of superior principles.

The interest of this juxtaposition is augmented by the fact the specific reactions of Gnosticism led to the representation of forms radically contrary to the ancient academic style, to the representation of forms in which it is possible to see the image of this base matter alone, by its incongruity and by an

overwhelming lack of respect, permits the intellect to escape from the constraints of idealism. In the same way today certain plastic representations are the expression of an intransigent materialism, of a recourse to everything that compromises the powers that be in matters of form, ridiculing the traditional entities, naïvely stupifying the scarecrows.¹²⁵

That most of the anti-form work produced in the 1960s was literally an accumulation of waste materials--the detritus of modern industry--further parallels Bataille's Gnostic rejection of the ideal. Eventually, even the institutional setting of the gallery or museum, that space of precious objects and materials, appears inadequate--a displacement of the art world's institutional frame that was central to the earthworks and land reclamation projects of Morris, Smithson, and Andre.

Morris's involvement with anti-form would seem to relate to that aspect of 1960s counterculture thinking concerned with liberation and freedom.¹²⁶ Morris himself pointed to the anti-establishment nature of Duchamp's life and work, a man who "was very much concerned with being free . . . [a man] constantly concerned to transcend, to define his freedom."¹²⁷ In his assessment of Duchamp, Morris was careful to observe that Duchamp worked outside the traditional conventions of art and language-- conventions built on the formulation of problems. "There are no solutions," Morris quotes Duchamp as saying, "because there are no problems, problems are an invention of man."¹²⁸ Morris's anti-art concept recalls some of the ideas expressed by the art critic Ursula Meyer, for example, in an important text entitled "The Eruption of Anti-Art."¹²⁹ Meyer, in addressing the issue of "Anti-Art" in the 1960s, suggested that the readymade strategies of Marcel Duchamp, the Dadaist

games of Jean Arp and Tristan Tzara, and the socio-political content of German Dada (Meyer cited George Grosz and John Heartfield's involvement in the so-called Rote Gruppe) resulted in a new art sensibility in the '60s that called for the "desublimation" of cultural values in art. Building her argument on Herbert Marcuse's notion of a desublimated society, Meyer cited the author's influential An Essay on Liberation [1969] in which Marcuse suggested that "the radical character, the 'violence' of the reconstruction in contemporary art, seems to indicate that it does not rebel against one style or another, but against 'style' itself, against the art-form of art, against the traditional 'meaning' of art." ¹³⁰ For Meyer, unlike Marcuse who tended support more traditional art forms, ¹³¹ Anti-Art was most radical when it undermined the conventions and the form of the static art object--objects specifically created to meet the demands of the museum and its art world patrons. Yet, even Marcuse placed Anti-Art in the streets and markets and not in galleries and museums. "If Anti-Art exists at all--not only in terms of an art historical (Duchampian) oddity, but in the context of a revolutionary present," Meyer concludes, "...it has to be defined on the basis of its temporariness."¹³²

While Morris's anti-form concept was developed several years before the publication of An Essay on Liberation, Marcuse's ideas would continue to be important to Morris's thinking.¹³³ The idea of stylelessness (so central to Morris's diverse œuvre), of working outside of the gallery or the museum, and of the rebellion against the "art-form of

art" reflect Marcuse's discourse on liberation, a discourse that would have been available to Morris as early as the late 1950s in Eros and Civilization. The following quotation from that book suggests some of the basic principles of anti-form: "Under the predominance of rationalism, the cognitive function of sensuousness has been constantly minimized. In line with the repressive concept of reason, cognition became the ultimate concern of the 'higher,' non-sensuous faculties of the mind; aesthetics were absorbed by logic and metaphysics. Sensuousness, as the 'lower' and even 'lowest' faculty, furnished at best the mere stuff, the raw material, for cognition, to be organized by the higher faculties of the intellect."¹³⁴ It is just such an organization by the "higher intellect" that Morris, to some extent, undermined in his anti-form strategies, strategies that called for the dispersal of raw or unprocessed materials outside the realm of closed form.

Herbert Marcuse's call for cognition liberated from the a priori conventions of the intellect parallels another important realm of advanced thought in the 1960s--the phenomenological imperatives of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. If Merleau-Ponty envisioned a world where "clear and articulate objects [are] abolished,"¹³⁵ where night renders no outlines, where experience is pure and simple, he did so to apprehend the world free of the conditions of logic and reason established by a positivist, scientific, industrial social order. The phenomenological dynamic of Morris's work, reinterpreted through Marcuse's socio-sexual discourse suggests, then, a political as well as formal basis for certain

sectors of the minimalist aesthetic. The minimalist impulse to question the founding principles of rationalism suggests the exhaustion, if not the bankruptcy, of these fundamental tenets. Ultimately Michael Fried's formalist rejection of "literal art" was built on his puritanical fear of the cultural implications of experience independent of composition or reason, on his conviction that each encounter with the art object must turn on a "single, infinitely brief instant [that] would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it."¹³⁶ That "Art and Objecthood" represents Fried's last major attempt at contemporary art criticism--an essay followed by twenty-years of art historical journeys into the world of Denis Diderot, Thomas Eakins and Gustave Courbet--suggests his own private acknowledgment that he was not, in the end, "convinced" of the durability of the critical barricades erected by him to protect late-formalism's magical, "infinitely brief" moments.¹³⁷ Several years later, in a dingy East Harlem warehouse, the "war" that Fried envisioned between the forces of minimalism and those of high art would be decided quietly by default, on a colorless, horizontal field of felt scraps, latex sheets, and spattered lead.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," Artforum 5 (June 1967); rpt. in Gregory Battcock, Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology (New York: Dutton, 1968), pp. 116-147.
2. "The New Sculpture" in Art and Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 142.
3. Ibid., p. 141.
4. Ibid., p. 144.
5. Ibid., p. 143.
6. "Notes on Sculpture, part I," Artforum, 4 (February 1966); rpt. in Battcock, pp. 222-223.
7. The Shape of Time (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 27. Morris specifically parodied iconological methodology in his dance piece 21.3. See "The Phenomenal Matrix," in chapter one.
8. Fried, p. 139. Stephen Melville has analyzed Fried's position toward the increasing theatricality of art: "For painting, 'theater' would be the name of a central failure--a failure that remains within the general sphere of the aesthetic and forclozes the possibility of any radical fall out of art altogether. The risk is not that the work might be taken for wallpaper but that its tableau might be misinterpreted as theatrical--might be taken to demand rather than to deny or absorb its beholder. The category of 'theatricality' conceals and constrains a crossing between questions about whether something is art and about whether it is good art; this is part of what it means to write, as Fried does, that 'what lies between the arts is theater.'" See "Notes on the Reemergence of Allegory, the Forgetting of Modernism, the Necessity of Rhetoric, and the Conditions of Publicity in Art and Criticism," October, no. 19, Winter 1981, p. 65. For Fried's ideas on absorption and theatricality, see Michael Fried, Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1980). This book anthologizes, in a revised and expanded form, a number of previously published essays.
9. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 120.
10. "This autonomy," Morris continues, "was not sustained in the work of the greatest American sculptor, the late David Smith." See "Notes on Sculpture, part I," p. 224.
11. Ibid., pp. 226-28.
12. Ibid., p. 228.

13. Rosalind Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility: Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," Artforum, 12 (November 1973); rpt. in Amy Baker Sandback, ed., Looking Critically: 21 Years of Artforum Magazine (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1984), p. 155.

14. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 125.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 128.

17. Krens, Tape 2/side 1, p.1.

18. This point is illustrated by an examination of the early, major exhibitions devoted to the subject of "minimalist" sculpture. Such shows, free of the aggressive critical partisanship that would come to characterize the movement, took a more independent and broad view of the concept of the new sculpture. Kynaston McShine's important "Primary Structures" exhibition for the Jewish Museum [27 April through 12 June 1966] is a case in point. McShine's essay, in its use of such formalist code words as "pictorial," "ambiguous," "mysterious," and "quiet lyricism," does not, in fact, reject the basic conditions of late-formalist sculpture. McShine specifically cites "David Smith's challenge to the new generation" and the "painting that provided the new sculpture with clues to the solution of many of its problems" as examples of channels through which art "could attain a more direct and formal existence." Nowhere does McShine suggest a departure from the conditions of artistic purity so central to the formalist credo. A selective survey of the artists and works in the exhibition tends to sustain this formalist outlook: David Annesley, Michael Bolus, Anthony Caro, Tom Doyle, Peter Forakis, Judy Gerowitz, Daniel Gorski, David Hall, Douglas Huebler, Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Lyman Kipp, Gerald Laing, Salvatore Romano, Michael Todd, Anne Truitt, William Tucker, Richard Van Buren, and Isaac Witkin. The sculptures of these artists ultimately accepted formalist conditions--illusionism, composition, expressive form, and an ambiguous relationship between the pictorial and the sculptural. See Kynaston McShine, "Introduction" in Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1966), n.p.

19. For an important discussion of these sculptural principles see Rosalind Krauss, Terminal Iron Works: The Sculpture of David Smith (Cambridge, Mass. and London: M.I.T., 1979) and Krauss, "Tanktotem: Welded Images" in Passages in Modern Sculpture, pp. 147-200.

20. Goossen, p. 111.

21. The references for this connection are too numerous to list here, since most minimalist criticism (except that of David Antin, Annette

Michelson and Martin Friedman) saw Morris and Judd as representing similar positions within the movement. Friedman correctly differentiates between Judd's stylistically consistent hard-edged forms and Morris's diverse and complex production: "Robert Morris's piece [in the "Industrial Edge"] exhibition consists of four sets of U-shaped, aluminum grating units, set symmetrically along an axis. But such severe and finite form represents only one aspect of Morris's production. Where Judd's art has a predominantly formal bias, Morris's is predominantly involved with issues of perception and ambiguity." Friedman goes on to survey the diversity of Morris's oeuvre. See Martin Friedman, "The Theorists: Judd and Morris" in 14 Sculptors: The Industrial Edge (Minneapolis, Minn.: Walker Art Center, 1969), pp. 13-14

22. Even on the level of the artists' formal production, the differences are clearly established. Morris's "reductivist" or "unitary" forms were made from 1961 to 1967, alongside his dances and performances. Judd's early work (1961-64) was entirely different than Morris's, being far more interested in color, composition, and aesthetics. Eventually Morris abandoned his sober gray plinths, beams, and cubes in favor of his anti-form work. While similarities do exist between Morris's and Judd's work from 1967-68, the former was much more involved in industrial materials and methods that departed from the traditional aesthetics of the art object.

23. "Specific Objects," Arts Yearbook, 1965; rpt. in Donald Judd, Complete Writings, 1959-1975 (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975), p. 184.

24. Allusive objects such as a Jasper Johns's target, Large Construction [1955]; John Anderson's Yoke [1962]; Robert Watts's shoe stand, Untitled [1964]; Robert Rauschenberg's Odalisk [1955-58]; Richard Artschwager's table and chair, Untitled [1964]; George Ortman's Stages of Life [1956]; H.C. Westerman's Untitled [1964]; Lucas Samaras's Book no. 6 (Treasures of the Metropolitan) [1962]; Yayoi Kusama's Boat Accumulation [1962]; Phillip King's Rosebud [n.d.]; Claus Oldenberg's Switches Sketch [1964]; Richard Smith's Quartet [1964]; Tony Delap's Lorna Doone [1964]; Dan Flavin's Three Fluorescent Tubes (Red and Gold) [1963]; Frank Stella's Charlotte Tokayer [1963] as well as Morris's Slab [1963] and Judd's Untitled [1963] illustrated Judd's "Specific Objects" text.

25. Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1967), p. 273.

26. Of the striking, decentering treatment of the audience in the "Happenings" Susan Sontag writes: "The performers may sprinkle water on the audience, or fling pennies or sneeze-producing detergent at it The audience may be made to stand uncomfortably in a crowded room, or fight for space to stand on boards laid in a few inches of water In Allan Kaprow's A Spring Happening, presented in March 1961, at the Reuben Gallery, the spectators were confined inside a long, boxlike

structure resembling a cattle car; peepholes had been bored in the wooden wall of this enclosure through which the spectators could strain to see the events taking place outside; when the Happening was over, the walls collapsed and the spectators were driven out by someone operating a power lawnmower." See Ibid., p. 265.

27. This effect was not evident in Check [1965], the last and least typical dance choreographed by Morris. The work intensified the spectator/performer relationship by employing "forty people...to coalesce and disperse into the audience," a theatrical event that "located [the forty] in [the] zone between performers and audience." Check, in its lack of internal organization, was "purposely antithetical" to Morris's previous dances. The piece had no central focus, climax, dramatic intensity, or continuity of action; it neither involved skill in performance nor demanded continuous attention from the audience. In a room one-hundred by three-hundred feet (the central gallery at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm), seven to eight hundred chairs were placed at random in the center area leaving aisles around the perimeter. Individual performers executed various actions in these aisles. Forty other performers--men, women and children--"wandered" through the entire space. At a given signal, the forty assembled into two groups for simple, simultaneously rendered actions. Repeatedly dispersing upon a signal to resume their wandering, the performers formed, what Morris has termed, a "proto-audience." Since the seven-hundred spectators were free to sit or stand as they wished, the "performed" actions were mostly invisible to them.

28. War will be discussed in "Art as Act: Vietnam, the Museum, and the Art of Protest" in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

29. Krauss, Passages in Modern Sculpture, p. 233. For a detailed history of the Judson Dance Theater in New York City, see Sally Banes, Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-64 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: U.M.I. Research Press, 1983).

30. Morris and Rainer lived together in the mid-1960s, significantly influencing each other.

31. "A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A" in Battcock, pp. 263-73. While Rainer feared that her analogies were "overstated," her position helped to generate an intense reevaluation of the interaction between the New Dance and art. Of the role of the 1960s dance sensibility in shifting the temporal setting of art from the virtual to the operational, Annette Michelson extends Rainer's argument: "Instituting games--and rules for games--within the dance fabric, [the New Dance] engendered a specific logic of movement--and, of course, the possibility of that logic's reversal. Using found materials and the principal of found materials transposed into terms of movement, using techniques of disjunction, setting movement against sound, sound

against music and against speech, operational movement against recorded movement (film), it distended the arena of organized movement, installing within the dance situation within which an action may take the time it takes to perform that action. Neither self-contained, nor engendered by the pre-determined rhythmic or rhetorical patterns, it was not 'synthetic.' See Michelson, p. 57. For a collection of Rainer's writings, see Yvonne Rainer, Work 1961-73 (New York: New York University Press, 1974).

32. Rainer, "A Quasi Survey," p. 270.

33. Ibid.

34. "Dance," The Villiage Voice, 3 February 1966, p. 25.

35. Transcript of a taped interview with Robert Morris by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, 10 March 1968, p. 29. [Morris Archives]

36. In conversation with the author, Gardiner, New York, 11 June 1985.

37. "Notes on Dance," Tulane Drama Review, 6 (Winter 1965), p. 179.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., p. 180-83.

41. See "Space without Centers: Shifters, Indexes, and Traces" in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

42. Baudelaire writes: "Whether these men are nicknamed exquisites, incroyables, beaux, lions or dandies, they all spring from the same womb; they all partake of the same characteristic quality of opposition and revolt; they are all representative of what is finest in human pride, of that compelling need, alas only too rare today, of combating and destroying triviality. It is from this that the dandies obtain haughty exclusiveness, provocative in its very coldness. Dandyism appears above all in periods of transition, when democracy is not yet all powerful, and aristocracy is only just beginning to totter and fall. In the disorder of these times, certain men who are socially, politically and financially ill at ease, but are all rich in native energy, may conceive of the idea of establishing a new kind of aristocracy, all the more difficult to shatter as it will be based on the most precious, the most enduring faculties, and on the divine gifts which work and money are unable to bestow. Dandyism is the last spark of heroism and decadence . . ." Charles Baudelaire, "The Painting of Modern Life," in The Painting of Modern Life and Other Essays, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York:

Da Capo Press, 1964), p. 28. A critique of Baudelaire's notion of the dandy as removed from the labor economy will be discussed later in this section.

43. Morris himself was unsympathetic to the modernist obsession with temperament. In 1971, in an essay entitled "The Art of Existence--Three Extra-Visual Artists: Works in Process," Morris parodied the critical fixation on creative and personal expression. In his analysis of the art of "several younger artists...who are exploring...what I can call 'existence art,'" Morris devised an elaborated field of "biographical" information about a group of fictitious artists. Marvin Blaine makes earth art in Ohio, having "grown up around the mounds of Southern Ohio." Jason Taub, "a 27 year old artist working in San Diego," works on "modulating radio frequencies (rf for short) in a number of ways." Robert Dayton "began doing wall pieces..which involved certain chemical reactions-- primarily acid attacking walls." Complete with fake quotations and illustrations, Morris's elaborate and detailed review overturns the cult of the personality that helped to produce the myths and legends of the modernist epoch. See "The Art of Existence--Three Extra-Visual Artists: Works in Process," Artforum, 10 (January 1971), pp. 28-33.

44. Irving Sandler, unpublished interview with John Cage (6 May 1966); as quoted in Sandler, The New York School: The Painters and Sculptors of the Fifties (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 164.

45. Rainer, "A Quasi Survey," p. 267.

46. Unpublished notation in Morris's dance notebook (1963). [Morris archives]. In eschewing the self-indulgent, Morris asked Jasper Johns--an important figure in the Duchamp/Cage aesthetic--to help him execute the mask for Site. "The stink of artists' egos," Johns had reminded us was the brunt of Duchamp's brilliant puns. For Johns, too, the anonymous ale-cans and coat hangers, though still inflected with the fetishistic touch of the master's hand, were placed in the context of parody: the planar dashes of Cezanne, the cubist facets of Picasso and Braque, the drips of the Action Painter--these signature strokes, these marks of temperament and style--were turned-back on themselves to question the modernist conviction in "creative expression."

47. "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making: The Search for the Motivated," Artforum, 9 (April 1970), p. 62. Morris observed that art history virtually ignored the processes of art making. It was George Kubler, whose Shape of Time served as the central methodological model for Morris's master's thesis on Brancusi, that the artist credits with understanding the significance of the means of art making. Morris writes: "Much attention has been focused on the analysis of the content of art making--its end images--but there has been little attention focused upon the significance of the means. George Kubler in his examination of Machu Picchu is startlingly alone among art historians in his claim that the

significant meanings of this monument are to be sought in reconstructing the particular building activity--the eccentric grinding and fitting of the stones--and not in a formal analysis of the architecture." The Kubler text that Morris refers to is "Machu Picchu," Perspecta, no. 6 (1960).

48. Ibid. p. 63.

49. Ibid.

50. "Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide," Artforum, 12 (February 1973), p. 45.

51. "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making," p. 63.

52. In 1969, Morris curated an "Anti-Form" exhibition at the Leo Castelli Warehouse in New York City that explored the issue of process in the art of the late 1960s. Artists in the show included Alan Saret, Claes Oldenburg, Eva Hesse, Keith Sonnier, Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra, and Steve Kaltembach. For more on this exhibition and its critical implications see section four of this chapter, "Anti-Form: Sensuality and the Dissolution of the Art Object."

53. "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making," p. 64.

54. Ibid., p. 65.

55. "A Method for Sorting Cows," Art and Literature, 11 (Winter 1967); rpt. in Michael Compton and David Sylvester, Robert Morris (London: Tate Gallery, 1971), p. 8.

56. In fact, "A Method for Sorting Cows" describes the actual method used for sorting cows by Morris's father who was in the livestock business. As a child Morris would act as gate man, his father as head man. This information was given in conversation with the author.

57. "Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide," p. 46.

58. Robert Morris, "Films," unpublished manuscript, undated, n.p. [Morris archives]

59. Ibid.

60. In response to a letter written by Jan van der Mack (2 July 1969) requesting a work for the "Art by Telephone" exhibition Morris writes: "I want to make a short film by telephone. For this I'll need a cameraman with a 16 mm camera that can run at high speed for extra slow motion, a telephoto lens, a muscular shirtless athlete and a heavy glass door (perhaps there is one on the front of the museum --I don't recall) . . . Once a cameraman is located I can tell him, by phone or letter, precisely what kind of equipment will be needed." (letter from Robert

Morris to Jan van der Mack, dated 16 September 1969, Morris archives). The "Art by Telephone" exhibition embodied a central issue of advanced art in the 1960s--the idea of the artist as producer and the removal of the artist from the mythologies of expression, temperament, and the organic metaphor. In his letter to participating artists, van der Mack suggested an important modernist source for such thinking: "The precedent for long distance creation goes back to 1922 when Moholy-Nagy, just appointed to the Weimar Bauhaus, set out to prove to his students and his colleagues, Feininger and Klee, that the intellectual approach to creating a work of art is in no way inferior to the emotional approach. Moholy ordered from a sign manufacturing company three steel panels of decreasing size...covered with white porcelain enamel and bearing a simple geometric design in three colors . . . Moholy asked that the manufacturer take a piece of graph paper and a color chart and, with the specifications ready at his end, he dictated the works over the phone." [Morris archives] It might also be added that more recently the Mexican artist Mathias Goeritz also worked by telephone.

61. Eventually the scene was no longer seen in reflection as the camera directly recorded Morris walking further and further into the background. In a second sequence, Morris backed-up from the camera in a straight line to a distance of about two-hundred yards.

62. For more on Finch Project, see Goossen, p. 105.

63. Of the film Neo-Classic, Morris says: "I knew those things would be destroyed and I wanted a visual record of those objects: big balls, round things that rolled. And rather than just photographing them I wanted to see them in motion. Not necessarily the kind of motion they might've had while the show was on. The nude gave the objects a sense of scale. I called [the film] Neo-Classic. The things were so plain and yet so large. They looked like neo-classical architecture. They were all in a plain room and had a kind of smoothness and blankness I associate with neo-classic art...It took a month to build the elaborate devices out of wood. Some were fiberglass. The show had a gradient, from things manipulated with your hand to things that respond to your body and then things you had to make an effort with your body to somehow have access to. So there was a progression."

64. The Art Workers' Coalition was actually conceived on 3 January 1969 at a meeting of several artists and critics (Takis, Tsai, Hans Haacke, Willoughby Sharp, John Perrault, Farman, and Carl Andre) held at the Hotel Chelsea in New York City. The meeting was called to discuss ways in which the art community could become more responsive to social and political matters and at the same time remain true to their respective artistic visions. According to Lucy Lippard, the AWC was formed "when the kinetic artist Takis (Vassilakis) removed a work of art made by him but owned by the Museum of Modern Art, from the museum's "Machine" show, on the grounds that an artist had the right to control the exhibition

and treatment of his work whether or not he had sold it." For a short history and evaluation of the AWC see Lucy Lippard, "The Art Workers' Coalition: Not a History," Studio International, 177 (November 1970:) rpt. as "The Art Workers' Coalition" in Gregory Battcock, ed., Idea Art (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), pp. 102-15.

65. In Jeanne Siegel, "Carl Andre: Art Worker" (interview), Studio International, 177 (November 1970); rpt. in Jeanne Siegel, Artwords: Discourse on the 60s and 70s (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 130. For an important discussion of Marcel Duchamp's readymade concept and its relation to the ideologies of production, an issue that was crucial to Morris in the 1960s, see Molly Nesbit, "Ready-Made Originals," October, no. 37 (Summer 1986), pp. 53-64.

66. Morris's involvement in the activities of the Art Worker's Coalition was relatively marginal. Except for the Coalition's active participation in the various artist's strikes and protests against the Vietnam War, Morris tended to reject its populist campaign and the tendency of its leaders (including Andre) to separate the art object from the political activism of its maker, a position that perpetuated modernist notions of the separateness of art.

67. Although the tendency to periodize is indeed problematic, the special historical context of the 1960s would seem to make it a good exception. The recent tendency of neo-conservative academics to blast the "60s" as an age of moral degradation and eroded intellectual and social values has created an urgent political imperative to fairly reevaluate the period in relation to the age of Reagan--a time when support for the social and cultural programs of the '60s are being slashed or eliminated. It is this threat to the moral and political values of the Left that renders periodicity necessary. For more on this problem, see "Introduction: The Social Text Editors" and Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the '60s" in Sohnya Sayres, et. al., The 60s Without Apology (Minneapolis: Univeraity of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 1-9 and 178-209.

68. The subject of Morris's relation to the political movements of the 1960s is the subject of chapter 3 of this dissertation, "Art as Act: Vietnam, the Museum, and the Art of Protest."

69. "When the New Left was New" in Sayres, et. al., p. 20.

70. The advertisement was reprinted in Sylvester and Compton, p. 9.

71. Morris's archives contain a number of requests for work. Since the advertisement appeared in Studio International, several requests came from Europe, including a letter from a Czechoslovakian artist who wanted to "dam up the upper flow of a brook" and ignite the contents of a drum of gasoline on the surface of the water.

72. "Some of Hans Haacke's Works Considered as Fine Art" in Brian Wallis, ed., Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1986), p. 11.

73. See, for example, Rosalyn Deutsche, "Property Values: Hans Haacke, Real Estate, and the Museum," Brian Wallis, "Institutions Trust Institutions" and Hans Haacke, "Museums, Managers of Consciousness" in Wallis, pp. 20-37, 51-59 and 60-72.

74. Morris's contribution to the 1969 "Anti-Illusion" exhibition at the Whitney Museum was an investment scheme that included the purchasing of art works for the museum's permanent collection. Morris requested that the Whitney's board of directors advance him more than \$100,000 for the project, a request that was refused. Instead, a tightly controlled trust for \$50,000 was issued to Morris with the provision that all purchases were subject to the board's discretion.

75. See chapter 1, fourth section, "Base Concerns: Sexuality, Repression, and the Horizontal Axis."

76. "Work and the Pleasure Principle," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, no. 12 (1943), pp. 314-18.

77. Eros and Civilization (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 220.

78. Ibid., p. 221. Yet, Marcuse's intellectual position--in its blending of Marxian and psychoanalytical devices--does not entirely rest on the issue of class. Unlike Marx, Marcuse's writing, in its utopianism, avoids the cold reality of labor as a constant feature of industrial society. Neither classically Marxist nor Frankfurt School, Marcuse's ideas represent a unique hybrid of late-modernist thought, thinking that is not always convincing in its understanding of the reality of labor and production. On Marcuse's relation to Marx, Barry Katz writes: "The main conclusion to be drawn from Marcuse's work is that Marxism is not a body of empirical propositions nor even a 'method,' as Lukács had proposed in his own attempt to prevent radical thought from being overtaken by historical developments. For Marcuse, Marxism was rather a theory of the 'universal individual,' but one which surpasses simple humanism because it speaks both to the material forces which obstruct its realization and to the existing emancipatory forces that may yet achieve it. Thus he consistently rejected the distinction between the young, allegedly 'humanistic' Marx and the author of the mature critique of political economy, for the concepts of exploitation, surplus-value, profit, and abstract labor reveal the fragmentation of human life in capitalist society and thus contain--in negative form--the substance of a genuine humanism." See Barry Katz, Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation (London: Verso, 1982), pp. 218-19. For an early critique of Marcusean thought, see Alasdair MacIntyre, "Marcuse's Interpretation of Hegel and Marx," "Freud Reinterpreted: Eros and Civilization," "One Dimensional Man: The Critique of Contemporary Society," and "Marcuse's

Program" in Herbert Marcuse: An Exposition and A Polemic (New York: Viking Press, 1970)

79. Marcuse, p. 195.

80. Jean Baudrillard, The Mirror of Production, trans. Mark Poster (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975), p. 39.

81. Ibid., p. 40-41.

82. Morris was fully aware of the political implications of his work and the extent to which the art world economy reflects the greater world of labor and production. On the issue of process, for example, he writes: "Process has its political and economic basis as well, for all theories of art's recent histories are also theories of scarcity in which a given 'line' of works and people are posited as the significant one" ("Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide, p. 44). In effect, Site confronts the problematic liberal tradition that treats the body as capital. Since the human body has no material exchange value, the worker must physically work to survive. Concomitantly, the laborer is constantly subjected to the repressive hierarchies of class structure.

83. T.J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 87.

84. The critic Félix Deriège was one of the first to liken Olympia to a corpse. See Ibid., pp. 97-98.

85. Ibid., p. 88.

86. Norman Bryson draws a less definitive conclusion about Olympia's relation to the working classes. For Bryson, Olympia remains intensionally suspended between the worlds of the courtesane and the prostitute: "The image of Olympia refuses to settle in any legible middle ground between the discourses of the Odalisque and of the Prostitute: it is committed exactly to equivocation, to the equal voicing of both positions; and it knows, its entire conception is aware in advance, that this stubborn commitment means that it will not be read through the existing codes, that it cannot flow smoothly through the existing discursive circuits (what is enduringly impressive about Olympia is the impassivity with which it bears that fore-knowledge; not the illegibility of the girl [woman?!] but of Olympia's address to those who refuse it)." See Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 147. For an important defense of Clark's position see Klaus Herding, "Manet's Imagery Reconstructed," October, no. 37 (Summer 1986), pp. 113-124.

87. Clark, p. 23. Also see Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in Reflections, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), pp. 159-162.

88. Ibid., p. 102.

89. As quoted in Ibid. Simmel's equation, although problematic, addresses society's (and presumably not his own) moralizing tendencies: "The abhorrence that modern 'good' society entertains toward the prostitute is more pronounced the more miserable and the poorer she is, and it declines with the increase in the price for her services." See George Simmel, The Philosophy of Money (London, 1978); as quoted in Clark, p. 291, n. 82.

90. "Painting: The Task of Mourning" in Endgame: Reference and Simulation in Recent Painting and Sculpture (Cambridge, Mass. and London: M.I.T. Press, 1986), p. 37.

91. See fn. 76 above. The Baudelairean ideal of the novel and the new as separate from the situation of the commodity--an ideal that governed the mythical and removed life of the dandy/artist--represents a central myth of the avant-garde. As Yve-Alain Bois observes: "Baudelaire indeed saw the connection between fashion and death, but he did not recognize that the absolute new he searched for all his life was made of the same stuff as the commodity, that it was governed by the same law as the market: the constant return of the same. Benjamin recognized this blind spot of Baudelaire's: that the last defense of art coincided with the most advanced line of attack of the commodity, this remained hidden to Baudelaire." See Ibid., p. 36.

92. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" in Reflections, p. 226. Within these quotation marks, Benjamin is quoting from the writing of Kurt Hiller, the German theoretician of Activism.

93. Ibid., p. 228.

94. See "Strategies of Subversion: The Duchamp Imperative" in chapter 1 of this dissertation. Note especially Morris's comments on Duchamp's last work, Etant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau 2° le gaz d'éclairage [1946-66].

95. "Robert Morris [New York 1972]" (interview) in Achille Bonito Oliva, Dialoghi d'artista: Incontri con l'arte contemporanea, 1970-1984 (Milan: Electa, 1984), p. 83.

96. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 128.

97. "Notes on Sculpture, part IV: Beyond Objects," Artforum, 7 (April 1969), p. 51.

98. Sylvester and Compton, p. 13. For more on Morris's concept of sculptural scale, see "Notes on Sculpture, part II," p. 311.

99. The anthropomorphism of Morris's sculpture was evident as early as his first freestanding work, his Column of 1961. The sculpture, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, was not simply a static art object but the sole "actor" in Morris's first performance piece at the Living Theater in New York City. But the simple performance--the column stood for 3 1/2 minutes, fell, and remained prone for 3 1/2 minutes--was not performed as it was conceived. What was not known to the general public, nor to critics and historians who have subsequently described the piece, was that the hollow column was activated by Morris who was to fall over while standing inside of it. Rather than cold and inorganic, the sculpture was both literally and metaphorically a surrogate for the human body. The use of a string to topple the column was actually a compromise, the result of an accident sustained by Morris during a rehearsal on the day of the performance.

100. The dance critic Jill Johnston has compared the provocative bisexual character played by Lucinda Childs in Morris's erotic dance piece Waterman Switch [1965] to the "neutral" yet confrontational forms of his mature minimalist style.

101. "Eros Presumptive," The Hudson Review (Spring 1967); rpt in Battcock, Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, p. 210.

102. Ibid., pp. 209-10.

103. Ibid., p. 216. Lippard denies the erotic content of Morris's work: "Robert Morris's imprinted penis and vulva in lead reliefs, as well as making a box relief that opens to reveal a photograph of the artist--expressionless, stark and frontally naked. Comparison of these works to Giacometti's Disagreeable Object of 1931 clarifies this change. Object is Surrealist, consciously subconsciously inspired, bristling, literally, with erotic violence and hostility. There is nothing erotic about Morris's objects, nor was there about a still more radical gesture he made in a dance piece in which he and Yvonne Rainer, both nude, and in close but dispassionate embrace, were moved mechanistically across the stage, neutralizing nudity into a condition like any other condition, embrace into an act like any other act . . . Any residue of sexual stimulus in Duchamp's or Morris's work evokes a cerebral rather than an emotional response [p. 215]." Lippard's conservative position presumes that the mechanisms of sexual desire are purely emotional, a position discredited by the work of such figures as Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. See, for example, Deborah Bershad, "Signs of Difference" in Damaged Goods: Desire and the Economy of the Object (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986), pp. 38-41. For an understanding of the function of eroticism in Morris's work of the mid-1960s see David Antin, "Art & Information, 1: Grey Paint, Robert Morris," Art News, 63 (April 1966,) p. 58 and "Base Concerns: Sexuality, Repression, and the Horizontal Axis" in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

104. Unpublished interview by Jack Burnham, 21 November 1975,

p. 7.

105. In contrast to analyses of the minimalist movement as a whole, Morris criticism has occasionally discussed this other side of his oeuvre.

106. "Anti-Form," Artforum, 6 (April 1968), pp. 33-35.

107. Sylvester and Compton, p. 105. It should be noted, of course, that Sylvester and Compton's notion of entropy differs markedly from Robert Smithson's more radical conception. Smithson's process oriented paradigm, for example, refused the idea of replacing a work of art that had been damaged or eroded. For Smithson, entropy would necessarily include the processes of disolution and decay. See "Art Outside the Museum: Land Reclamation, Earthworks, and Ecology," Chapter Three of this dissertation.

108. Ibid.

109. "Notes on Sculpture, part IV: Beyond Objects," p. 54.

110. Sylvester and Compton, p. 105.

111. Ibid.

112. "Notes on Sculpture, part IV: Beyond Objects," p. 54.

113. Ibid.

114. "Robert Morris Presents Anti-form," Arts Magazine, 43 (February 1969), p. 30.

115. "Anti-Form," p. 35.

116. "The Shape of the Art Environment: How Anti Form is 'Anti-Form'?" Artforum, 6 (Summer 1968), p. 32.

117. It is also important to acknowledge that Morris himself realized the extent to which anti-form arrangements had discrete shapes: "Most of the new work under discussion is still a spread of substances or things that is clearly marked off from the rest of the environment and there is not any confusion about where the work stops. In this sense, it is discrete but not objectlike. It is still separate from the environment so in the broadest sense is figure upon a ground. Except for some outside work which removes even the frame of the room itself, here the 'figure' is literally the 'ground.'" See "Notes on Sculpture, part IV: Beyond Objects," p. 51.

118. I should like to thank Kathy O'Dell for discussing with me the innovative aspects of Kaprow's critique of the museum. As O'Dell relates, this attitude was fostered by Kaprow's disillusionment with the

experience of his 1964 "Push and Pull" participatory environment at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. "Push and Pull" was at once a tribute to Kaprow's former teacher Hans Hofmann and a parody of Hofmann's idea of compositional push and pull. Spectators were asked to enter a room and to literally push and pull furniture around according to their own design. Viewers, now granted a new level of prestige, were uncomfortable in the classic museum setting and were unresponsive to Kaprow's instructions (or so the artist thought). For a discussion of his rejection of the hierarchies of the museum see Allan Kaprow, "Death in the Museum," Arts Magazine, 41 (February 1967), pp. 49-51. For a history of Kaprow's development from 1959-1979, see Kathy O'Dell, "Allan Kaprow: The Artist as Educator," unpublished master's thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1982.

119. Kaprow, "The Shape of the Art Environment," pp. 32-33.

120. See, for example, Friedman, pp. 13-14.

121. "Notes on Sculpture, part IV: Beyond Objects," p. 51.

122. See "Base Concerns: Sexuality, Repression and the Horizontal Axis" in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

123. As quoted in David Bourdon, "The Razed Sites of Carl Andre," Artforum, 5 (October 1966); rpt. in Battcock, Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, p. 104.

124. "Notes on Sculpture, part IV: Beyond Objects," p. 53.

125. "Base Materialism and Gnosticism" in Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-39, trans. Allan Stoekl ((Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 51. While Morris was unaware of Bataille's writings at this time (Bataille's texts had not yet been translated into English), he was interested in the concepts of Gnosticism. Morris, for example, had discussed the principles of Gnosticism with the critic Jack Burnham. In a letter dated 3 November 1975, Burnham suggested that Morris read a recently published book on the subject, Patrizia Norelli-Bachelet, The Gnostic Circle: A Synthesis in the Harmonies of the Cosmos. [Morris archives]

126. Stanley Aronowitz has organized the voices of counterculture in the 1960s into two distinct camps: the politics of direct democracy and the politics of the erotic revolution. "The second," he writes, "were the cultural radicals, the artists, the writers and, above all, the rock musicians and their audience, for whom the erotic revolution was a political movement." While Aronowitz goes on to say that it is important to recognize the difference between the two, it is clear that in certain instances, including Morris's art, some overlap exists. See Aronowitz, p.24.

127. Oliva, p. 75.

128. Ibid.

129. "The Eruption of Anti-Art" in Battcock, Idea Art, pp. 115-34.

130. An Essay on Liberation ((Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 40. For an analysis of Marcuse's idea of "Anti-Art" in relation to the politics of the art world, see Gregory Battcock, "Marcuse and Anti-Art," Arts Magazine, Summer 1969, pp. . Battcock, for example, defines the Anti-Art concept as follows: " In order for a statement to be awarded the "Anti-Art" label, such a statement must, in some way, demand (require) a change in the prevailing receptive capabilities. Therefore, it must not only be difficult to accept as art, but it must be unacceptable as art. The assumption is that only the work of art that is unacceptable is capable of forcing a readjustment, a change, a disruption, a revolution of those capabilities and faculties that ultimately determine the meaning and effectiveness for the individual of all information received."

131. As had been pointed-out, "And what, according to Marcuse, are these counterrevolutionary anti-forms? [emphasis mine] They [according to Marcuse] are 'poems which are simply ordinary prose cut up in verse lines' and 'paintings which substitute a merely technical arrangement of parts and pieces for any meaningful whole.' Thus, in one fell swoop, Professor Marcuse has relegated virtually all contemporary art forms (cinema, literature, art, and music) to the realm of anti-form, thus inhibiting radical revamping of the bourgeois tradition. He claims that such forms are 'incapable of bridging the gap between 'real life' and art" Gregory Battcock, "Art in the service of the Left," in Ibid., p. 25.

132. Meyer, p. 133.

133. This conclusion can be made not only because, as Theodore Roszak reported, "Marcuse . . . had become 'hot feature material' for the American and European press in the wake of the 1968 student rebellions," but because Morris himself was involved with Marcusean thought throughout the late 1950s and 1960s. Roszak was quoted in Ibid., p. 130.

134. Eros and Civilization, p.180.

135. Phenomenology of Perception, p. 283.

136. Battcock, Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, p. 146.

137. This ironic possibility was suggested by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh in a panel discussion at the DIA Foundation in New York City on 23 February 1987. The panel, "1967-1987: Theories After Minimalism and Pop," included, in addition to Buchloh, Michael Fried, Rosalind Krauss, and Hal Foster and was principally concerned with reevaluating Fried's "Art at

Objecthood" in the context of the art and theory of the 1970s and '80s.

CHAPTER THREE

Art as Protest: The Vietnam War, the Museum and the Ecological Movement

No one was killed, but many people were frightened. Injuries were reported. "The public got into . . . a somewhat overzealous participation," observed one spectator. "They were jumping and screaming . . . the middle-aged in particular. The children were the most sensible." In the "first" room was a large granite roller to walk around on. Nearby were two sets of steel ramps with large heavy forms to haul up and down on a rope. The "second" room--a monumental, neo-classical rotunda--housed a large wooden ball that was to be kicked around a circular track. A low tight-rope and a walking beam spanned the "third" (and final) room alongside a steel ledge to balance on, broad steel ramps, assorted slots and tunnels, and a set of vertical "chimneys" for climbing. The environment reverberated with the hard, cold edges of steel and concrete, suggesting an ambience of manipulation and control.

The events described occurred in a most unlikely place: a stately London art museum. The people involved were visitors to the museum, their tasks prescribed by specific instructions posted on the walls.

Expecting mild enthusiasm, the directors of the institution were not prepared for the public's radical response. The environment "produced an electric social atmosphere; individual exhilaration [became] group exhilaration, people wanted to do things together." For some, however, the experience of being in these crowded rooms, with those severe objects, proved claustrophobic and alienating; their reaction was nearly violent. Within a few days, the rooms "were a shambles." Objects still standing were in danger of collapsing. Five days after the show opened it was closed to "protect the public."

The exhibition that caused so much confusion and chaos was not of medieval instruments of torture but rather of stringently symmetrical and crisply geometric sculpture. The show was an attempt by the Tate Gallery in May 1971 to mount an "authoritative" retrospective of the minimalist art of Robert Morris [Figs. 39 and 40].¹

I. Redefining the Institution: The Museum as a Space of Dissent

The Tate incident represents but one instance of the protests waged by advanced artists in this period against the social order of the museum.² The "authoritative" part of the original Tate exhibition, a

retrospective of the artist's work of the 1960s, was reduced by Morris to several refabricated sculptures, photographic reproductions and a slide show. For the "actual" exhibition, Morris erected three architectonic theaters of viewer participation, fields where traditional notions of the autonomy of art and the reified nature of the exhibition space were overturned. The commissioners of the Tate Gallery did not count on Morris's resistance to the historicizing rigidity of the concept of the "retrospective." In fact, several days after the show was closed, it was reopened as a hastily organized retrospective of Morris's works from the permanent collection and of objects loaned by local collectors and museums. Morris had already returned to the United States, offering the museum yet another opportunity to assert its imperatives over the wishes of the artist and the enthusiastic visitors to the museum.

A year before the Tate closing, Morris was involved in another celebrated protest against the venerated status of the museum. In 1969, Marcia Tucker, then an associate curator at the Whitney Museum, offered Morris a retrospective at the Whitney to open in late spring 1970. While Morris agreed in principle to exhibit at the museum, he vehemently refused the idea of a retrospective. He wanted the monetary value of the exhibited works, as in the Tate installation, to be no greater than the cost of materials and labor, a concept alien to an institution committed to a permanent collection of important and valuable art objects. In a letter dated 28 December 1969, Morris offered the Whitney an ultimatum:

either he would construct a site-specific installation or he would refuse to exhibit. "I feel a separate room of older objects shown somewhere off the third floor," Morris replied to the compromise suggested by Tucker, "is antithetical to the position I take with respect to this show and the point I want to make about a redefinition of the possibilities for one-man shows in contemporary museums of art . . . my hope is that the museum can support a showing situation which allows the artist an engagement rather than a regurgitation: a situation of challenge for the public and risk for the artist."³ In the end, Morris prevailed, and, on 9 April 1970, the artist's sprawling participatory exhibition opened at the Whitney Museum.⁴

The installation was both complex and monumental. The center piece of the show, Morris's largest installation to date, necessitated the clearing away of all partitions from the Whitney's 108 foot long third-floor gallery. The work was essentially a primitive system for moving concrete blocks that weighed more than 1,500 pounds each. Using timbers and steel pipes, Morris and his crew erected three tracks, each 90 feet long. The concrete blocks were eventually pushed by hand with pipe rollers to the end of the tracks where they were intentionally crashed to the floor. The large number of blocks accumulating at one end of the tracks eventually caused the entire structure to collapse under the intense weight [Fig. 41]. Entirely rejecting the tradition of finished aesthetic objects, the installation juxtaposed the dynamic of construction

and process with that of destruction. "As workmen moved in with gantries, forklifts and hydraulic jacks to help Morris do his thing," wrote Time magazine, "the museum took on the look of a midtown construction site."⁵ The museum even dispensed with a formal opening, instead allowing interested museumgoers to observe Morris and his crew at work.⁶ In the end, it must be said, the unproblematic division of labor--the artist as boss to a crew of workers--was rather traditional.

The Whitney installation's more successful strategy of subversion was revealed two weeks before the exhibition's scheduled closing when Morris released, without warning, the following statement simultaneously to the museum's trustees and to the press:

I am asking the Whitney Museum to close my one-man show of sculpture I do not consider this a unilateral action but an action taken in concert with the majority decision made Wednesday, May 13, by the participating artists, of whom I am one, in the Jewish Museum show, Using Walls The extension of this act of closing to a second cultural institution is intended to underscore the need . . . to shift priorities at this time from art making and viewing to unified action within the art community against the intensifying conditions of repression, war, and racism in this country.

I furthermore ask the Whitney Museum to take an unequivocal stand on these issues by the following actions: (1) Make a statement of position. (2) Suspend all normal cultural functions for this two week period. (3) Direct their energies and resources during this period toward making available staff and space for meetings open to every level of the art community. (4) Directly engage in initiating meetings and discussions with other major museum staffs toward making similar moves.

A lack of vigorous, positive response to these four proposals can only be interpreted as condoning the militarist and repressive policies which the faculty of the School of Visual Arts and participants in the current Jewish Museum show have publicly abhorred. Beyond this a reassessment of

the art structure itself seems timely--its values, its policies, its mode of control, its economic presumptions, its hierarchy of existing power and administration--with the view of changing that which is outmoded and corrodes our lives as people and artists.⁷

While his demands for a realignment of the Whitney's priorities were ignored, Morris's exhibition was closed on May 17 and subsequently removed from the museum. His actions, motivated by the continuing escalation of the Vietnam War, were directly in response to the tragic killing of four student protesters at Kent State University in Ohio on 4 May 1970 by national guardsmen. Nine days after the Kent shootings, a group of artists participating in the Using Walls exhibition at the Jewish Museum voted to force the closing of that show as a means of redirecting the role of the museum in a time of great social and political unrest.⁸

"Artists are used to dealing with their own egos," Morris remarked about the Whitney closing in a profile on him in the then politically liberal New York Post. "They're not used to organizing and they prefer to be uninvolved in politics. The catalyst was the deaths of the students. A lot of us had strong feelings about Vietnam and Cambodia, but Kent State galvanized us into action. We identified with the students. Museums are our campuses."⁹

Less than a year after the Whitney closing, a group of artists participating in the sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum (11 February-11 April 1971) strongly objected to the presence in the show of a large striped cotton banner by Daniel Buren

that was installed in such a way as to obstruct the view across the building's impressive atrium.¹⁰ The work was consistent with Buren's radical practice of deploying the same 8.7 centimeter wide stripes in galleries and museums as well as in streets all over the world.¹¹ Buren's desire to work outside of the conventions of the museum--to overturn the myths of originality and autonomy that had fueled the modernist vision--was unconvincing to the artists in the Guggenheim International whose territorial rights were allegedly violated by the intrusive presence of the blue and white banner. (It can be convincingly argued that Buren's attempt to seize territory at the expense of fellow artists was, in fact, anti-democratic and even authoritarian.) Under intense pressure from this small but vocal group of artists (lead by sculptor Dan Flavin), many of whom were unsympathetic to Buren's aesthetic position, the museum removed the work from the exhibition without prior agreement from the artist.¹² Robert Morris vehemently opposed the decision: "I wish to go on record as not having been one of the artists in the Guggenheim International Exhibition who felt his work endangered or disturbed by Mr. Buren's work," he wrote in a statement released to Guggenheim curator Diane Waldman on 15 February 1971. "Furthermore, I deplore the fact that no attempt was made to arrive at a consensus of how all of the artists in the show felt about Buren's work. A few artists complained and the work was removed. This is insulting to Mr. Buren and once again shows evidence of the cavalier, oppressive, and fascistic type of control exercised by museums."¹³

It was in this ambience of cynicism and suspicion that Morris's Tate Gallery installation opened. There were those critics who, like Allan Kaprow, believed that Morris's willingness to work within the museum's institutional frame ultimately undercut the effectiveness of his protests. In London, critics were sharply divided on the issue. Conservatives found the Tate antics shocking and destructive--a needless attack on the respectability of one of England's great institutions.¹⁴ Radicals, such as critic Peter Fuller, concluded that the Tate installation failed to go far enough, relating to the spectator in a manner "not that different from a colorful afternoon at the Battersea Fun Fair"¹⁵: "If . . . [Morris] really meant half of what he says he would be down in Harlem somewhere, trying his experiments in a real life situation The Academy and Morris at the Tate, both illustrate the current inability of the visual arts to communicate anything meaningful to a grass-roots audience. They are both located firmly within the system. The Academy is a kind of Fortnum & Mason's, but without anything like the style. Morris is an inflated guru for the art school avant-garde, who believes that you have done quite enough if you teach people that their feet are between five and six feet away from the top of their head."¹⁶

Fuller's criticism reechoed the sentiments of an important and radical sector of the art world, exemplified by the work of Hans Haacke and Daniel Buren, that to an extent functioned outside of the space and/or

mainstream issues of the museum. Haacke's direct social commentaries--on the real estate market's disenfranchisement of the poor, on the considerations of race and class that result in oppression, on the art world's complicity in such establishment ventures as the Vietnam War and the financial support of South Africa--spoke to real political issues, eschewing the polite games of perception and individual reception prized by minimalism's relatively purist aesthetic. Daniel Buren, addressed the exhaustion of the modernist conviction in autonomous objects by deploying his ubiquitous stripes on billboards, on buildings, and even on people. "Art is not above ideologies," stated Buren at the time of the Guggenheim incident, "but a part of them. In the case of the 'avant-garde' art is a reflection of a dominant ideology--in our society, that of the bourgeoisie." ¹⁷ Yet most of Haacke's major installations and many of Buren's were exhibited in the upper-class realm of the museum and the gallery, as they practiced within the system to undermine its oppressive conventions and hierarchies. ¹⁸

Morris's activism against the war in Vietnam frequently sent him out of the galleries and museums and into the streets and speaking halls. The day after his Whitney closing, more than 1500 artists, dealers, museum officials and other members of the art community attended a meeting at New York University's Loeb Student Center to "plan a coordinated policy in protesting United States . . . [involvement in the Vietnam War] and to reassess the art world's priorities."¹⁹ The original

idea for the gathering came from the faculty of the School of Visual Arts in New York City in response to the "recent events in Cambodia and at Kent State University, and the wave of student strikes across the country."²⁰ The Loeb conference elected Robert Morris and Poppy Johnson as its co-chairpersons, a vote that, in part, reflected the general admiration for Morris's withdrawal from the Whitney Museum. In an accompanying statement, Morris informed the gathering that his Whitney protest was intended to "underscore the need . . . to shift priorities at this time from art making and viewing to unified action within the art community against the intensifying conditions of repression, war and racism in this country."²¹ Others who addressed the meeting included Poppy Johnson, Carl Andre, Irving Petlin, as well as representatives of the Art Students' Coalition, Women Artists in Revolution, the Art Workers' Coalition, Artists and Writers in Protest, and the Student Committee of Artists United.

Accompanied by enthusiastic applause and cries of "Right On," the Loeb Conference approved the following resolutions:

- That a one-day strike be declared on Friday [22 May 1970] to close museums and galleries as a protest against the war; with optional continuance for two weeks.
- That an 'emergency cultural government' be formed to sever all collaboration with the Federal Government on artistic activities.
- That artists take over the ground floor of galleries and museums to help politicize visitors.
- That a tithe-- 10 percent--be imposed on the sale of every work of art to go into a fund for peace activities.²²

Representing about 40 of New York City's art galleries, Klaus Kertess,

director of the Bykert Gallery, affirmed the dealers' support of a one-day closing "as an indication of solidarity within the art community."²³

Furthermore, Kertess added that the dealers would agree to the use of their galleries as information centers for peace activities.

The following evening, in Yvonne Rainer's loft on Greene Street, a group of about 35 people were invited to organize the strike action. With Morris as chairman, the steering committee initially voted to demand the closing of five museums on the day of the strike--the New York Cultural Center, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art--but later decided to close the Metropolitan first and to proceed to the others if they refused to participate in the strike.²⁴ The committee was split in some areas: The two black artists present, for example, attempted without success to reconstitute the steering committee to include equal numbers of blacks, Puerto Ricans, and whites.²⁵ Women--shamefully ignored by much of the New Left in the 1960s--were characteristically underrepresented at the meeting (one of the few women invited served as the recording secretary), eliciting another unsuccessful proposal to establish gender as well as racial quotas.²⁶

On Friday, May 22, the first of the protesters arrived on the steps of the Metropolitan a half hour before the museum's scheduled opening. Typical of such protest scenes in New York during the Vietnam era, the

dissidents were confronted by a battalion of helmeted policemen. As visitors patiently waited to enter the museum, they were handed pink leaflets by the strikers that reiterated the earlier Loeb Center demands. In addition to a second, non-public leaflet that offered a plan of action in case the museum did not close, the arriving demonstrators were given black posters lettered in white: "Art Strike Against Racism, War, Repression." Responding to the strikers, the museum distributed a leaflet that stated the Metropolitan's sympathies with "the needs and wishes of the artistic community" as well as its refusal to close because "its responsibility to the people of New York is best served by remaining open and allowing art to work its salutary effect on the minds and spirits of all of us." ²⁷

As patrons sympathetic to the demonstrators turned away from the Metropolitan, Joseph Nobel, the museum's vice director issued a proposal to Morris (who was also chairman of the Metropolitan strike): the museum would agree to close for one hour if the crowd would agree to disperse immediately after the closing. The group voted unanimously to reject the museum's compromise. Throughout the day the artists preached to potential visitors, maneuvered to block museum entrances, haggled with police and debated with museum officials. For about an hour in the early afternoon, the second-floor European painting galleries were indeed closed, presumably to preclude any acts of vandalism. At this time., a group of policemen flanked the fortified band of protesters

(sympathetic museum staffers and bystanders increased its ranks to an estimated 500 people). "The head cop walked toward us with a bull horn," recounted one observer. "Some felt stricken with terror, thinking here it comes: they're going to drag us off!"²⁸

The police eventually retreated, and by late afternoon the group overwhelmingly approved Morris's proposal to continue the strike until 10 p.m., the museum's extended closing-time for that day. Later in the evening, brooms were distributed to the demonstrators and debris was swept up, erasing all evidence of protest and returning the Metropolitan steps to their sober dignity. Just before the group disbanded Morris called for a minute of silence: "I think we have been heard today," he proclaimed as the weary protesters emerged from their moment of contemplation. Twelve hours after the strike began it was over. "I feel exhilarated," said one artist. "There is another way to be an artist!" In the end, though, little had really changed. The next day, on an ordinary Saturday morning in late May, the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened its imposing bronze doors to a crowd of enthusiasts who, unaware of the shattered silence of the day before, desired only to commune with the mute and stately objects of art history.²⁹

Other activities of the Art Strike met with similar indifference. On June 1, for example, the New York Artists' Strike "confronted" the 65th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Museums with a set of

demands that would be virtually ignored. While the 30 dissident artists, brandishing protest banners as they invaded the speaker's rostrum, were able to disrupt the meeting for 20 minutes, they were later relegated to small, private meetings with sympathetic delegates. The Emergency Cultural Government Committee (a subgroup of the New York Artists' Strike that included Morris, Irving Petlin, Frank Stella, and the art critic Max Kozloff) waged the Art Strike's most successful boycott, withdrawing 26 artists from the American Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in protest "against the U.S. government's policies of racism, sexism, repression and war."³⁰ As compensation for the Biennale withdrawal, the ECG sponsored an exhibition of graphic work (at the Museum, an alternative space at 729 Broadway in New York City), open to any artist who wished to participate. The egalitarian structure of the show was the result of a challenge by the group WSABAL (Women, Students, and Artists for Black Art Liberation) that questioned an earlier proposal's validity in limiting the exhibition to the predominantly white and male artists who had withdrawn from the Biennale. "It is hoped," stated the press release, "that this new liberated show will go a step beyond the mere renunciation of government sponsorship by a few known artists in an international show."³¹ A month after the announcement of the Biennale action, a group of artists and dealers headed by Robert Morris mobilized for a Washington journey in order to brief members of the Senate Subcommittee on the Arts and Humanities.³² Asked by the Senators how they could help, Robert Rauschenberg snapped, "Put on more government

shows we can withdraw from."³³

Rauschenberg's retort suggests the reactive, confused nature of the Artists' Strike Against Racism, Repression, and War. By the end of 1970, the movement--with neither an intellectual nor a political program to unify its disparate factions--collapsed under the weight of dissension and disagreement: "[The Art Strike] concept began to come apart in terms of other interest groups within . . . the organization," observed Morris a decade later. ". . . The consensus weakened There were no common actions that could be agreed upon. It just began to dissipate very quickly."³⁴ Most of the Art Strikers did not consider their art intrinsically political or social, a problem that resulted in a divisive split between the purity of their artistic vision and the activism resulting from their frustration with the Vietnam War. Because of his stylistic diversity, Morris was more successful than most in reconciling aesthetics with politics as he augmented his abstract geometries with dances, conceptual art, advertisements, installations, and earthworks that sometimes directly addressed current social issues.

"In direct response"³⁵ to the United States bombing of Cambodia in 1970, for example, he produced a series of drawings and a suite of five lithographs depicting visionary war memorials such as "Trench with Chlorine Gas," "One-Half Mile Concrete Star with Names," and "Scattered Atomic Waste."³⁶ For the 1969 "Art and Technology" exhibition curated

by Maurice Tuchman for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Morris proposed that the massive air conditioners and heaters of the type used in the ground-support phase of ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) technology be buried in a square mile of ranch land in Irvine, California [Fig. 42]. The machine-generated hot and cold air would be vented in the ground, an effect designed to denaturalize and distort the pastoral experience. (His drawing for the work was based freely on a Rembrandt etching of three trees.) "One could wander around and come upon these local changes of temperature--a cold wind blowing out of an otherwise still tree or stones radiating heat . . ." ³⁷ The disturbing and disorienting effects and the anti-war message of Los Angeles Project II, however, overstepped the boundaries of an exhibition "designed to bring artists into contact with the resources of modern industry and its related technologies." ³⁸ Even though the productivist ideologies of post-revolutionary Russia informed Tuchman's thinking, the controversial project was abandoned when the corporation matched with Morris--a major producer of aeronautics technology--withdrew its support. ³⁹

Morris's pacifist sentiments were not exclusive to the Vietnam War. In late October 1962, he executed 13 drawings titled Crisis in response to the harrowing events of the Cuban missile crisis [Fig. 43]. ⁴⁰ The drawings--gray washed pages from three New York tabloids bearing anxious and inflammatory headlines--created ironic juxtapositions between artfully subdued surfaces and the harsh, manipulative language

lurking beneath them. Like Morris's gray plinths and cubes (the identical paint was used for Crisis), the meaning of these drawings unfolded temporally, even cinematically, as the viewer gradually apprehended the bits and pieces of their horrific narratives. As pristine, minimalist surfaces rapidly dissolved into hysterical warnings of nuclear annihilation the petty demands of high culture no longer seemed relevant.⁴¹

On a late October evening in 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis, the minimalist artist Robert Huot and Morris began discussing urban violence and theories about its origins in class and race. As a possible outlet for the frustrations and tensions that resulted in these violent acts, Huot proffered the idea of a festive jousting tournament--a theme that would become the basis of a dance duet, War, which premiered at the Judson Memorial Church on 30 January 1963. For the performance, Morris and Huot individually, and in secret, crafted armor and weapons (Morris's shield was adorned with a large photograph of President Eisenhower), agreeing only to make them breakable and harmless [Fig. 44]. Psyching each other with voodoo dolls and taunts, the two began their dance in total darkness as the composer LaMonte Young played a large gong for three minutes: "Suddenly light flooded the space," recounted Huot. "Morris and I were at the far end of the [Judson] gym. We hesitated for a few seconds, turned and charged at each other. We collided and at the moment of impact released a pair of white doves. We battled as the doves flapped overhead. When we ran out of weapons we

battled hand to hand, rolling toward the audience. As we reached them, the lights went out and LaMonte played again for three minutes."⁴² While lacking the ideological complexity of such dances as Waterman Switch and Site, the Huot/Morris collaboration nevertheless served both as a disturbing reminder of the cold war ideologies that resounded in America and a parody of the explosive, egoistic temperament and machismo that colored the art and ideas of Abstract Expressionism.

The ideology of Morris's production--the political foundation of his art--went beyond social content and political protest to a complex and fundamentally political reorientation of how art objects are displayed and received. Morris's rethinking of art's institutional frame specifically recovered aspects of avant-gardist production begun in the 1920s and 30s in the Soviet Union, Holland, and Germany that not only chose to "negate the category of individual production but also that of individual reception."⁴³ The public's reaction to dada performances, for example, which ranged from shouting and fisticuffs to the near clashing of firearms, had most often been mobilized by the provocative, frequently threatening, tone of the event. And given the avant-garde's intention both to disrupt historically accepted models of art production and to "do away with art as a sphere that is separate from the praxis of life,"⁴⁴ it is only logical that fundamental shifts would be manifested in the relationship between producer and recipient.

Morris's deployment of geometric form in his deconstruction of the political basis of modernist institutions was not, of course, new to the history of modernism; its projection within the avant-gardist commentary on industrial progress and production was evident as early as the 1920s. "Perhaps the artists should be integrated into society," Morris has observed, "and in some way improve the quality of life . . . [as] Marcuse has [advocated] . . . [It was] that opinion [that] was taken by some of the Russians in the 20s, people like Tatlin, for example."⁴⁵ A significant blow was indeed struck in the Soviet Union, during the post-revolutionary period, with the emergence of a "paradigm change within modernism,"⁴⁶ one that eschewed the elegant brushwork and illusionism of cubism for the hard-edged geometries of constructivism. The constructivists, concentrating on the basic material and ideological options involved in the production of art, engaged in a radical reevaluation of art in society, a reappraisal that resulted in fundamental changes in the form and exhibition of the art object.

In the end, constructivism advocated a dismantling of the myth of the individual master in favor of an art oriented to collective and utilitarian practice. The concern for faktura in Soviet avant-garde painting--for resolutely flat, unpainterly surfaces--contradicted the traditional idea of "facture," a validation of the masterful stroke of the painter's hand, guaranteeing authenticity, uniqueness, and exchange value. Faktura emphasized "precisely the mechanical quality, the

materiality, and the anonymity of the painter's procedure,"⁴⁷ thus establishing a connection between art and industrial production. "Henceforth the picture ceased being a picture and became a painting or an object," wrote Alexander Rodchenko. "The brush gave way to new instruments with which it was convenient and easy and more expedient to work the surface. The brush which had been so indispensable in painting which transmitted the object and its subtleties became an inadequate and imprecise instrument in the new-objective painting and the press, the roller, the drawing pen, the compass replaced it."⁴⁸ And while the constructivist vision was preeminently Utopian, it nevertheless supported an unprecedented materialist matter-of-factness--a sensibility consistent with the introduction of industrialization and social engineering in the post-revolutionary Russia.⁴⁹

The radicalism of avant-gardist art of the 1920s--which in addition to constructivism would have to include Dadaism and to some extent De Stijl--was essentially political, its goal to discredit, or at least to reevaluate, the forms and institutions of dominant bourgeois culture.⁵⁰ Such radicalism was driven by the will to overturn shopworn notions of the art object's autonomy, its existence outside the actual temporal experience of the spectator.⁵¹ In rejecting these autonomist notions, Morris's art participated both in a reevaluation of the art object's deployment and display as well as its reception by the viewer. Morris often pushed individual contact to its extreme, forcing the art object and

viewer into a complex, intrinsically phenomenological relationship: the dead-ended maze of Passageway, the horizontal scatterings of anti-form, the psychosexual narrative of Waterman Switch, the disorienting, startling journey proposed for Los Angeles Project II, the ramps and tunnels of the Tate Gallery installation all speak to a direct and provocative engagement of the spectator. As calls for the "desublimation" of Western society and the liberation of human sexuality resounded in the 1960s, Morris attempted to liberate the previously cloistered and anxious relationship between object and spectator. While the phenomenological imperatives of his oeuvre were problematic, the experiential dynamic of his work contributed to his conception of art as a distinctly social as opposed to aesthetic phenomenon.

Morris's social conception of art and culture was so pervasive that in 1970 he began researching a book to be co-authored with Poppy Johnson that proposed to examine "the modes of radical thought" in twentieth-century art.⁵² The study--a comprehensive discussion of the "relationships between radical art of the last half-century and radical political action of...the same period"⁵³-- touched on several then underestimated areas of avant-gardist culture: The constructivist renunciation of aesthetics and a Marxist reading of the social motivations of sectors of modernist art; the "peoples" art of the Works Progress Administration, 1930s regionalism, and 1960s black art; the "roots of modernist mainstream art within the bourgeois classes"; and the

"reduction of the economic base within 'high' art to make it available to large numbers of people" and the extent to which the aims of this art are contradicted by the demands of the gallery system.⁵⁴ By avoiding a formalist "survey" of objects, Morris felt that the book could transcend the methods of traditional art history.⁵⁵ "I [will] seek to find the 'mental structure' for radical action," he wrote. "This definition would draw on certain philosophical and psychological work as well--i.e., Piaget and Merleau-Ponty would be examined in an effort to go beyond the context of either art or politics as such. Concepts of freedom, necessity, power and history would be taken up and related to individuals such as Duchamp, Lenin, Trotsky, and Pollock, to pick just a few at random. How these individuals relate to their respective groups, how such groups provide a context for their actions would be examined [In] the end . . . [I will] locate a structure for radical thought and action by examining psychological, historical, and artistic instances" ⁵⁶

While such a project was never completed, Morris's notes and proposals for the book offer considerable insight into his thoughts concerning the relationship between art and politics: the modernist mainstream as opposed to the radical avant-garde, the interchange between 'high' and 'low' culture, and the institutions of late industrial society--issues feared by the formalist hegemony.⁵⁷ That most discussions of Morris oeuvre have avoided the political implications of his work, particularly in light of the '60s social climate that helped shape his

thinking, is consistent with the critical practices of formalism. In a world of vested interests based on class--where even the atrocities of a raging and destructive war could not close the Metropolitan Museum for a day--Morris's discussions of the political economy of the art world were perceived as irrelevant. The guardians of high culture, anxious to distance themselves from charges of exploitation, will always invoke comfortable clichés of the dandy and the bohemian. Such mythologies disguise the reality that many artists live in poverty or that those fortunate enough to sell their work serve a commodity system that brokers their art and robs them of a voice in the distribution and exhibition of their work. Myths of individualism and classlessness are advanced even by artists themselves in a vain effort to evade issues that could make them unpopular. In an atmosphere of counterculture and protest, Morris challenged this complacency:

Art is always suffused with political meanings. One such meaning has to do with the class interests any particular art serves. All art serves some class interest since such interests provide the very ground upon which art is sustained. If there is a political context for the emergence of any art there is also one for its entombment in history . . . the so-called modernist mainstream is a political document which registers certain class interests besides being a collection of physical objects.

Artists' lives are bound within the repressive structure of the art world: The iron triangle is made up of museums, galleries, and the media. All three . . . wield power over artists while maintaining a symbiotic dependence on them. In most every case status quo economic interests support this iron triangle and effect policies coming from each corner of it. The repressive structures within the art world parallel those outside it. But while this should generate protest action on a broad front it has not done so until recently . . . Primarily artists want to be left alone to do their work and consequently they do not develop political consciousness but prefer instead a paternalistic patronage and support. In the beginning. . . it

is difficult just to exist and the slightest pittance of a reward generally mollifies and silences every artist.⁵⁸

II. Art Outside the Museum: Land Reclamation, Earthworks, and Ecology

Or is art beyond good and evil? It can and does flourish in the worst moral climates. Perhaps because it is amoral it can deal with all manner of social extremes Art erodes whatever seeks to contain and use it and inevitably seeps into the most contrary recesses, touches the most repressed nerve, finds and sustains the contradictory without effort. Art has always been a very destructive force, the best example being its capacity constantly to self-destruct, as in the sinking of modernism once it became a set of established rules that rationalize a procedure, a life style. Art has always been dependent upon and served one set of forces or another with little regard for the morality of those forces (pharaoh, pope, nobility, capitalism). It makes little difference what forces make use of art. Art is always propaganda--for someone. History, which is always someone's history, invariably attempts to neutralize art (according to someone's history, Speer was a better artist than Géricault). Artists who deeply believe in social causes most often make the worst art.

Robert Morris, "Notes on Art as/and Land Reclamation" [1979]

In a keynote address for a symposium on the issue of land reclamation as art, Robert Morris extended his discussion on the proliferation of commodities in late-industrial society to the production and distribution of art.⁵⁹ The profit motives of a capitalist economy, while traditionally rationalized as serving public needs, did quite the reverse, Morris argued, as they resulted in a consumerist economy that refused to "conserve and in general and to modify . . . [its] behavior with regard to consumption."⁶⁰ The economy of late capitalism continues to

ignore the dangers of exhausting irreplaceable natural resources and the concomitant disastrous effects: wind and water erosion; landslides; elimination of wildlife; acid, toxic, or mineralized water pollution; sedimentation; floods; loss of water table; destruction of man made property from the effects of pollution, mining, and blasting; and additional economic degradations such as the poisoning of live stock. "As socialism, or the organization of production by producers for the sake of positive social values rather than increased commodity production for profit, is nowhere on the horizon," Morris observed, "appeals to the citizen consumer [are] . . . as [Hans Magnus] Enzensberger has pointed out, 'not only useless but cynical.'"⁶¹

Morris nonetheless questioned whether or not it is a fundamental social responsibility to warn the public of the inevitable coming disaster: "Given the prevailing consumer ideology, the machines will not stop until there is nothing more to put into the hoppers. Then what? Riots? Class wars for survival?"⁶² For Morris, who produced ecological art as early as 1963, such questions were neither new nor hypothetical. Such "ecological" inquiries explored the means by which overproduction and consumption, both economic and cultural, contributed to the exhaustion of the utopian visions of industrialized society. Morris's rethinking of perception and reception, for example, inevitably tested the status of art in an era of waning convictions in the modernist canon. Moreover, through contact with the land these investigations could be made to

function outside the institutionally defined space of the museum or gallery.

Morris's earliest statements on the politics of ecology were actually objects made during his Duchamp-inspired period.⁶³ Metered Bulb [1963, Fig. 17], a small wooden structure containing a light bulb and fixture attached to an electric meter, continually records the expenditure of electricity. Initially, the work reasserts the temporal, theatrical strategies of the phenomenological minimalism of the mid-1960s. But it also traces the passage of energy and time in the context of capital, maintaining the kind of matter-of-factness one associates with a utility company demonstration. "When the work was created," writes Kenneth Friedman, "energy was not perceived by many as an issue of concern Nevertheless, the awareness . . . of at least some artists, just as . . . some scientists, that energy is an environmental issue, if not of crisis, of contemplation, has been evident for years."⁶⁴ Morris's ecological awareness came from an additional, unlikely source--Marcel Duchamp. Morris's Fresh Air [1963], twelve sealed glass bottles with calling cards inscribed "The Arm Horse Air Works, Natural and Artificial Fresh Air for All Occasions," foresees a world so horrible that even the air we breath will be marketed. Fresh Air directly alludes to Duchamp's gesture of bottling air in Air de Paris [1919] and the latter's implicit critique of the commodification and destruction of basic resources⁶⁵

In 1969, Morris executed several indoor and outdoor environments where natural phenomena such as temperature and light were altered and controlled in order to change our perception of the world. While most of his proposals for land projects were not realized due to lack of public or private funding, a number of viewer perception projects were realized.⁶⁶ Morris printed the words "there are two temperatures: one outside, one inside" on all the bathroom towels at Bradford College, for example, eliciting a hyperacute state of awareness from an ordinary, even mundane situation. In another piece, steam escaping from valves in the ground created a kind of theatrical setting where the natural phenomena of condensation and evaporation, dependent on conditions of temperature, humidity, pressure and wind velocity, could be observed [Fig. 45].⁶⁷ And for the "Spaces" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, Morris constructed an elaborate indoor eco-system [Fig. 46]. Consisting of miniature groves of fir trees, planted in diminishing size to create impressions of a vast landscape, the environment re-created outdoor conditions of radiation, humidity, and temperature. Curator Jennifer Licht described the piece: ". . . The floor is covered with steel, and the ceiling with fluorescent 'grow' lights. Even the air itself is a vehicle, for it must be injected with sympathetic climactic conditions, humidity and cold, to keep the trees alive. (Originally [Morris wanted] the air . . . to be imbued with . . . negative ions, which induce feelings of euphoria, but this aspect could not be realized.) The rendering of atmosphere as a painterly subject is played upon, for Morris's 'atmosphere' is a meteorological fact Here

the artist is presenting a museum--traditionally an institution expending its energies and resources to preserve the inert matter of art--with the incongruous task of preserving live organisms of nature."⁶⁸ Working from within the museum, Licht chose to ignore the institutional and ecological implications of Morris's environment. Its rejection of the "inert matter of art" challenges the museum's social hermeticism: The environment was disturbing to many viewers who envisioned in it an inevitable and desolate future. The allusions to landscape painting and states of euphoria were ironic inversions of the work's ultimate appeal to ecological responsibility: Could political and cultural indifference to the consequences of wastefulness and overproduction result in a world so barren of life-sustaining resources that such resources must be synthesized in order to survive?⁶⁹

By dislocating the space of art from the museum to the landscape, Morris's earth projects would even more dramatically engage this question. Assuming a scale "that would allow them to stretch away from the viewer's vision to the degree that he could not take the whole of the work in,"⁷⁰ such projects were neither earthworks nor sculptures; instead they existed somewhere between landscape and architecture, establishing a connection to the geological and temporal conditions of their setting. In effect, works like the Ottawa Project (a structure in earth and sod commissioned by the National Gallery of Canada in 1969 but never realized) and the Evanston Illinois Project [1968-69]⁷¹ radically

negated the spatial and ideological demands of the museum.⁷² Of the indeterminacy of these projects, Morris writes: "But if the works do not seem to locate themselves as objects neither do they become environments . . . since they would not invariably surround one. They have no enclosing boundary. One could be outside the work as well as in it or on it." ⁷³

The Observatory project, built on a plain near Santpoort-Velsen in the Netherlands, was Morris's contribution to Sonsbeek '71, an international sculpture exhibition organized by the town of Arnhem in 1971 [Fig. 47]. The Observatory had a total diameter of 230 feet and consisted of two concentric, circular mounds of earth marked by two granite and one steel-lined notches that aligned with the two equinox and two solstice sunrises. The work established a complex reconciliation between historical allusion and contemporary ideas about reorienting the experience and perception of art. The overall experience of Observatory, Morris observed, "derives . . . from Neolithic and oriental architectural complexes. Enclosures, courts, ways, sightlines, varying grades . . . assert that the work provides a physical experience for the mobile human body. These concerns set the work apart from other large-scale outdoor work which exist as static, wholistic, monumental artifacts The work's temporal focus . . . the marking of the four annual sunrises of seasonal changes provide[s] a kind of 'time frame' or ever present context for the physical experience of the work."⁷⁴

One Neolithic source for Observatory was Stonehenge--the circular arrangement of prehistoric monoliths on Salisbury Plain, England. The mysterious structure, oriented toward the exact point at which the sun rises on the day of the summer solstice, probably served a sun-worshipping ritual. The historical implications of Observatory also arise from the geological history of the Netherlands and of Santpoort-Velsen, where much of the land had been reclaimed after being submerged by periodic flooding. Rather than imposed technology, Observatory appears to emerge naturally out of the ground, constructed mostly of material belonging to the site such as bulldozed earth and large, roughly cut granite blocks.⁷⁵ Vulnerable to wind and rain erosion, the structure was destroyed in 1971. Ironically, the work elicited such enthusiasm in the Netherlands that money was raised for its reconstruction on a larger scale and continual maintenance in Oostelijk-Flevoland in 1977 [Fig. 48].

Morris's dialectic between prehistory and the practical rehabilitation of land through ecology recalls the work and ideas of his friend, the late Robert Smithson.⁷⁶ Like Morris, Smithson's interest in prehistory functioned simultaneously as a "symptom of political pessimism amid the ruins of the 'new world'" and as an "act of faith in new roles and powers for artists in this ruined world."⁷⁷ Smithson was fascinated by the idea of chaos, seeing in it a "constant confusion between man and nature."⁷⁸

Entropy was his word for the energy drain toward which the world was inexorably headed--a kind of "evolution in reverse."⁷⁹ By failing to produce closed and static objects, the temporal dynamic of the phenomenological art of the 1960s seemed appropriate to Smithson as it paralleled the entropic direction toward which art and culture appeared to be moving:

The works of the [minimal artists] celebrate . . . 'inactive history' or what the physicist calls 'entropy' or 'energy drain'--they bring to mind the Ice Age rather than the Golden Age, and would most likely confirm Vladimir Nabokov's observation that 'the future is but the obsolete in reverse.' In a rather round-about way, many of the artists have provided a visible analog for the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which extrapolates the range of entropy telling us energy is more easily lost than obtained, and that in the ultimate future the whole universe will burn out and be transformed into an all encompassing sameness. the 'blackout' that covered the Northeastern States recently may be seen as a preview of such a future. Far from creating a mood of dread, the power failure created a mood of euphoria. An almost cosmic joy swept over all the darkened cities...⁸⁰

Smithson's world view, like Morris's, was neither hermetic nor formalist:

"Critical boundaries tend to isolate the art object into a metaphysical void, independent from external relationships such as land, labor, and class."⁸¹

In his earthworks, Smithson recognized both a public and political context for applying Marxist principles of alienation to land use. Citing abstraction, like spiritualism and idealism, as an enemy of social responsibility, he called for artists working on the land to abandon modernist conventions: "They don't really know what they're doing . . . [at the site]. They're imposing an abstraction rather than drawing out an aspect of cultivating something in terms of the ecological situation."⁸²

Smithson's site-specific projects were built on a thorough examination of the prehistory and the socio-economic history of the area under consideration, rigorous preparation that opened-up the discourse of the earthwork to sociology and ecology. And so, the temporal and mythological setting that shaped the Spiral Jetty--Smithson's extraordinary monument to the Great Salt Lake in Utah--was the lake itself. "The occurrence of a huge interior salt lake," writes Rosalind Krauss, "had for centuries seemed to be a freak of nature, and the early inhabitants of the region sought its explanation in myth. One such myth was that the lake had originally been connected to the Pacific Ocean through a huge underground waterway, the presence of which caused treacherous whirlpools to form at the lake's center."⁸³ The echo of this myth resounded in the gyrating passage of the Spiral Jetty. But such allusions to prehistory mediated a central political consideration: The jetty was adjacent to a disused oil drilling operation that rendered the entire northern section of the lake useless. "I'm interested in bringing a landscape with a low profile up," Smithson remarked, "rather than bring one with a high profile down."⁸⁴

It was this kind of social responsibility that Morris brought to his work. Each of his major land pieces, from the Field Planting in Puerto Rico [1969] to the Observatory projects,⁸⁵ considered the historical and political contexts of the site as the basic material--the archive--from

which the monument would emerge. This concept of land reclamation rests on an archaeological understanding of art and history, speaking to the way history is conceived and the means by which the artist--who often reclaims it--goes about constituting the past and present. Such an archaeological understanding of history, of course, opposes the modernist model, where the "document," the "archive," and the "œuvre" are diligently recomposed into logical, diachronic narratives.⁸⁶

Published in its English translation in the early 1970s, Michel Foucault's The Archaeology of Knowledge radically deconstructed this diachronous organization of history.⁸⁷ For Foucault, the historian was charged with a new responsibility: to constitute events synchronically in relation to the monuments and issues that defined them in their own time. His was a discourse liberated from the traditions and models of a history that often imposed an artificial causality on a given period's disparate meanings. The new history, Foucault observed, would establish a network of discontinuous events rather than a linear narrative based on historical convention. Foucault writes:

... history, in its traditional form, undertook to 'memorize' the monuments of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms documents into monuments where, in the past, history deciphered the traces left by men, it now deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities. There was a time when archaeology, as a discipline devoted to silent monuments, inert traces, objects without context, and things left by the past, aspired to the condition of history, and

attained meaning only through the restitution of a historical discourse; it might be said, to play on words a little, that in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology, to the intrinsic description of the monument.⁸⁸

Smithson and Morris's land reclamation projects achieve meaning not by a standard relationship to art history but by recovering the past through a disinternment of its individual monuments and myths. "Reference to the past through memory [in Morris's oeuvre as a whole]," writes Edward Fry, "is permitted only if limited to the past actions and thoughts of the isolated individual. What is astonishingly absent is any acknowledgement of the cumulative record of history, of the collective written record of the human race."⁸⁹ In works such as Spiral Jetty and Observatory, the role of history is recuperative rather than antiquarian as it challenges received notions about art; history now serves the effort "of discovering or constituting meaning in the inertia of the past and in the unfinished totality of the present."⁹⁰ In other words, these epistemological mutations of history--through reconstituting the ruins of our past to suggest the depth of our ruined present--can alert us to the "unheralded but unmistakable signs of collapse"⁹¹ that mark the institutions of late-industrial society.

At the root of this attraction to prehistoric and industrial ruins, to the idea of history as an inevitable process of dissolution and decay, is the need to be warned of this impending collapse. Allegory, in the form of a reconstituted ruin, gave speech to what was only mutely implied in Morris's more orthodox work: That the metaphysical pretensions of much

modern art (including the Abstract Expressionist generation that preceded him)--those principles of illusion and belief that disguised a growing sense of alienation and disenfranchisement -- were more or less ruined. (Morris was always interested in the ruin. His first minimalist columns and slabs from 1961, for example, were copied out of the Zoser complex in Egypt.) The idea of the ruin as allegory did not, of course, originate with the concept of land reclamation. As Walter Benjamin writes: "In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things In the process of decay, and in it alone, the events of history shrivel up and become absorbed in the setting."⁹² Thus, Morris's desire to embed his land reclamation projects in a specific setting, to build them up from the earth so that they seem to be rooted there, is the desire to constitute allegory.⁹³

As a temporal extension of metaphor, allegory "is revealed as the projection of the . . . static axis of language onto its metonymic or temporal dimension."⁹⁴ As such, the allegorical experience of passing through the Observatory functions outside of a linear historical narrative. Rather than imposing contemporary standards and meanings onto past events and monuments, the allegorical object allows archaeological form to unfold and lend meaning to the present. The spiraling metaphors of

birth and decay that mark one's journey through the Spiral Jetty or Observatory are manifested without a priori knowledge of a specific historical narrative; through a union of nature, history and immediate experience, Morris hoped that the allegorical implications of the works' decentering passage would emerge.

As acts of historical recuperation, Morris's reclamations of prehistorical and present-day ruins extend beyond a desire for allegory. When Morris went to Peru to personally observe the Nazca lines, he did so not as an artist or even as an historian but as an archaeologist. The first section of his essay "Aligned with Nazca" aspires, as Foucault would say, to a lengthy, meticulous "description of the monument," a record of his trip that includes his own temporal relationship to the work as spectator:

Unlike urban spaces, the ground plane is not confined to a brief flatness constantly interrupted by verticals. In a landscape like that of Nazca the ground plane does not remain merely horizontal, for it extends up into one's vision to the height of one's eyes at the distant horizon. The opposition of street and building, floor and wall, of close-up urban seeing, is nonexistent. One sees instead always at a distance, the known flatness of the ground also becomes visible 'elevation' at the horizon. The lines inscribed on the plain become visible only by virtue of the extension of that plain--literally from under one's feet up to the level of one's eyesight. The horizontal becomes vertical through extension. The lines become visible by the 'tilt' of the ground plane and subsequent compression of foreshortening. The further down the line one looks the greater its definition. Yet the greater the distance the less definition of detail. The lines are both more general and more distinct as lines in direct proportion to the distance focused by the eye. The gestalt becomes stronger as the detail becomes weaker.⁹⁵

Morris's description also acknowledges the connection between the lines themselves and their specific setting: "The site at Nazca can be seen as an instance of large-scale public art, whose claim to monumentality has to do with a unique cooperation with its site . . . it is the maker's care and economy and insight into the particular landscape that impresses."⁹⁶ But what most impressed Morris about Nazca was neither its large-scale nor its publicness; instead, he saw in these lines "something intimate and unimposing,"⁹⁷ something that could compensate for the sense of loss that permeated late-industrial society. This loss was not just the lack of care, economy, and insight in a world of overproduction and overconsumption but the absence of an even more valuable commodity: The self. In the space of Nazca there exists the possibility of rethinking the way our bodies relate to the world at large, Morris observed, as one's position must be inwardly located (by realizing the expansive patterns established by the lines) through a private temporal accumulation of visual and visceral information.

For Morris, such overtly phenomenological art could serve as the foundation for experiences that return to the individual those processes of perception and cognition lost through a priori methods of thinking. The public scale of the minimalist art of the '60s, Morris came to believe, was "informed by a logic in its structure, sustained by a faith in the significance of abstract art and a belief in an historical unfolding of formal modes which was very close to a belief in progress." "The art of

that decade," he continued, "was one of dialogue: the power of the individual artist to contribute to public, relatively stable formats which critical strategies, until late in the decade, did not crumble."⁹⁸ What Morris saw in those seemingly meaningless lines at Nazca was exactly the opposite of these stable formats and critical strategies; he realized in his outer-directed, temporal passage a means of continuing the project of deconstruction begun by anti-form. For Morris, this crumbling of the intellectual architecture of modern society could offer access to that private, individual space of the self normally surrendered at the door of the museum or the gallery. The shift away from the minimalist object that began in the late 1960s offered the possibility of an even greater access: "Here the private replaces the public impulse," Morris writes. "Space itself has come to have another meaning Deeply skeptical of experiences beyond the reach of the body, the more formal aspect of the work in question provides a place in which the perceiving self might take measure of certain aspects of its own physical existence. Equally skeptical of participating in any public art enterprise, its other side exposes a single individual's limit in examining, testing, and ultimately shaping the interior space of the self."⁹⁹

NOTES

1. For journalistic accounts of the Tate exhibition and its subsequent closing see: Guy Brett, "Heavy Weights," The Times (London), 28 April 1971; Caroline Tisdall, "Sculpture for Performing on," Guardian Weekly (London), 8 May 1971; Nigel Gosling, "The 'Have-a-go' Show," The Observer Review (London), 2 May 1971. For an appraisal of the Tate incident see Barbara Reise, "A Tale of Two Exhibitions: The Aborted Haacke and Robert Morris Shows," Studio International, 182 (July 1971), p. 30. It should also be added that participation art was not uncommon in Europe at this time. The work of the Paris-based Groupe de Recherche d'Arts Visuels was well established in Europe by the time of Morris's Tate exhibition.

2. For a series of interviews on the reordering of the economic and social structure of the art world in the midst of the political upheavals of the 1960s see "How Effective is Social Protest Art? (Civil Rights)," "How Effective is Social Protest Art? (Vietnam)," "The Artists' Protest Against the Museum of Modern Art," and "Carl Andre: Artworker," in Jeanne Siegel, Artwords: Discourse on the 60s and 70s (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), pp. 85-140.

3. Letter to Marcia Tucker from Robert Morris, 28 December 1969. [Morris Archives]

4. Morris took a cynical view of the museum's belated acceptance of his proposal: "It was too late They were obliged to install...they were scheduled and it was pretty late by then. My feeling is that they couldn't change things around." Unpublished interview with Jack Burnham, 21 November 1975, pp. 13-14. [Morris Archives]

5. "Maximizing the Minimal," Time, 20 April 1970, p. 54.

6. Other pieces in the show (there were six in all) included a large arrangement of massive timbers and a series of structures made of steel plates held together with brackets. Three works from the drawing 2" Steel Plate Suite [1970] were assembled for the Whitney show. The two-inch thick plates, weighing between 2400 and 4000 pounds, were joined by large steel brackets designed by Morris.

7. Press release signed and dated Robert Morris, 15 May 1970. [Morris Archives]

8. This decision was made at a meeting held at the Jewish Museum on 13 May 1970. The following statement was released by the artists participating in the boycott: "We the majority of participating artists wish to express our anguish and fear that under present conditions doing our

work is becoming ever more difficult. We have therefore decided to temporarily close the exhibition USING WALLS for the period of two weeks, May 18th to June 1st and to join with others to discuss further action. We are determined that our effort shall hold to its original purpose which is change." As quoted in an undated statement issued by the Jewish Museum in May 1970. [Morris Archives]

9. Ralph Blumenfeld, "Daily Closeup: Show Mustn't Go On," The New York Post, 4 June 1970, p. 37. The relationship of the student movement to the interests of the New Left was central to the anti-establishment activities of the 1960s. Such movements as the Students for a Democratic Society (begun in 1962) and the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley (begun 1964) established the student as an important mediator of social change. In this regard, Herbert Marcuse was an important catalyst in bringing students into the Leftist fold. As early as 1966, he participated in teach-ins on the Vietnam War held at UCLA. His voice--in publications such as the Essay on Liberation [1969] and lectures at the Free University of Berlin and the London Conference on Liberation [both 1967]--helped provoke student protest both in the United States and Europe including the mouvement de mai in Paris in 1968. (Marcuse had been invited to Paris to participate in a UNESCO symposium on "The Role of Karl Marx in the Development of Contemporary Scientific Thought," and he witnessed firsthand the wave of student strikes and factory struggles that were to paralyze France for most of the summer.) Morris's implied solidarity with the student protesters--his association of the artist with the student--reflects this popular validation of the student as a true conduit for social change. For Marcuse's role in the student movement, see Barry Katz, "Years of Cheerful Pessimism," in Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation (London: Verso, 1982), pp. 162-192.

10. The work was to consist of two paintings: "(1) Interior (in the center of the Guggenheim Museum from the dome at the top to the first ramp at the bottom) . . . Description: cotton woven in alternate vertical stripes of blue and white each 8.7 cm wide, the two outer white stripes being coated with white paint on both sides. (2) Exterior (in the center of 88th Street between Madison and 5th Avenues, a site chosen by the museum) . . . Description: cotton woven in alternate stripes of blue and white each 8.7 cm wide, the outer white stripes being coated with white paint on both sides." Daniel Buren, as quoted in "Gurgles Around the Guggenheim," Studio International, 182 (June 1971), p. 246.

11. For a discussion of the political implications of Buren's work, see Douglas Crimp, "The End of Painting," October, no. 16 (Spring 1981), pp. 69-86 and Benjamin Buchloh, "Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas," October, no. 22 (Fall 1982), p. 112. See also Daniel Buren, "The Function of the Museum," Artforum, 12 (September 1973); rpt. in Amy Baker Sandback, ed., Looking Critically: 21 Years of Artforum Magazine (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), p. 142.

12. Diane Waldman, the curator of the exhibition, offered Buren a one-person show to immediately follow the Guggenheim International if he agreed to withdraw the interior painting. Buren recounted that "there could clearly be no question of exhibiting Painting 2 without Painting 1; this would have been a mutilation of the project as originally conceived. As for the one-man show, which certainly would have interested me in other circumstances, it was no more than a skillful means of taking some of the odium from the censorship that was being exercised by certain artists, thus obviating a confrontation from which they could hardly have emerged with credit; by shifting my piece out of its initial context, it would be possible to diffuse the issue which it raised by its presence." See Ibid.

13. And yet, only Carl Andre withdrew his work from the Guggenheim International in protest of the removal of Buren's work.

14. See, for example, Reyner Banham, "Art in London: It Was SRO--and a Disaster," The New York Times, 23 May 1971, p. 31.

15. "Morris Dances," Ink (London), 29 May 1971, p. 10.

16. Ibid.

17. Buren, p. 246.

18. See Yve-Alain Bois, Douglas Crimp, and Rosalind Krauss, "A Conversation with Hans Haacke," October, no. 30 (Fall 1984), pp. 23-48 and Douglas Crimp, "The Art of Exhibition," October, no. 30 (Fall 1984), pp. 49-82. Morris's resistance to such overt political statements suggests a continued attachment to the idea of art as pure, or at least substantially removed from the mundane state of popular culture. Morris always wants his ideological program to serve the interests of art, both in the aesthetic and social sense of that word. This continued attachment to the concept of art as removed from the absolutist state of social politics recalls the aesthetics of Marcuse, where even political art relegated to the streets (a condition advocated by Marcuse in the Essay on Liberation) must somehow appeal to the emotional and aesthetic interests of art. Barry Katz writes: "In developing the theory of 'affirmative culture' in the 1930s, Marcuse had insisted that while the work of art contains a sensuous dimension which alone can penetrate the deepest structures of human existence, it is also inescapably bound to the material structure of that existence [emphasis mine]." Marcuse's desire to have it both ways was a relatively common feature of avant-gardist art of the 1960s. See "Art and Politics in the Totalitarian Era (1942-1951)," in Katz, p. 128. For a discussion of Marcuse's ideas on art and culture and their relation to an Hegelian aesthetic, see "The Aesthetic Dimension (1920-1928)," in Katz, pp. 48-50.

19. Grace Glueck, "Art Community Here Agrees on a Plan to Fight War, Racism, and Oppression," The New York Times, 19 May 1970, p. 30.

20. Undated press release, May 1970. [Morris archives].

21. Glueck, p. 30.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. The Jewish Museum and the Whitney Museum closed in sympathy with the strike. The Museum of Modern Art suspended its \$1.50 admission charge for the day and staged a special "pro-youth" photographic exhibition and an anti-war film festival. MoMA's actions were not entirely sympathetic to the spirit of the boycott. Its director, John Hightower, charged that the artists' actions put them in "the same position of Hitler in the thirties and forties, Stalin in the fifties--and more recently, the Soviet repression of free expression in Czechoslovakia. I cannot help but think those people in the United States who are most responsible for repression would be delighted by the action you are taking for them. I can only urge you not to be guilty of the same repression you are striving so hard to resist." Meanwhile, the Guggenheim Museum removed all paintings from its walls for the day and suspended its admission charge. Thomas Messer, the museum's director, ordered the removal to protect the works from vandalism. See Grace Glueck, "500 in Art Strike Sit on Steps of Metropolitan," The New York Times, 23 May 1970, p. 12.

25. Black artists united under WSABAL, Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation, a student organization. Claiming that the art world existed to protect the interests of "superstar anti-human artists," WSABAL released a press release on 24 June 1970 (written by the art writer Michele Wallace) that denounced the Artists' Strike as racist. Calling for a quota system of race and gender, the press release concluded that black artists have united under WSABAL "to finally bring to an end the complex system of THE BIGOTED ART ESTABLISHMENT OF ANTI-HUMAN WHITES AND TOKEN NIGGAS." [Morris Archives]

26. For a discussion of the problematic relationship between feminism and the New Left, see "Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism," in Sohnya Sayers, et. al., eds., The 60s Without Apology (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 91-118.

27. As quoted in Therese Schwartz and Bill Amidon, "on the steps of the met," New York Element, 2 (June-July 1970), p. 4.

28. In an interview conducted in 1981, Morris recalled that the strikers expected to be arrested given the power of the Metropolitan Museum. Sean Elwood, unpublished interview with Robert Morris, New York City, 29 October 1981, p. 5. [Morris archives]

29. My chronology of the events of the Metropolitan Strike is culled from conversations with Robert Morris and the following published sources: Schwartz and Amidon, pp. 3-4 and 19-20; Elwood, pp. 1-11; Glueck, "500 in Art Strike Sit on Steps of the Metropolitan"; Lawrence Alloway, "Art," The Nation, 19 October 1970, pp. 381-382; Elizabeth C. Baker, "Pickets on Parnassus," Art News, 70 (September 1970), pp. 31-33.

30. Statement from press release issued on 14 July 1970. The 26 boycotting artists were: Richard Anuskievicz, Leonard Baskin, Herbert Bayer, Robert Birmelin, John Cage, Raymond Deshais, Jim Dine, Sam Francis, Ron Kitaj, Nick Krushenick, Roy Lichtenstein, Vincent Longo, Sven Lukin, Michael Mazur, Deen Meeker, Robert Morris, Robert Motherwell, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, Lucas Samaras, Frank Stella, Carrol Summers, Ernest Trova, Andy Warhol, Jack Youngerman, and Adja Yunkers.

31. Press Release for "Open Show," issued on 14 July 1970.

32. The briefing occurred on 16 June 1970.

33. As quoted in Grace Glueck, "Strike Front Keeps Its Cool," The New York Times, 5 July 1970, p. 17D.

34. As quoted in Elwood, p. 6. Elizabeth Baker writes: "As art factions fought each other about tactics, concern turned inward and re-focused around a number of points involving museum reform which art-world radicals, mainly the Art Workers Coalition, had been working towards for over a year. All at once, strike leaders were openly stating that the war was no longer the issue, although at this juncture the continually elusive nature of the Strike constituency underwent a particularly major shift. Even by the time the Strike reached the steps of the Met, many of its first promoters had returned disillusioned to their studios, leaving a loose mixture of groups with different axes to grind." See Baker, p. 32.

35. Thomas Krens, transcript of a tape-recorded interview with Robert Morris, 8 December 1978, p. 5. [Morris Archives]

36. Two War Memorials--"Steel Ball in Trench" [1970] and "Large Cross-Shaped Trench with Steam" [1970]--were actually proposed to be built.

37. As quoted in Thomas Krens, The Drawings of Robert Morris

(Williamstown, Mass.: Williams College Museum of Art, 1982), n.p.

38. Thomas Krens in Ibid.

39. The corporation was Litton Industries.

40. The title of the series, Crisis, was taken from one of the newspaper headlines.

41. For a study of Morris's themes of nuclear disaster in his work after 1980, see Robert Morris: Works of the Eighties (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986).

42. Statement by Robert Huot, 1975. [Morris Archives]

43. Peter Bürger, Theory of the Avant-Garde, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 53.

44. Ibid.

45. Unpublished statement dated 3 June 1971. [Morris Archives]

46. See Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," October, no. 30 (Fall 1984), pp. 82-118.

47. Ibid., p. 87, n. 6. See also, Margit Rowell, "Vladimir Tatlin: Form/Faktura," October, no. 7 (Winter 1978), pp. 94-103.

48. Exhibition pamphlet for the Leftest Federation in Moscow in 1917; as quoted in Buchloh, p. 89. Even Malevich's more spiritualist program of Suprematism understood this connection: "... The role played by science and theory is completely subordinate. Futurism will become the art representative of the environment of the working man, whose job it is to build machines (to construct dynamic elements), since his (the worker's) dynamic life forms the substance of this artistic culture." see Kasimir Malevich, "Introduction to the Theory of the Additional Element in Painting," 1927; rpt. in Herschel B. Chipp, Theories of Modern Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) p.340.

49. The avant-garde's allusions to the structure of industrial life were predicated on a linking of the art object with the dynamic--both linguistic and political--of the society at large. Much constructivist art wished to expose relationships between art and ideology; the political agenda of communism--with its socially dominant modes of control--inflected the program of constructivism. Structural linguistics, as well, informed Soviet art: the constructivist development of the first systematic phenomenological grammar of painting and sculpture paralleled the formation of the Moscow Linguistic Circle (1915) and the

Opoyaz Group in Petersburg (1916). The limitations of traditional easel painting--where the spectator engages in traditional contemplative behavior--tended to undermine this ideological cross-referencing. By the mid-1920s, El Lissitzky's geometric compositions had evolved into architecture. In 1926, in Dresden and Hannover, Lissitzky exhibited his Demonstration Rooms, room sized cabinets for the display and installation of non-representational art. "With each movement of the viewer," Lissitzky wrote, "... the perception of the wall changes; what was white becomes black and vice versa This play makes the viewer active The viewer is physically engaged in an interaction with the object on display" ("Demonstrationsräume," as cited in Buchloh, pp.92-93). Thus the spectator would no longer be intoxicated by the precious illusionism of painting, no longer "lulled into passivity by the paintings on the wall." For more on the relationship between politics and the constructivist aesthetic, see Christiana Lodder, Russian Constructivism (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1983).

50. In the context of the Hegelian heritage implanted within Dutch culture in the period preceeding World War I, Annette Michelson has recently claimed for De Stijl something more than just a Utopian direction. Behind Theo van Doesburg's cool compositions, for example, lurked his alter-ego, I. K. Bonset--poet, contributor to Kurt Schwitter's Dada journal Merz, and editor of his own journal Mécano. Bonset represented van Doesburg's liberation from repression, a figure who could transgress the rigid codes of Protestant respectability and revolt against the alienation of modern life merely suggested in the unyielding edges of DeStijl painting. Significantly, Bonset published in the journal De Stijl, appearing first in the December 1919 issue in "The Other Face," a text which linked the causes of Dutch art with that of Dada. In 1922, Kurt Schwitters, accompanied by van Doesburg and fellow De Stijl painter Vilmos Huszar, embarked on a lecture tour of Holland. Speaking throughout the country, their performances were both inciteful and violent. "The police, who had been called in, wept; the public fought furiously amongst themselves; on all sides people congratulated . . . each other with black eyes and bloody noses." Thus the voices of Dadaist nihilism had joined forces with a major Dutch proponent of radical plasticity. In rehearsing the dynamic of a Freudian typology, van Doesburg, as Michelson suggests, was able to serve two masters, constructive and destructive. Michaelson's assumptions must be questioned, however, since Van Doesburg wrote texts against the idea of political art and he refused to support the ambitions of Soviet Russia. For Michelson's discussion see "DeStijl, Its Other Face: Abstraction and Cacaphony, or What Was the Matter with Hegel?," October, no. 22 (Fall 1982), pp. 3-26. For a discussion of the relationship of DeStijl to the forces of industry and production see Peter Gay, Art as Act: Causes in History--Manet, Gropius, Mondrian (New York: New York University, 1976). On the history of DeStijl's connection to Dada see John Elderfield, Kurt Schwitters (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), pp. 105-106 and Kurt Schwitters, "Theo van Doesburg and Dada," trans.

Ralph Manheim, in Robert Motherwell, ed., The Dada Painters and Poets (New York: Wittenborn, 1951), p. 273. For a contradiction of the idea that Van Doesburg's aims were overtly political, see Ger Harmsen, DeStijl. Visions of Utopia (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1982).

51. My use of the word autonomy and its avant-gardist implications is consistent with that of Peter Bürger. See Jochen Schulte-Sasse's analysis of Bürger's position in "Theory of Modernism versus Theory of the Avant-Garde," in Bürger, pp. vii-xlvii.

52. Undated, handwritten, preliminary abstract for a book on art and politics, n.p. [Morris archives]

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Morris's historical methodology for the book was probably influenced by Donald Drew Egbert's comprehensive study, Social Radicalism and the Arts: Western Europe--A Cultural History from the French Revolution to the Present (New York: Knopf, 1970). Morris's archive contains notes on the book and a clipping of Christopher Lehman-Haupt's review of the book ("Books of the Times: A Dull but Valuable Course in Modern Art," The New York Times, 14 September 1970, p. 21).

56. Preliminary proposal.

57. See, for example, Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" and "The Plight of Culture" in Art and Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961).

58. Unpublished, undated (1970?) essay on art and politics, p. 1. (Morris Archives)

59. "Notes on Art as/and Land Reclamation," October, no. 12 (Spring 1980), pp. 87-102.

60. Ibid., p. 95.

61. Ibid. The Enzensberger statement continues: "To ask the individual wage earner to differentiate between his 'real' and his 'artificial' needs is to mistake his real situation. Both are so closely connected that they constitute a relationship which is subjectively and objectively indivisible. Hunger for commodities, in all its blindness, is a product of the production of commodities." See Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "A Critique of Political Ecology," in Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway, eds., Political Ecology (New York: Times Books, 1979),

p. 391. For more on the conservationist/industrialist conflict see Barry Commoner, The Closing Circle (New York: Knopf, 1971).

62. Morris, "Notes on Art as/and Land Reclamation," p. 96.

63. See, for example, Annette Michelson, "Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression," in Robert Morris (Washington D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), p. 53.

64. The argument that Metered bulb was an ecological statement was made by Friedman in "Notes on the Environment: Robert Morris," in Re-Dact 1 (New York: Willis, Locker & Owens, 1984), pp. 67-72.

65. The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, a typographic version of Marcel Duchamp's Green Box, ed. Richard Hamilton, trans. George Heard Hamilton (New York: Jaap Rietman, 1976), n.p.

66. The following represents a complete listing of Morris's earth projects (proposals and completed works) from 1965-73: Florida Project (for Patrick Lannan's grounds, Palm Beach, Florida, not realized), 1965; Project in Earth and Sod (included in Robert Smithson's proposals for the Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Airport, not realized), 1966; Mounds and Trenches (for Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, not realized), 1968; Steam Cloud (conceived in 1966 and realized for the Robert Morris Retrospective at the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.), 1969; Los Angeles Project (for the "Art and Technology" exhibition, Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles, not realized), 1969; Field Planting (realized for the "Farmproereerofibseaterlr" exhibition, University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez), 1969; Ottawa Project (for the Jacques Cartier Park, Ottawa, Canada, not realized), 1969-70; Observatory (realized for "Sonsbeek '71" in Santpoort-Velsen, the Netherlands), 1971; Steam Project (for Western State College, Bellingham, Washington, realized), 1971-72; Sophie Krauss Memorial Project (for Volunteer Park, Seattle, Washington, not realized), 1971-72; Earthwork for Belknap Park (for Grand Rapids, Michigan, realized but is now a ruin), 1973.

67. The Steam Project was realized for the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C., on the occasion of Morris's retrospective exhibition in 1969.

68. Spaces (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1969), n.p. According to Yve-Alain Bois, who visited the installation in 1969, the base-line of the landscape actually existed above the eye level of many of the spectators, thus negating the purpose of the piece by making it impossible to visually control the landscape.

69. The ecological movement in America had an effect on the consciousness of the New York art world in the late 1960s. John Gibson's

unique "Projects for Commissions" gallery hosted a show of earth art in 1969. Rather than earthworks, these projects were specifically in the context of ecology and the exhibition was, in fact, called "Ecologic Art." For the show, Robert Morris contributed drawings for his aborted Los Angeles Project. For a review of "Ecologic Art" see Carter Ratcliff, "New York," Art International, 13 (November 1969), p. 81.

70. Robert Morris, notes for a brochure announcing a portfolio of 10 lithographs of proposals for Earth Projects published in 1969. Earth Projects was from aluminum plates by Aris Koutrolis and Theo Wujcik. The prints were pulled in the Detroit Workshop at the Common Ground of the Arts in Detroit in the Summer of 1969.

71. For more on the projects, see Krens, The Drawings of Robert Morris, n.p.

72. See "Redefining the Institution: The Museum as a Space of Dissent," section one of this chapter.

73. Notes for Earth Projects brochure. For a critique of the earthwork's aestheticizing, high art context, see John Beardsley, "Art and Authoritarianism: Walter De Maria's Lightning Field," October, no. 16 (Spring 1981), pp. 35-38.

74. Unpublished statement on the Observatory project, undated (1971?). [Morris Archives] The Observatory was actually based on Morris's ideas for the unbuilt Ottawa project. It has been observed that "in the Ottawa drawings we see the Duchampian fascination with measurement and the demarcation of space and time extend to the most regular and obvious of natural phenomena--the interrelationships between the earth, sun, and moon--for verification. One drawing is a proposal for a catalogue of simple measuring devices or site lines aligned to the equinoxes and solstices of the sun and moon. The technical means, banked stockades, parallel steel plates, hedgerows, a furrow gouged by steel plates, granite boulders, [and] a concrete pool foreshadow the more sophisticated arrangements of Observatory." Unpublished statement, author unknown (1971?). [Morris archives]

75. For photographic documentation (with text by Morris) of the construction of the Observatory, see Robert Morris, "Observatory," Avalanche (Fall 1971), pp. 30-35. The photographs were taken by Peter Schuit from early June to mid-July, 1971.

76. Morris often participated in field trips and excursions initiated by Smithson. In December 1966, Smithson, Morris, and Nancy Holt went to Great Notch Quarry, near Paterson, New Jersey. In April 1967, a two-day "site selection trip" to the Pine Barrens and Atlantic City was undertaken by Smithson, Holt, Morris, Virginia Dwan, and Carl Andre.

77. Lucy Lippard, "Breaking Circles: The Politics of Prehistory," in Robert Hobbs, Robert Smithson: Sculpture (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 31. Morris was always interested in natural and technological disasters and ruins. In 1968, for example, he issued a telegram that was in effect a "Proposal to Re-Do the Chicago Fire of 1871." The work, which is now in the collection of Bernar Vernet, is dated 21 October 1968.

78. As quoted in Ibid.

79. The idea of entropy as "evolution in reverse" belongs to Wylie Sypher but was often paraphrased by Smithson.

80. "Entropy and the New Monuments," Artforum, 4 (June 1966), p. 26.

81. Smithson as quoted in Lippard, p. 32.

82. As quoted in Ibid., p. 39.

83. Passages in Modern Sculpture (New York: Viking Press, 1977), p. 282.

84. As quoted in Lippard, p. 40. For the definitive collection of Smithson's writings, see The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979).

85. In addition to discussing the historical concept of land reclamation in an area of Holland that had been ravaged by flooding, Morris also acknowledged the socio-economic conditions of the area. In an interview with Lucy Lippard, he talked about the response of the middle-class farmers who lived around the Observatory. See Lucy Lippard, unpublished interview with Robert Morris, December 1971, pp. 17-20. [Morris archives]

86. See Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge (New York: Pantheon, 1972). For an important discussion on the emphasis on causality in the writing of history and of the distinction between general and special history, see Maurice Mandelbaum, The Anatomy of Historical Knowledge (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1977).

87. This archaeological understanding of history was first postulated by Foucault in his influential Les Mots et les choses (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1966) later translated into English as The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York: Pantheon, 1970). Robert

Morris read The Order of Things as early as 1970 and was fully versed in its arguments by the time he began thinking about the Observatory project. Several years later, Foucault's The Archaeology of Knowledge was published in America (1972), a work that more fully developed the author's concept of a new historical process based on archaeological considerations of the events and monuments of history. See especially Foucault's "Introduction," in The Archaeology of Knowledge, pp. 3-17.

88. The Archaeology of Knowledge, p. 7.

89. "Robert Morris: The Dialectic," Arts Magazine, 49 (September 1974), p. 22.

90. Ibid., p. 11.

91. Morris, "Notes on Art as/and Land Reclamation," p. 96. Morris's concept of the collapse of the economic order of late-capitalism is based on Barry Commoner, "Capital Crisis," in The Poverty of Power (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 221-49.

92. The Origin of German Tragic Drama, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977); as quoted in Craig Owens, "Earthwords," October, no. 10 (Fall 1979), p. 129.

93. My argument on the ruin as a function of allegorical desire is indebted to Craig Owens's impressive argument about Robert Smithson in ibid., pp. 121-30.

94. Ibid., p. 129.

95. "Aligned with Nazca," Artforum, 14 (October 1975), p. 31.

96. Ibid., p. 39.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

EPILOGUE

A Circle in Search of its Center: Robert Morris in the Space of the Labyrinth

Ten years ago any symmetry with a semblance of order--dialectical materialism, anti-Semitism, Nazism--was sufficient to charm the minds of men. How could one do other than to submit to Tlön, to the minute and vast evidence of an orderly planet? It is useless to answer that reality is also orderly. Perhaps it is, but in accordance with divine laws--which we never quite grasp. Tlön is surely a labyrinth, but it is a labyrinth devised by men, a labyrinth destined to be deciphered by men.

Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis, Tertius" [1956]

The arguments presented by this dissertation refuse the notion that it is possible, even desirable, to locate a central theme or stylistic sensibility for Morris's work of the 1960s and early '70s. However, my overall conception of the art historical process is not without methodology or coherence. While I have for the most part disallowed the kind of predetermined argument that imposes recent theories on an historical era, my discussion of Morris has frequently reconstructed the various discourses of the period in question in order to evaluate (or reevaluate) the artist's complex project. The artist's words are one such discourse. And so are contemporaneous philosophical writings and alternative criticism. But for my conclusion I should like to begin by reasserting one

discourse in particular: That of the reconstitution of history itself advanced by Michel Foucault. I look to Foucault for two reasons. Firstly, translations of his writings were read by Morris almost as soon as they were published, a connection between the artist and his time that my argument favors. (This is not to say, of course, that recent advances in critical theory should not be applied to problems rooted in other historical moments, but that this application must be fearful of distorting events and monuments in the service of a narrow, prescribed thesis.) I have also chosen Foucault because of my conviction that the art historian must reevaluate his or her relationship to the act of writing history.

The seeming diversity of Morris's work presents a particular problem of organization, namely how to restore historical meaning to a field of discontinuous elements. Traditional history would merely map onto these disparate relations an a priori construction, or series as Foucault has called it, requiring the historian to simply "define. . . the position of each element in relation to the other elements in the series."¹ It is here that I assert Foucault's inversion of conventional historical method:

The problem now is to constitute series: to define elements proper to each series, to fix its boundaries, to reveal its own specific type of relations, to formulate its laws, and beyond this, to describe the relations between different series, thus constituting series of series, or 'tables': hence the ever-increasing number of strata, and the need to distinguish them, the specificity of their time and chronologies; hence the need to distinguish not only important events (with a long chain of consequences) and less important ones, but types of events at quite different levels (some very brief, others of average duration, like the development of a particular technique, or a scarcity of money, and others of a long-term

nature, like a demographic equilibrium or the gradual adjustment of an economy to climatic change); hence the possibility of revealing series with widely spaced intervals formed by rare or repetitive events.²

In attempting to group a range of monuments and events in order to make them relevant I have established a series of synchronic categories (or series) for Morris's work: Duchamp; Brancusi and the rejection of a repressive verticality; Marcuse and the ideology of production; anti-form and desublimation; political protest against the institutions of modernism; and ecology. There are other series in Morris's œuvre that relate to the structural dynamic of his work: temporality; theatricality; collapsed shifters; discourse (the artist's texts as an intellectual program for his art); and phenomenology. Object by object, action by action, it is possible to construct an archaeological description of a fundamental spatial organization--a significant series in the artist's œuvre--from this list of experiential conditions. And that series has a proper name: Labyrinth.

Starting with the Passageway of 1961, Morris's work has most often assumed the temporal or structural conditions of the labyrinth.³ Fundamentally, to enter into a labyrinth is to accept the temporary loss of one's center. Because the ultimate organization of its numerous passages unknown to the labyrinth's victim, the experience of surviving the labyrinth is predicated on an outward accumulation of information in time--a groping reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological world "where night has no outlines."⁴ To be decentered in this way requires a willingness to lose control--to obediently enter the maze, to suffer the trauma of relinquishing the knowledge of where one is, to allow the

collapse of automatic impulses, to temporarily lose the handle of narrative, of memory, of language itself. The labyrinth disrupts the ego; it confiscates one's psychological center. In Morris's oeuvre such labyrinthine decentering recurs over and over, reduplicating itself even in the very form of its repetition. For Morris, the labyrinth decenters in order to liberate the spectator from a priori conditions of logic and reason: "The problems of solipsism and autism hang in the air," writes Morris. "Here the labyrinth form is perhaps a metonym of the search for the self, for it demands a continuous wandering, a relinquishing of the knowledge of where one is."⁵

Morris's labyrinth is neither a metaphysical space nor is it a source of redemption. The concept of spiritual freedom, dialectically related in the history of ideas to the labyrinth's metaphors of imprisonment, no longer obtains. The notion of the prison as a refuge predates Romanticism, having existed as early as the mystery cults of Dionysos.⁶ "The prisoner who survives incarceration or the rigors of the labyrinth," writes Stephen Eisenman, "transcends bodily cares and is initiated into a realm of spiritual redemption. Thus the prison can become the setting for the creative act, a place where time and the phenomenal world are placed in suspension."⁷ Initially, Morris's labyrinth functions ideologically as it intentionally simulates the decentering conditions of late-industrial society--the world of labor, commerce, and production--in order to engender in the spectator a sense of uncertainty and resistance.

While deconstructing the modernist and industrialist hierarchies, these complex labyrinths have assumed many forms. Hearing, an installation at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1972, for example, consisted of a tableau of recognizable objects accompanied by the continuous blare of recorded dialogue [Fig. 49]. Hearing's arrangement was deceptively simple: an equilateral cruciform platform filled with casting sand served as the base for three pieces of furniture--a oversized copper chair and galvanized steel table and a lead cot and pillow. The unit was flanked by two arcs of chairs provided for the spectators. The audio-tape--a three-and-a-half hour mock-courtroom inquisition between an "investigator," a "council," a "witness"--was literally a concatenation of intellectual voices,⁸ a "drama of ideas" as Morris referred to it: reechoing in this maniacal courtroom were texts by Noam Chomsky, Marcel Duchamp, Michel Foucault, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Jean Piaget, Claude Levi-Strauss, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and others.⁹ The specific content of the tape--a rambling discourse on art history, esthetic theory, and structuralist analysis--was perhaps less significant than its structure, for periodically, the interrogation was interrupted by a raucous buzzer and a gavel struck pronouncement of "recess," a pause meant to release the seated spectators to approach the haunting objects before them.

Hearing's subdued ambient lighting served to initially disguise its most "shocking" detail: partially buried in a trench in the sand were a group of wet-cell batteries. The carefully worded signs placed on the

floor at each side of the piece, however, were impossible to overlook: "CAUTION," they read, "Injurious heat and amperage. Do not touch the objects or step on the platform." This admonition--which on one level served as a parody of the mechanisms of authority under question--signaled the fact that the table and bed were electrically charged, the chair filled with water so hot that its copper glowed. The experience of moving around the installation was frustrating, for the sensuous and tactile demands of the sculpture were in conflict with its mechanisms of fear. The gallery's institutional responsibility as a space of aesthetic pleasure and refinement had been violated. "The viewer," wrote Artnews in reference to Hearing, "has not only been auditorily spellbound, visually intrigued, tactilely stimulated and thwarted, he has also been psychologically programmed and choreographed by the artist."¹⁰

Morris's redefinition of the artist/spectator relationship--which had reached its most aggressive moment in Hearing--further radicalized the provocative nature of certain aspects of avant-gardist culture in the 1910s and 1920s.¹¹ The public's reaction to dada performances--as for example to Francis Picabia's set for the Ballet Suédois production of Relâche (1924) in which a drop curtain of 370 spotlights nearly blinded a startled audience¹²--had most often been mobilized by the frequently threatening tone of the event. Morris's "environments" of the 1960s and '70s, his labyrinthine units, mirror pieces, mazes, and sound chambers, recapitulated this aggressive relationship between producer and receiver. Morris's spectacles--their industrial tone, their use of ordinary building

materials, their emphasis on information, instruction and task, and their blatant defiance of the idealistic and hermetic pretensions of the museum--suggested a far broader program, one that addressed the interaction of the individual with society. His sculptures, like the cellular, regimented order of the factory or the office pool, offered little aesthetic pleasure or material comfort. Such was the case, for example, with Untitled [1967], a series of nine steel cubicles that resembled the kind of claustrophobic spatial dividers found in business offices, partitions meant to offer employees "privacy" while at the same time allowing their supervisors to observe them easily.

Gridded streets. Mazes of colored stripes on hospital corridor floors. Yellow lines that divide highway lanes. Railroad tracks. Semaphores. Statistical graphs. Repetitions of skyscraper windows. Our world reads as a network of geometric progressions, a cacophony of cells, compartments, and walls that create the illusion of private spaces, spaces of the self. The failure of the historical avant-garde may relate to its conflicted attitude toward these modern geometries: the radical spirit which challenged the alienating character of bourgeois society continued to be seduced by the momentum and dynamism of the technological revolution.¹³ On the ruins of classical form, plastics, alloys, and other synthetic materials offered hope for new (and economically feasible) Utopias--Nature had yielded to technology as a revolutionary vision searched for the means to effect society's reorganization. Some, like Morris, have questioned the toll of this technological program and have

observed the decentering of our very notion of reality.

Under the influence of Michel Foucault's Discipline and Punish, a work he read in the late 1970s,¹⁴ Morris executed a suite of twelve drawings in 1978 that form a kind of index to the latent ideological program of his earlier work, a program determined to deconstruct the repressive order of industrial society. The drawings--collectively entitled In the Realm of the Carceral--represent the way hierarchies of power insist that space be organized to monitor and control the movement and actions of people [Fig. 50]. The Carceral drawings, images of labyrinthine prisons and other spaces of confinement, have several sources in the history of art and architecture: The visionary architecture of Etienne Boullée and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux and the Carceri Invenzione of Giambattista Piranesi (Morris had visited the Piranesi exhibition at the East Wing of the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. in the spring of 1978). The enclosing spaces depicted in the Carceral series--"Towers of Silence," "Security Walls," "Stockade," "Places for the Solitary," and "Observation Yards"--resemble, as well, earlier cage-like sculptures constructed in steel mesh and aluminum grating beginning in 1967 [Fig. 51].¹⁵

"Is it surprising," asks Michel Foucault in Discipline and Punish, his study of how penal institutions and the power to punish became a part of our lives, "that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?"¹⁶ Even before the ascendance of computer

simulation and media repetition,¹⁷ the hierarchies of power demanded that space be organized so that people's movement and actions could be both monitored and controlled. Foucault points to society's pervasive alienating geometries, to the existence of repressive political technologies that can be integrated into any social function--into the realm of education, medical treatment, production, and punishment--in order to determine the interaction of docile bodies.

Central to Foucault's understanding of the industrial social order is the "invention" of the Panopticon, essentially a central observation point surrounded by a maze of discrete cubicles.¹⁸ The panoptic schema, rooted in nineteenth-century systems of prison surveillance such as Jeremy Bentham's penitentiary panopticon, represents an ideal paradigm of the modern mechanism of power, invisible power in the service of subtle coercion: "[The Panopticon] makes it possible to draw upon differences: among patients, to observe the symptoms of each individual, without the proximity of beds, the circulation of miasmas, the effects of contagion confusing the clinical tables; among school children, it makes it possible to observe performances (without there being any imitation or copying), to map attitudes, to assess characters, to draw up rigorous classifications and, in relation to normal development, to distinguish 'laziness and stubbornness' from 'incurable imbecility'; among workers, it makes it possible to note the aptitudes of each worker, compare the time it takes to perform a task, and if they are paid by the day, to calculate their wages."¹⁹

What carceral structure attempts to restore to society in its techniques of surveillance and correction is not so much the "juridical subject, who is caught up in the fundamental interests of the social pact, but the obedient subject, the individual subjected to habits, rules, orders [emphasis mine]."²⁰ The systems of corrective penalty established in the nineteenth century, as opposed to the ruined prisons lined with torture chambers depicted in Piranesi's dark and frightening engravings, were destined to reorder silently and efficiently social and political interaction. "Without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, [panoptic order] acts directly on individuals; it gives 'power of mind over mind' " ²¹

Morris's labyrinths take a dialectical view of their potential to control an obedient subject. On one level, the creation of an exploratory situation grants the individual a degree of independence from the traditional relationship between viewer and reverential art object. The Tate installation, for example, undercut the museum's ordering of the obedient subject; the spectator could climb, walk-on, and touch objects without regard for the decorum of the institution. Such intricate situations, however, also reestablish modernism's carceral order. Morris's Philadelphia Labyrinth, constructed in 1974 for the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia as part of an exhibition entitled "Robert Morris: Projects" [Fig. 52], asked the spectator to traverse a claustrophobic 500 foot passage too narrow for two people to pass each

other comfortably: "The work is a maze, circular in its exterior format and 30 feet in diameter. The walls are eight-feet high and painted the usual Morris grey. There is only one path to the center . . . and the only exit is the same path retracted. There are no dead ends, as in a true maze; the focus is therefore on the circuitous transit to the center and out again, and on the physical and psychological aspects of transit."²² The vertiginous path of the Philadelphia Labyrinth acts much like the collapsed shifters of Morris's work of the early 1960s as the temporary state of autism effected by the claustrophobic, dizzying passage temporarily confiscates the spectator's psychological center. (Morris built the labyrinth, in part, in response to his own severe claustrophobia.)

The artist's numerous mirror pieces function similarly as they reduplicate their ambient setting to the point where the spectator loses control over the primary experience.²³ Works such as Pharmacy [1962, Fig. 21], Untitled [1973], Sight Line Pieces [1975-76], and the film Mirror [1969]²⁴ projected a bewildering mise en abyme of reflections. Octavio Armand, in an elegant essay on Morris's mirrors, describes this endless, decentering circularity:

. . . In Robert Morris's hall of mirrors, vision looks in vain for its reflection; form wants to see itself multiplied, exaggerated, and it feels cheated in one mirror after another, reduced to a disquieting absence. Vision activates a circular visualization. The eye is a sixth sense: two eyes times four mirrors equals zero. . .

. . . The mirrors: an unconvincing symmetry. Not a rhetoric of vision but a metaphor. What's more: an ellipsis. Rebounding/repeating, the eye collaborates in its systematic revocation. The mirrors are eyelids: closed in vision. A glance is not returned: there is a sweeping eradication of appearance and amazement. Glass eyelids. Don't be caught looking.

Narcissus again and again.²⁵

The repetitive or reduplicate experience of the mazes and mirror pieces--the ability to remove the individual from the realm of primary experience into a world of absences--suggests another dimension of Morris's labyrinth: The labyrinthine nature of language itself. Just as repetition serves to decenter the spectator, it also reaffirms the primary condition of language as reduplicative. (See, for example, my argument in chapter one on Morris's use of reduplication in Pharmacy and its relation to Roman Jakobson's understanding of the reduplication of syllables as the point of verbal cognition in children).²⁶ Language ultimately occupies the elusive center of Morris's stylistically diverse œuvre; from his fascination with Duchamp's complex linguistic structure to his numerous supplementary critical essays, Morris is obsessed with language. The relationship of his production to discourse brings to mind Craig Owens's evaluation of the role of the text in Robert Smithson's art: "Whenever Smithson invokes the notion of the center . . . it is to describe its loss Paradoxically, the concept of the center can occur only within language; at the same time language, which proposes the potentially infinite substitution of elements at the center, destroys all possibility of securely locating any center whatsoever. Thus what is described by Smithson in . . . [his text "A Museum of Language"] is that dizzying experience of decentering which occurred 'at the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse.' If . . . Smithson's writings testif[y] to anything in our present culture, it is to the eruption of language into

the field of the visual arts, and the subsequent decentering of that field--a decentering in which these texts themselves play a crucial role."²⁷ The decentering of art through the operations of language is an important concept in understanding Morris's radical dislocation of art. Language resounds not only in his critical texts and temporal strategies, but in the contradictory, often clashing voices of Hearing; the rambling monologue in the dance 21.3, and the monotonous, circuitous set of instructions read aloud in the performance Arizona.

Morris's linguistic imperative reached its culmination in Voice [1973-74, Fig. 53], in which the art object yielded almost entirely to verbal discourse. Installed at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1974, Voice was essentially an elaborate sound chamber. Four large amplification units, each shaped like the corners of the room, defined a rectangular space in the gallery. Within this 50-foot square area, viewers were invited to sit on randomly arranged boxes laminated with white felt. Differing from Morris's orthodox minimalist plinths only in their cloth covers and utilitarian purpose, these boxes reiterated the ordinariness of the earlier work. The demystification of the art object extended even to the 3 1/2 hour sound track; rather than written by Morris himself, many of the texts, as in the earlier sound track for Hearing, were appropriated from a range of published sources. Morris recorded eight actors reading from a 256 page manuscript that was divided into four sections.²⁸ The first section, "The Four," was written by Morris and involved four actors, each identifying an amplification unit

with a point of the compass (NE, SE, NW, SW) . The second section, "They," was appropriated from Emil Kraepelin's Dementia Praecox [1919] and Manic Depressive Insanity and Paranoia [1921].²⁹ Section three, was divided into three parts; the first two--"Cold/Oracle," "He/She"--were written by Morris while the third--"Scar/Records"--was a list of entries from the Guinness Book of World Records. The final section, also by Morris and narrated by the poet Mark Strand, was called "Monologue."

The sound track was both discursive and complex. Morris drew up elaborate charts to mix the eight-track tape for Voice, arriving at 546 random combinations of words and sounds that could come out of the four speakers.³⁰ "As with the interplay between seats and the disposition of the amplifiers," writes Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, " . . . Morris . . . initiates one's experience of Voice with a series of references to spatial positioning and temporal order that reflexively identify the two through what are puns or almost puns--of specific location with generalized orientation on the compass, of a speaker system with a narration that's sometimes suggestive of a person moving around the room (when a single voice comes first from one speaker and then from another) and at others suggests a space of speaking (when more than one voice speaks simultaneously on more than one speaker)."³¹ The dizzying circularity of speech resulted in a disorienting array of voices and information: The spectator, never permitted to center on any single area of discourse, was drawn into a temporal passage of words so unpredictable and disruptive that both narrative and extended meaning were denied.

Such is the case with the gender confusion in "They." The excerpts from Kraepelin's writings used in "They" were thought by Morris to be the least theoretical and the most descriptive of the individual case studies.³² The four-track tape was read by an actor and an actress. Each of two speakers diagonally opposite each other was reserved for passages read exclusively by the man or the woman. The other two were used for both voices together. Sentences read by either the man or the woman were often interrupted by both voices reading at once. Some sentences were repeated as many as four times. Significantly, when the two actors were reading together they transposed the personal pronoun for the opposite sex whenever it came up: he became "she," she became "he."

The decentering effect of Voice was self-consciously reiterated in the very presence of Kraepelin's texts on mental illness. Kraepelin, the originator of a classification system of psychopathology on which all subsequent classifications were based, differentiated between varying degrees of insanity: Dementia Praecox (schizophrenia), manic-depressive disorders, paranoia. The space of Voice asserted the conditions of ego-loss that constituted these mental illnesses: The complex sound track, which took Morris more than three months to create, often shattered into an incoherent field of sentence fragments and sounds where linear thinking and logic were a rare exception, a disorienting space where men identified themselves as women; women as men, where the word "I" was almost never invoked.³³

Morris's associations in Voice to mental pathology--his construction of a schizo-effective environment--suggests a central paradox. The psychotic world that Morris envisions is as much a duplication of our own degraded world as it is a space of desublimation and recovery--a space where established patterns and habits could be questioned; it is a realm removed from many of the constraints of logic and reason imposed on society by an industrial social order.³⁴ The idea of being liberated from this repressive center impressed those thinkers who recognized that such repression represented yet another means by which the establishment could claim control over the individual. In the late 1960s, the period in which Morris reconciled his political conscience with his art, the question of Freud's alleged complicity in the logic of domination, a question initially discussed by Marcuse a decade earlier, would reemerge. Michel Foucault writes:

Then [from 1966-71] came the five brief, impassioned, jubilant, enigmatic years. At the gates of our world, there was Vietnam, of course, and the first major blows to the powers that be. But here, inside . . . [the walls of the intellectual], what exactly was taking place? An Amalgam of revolutionary and antirepressive politics? A war fought on two fronts: against social exploitation and psychic repression? A surge of libido modulated by the class struggle? Perhaps. At any rate, it is this familiar, dualistic interpretation that has laid claim to the events of those years. The dream that cast its spell, between the First world War and fascism, over the dreamiest parts of Europe--the Germany of Wilhelm Reich, and the France of the surrealists--had returned to set fire to reality itself: Marx and Freud in the same incandescent light.

But is this what really happened? Had the utopian project of the thirties been resumed, this time on the scale of historical practice? Or was there, on the contrary, a movement toward political struggles that no longer conformed to the model that the Marxist tradition had prescribed? Toward an experience and a technology of desire that were no longer

Freudian. It is true that the old banners were raised, but the combat shifted and spread into new zones.³⁵

The new areas of confrontation to which Foucault refers include the influential, albeit extremely problematic, work undertaken by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in the Anti-Œdipus, their challenge to the social order of Freud and Marx. Published in 1972 in French (and subsequently translated into English in 1977),³⁶ Anti-Œdipus questions the conditions and assumptions on which psychoanalysis was built. Specifically, Deleuze and Guattari dismantle what they consider to be the mythological status of œdipal desire: For them, Œdipus is not merely a psychoanalytic construct but a figurehead of imperialism, "colonization pursued by other means, it is the interior colony, and we shall see that even here at home . . . it is our intimate colonial education."³⁷ Depression (the ultimate condition of unfulfilled œdipal desire) and Œdipus are seen as "agencies of the State, agencies of paranoia, agencies of power as such, just as neurosis is the result of power on individuals."³⁸ They call for an exchange of the concept of œdipal desire tied abstractly to the parent for an acknowledgement and acceptance of libidinal desire. In this antioedipal thinking, the ego also must be undone as a major repressive force that validates reality and logic over sensuality as it fashions docile and obedient subjects. "Everybody has been œdipalized and neuroticized at home, at school, at work," writes Mark Seem in his introduction to the Anti-Œdipus. "Everybody wants to be a fascist. Deleuze and Guattari want to know how these beliefs succeed in taking hold of a body, thereby silencing the productive machines of the libido."³⁹

In Anti-Œdipus, it is the psychotic who holds the key to liberation. Whereas the neurotic responds to œdipalization, the psychotic is most often incapable of yielding to the logic of œdipal desire. The fundamental task of the revolutionary, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, is to dismantle the Œdipal complex in order to dissolve the mystifications of power and "initiate a radical politics of desire freed from all beliefs."⁴⁰ Exemplars are made of those marginal figures who, at least hypothetically, resist œdipal drives: orphans (no parents as the object of desire), atheists (no beliefs), and nomads (no habits, no territories). To this list, are added those writers whose "stoned" world was based on intensely lived reality: Henry Miller, Nietzsche and Artaud. Ultimately, Deleuze and Guattari advocate the replacement of psychoanalysis based on Œdipus and the Ego with schizoanalysis--a therapy that attempts to de-normalize and de-individualize through a decentering and transformation of human relationships in a struggle against power.

To forget about our egos is to make possible a non-neurotic politics, a politics that fights against subjugation: "... A revolutionary group at the preconscious level remains a subjugated group, even in seizing power, as long as this power itself refers to a form of force that continues to enslave and crush desiring-production. ... A subject-group, on the contrary, is a group whose libidinal investments are themselves revolutionary, it causes desire to penetrate into the social field, and subordinates the socius or the forms of power of desiring production; productive of desire

and a desire that produces, the subject group always invents mortal formations that exorcise the effusion in it of a death instinct; it opposes real coefficients of transversality to the symbolic determinations of subjugation, coefficients without a hierarchy or a group superego."⁴¹ The object ultimately is not madness as a way of life (for psychosis would result in an extreme disconnection from power), but rather a politics of the here and now--a kind of materialist psychiatry. The space of the Anti-Edipus oscillates between the worlds of Nietzsche and Marx, a construct of intense experiences tied to revolutionary political causes, where process and experience are favored over a repressive social order.

One can see reflected in Morris's labyrinths, in their winding paths of experience and process, the anxious dialectic of the Anti-Edipus--a discourse that was for Morris grounded in both the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and such Marcusean texts as Eros and Civilization, An Essay on Liberation, and One Dimensional Man. From the very beginning--from the Passageway in 1961 or the I-Box in 1962--Morris charts a journey wherein the ego is temporarily suspended, where the logic of "reality" yields to the visceral and the sensual. "Often the labyrinth is a symbol for happiness . . .," Borges has said, "because we feel we are lost in the world, and the obvious symbol is that of losing yourself in the labyrinth . . . and the word labyrinth is so beautiful."⁴² The sensuality of Morris's labyrinth is reduplicated in the exhibition poster designed by him for Voice, an exhibition that also included drawings for the Philadelphia Labyrinth and the Blind Time series. That

poster boldly presents an initially off-putting photograph of Morris in a helmet and sado-masochistic drag--dark glasses, chains, spiked neck band [Fig. 54]. The image at first begs a Foucauldian explanation in its assertion of the artist as master, the viewer as slave: An effigy of the architect at the center of the labyrinth; a metaphor for a panoptic society at its entrance.

But this image, like Site or Waterman Switch, enters into a depersonalized eroticism--either through the wearing of a mask, the closing of a door or the wearing of dark glasses and a helmet--where the artist and spectator are permitted to indulge in their private fantasies. In a parody of pornography, Morris's brutal display of sexuality is manifested anonymously as demanded by our moralist, puritanical culture. (A year later, Morris proposed a series of nondescript "Sex Chambers" as gallery installations to be constructed in straw and copper wire [Fig. 55].) However, like the Morris of I-Box permitting the mechanisms of anonymity to swing into place, his lack of self-identity and his de-normalized status are willful, for at the core of Morris's work is the impulse to celebrate rather than extinguish desire.

Morris celebrated, as well, that aspect of New Leftist thinking in the 1960s and early 1970s that sought to disavow the standards of normalcy that govern late-industrial society. An important intellectual source for Morris (as well as for the inversion of psychoanalytic thought suggested by Deleuze and Guattari) was the influential texts of the British

psychiatrist R.D. Laing.⁴³ Laing's writings in the 1960s (The Divided Self [1959], Self and Others [1961], Reason and Violence [1964], and The Politics of Experience [1967]) aggressively supported a humanistic rethinking of our attitudes toward a principal condition of social aberrance--mental illness. In recounting the story of a young mental patient who was terrified because of the imagined Atom Bomb lodged inside of her, for example, Laing asks whether the statesmen of the world "who boast and threaten that they have Doomsday weapons are far more dangerous, and far more estranged from 'reality' than many of the people on whom the label psychotic is affixed."⁴⁴ Laing reasoned that society's impulse to incarcerate and tranquilize the schizophrenic--to silence the mumblings of disaffection and confusion that characterize psychotic speech--parallels a greater need to establish order in a society conditioned by violence and repression. Citing a description by Emil Kraepelin of his interaction with a schizophrenic woman (a study similar to those used by Morris for the sound track of Voice), Laing reveals Kraepelin's hidden semantics of coercion, a discourse built on cruel and violent attempts at behavioral modification.⁴⁵ Ultimately Laing asked and, with his work at the controversial Philadelphia Association, continues to ask one of the most compelling questions about the nature of mental illness: Can schizophrenic, or more inclusively, psychotic states be seen as intervals of healing? Can we accept the passage into psychosis as a transcendental, albeit desperate, search for recovery from the conditions of alienation that haunt us all?

"What we call 'normal,'" wrote Laing, "is a product of repression, denial, splitting, projection, introjection and other forms of destructive action on experience. . . . It is radically estranged from the structure of being."⁴⁶ If schizophrenia was construed by Laing as a "social fact. . . a political event," than experience itself was also seen as hostage to an entire subset of ideologies and demands. Laing's thinking, when placed in the context of a liberating phenomenology--as for example, the world of Merleau-Ponty where a priori constructs of history and logic are dismantled and abolished--offers an important key for understanding the political basis of Morris's (and possibly other minimalists') ontology. The kind of open-ended experience that drove Michael Fried to caution about the impending destruction of the art object, was also most often negated by a positivist social order (i.e., the negation of experience, as Laing called it), where experience unbounded by convention, memory, or knowledge would certainly read as madness.⁴⁷

Ultimately the unbounded, experiential world envisioned by Eros and Civilization, The Anti-Œdipus, or The Politics of Experience--the space of recuperative psychosis, schizoanalysis, and polymorphous sexuality--was not to materialize. As the problems and contradictions of such ideologies of presence emerged, conviction collapsed into hopeless mythologies. To observe a schizophrenic person descend into an abyss of delusions, paranoia, and self-destruction, is, of course, to witness a tragic dismantling of control, a loss rendered more dangerous by society's relentless intolerance, even hatred, of the mentally ill. While the

epiphanic tone of the 1960s sustained belief in such myths of transcendence, the more conservative spirit of the 1980s has shattered them. The urgent will to protest oppression in the 1960s often spawned narrow ideological programs like those of Deleuze and Guattari or Laing, positions designed to transgress the boundaries of normalcy and acceptability. Although such utopianisms were naïve and, moreover, impossible, they contributed to an already established discourse of liberation. Reconciling these ideas with the mythic imperatives of phenomenology, Robert Morris constructed a correlative cultural discourse, deploying art objects, installations, and environments that intentionally decentered the spectator as they continually asked questions about the nature of our confinement and the possibility of our freedom. While no answers were to be found at the center of his labyrinths, these works stand in testament to a vital, albeit traumatic, moment in the history of modernist culture.

As such, Morris's explorations of phenomenal and psycho-sexual conditions attempted to critique, if not actually effect, what Laing and others concluded was impossible in the space of late-capitalism: a truly self-validating experience without concessions to dominant ideologies and patterns of human behavior. Predominant throughout the artist's œuvre is a dialectic between the modernist will to celebrate the ego through a cult of the personality (Morris as performer) and the post-'60s impulse toward difference, de-individualization and a decentering of linear logic and reason (the anonymity of the orthodox minimalist plinths, the drive

toward temporality rather than formal closure, the sensual impulses, the labyrinthine space of his work). Oscillating between a philosophical, even Nietzschean voice, and social, Marxist-oriented themes, Morris refused to center on a stylistic or intellectual identity. If alienation became the brunt of Morris's social criticism, his vision nevertheless balanced a tacit acknowledgment of the continual confiscation of our egos with the perhaps naïve notion that such conditions of alienation could be transcended. His work simultaneously speaks to his own private desires, and to the public commitments of a political activist outraged by the Vietnam War and the dissipation of our natural resources. Ultimately Morris's œuvre can be defined neither as modernist nor postmodernist (an historical category that is, regardless of its relationship to Morris, questionable)-- his vision and his thinking reside somewhere in between, in a mannerist world in which past belief systems are questioned and possibilities for the future advanced. His diverse and complex production is, like his labyrinths, interconnected and most often unconventional. It would be impossible to distinguish the dances from the sculptures, the films from the critical writings, the political protests from the land reclamation projects.

Robert Morris entered the space of the labyrinth despite his claustrophobia, compulsively returning to it in search of an escape from the preconceptions of the past. As such, the impact of his machines for dismantling the ego--"desiring machines" as Deleuze and Guattari might have named them--was often felt by Morris himself. Whether naked in

the I-Box or Waterman Switch or donning work clothes in Site, Morris helped reshape the role of the artist and the spectator in an age of radical social and cultural deconstruction. Journeying around and around in circles, like one of Samuel Beckett's absurd heroes, he would grind away at the elegant, desexualized persona of the dandy, continually uttering the tentative, paradoxical words quoted at the beginning of this dissertation: "I seem to speak, it is not I, about me, it is not about me."⁴⁸

NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 7.

2. Ibid., pp. 7-8.

3. From 1961-74, the literal use of labyrinthine passages or maze-like organization occurs in the following works: Passageway [1961], Pharmacy [1962], Card File [1963], Arizona [1963], Site [1963], Waterman Switch [1965], Untitled (four mirrored cubes) [1965], Untitled (Four Slopped cubes) [1965], Untitled (L-Beams) [1965-67], Evanston Illinois Project [1968-69], Ottawa Project [1969], 2" Steel Plate Suite [1970], Blind Time [1973, 1976, 1985], Mirror [1969], Finch Project [1969], Earth Projects [1969-70], Whitney Museum Installation [1970], War Memorials [1970], Neo-Classic [1971], Observatory [1971], drawings for imagined architectural complexes, walkways, observatories, and courts (e.g., Bath House Observatory, Section of an Elevated Platform) [1971], Tate Gallery Installation [1971], Sophie Krauss Memorial Project [1971-72], Untitled (installation of mirrors and steel apertures) [1973], Drawings for Labyrinths [1973-74], Voice [1973-74], Philadelphia Labyrinth [1974]. In addition to these literal labyrinths, Morris often employed the decentering structure of the labyrinth in works that were not specifically maze-like.

4. For more on Maurice Merleau-Ponty see "The Phenomenal Matrix" in chapter one of this dissertation.

5. "Aligned with Nazca," Artforum, 14 (October 1975), p. 36.

6. See, for example, Stephen Eisenman's discussion of Morris's carceral imagery and its relationship to the history of the prison. "The Space of the Self: Robert Morris In the Realm of the Carceral," Arts Magazine, 55 (September 1980), pp. 104-09.

7. Eisenman, p. 104.

8. The text was spoken by four "actors": Jose Ferrer, Norma Fire, Hollis Frampton, and Steven Koch.

9. The following individuals were quoted or paraphrased in the 3 1/2 hour tape: David Antin, Manfred Bierwisch, Noam Chomsky, David Crystal, Marcel Duchamp, W. Brouder Firth, Janet Dean Fodor, Michel Foucault, E.C. Goossen, Clement Greenberg, Roger Harrison, Max Kozloff, M. Lemon, E.H. Lenneberg, John Lyons, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Jacques Monod, Frank Palmer, David Pears, Jean Piaget, Seth Siegelaub, Robert Smithson, Albert Speer, Claude Levi-Strauss, Andrew Stein, Liza Thomas, Immanuel Velikovsky, Mary Warnock, Lynn White, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. According to Morris, other writers, not identified in the xeroxed program, were also included in the tape.

10. As quoted in Thomas Krens, The Drawings of Robert Morris (Williamstown, Mass.: Williams College Museum of Art, 1982), n.p.

11. Dada performance represents the most radical example of this provocative relationship to the spectator. In 1916, for example, Hugo Ball a German theatrical producer, poet, and musician opened the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich. With the arrival of the German poet Richard Huelsenbeck and the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara, the Cabaret introduced aggressive, often violent, entertainment. Manifestoes were read to the public in an insulting manner. The entertainment was at least annoying and frequently physically threatening and inciteful. For more on this issue, see RoseLee Goldberg, "Dada Performance: The Idea of Art and the Idea of Life," in Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present (New York: Abrams, 1979), pp. 34-48.

12. See Ibid., pp. 59-62. Also Rosalind Krauss, Passages in Modern Sculpture (New York: Viking, 1977), p. 207.

13. In this regard, the Russian constructivists wished to engage the rapidly accelerating industrial revolution--to celebrate its potential to change and improve Soviet society and culture. See Buchloh, pp. 86-95.

14. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

15. These maze-like pieces with central enclosures or cubicle-like compartments resemble laboratory cages. See, for example, Morris's Untitled [1968].

16. Discipline and Punish, p. 228.

17. In contrast to the writing of Foucault, however, Jean Baudrillard's more recent critique of productivist ideology argues that "power is no longer exercised exclusively through control of the means of production but through control of the means of representation--the code" The decentering effected by a world of unremitting simulation--the space of Disneyland, electronic media, computers, and synthesizers--Baudrillard reasons, renders obsolete the need for panoptic surveillance. Baudrillard's idea suggests that the shift from modernism to postmodernism is consistent with a broader shift from industrial to postindustrial society, from a condition of production to one of information. Baudrillard's assumption suggests a kind of urban elitism, for the rural dweller, while subjected to the ordering of the highway, the shopping mall, the school, the hospital, and the factory, most likely does not live primarily by the codes of simulation. While a profound cultural shift has unarguably taken place, the idea of a society controlled and conditioned principally by the code is fallacious: far from being postindustrial, our society represents the first instance in which all sectors of the economy have been fully industrialized. In support of my

argument I point to the writing of economist Ernest Mandel who has maintained that late-capitalist society is just emerging into a thoroughly industrial state and is far from a postindustrial situation. It is important to add that Baudrillard distorted Foucault's reasoning to strengthen his relatively weak argument. Foucault's thinking would never have allowed for the simplistic idea that "power" in industrial society was "exercised exclusively through control of the means of production." For Baudrillard's critique of Foucault, see Forget Foucault (New York: Semiotext (e), 1986), pp. 9-64. For his initial argument on simulation, see Simulations, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext (e), 1983). For Mandel's argument, see Late Capitalism (London: Verso, 1978).

18. For a discussion of panoptic structure in society see Foucault., Discipline and Punish, pp.195-230.

19. Ibid., p. 203.

20. Ibid., p. 128.

21. Ibid., p. 202.

22. Edward Fry, "Robert Morris: The Dialectic," Arts Magazine, 49 (September 1974), p. 23.

23. "I once observed a raven attack its reflected image incessantly," writes Morris. "It was seeing itself in one of my "Mirror Cubes" on the lawn of the Tate Gallery in London." See, Robert Morris: Mirror Works (New York: Leo Castelli Gallery, 1978), n.p.

24. For descriptions and photographs of Morris's mirror pieces from 1961-78, see Ibid.

25. "Robert Morris: Mirage, Reflection," October, no. 6 (Fall 1978), pp. 75-80.

26. For Jakobson's seminal argument on verbal reduplication in infants, see "Why Mama and Papa?" Selected Writings, vol. I (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), pp.

27. "Earthwords," October, no. 10 (Fall 1979), p. 122.

28. The eight actors were: Jack Firestone, Richard Dunham, William Pritz, Mike Zelenko, Cathryn Walker, Gene Galusha, Charles Randall, and Mark Strand.

29. For a discussion on Morris's use of these texts, see Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, "Robert Morris: The Complication of Exhaustion," Artforum, 13 (September 1974,) pp. 46-47.

30. See Krens for a discussion of these charts.

31. Gilbert-Rolfe, p. 46.

32. Morris rigorously edited the Kraepelin texts, eliminating the theoretical sections.

33. Of the schizophrenic's refusal to speak in the first person, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write: "There are those who will maintain that the schizo is incapable of uttering the word I, and that we must restore his ability to pronounce this hallowed word. All of this the schizo sums up by saying: they're fucking me over again. 'I won't say I any more, I'll never utter the word again; it's just too damn stupid. Every time I hear it, I'll use the third person instead, if I happen to remember to. If it amuses them. And it won't make one bit of difference.' And if he does chance to utter the word I again, that won't make any difference either. He is too far removed from these problems, too far past them." Anti-Œdipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen Lane (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota, 1983), p. 23. The quotation within their statement is taken from Samuel Beckett's The Unnamable.

Morris's dislocation of language relates, as well, to strategies common to the writings of the minimalists. This interchangeability of writing and sculpture, as Craig Owens observes, results in the dislocation of language that matches the decentering conditions of the sculpture. Owens quotes Robert Smithson's observations of the poetry of Carl Andre: "Thoughts are crushed into a rubble of synchopated syllables," writes Smithson. "Reason becomes a powder of vowels and consonants. His words hold together without any sonority. . . . The apparent sameness and toneless ordering of Andre's poems conceals a radical dislocation of grammar." Owens's conclusion is indeed relevant to Morris: "In demonstrating that Andre deploys linguistic signifiers as he would the cinderblocks, logs, or metal plates of his sculpture, writing and work are made to confront each other like parallel mirrors mounted in series, opening onto an infinite play of reflections in which the distinctions between writing and sculpture are, in effect, dissolved." See Owens, p. 125. Also see Robert Smithson, "A Museum of Language," in The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations, ed., Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p. 67.

34. Herbert Marcuse writes: "In the equation Reason=Truth=Reality, which joins the subjective and objective world into one antagonistic unity, Reason is the subversive power, the "power of the negative" that establishes, as theoretical and practical Reason, the truth for men and things--that is, the conditions in which men and things become what they really are. The attempt to demonstrate that this truth of theory and practice is not a subjective but an objective condition was the original concern of Western thought and the origin of its logic--logic not in the sense of a special discipline of philosophy but as the mode of thought

appropriate for comprehending the real as rational The totalitarian universe of technological rationality is the latest transmutation of the idea of Reason." One Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 123.

35. "Preface," in Deleuze and Guattari, pp. xi-xii.

36. The following discussion on the Anti-Edipus attempts to establish a theoretical model for thinking about Morris's interests in schizophrenia and other psychotic states, interests which stem from the writings of R.D. Laing rather than Deleuze and Guattari. Since Morris has not read the Anti-Edipus, my argument does not attempt to establish this work as a source for his thinking.

37. As quoted in Mark Seem's "Introduction," in Deleuze and Guattari, p. xx.

38. Seem in Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Deleuze and Guattari in Ibid. p. 377.

42. Achille Bonito Olivia, "Dialogue in the Form of an Introduction" (interview with Jorge Luis Borges) in Dialoghi d'artista (Milan: Electa, 1984), p. 9-11.

43. Morris began reading Laing in the early 1960s.

44. "Preface to the Pelican Edition," The Divided Self (Middlesex: Pelican, 1969), p. 12.

45. See "The Schizophrenic Experience," in The Politics of Experience (New York: Ballantine, 1967), pp. 106-130.

46. Laing continues: "The more one sees this, the more senseless it is to continue with generalized descriptions of supposedly specifically schizoid, schizophrenic, hysterical 'mechanisms.' There are forms of alienation that are relatively strange to statistically 'normal' forms of alienation. The 'normally' alienated person, by reason of the fact that he acts more or less like everyone else, is taken to be sane. Other forms of alienation that are out of step with the prevailing state of alienation are those that are labeled by the 'normal' majority as bad or mad. The condition of alienation, of being asleep, of being unconscious, of being out of one's mind, is the condition of the normal man. Society highly values is normal man. It educates children to lose themselves and to become absurd, and thus to be normal. Normal men have killed perhaps 100, 000, 000 of their fellow normal men in the last fifty years." See Ibid., pp. 27-28.

47. "The person going through ego-loss or transcendental experiences," writes Laing, "may or may not become in different ways confused. Then he might legitimately be regarded as mad. But to be mad is not necessarily to be ill, notwithstanding that in our culture the two categories have become confused." See Ibid., pp. 138-39.

48. Morris addressed the linguistic ambiguity of the "I" in the act of writing: "In the strictly linguistic domain Roland Barthes asserts that the act of writing about the self may be another mode of being from which the 'me' is excluded. As he puts it, 'I myself am my own symbol. I am the story which happens to me: freewheeling in language, I have nothing to compare myself to; and in this moment, the pronoun of the imaginary 'I' is im-pertinent; the symbolic becomes literally immediate. . . . The 'I' here has no referent. As a signifier, it coincides with the signified." See Robert Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," Art in America, 66 (January-February 1978), p. 81, n. 4.

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Illustrations



Fig. 1. Robert Morris, I-Box, 1962, mixed media, c. 12 x 18 in. Photo: Courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery.



Fig. 2. Robert Morris, Untitled (Box with Lock), 1963, painted bronze, 13 x 7 1/2 x 3/12 in. Photo: Rudolph Burckhardt.



Fig. 3. Robert Morris, Untitled, c. 1955-57, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Destroyed.

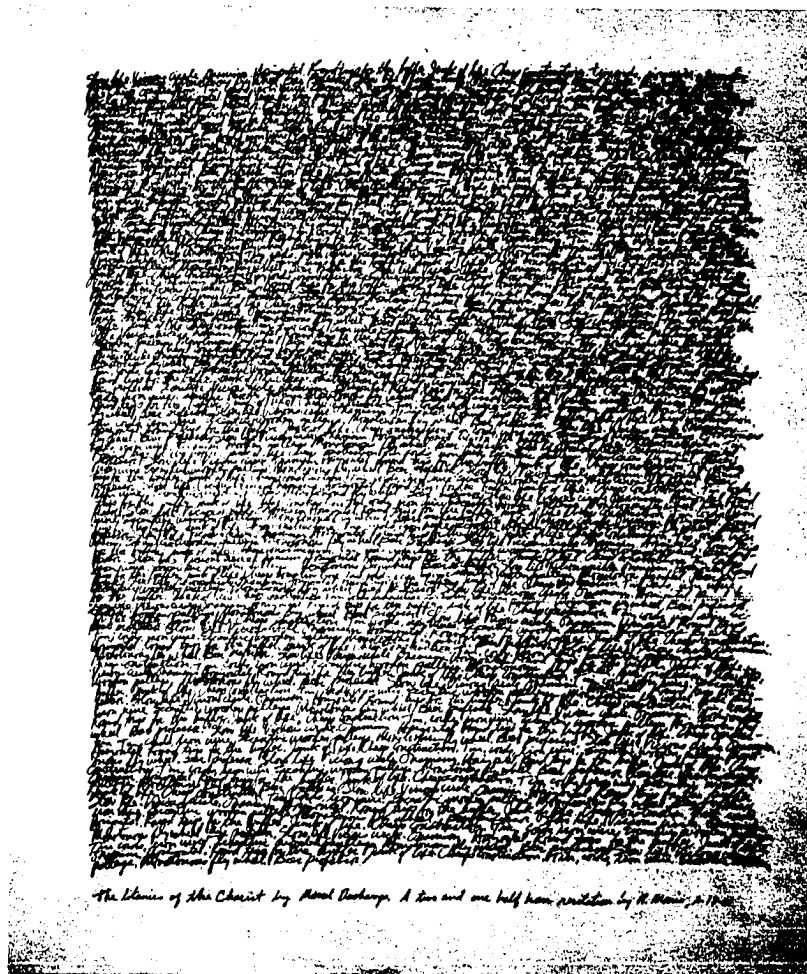


Fig. 4. Robert Morris, Litanies, 1961, ink on grey paper, 22 x 18 1/4 in.

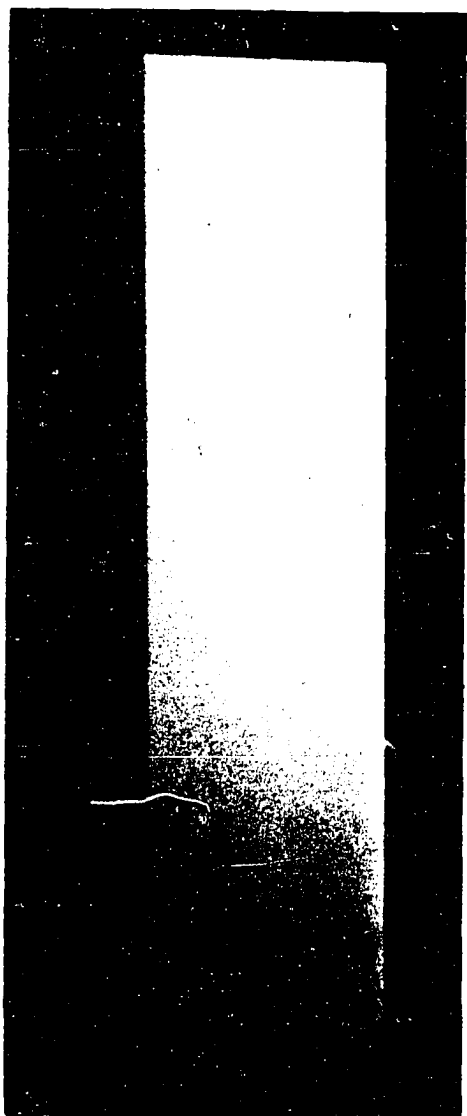


Fig. 5. Robert Morris, Column, 1961, painted plywood, 96 x 24 x 24 in.



Fig. 6. Robert Morris, Box with the Sound of its Own Making, 1961, walnut, 9 x 9 in. Photo: Rudolph Burckhardt.



Fig. 7. Marcel Duchamp, Etant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage, 1946-66, mixed media, c. 95 1/2 in x 70 in.



Fig. 8. Robert Morris, Fountain, 1963, mixed media, 35 1/2 x 13 x 14 1/2 in. Photo: Karl Stroher.

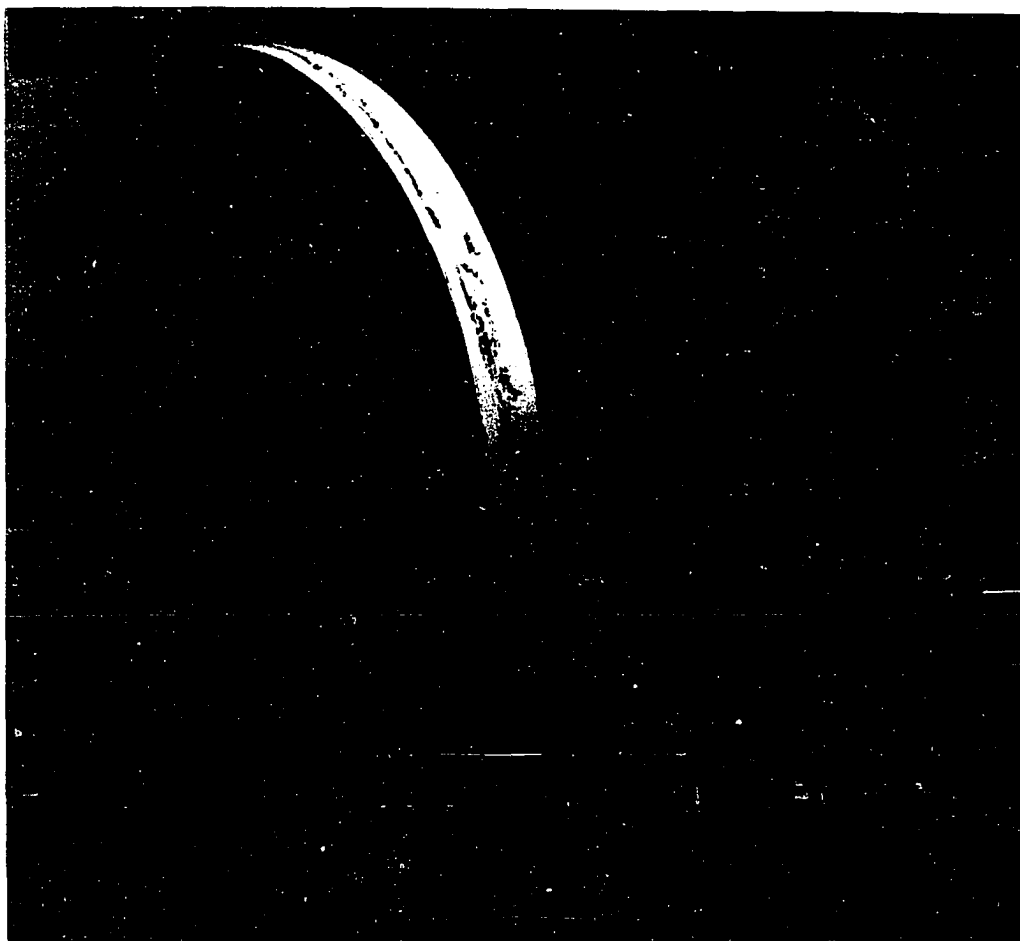


Fig. 9. Robert Morris, Wheels, 1963, wood and metal, 48 x 48 x 36.

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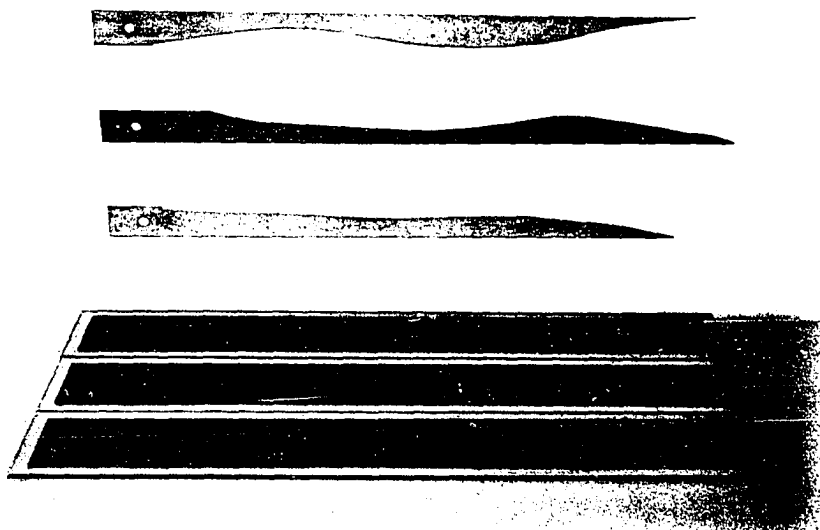


Fig. 11. Marcel Duchamp, Trois Stoppages étalon, 1913-14, mixed media,
11 1/8 x 50 7/8 x 9 in.

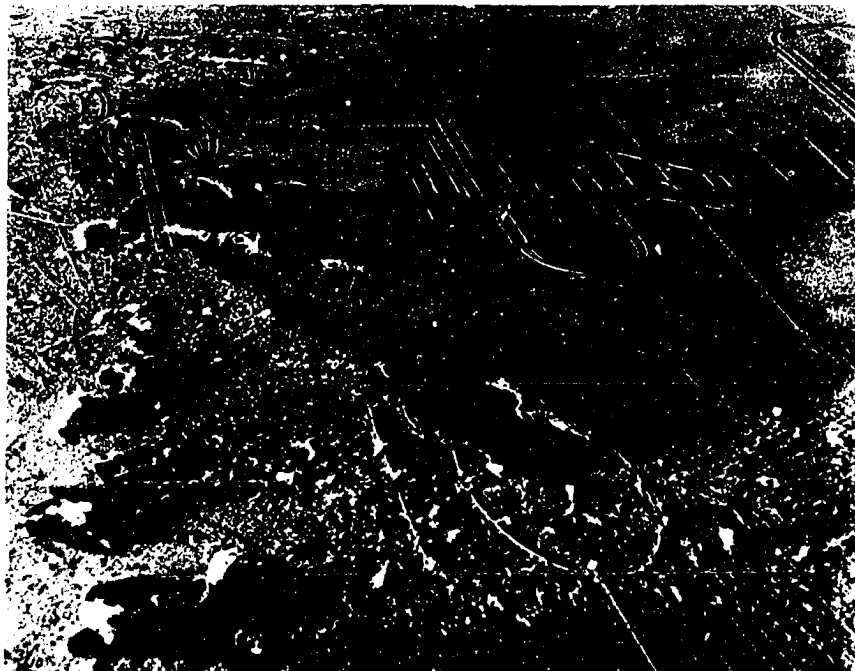


Fig. 12. Man Ray, photograph of Marcel Duchamp's Elevage de poussière, 1920, black-and-white photograph.

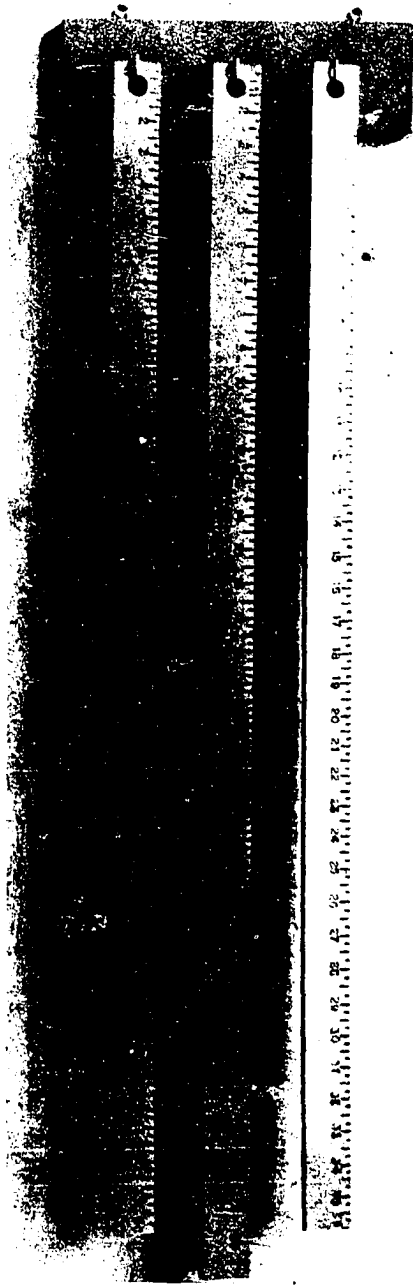


Fig. 13. Robert Morris, Three Rulers (Yardsticks), 1963, painted wood, c.
36 x 9 1/2 in Photo: Mark Hedden.

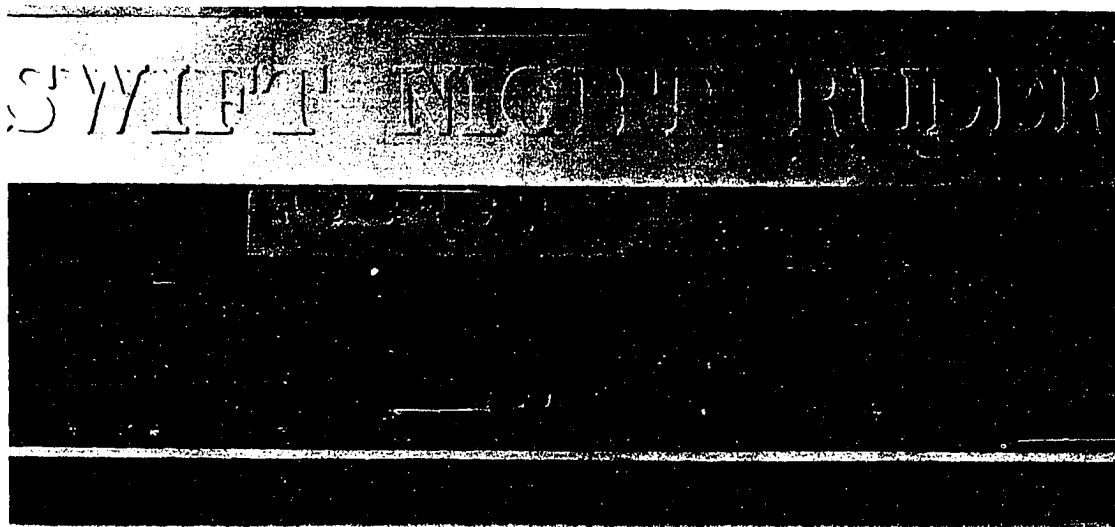


Fig. 14. Robert Morris, Swift Night Ruler, 1963, mixed media, 10 x 28 1/2 x 1 in. Photo: Walter Russell.

Paris December 3rd 1919
The Teeth's Loan & Trust Company, Consolidated
2 Wall Street.
N.Y.
Pay to the Order of Daniel Tzanck
one hundred fifteen and ⁰⁰/₁₀₀ Dollars
\$115. ⁰⁰/₁₀₀
RI
Marcel Duchamp

Fig. 15. Marcel Duchamp, Tzanck Check, 3 December 1919, ink on paper,
 8 1/4 x 15 1/16 in.

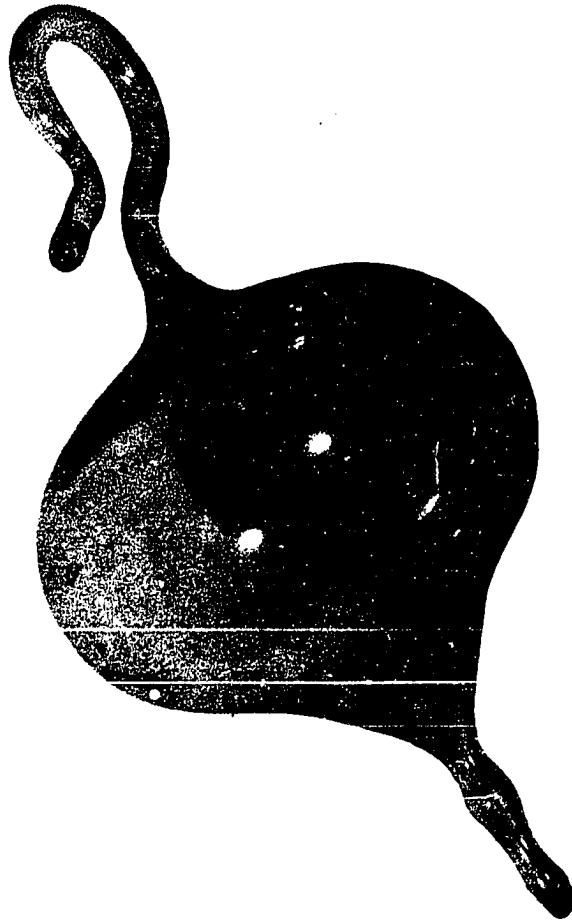


Fig. 16. Marcel Duchamp, Air de Paris, December 1919, readymade: glass ampoule (broken and mended), 5 1/4 in.

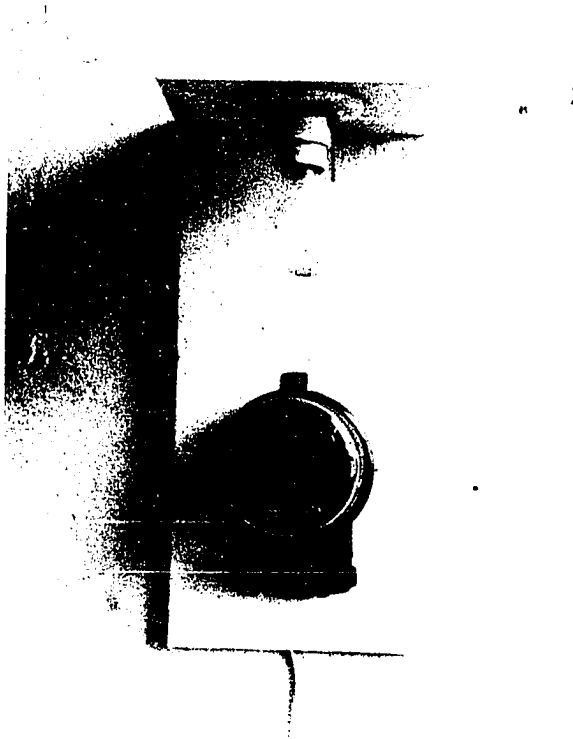


Fig. 17. Robert Morris, Metered Bulb, 1963, mixed media, 24 x 12 in.
Photo: Mark Hedden

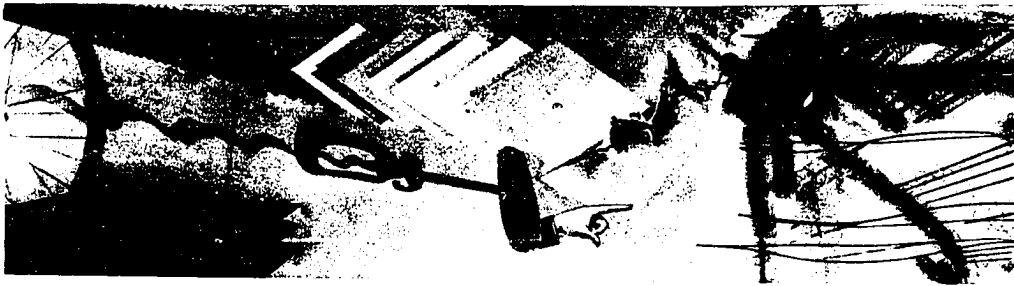


Fig. 18. Marcel Duchamp, Tu m., 1918, oil and pencil with found objects on canvas, 27 1/2 x 122 3/4 in.

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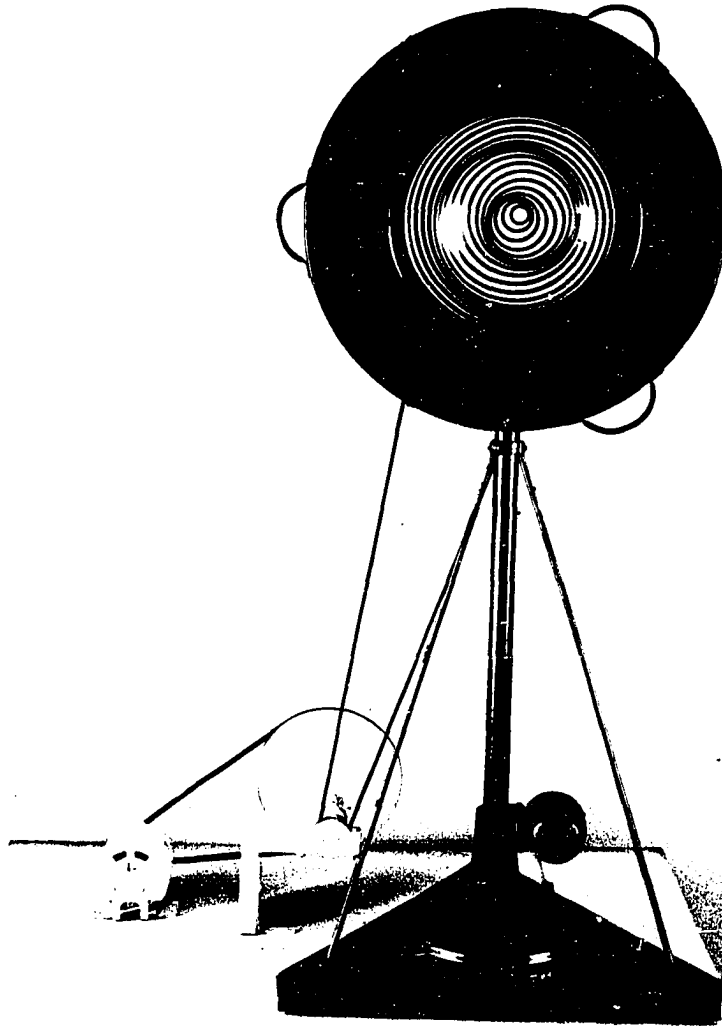


Fig. 20. Marcel Duchamp, Rotative Demisphere (Optique de précision), 1925, motorized construction, 58 1/2 x 25 1/4 x 24 in.

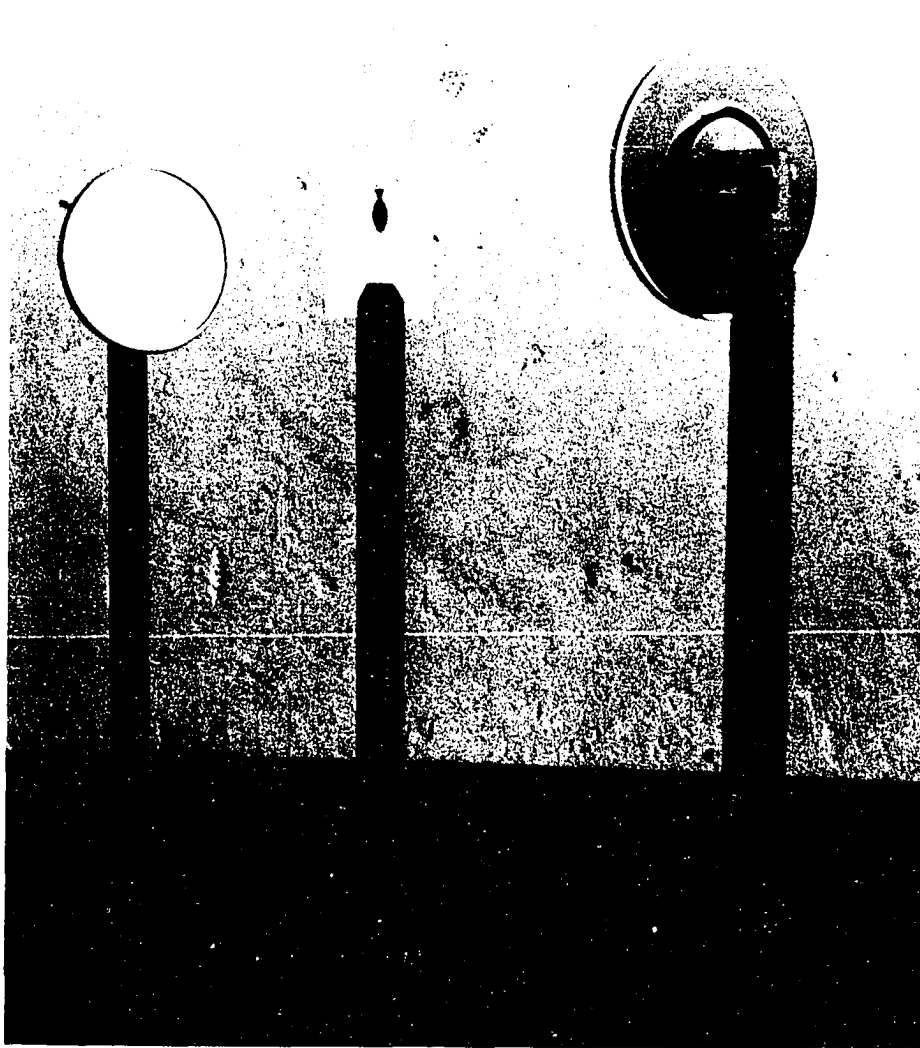


Fig. 21. Robert Morris, Pharmacy, 1962, mirrors and painted wood, 18 in. high.



Fig. 22. Marcel Duchamp, Pharmacie, January 1914, rectified readymade: gouache on a commercial print. 10 5/16 x 7 9/16.



Fig. 23. Robert Morris, Untitled (Mirrored Cubes), 1965, plexiglass mirror on wood, 28 x 28 x 28 in. Photo: Rudolph Burckhardt.

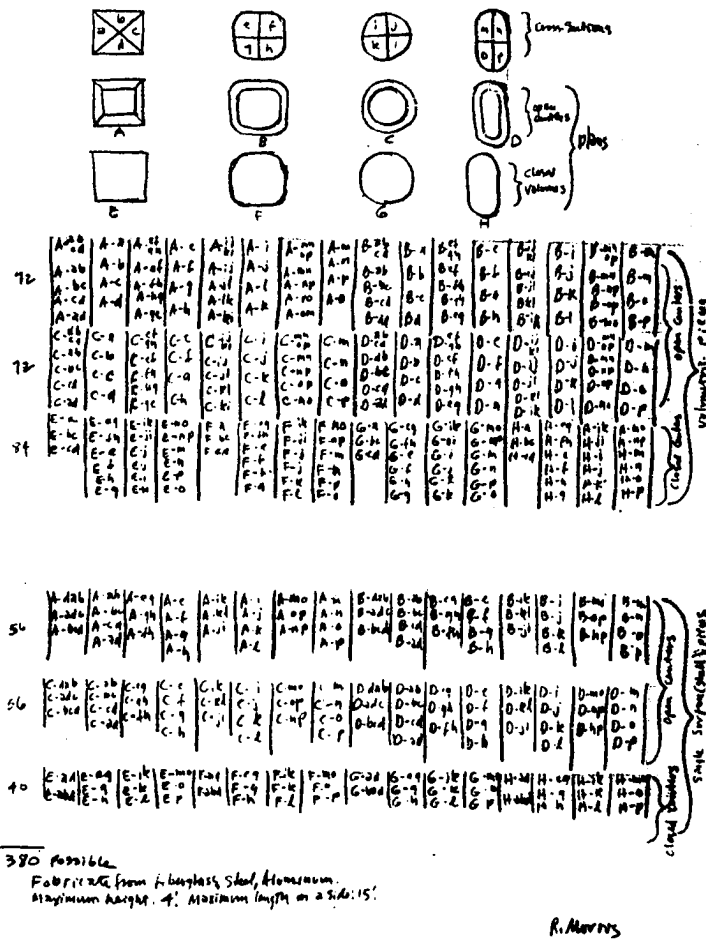


Fig. 24. Robert Morris, Untitled (Drawing for 380 Possible Fiberglass, Steel, Aluminum Pieces), 1967, pencil on paper, 20 x 16 in.

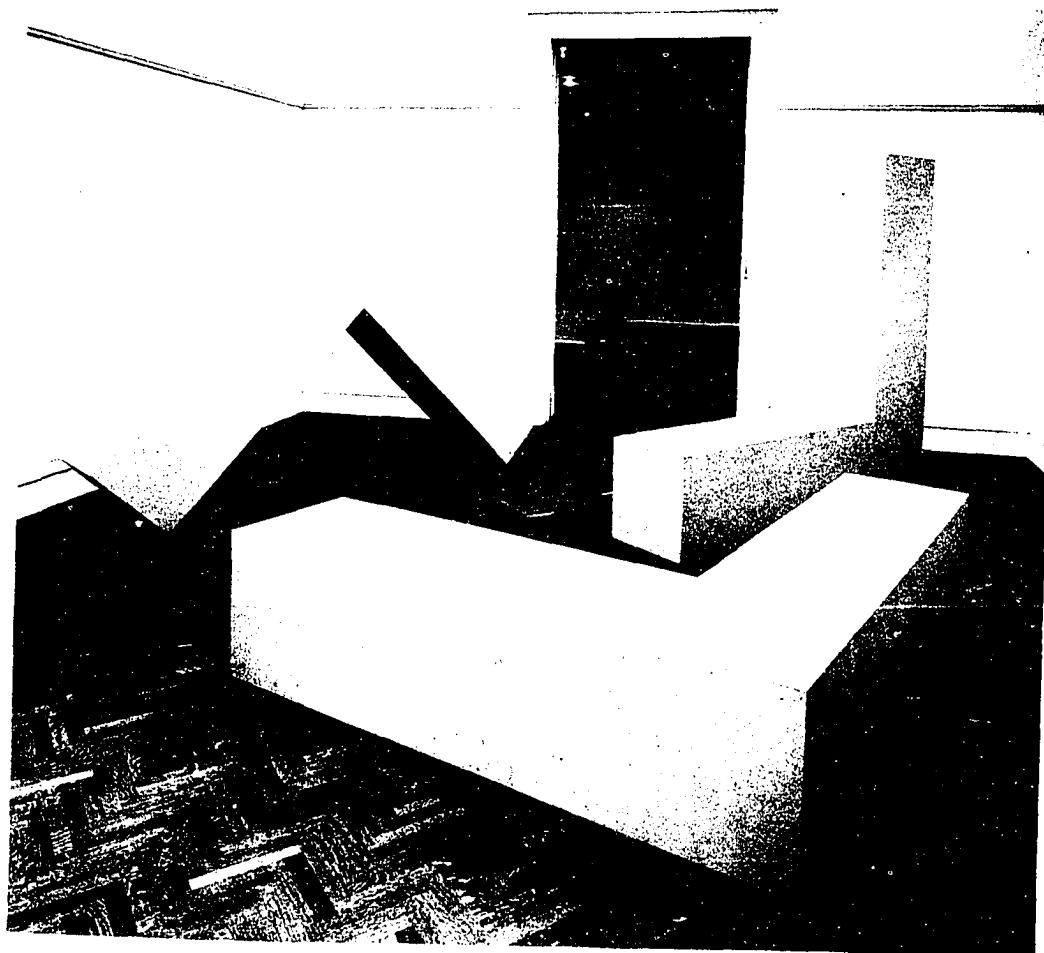


Fig. 25. Robert Morris, Untitled (L-Beams), 1965-67, painted plywood, size variable. Photo: courtesy of the Leo Castelli Gallery.

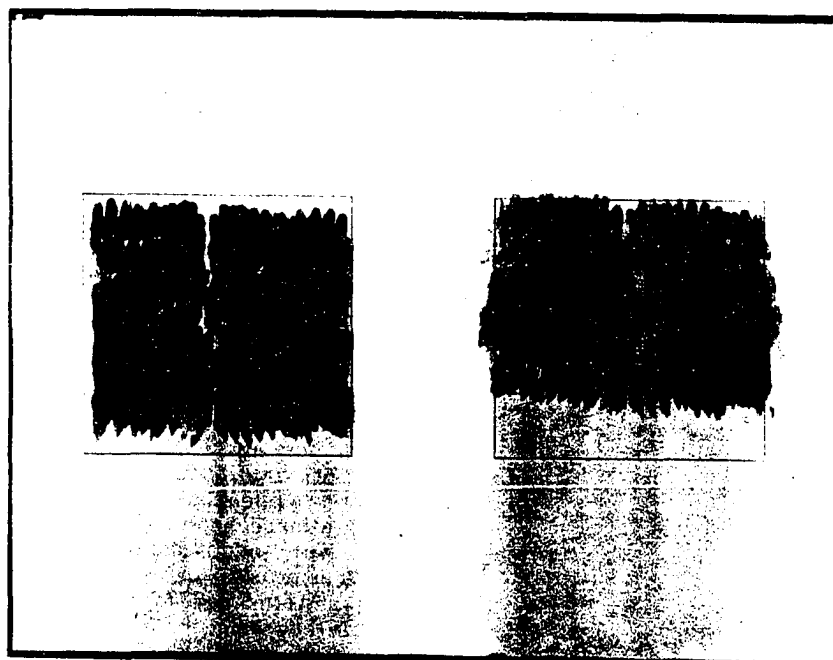


Fig. 26. Robert Morris, Blind Time I, 1973, graphite on paper, 35 x 46 in.

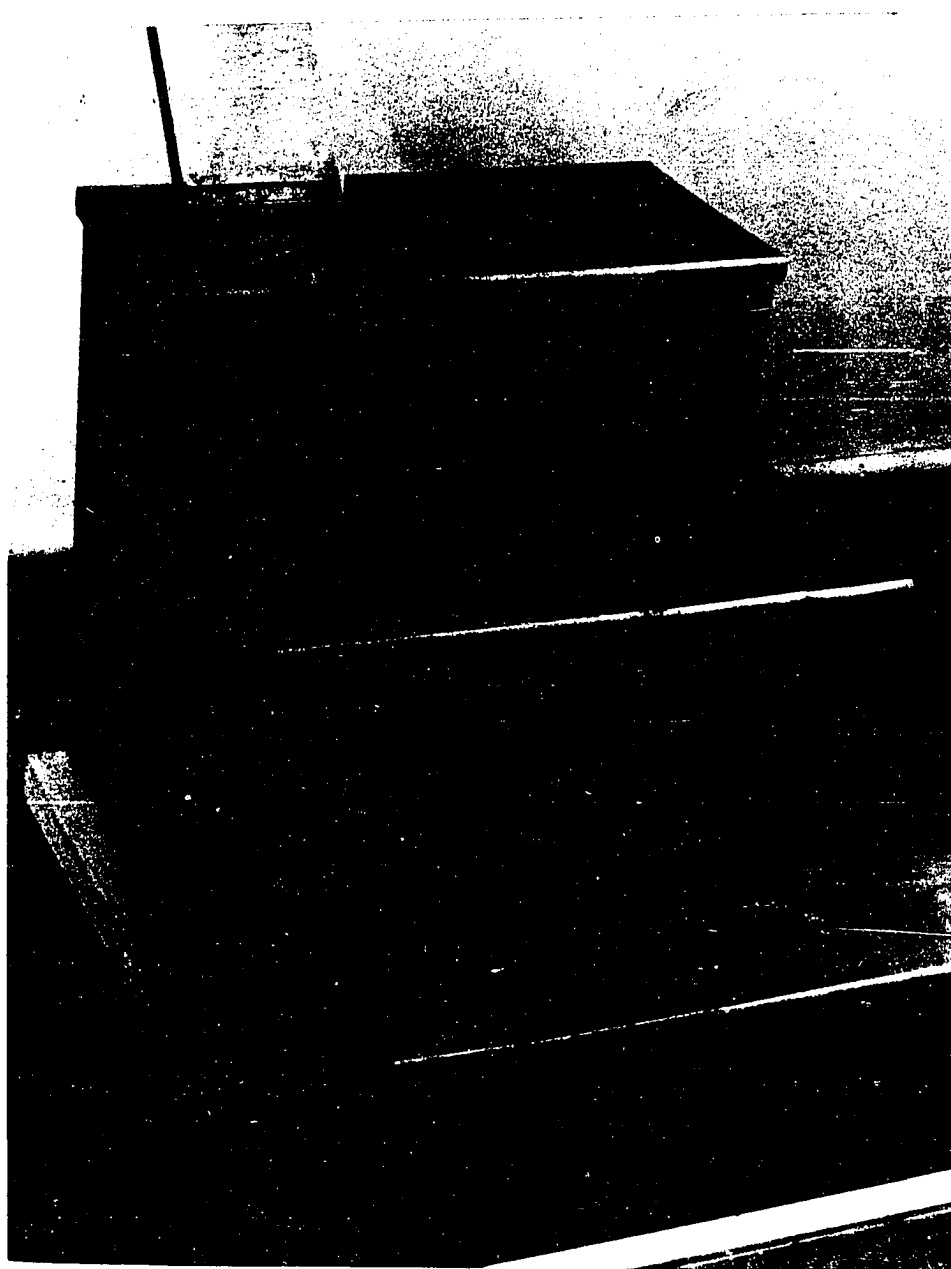


Fig. 27. Robert Morris, Untitled, 1964, library ladder with lead, $23 \frac{1}{2} \times 22 \frac{1}{2} \times 33$. Destroyed.



Fig. 28. Robert Morris, Untitled, 1964, lead, 36 in. high.

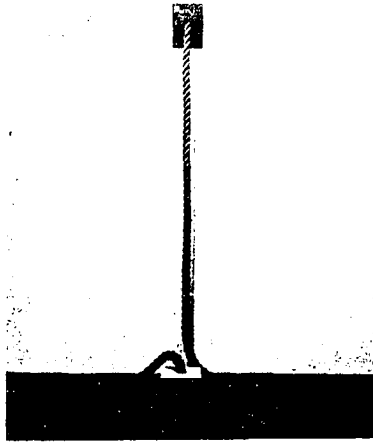


Fig. 29. Robert Morris, Untitled (Rope Piece), 1964, painted rope and wood, 216 in. high. Photo: Phillip Johnson.



Fig. 30. Robert Morris, Corner Piece, 1964, painted plywood, 78 x 108 in.
Photo: Rudolph Burckhardt.

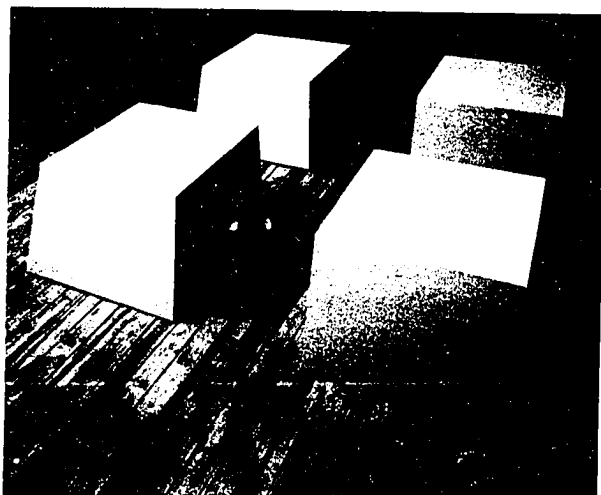


Fig. 31. Robert Morris, Untitled, 1965, fiberglass, four pieces, each 24 x 36 x 36.



Fig. 32. Robert Morris, Pine Portal, 1961, wood, c. 96 x 48 x 12 in.
Destroyed.



Fig. 33. Hans Namuth, Performance photograph from Robert Morris's Site, 1963, danced by Robert Morris and Carolee Schneemann.

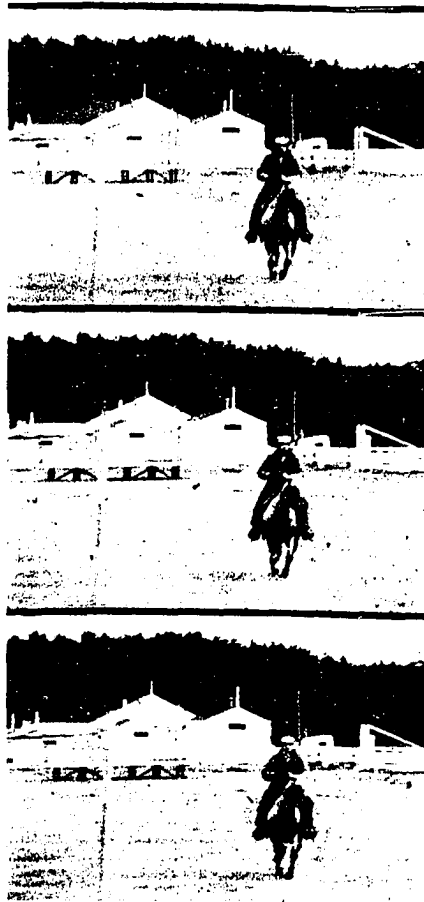


Fig. 34. Robert Morris, Pace and Progress, 1969, executed for Place and Process, Edmonton Art Gallery, Alberta Canada. Photo: Bob Fiore.

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Fig. 35. Robert Morris, Advertisement for the Peripatetic Artists Guild, November 1970.

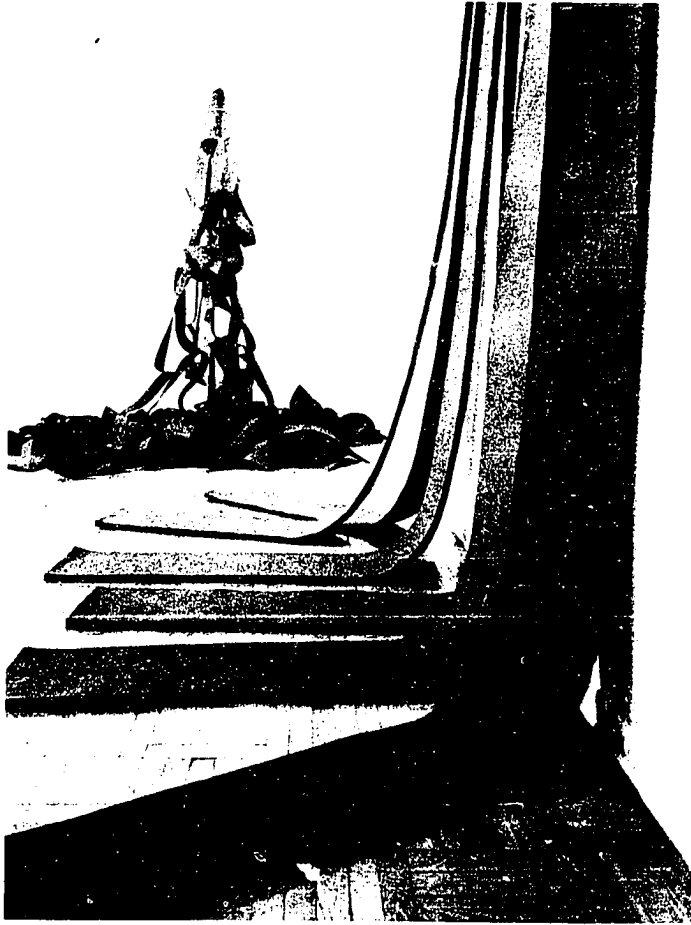


Fig. 36. Robert Morris, Installation shot of two Felt Pieces, Leo Castelli Gallery, 1968



Fig. 37. Robert Morris, Untitled, 1968, mixed media, c. 312 x 240 in.
Photo: Rudolph Burckhardt.



Fig. 38. Robert Morris, Earthwork, 1968, mixed media, 240 x 300 in.
Photo: Rudolph Burckhardt.



Fig. 39. Photograph of untitled installation of timbers, concrete, and steel for Robert Morris's Whitney Museum exhibition, April 1970.

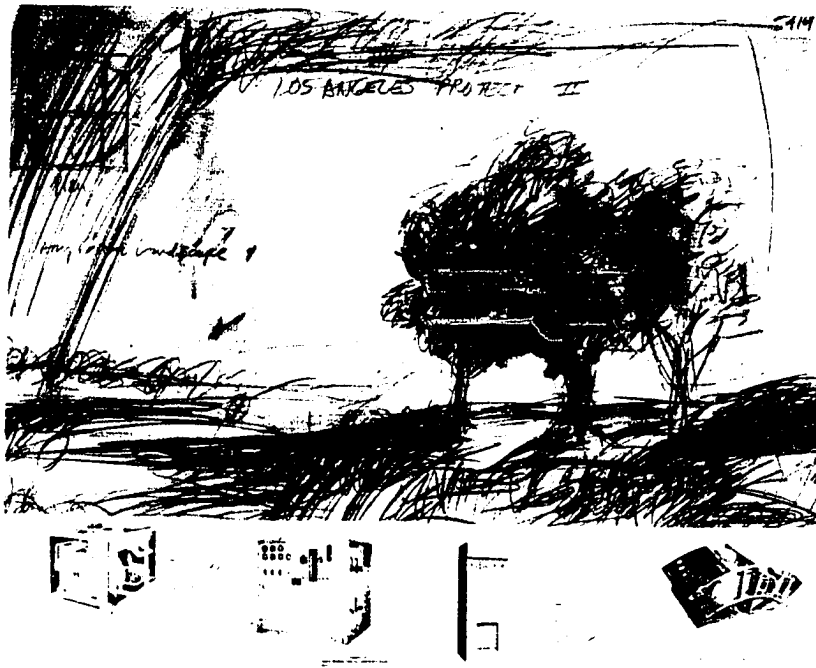


Fig. 40. Robert Morris, Los Angeles Project II, 1969, pencil, ink, wash, and photocopied images on graph paper. 28 x 30 in.



Fig. 41. Robert Morris, Crisis (New York Post, Monday, 22 October 1962), 1962, newspaper page painted grey, 15 x 21 1/2 in.



Fig. 42. Robert Morris, costume for performance piece, War, 1962, a collaboration of Morris and Robert Huot. First performed at the Judson Church, New York City, Winter 1963.

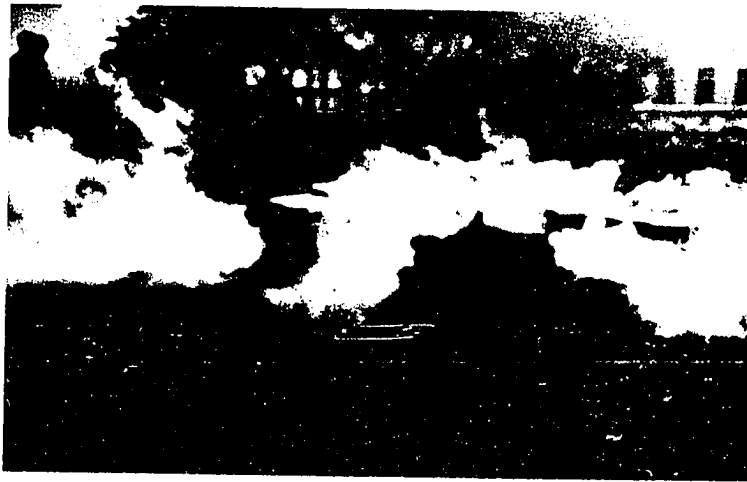


Fig. 43. Robert Morris, Steam, 1968-69. Photo: Susan Horwitz.



Fig. 44. Robert Morris, Untitled, 1969 for Spaces exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, mixed media, 168 x 312 x 312 in.



Fig. 45. Robert Morris, Observatory I, under construction at Santpoort-Velsen, The Netherlands, 1971.



Fig. 46. Robert Morris, aerial view of Observatory II at Oostelijk, Flevoland, The Netherlands, 1977.



Fig. 47. Robert Morris, Hearing, 1972, mixed media, size variable.

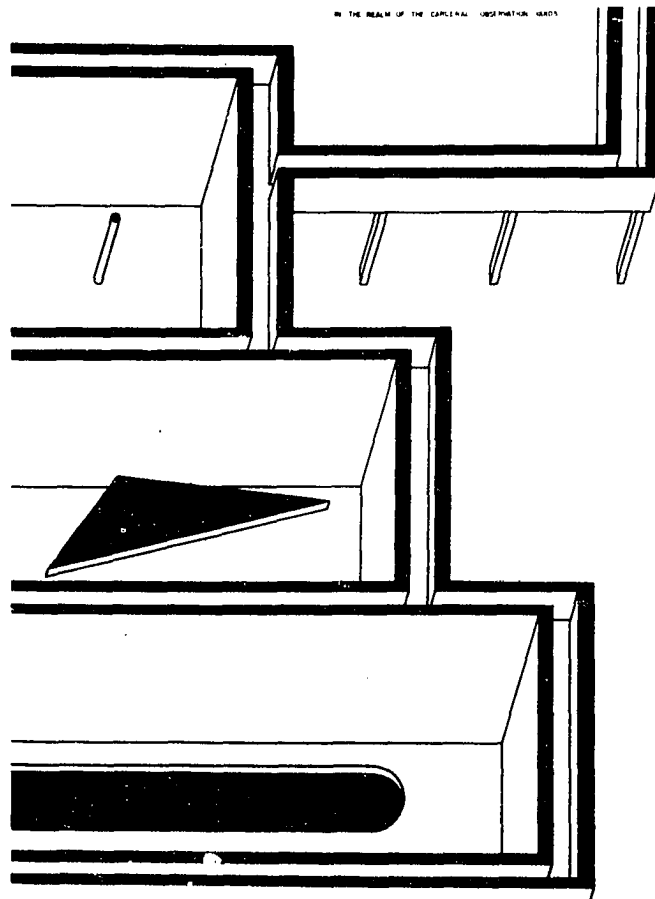


Fig. 48. Robert Morris, In the Realm of the Carceral--Observation Yards, 1978, ink on paper, 44 1/8 x 33 1/4 in. Photo: Courtesy of the Leo Castelli Gallery.

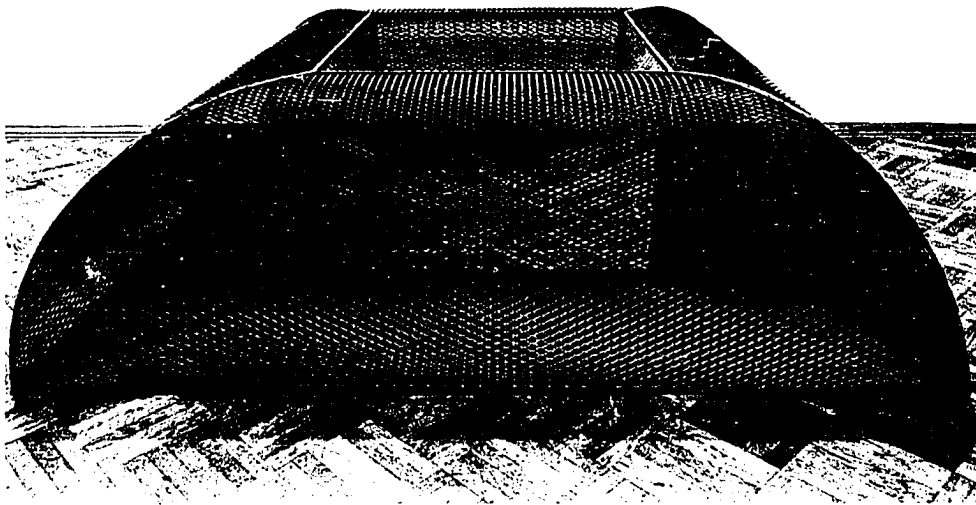


Fig. 49. Robert Morris, Untitled, 1967, steel, 31 x 109 x 109. Photo: Ron Miyashiro.



Fig. 50. Robert Morris, Philadelphia Labyrinth, 1974, plywood and masonite painted grey, 96 in. high, 360 in. diameter.

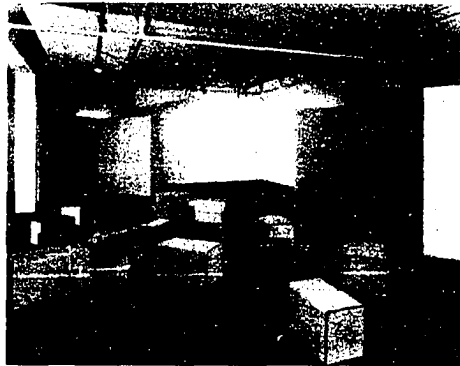


Fig. 51. Robert Morris, Voice, 1973-74, mixed media and sound installation, Leo Castelli Gallery, size variable.



Fig. 52. Robert Morris, Poster for Castelli-Sonnabend Gallery Exhibition, April 1974, 36 7/8 x 23 1/4 in. Edition of 250. Photo: Courtesy of Leo Castelli Gallery.

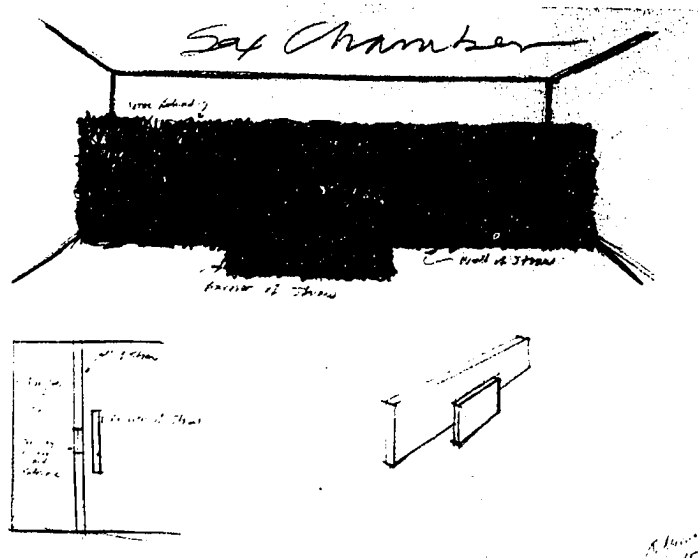


Fig. 53. Robert Morris, Sex Chamber, 1975, pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 1/2 in.