



**A University of Sussex DPhil thesis**

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

# THEMATICS IN THE ART OF ROBERT MORRIS

Nena Tsouti-Schillinger

PhD Thesis  
University of Sussex  
November 2010

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted to this or any other University for the award of a degree.

Nena Tsouti-Schillinger

November 25, 2010

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Doctor of Philosophy Thesis

Nena Tsouti-Schillinger

THEMATICS IN THE ART OF ROBERT MORRISSUMMARY

This dissertation investigates thematic unities within Robert Morris's seemingly disparate body of work. It demonstrates the thematic similarities, structural continuities and formal associations used throughout his art despite the great diversity of the media employed. It departs at times from a strictly chronological approach because its primary purpose is to explore how one work begets another or one style morphs into the next.

The research involved extensive archival work studying unpublished correspondence and texts, contracts, drawings and emails, along with traditional sources like books, interviews, lectures and Morris's own published criticism and texts. The author also examined many original artworks or reproductions of unavailable ones.

Chapter One discusses the definition and problem of style, establishment of artistic influences, and Morris's reluctance to accept traditional boundaries. Chapter Two addresses the choreography and its task-oriented vocabulary, and Morris's minimalist sculptures, examining his ideas on process and the phenomenology of perception. Chapter Three is devoted to Morris's concept of space and exploration of the horizontal as a spatial vector. It studies his interest in structural continuity throughout his lead, mirror and felt works, and touches on both the physical space of the sculptures, and the virtual space of the mirrors, as well as the fleeting evanescent space of the steam. His elaborations on "how to make a mark" are considered, too, from the *Blind Time* drawings, riding on horseback and body-part imprints, to language and the natural world. Chapter Four turns to Morris's philosophical investigations, his studies of language and imagery—some apocalyptic—and his increasing concern with destructive contemporary attitudes. Chapter Five takes up the works of the last two decades, his interest in memory and his growing cultural pessimism.

Finally, analyzing one of the most recent works, the Conclusion makes clear that through its recurrent *timeliness*, Morris's art achieves a certain sublimity which aims towards a suspension of time—a timelessness.



## CONTENTS

### VOLUME ONE:

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	5
INTRODUCTION	7

### CHAPTER ONE: A FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

The Sum Total of Some: the Question of Style and Artistic Influence	23
The Object-Observer-Space Triad	28
No Final State: "Heraclitus Is Always Laughing"	32

### CHAPTER TWO: "TO THE THINGS, THEMSELVES"

"With the Body in Motion"	43
To Strip Sculpture Bare, Even	61
<i>A Green Box</i> in a Green Gallery	75

### CHAPTER THREE: INTO THE ENTROPIC VOID

Lead Mirrors Felt	83
To See with Blinding Sight	115

### CHAPTER FOUR: A NEW WORLD ORDER

Saying, Seeing	135
Schism	149
From the Disasters of War to Mont Sainte-Victoire	158
IMPUNC Undermined	167

### CHAPTER FIVE: FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF WHITENESS

"How at This Dark Hour"	174
Melencolia and the Moral Void	188
The Lemma at the Heart of the Labyrinth	196
"Does the Past Judge Us?"	205
Normal Terror	217

CONCLUSION	227
------------	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY	235
--------------	-----

APPENDIX	255
----------	-----

### VOLUME TWO:

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	3
ILLUSTRATIONS	13

## VOLUME ONE

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have a great many people to thank for their assistance and support of this dissertation. Foremost among them is my advisor, David Alan Mellor, for his important counsel, keen insight and very meaningful contributions to the final form my dissertation has taken. I would like to thank him also for providing me with valuable suggestions of other relevant literary sources, and particularly for his continued enthusiasm throughout my research.

For her seminal role in this project I would like to thank Valerie Taylor. Not only has she been supportive as a friend and colleague, but she was in fact the very person who introduced me to this post graduate program at Sussex University.

Since I first became interested in Morris's work in 1986 I have been fortunate in the course of my research to encounter a number of supportive archivists, librarians and curators who have helped steer my inquiries or provided access during my attempt to locate relevant materials on Morris and my subject in general. Among those institutions and individuals who provided such assistance I particularly wish to thank Antonio Homem of the Illeana Sonnabend Gallery; the Leo Castelli Gallery; the Archives of American Art; the New York Public Library, the Galerie Pietro Sparta in Chagny; the Sprüth Magers Gallery in London; the Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea L. Pecci in Prato; Miranda MacPhail and the Gori family in Fattoria di Celle in Pistoia.

I would also like to thank my longtime editor, John O'Toole, whose consistent and valuable suggestions provided correction and polish where necessary; his patience and care in correcting and anglicizing the Greek names and terms mentioned throughout this study proved invaluable.

I extend my appreciation to my friends and family for their encouragement and support, particularly the Hattersley family for their frequent hospitality in London. I would also like to single out the contributions of my husband, Bill Schillinger, who not only provided the usual moral support, but unfailingly offered his invaluable opinions (both solicited and unsolicited) during every stage of my doctoral study.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to Robert Morris, who granted me liberal access to his archives, trusted me with his artist notebooks, and generously replied to my numerous queries concerning his art throughout the years. He also allowed me the rare privilege at times of viewing freshly made works still in studio and prior to public exhibition. For this I am particularly thankful and indebted to him.

## Introduction

*Nobody considers my work all of a piece—it's one of the things writers are always pissing in their pants about when it comes to dealing with my work.*

Robert Morris<sup>1</sup>

"This seems totally different. We must have made a wrong turn here because this is obviously not the same artist we were just viewing," remarked one visitor to the show.

"I think you're right. I don't see anything like what we saw in the last room," responded the other.

This is a conversation I happened to overhear between two viewers ahead of me as I was advancing to the next gallery during a retrospective exhibition of works by Robert Morris.<sup>2</sup> Puzzled and confused, they finally concluded that they had somehow stumbled into some group exhibition by mistake. With expressions of bewilderment they backtracked past me, returning to the room we had just vacated. Naturally, they had not stumbled into some group exhibition at all. They just assumed they had, given the seeming disparity among the pieces. As most viewers today expect an easily identifiable consistency in the works by a given artist, they misidentified these pieces as the collection of a group show.

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert Morris, in a letter to John L. Hochmann, editor at Praeger Publishers, Inc., Nov. 3, 1971 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

<sup>2</sup> This incident occurred in February 2005 at the Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato.

The subject of my study is Robert Morris, one of the most influential, thought-provoking and complex artists of our time. Of course, as I have already written a book about Morris's work, one might wonder what fresh approaches I can bring and what new material reveal. During the extensive research I did for my book *Robert Morris and Angst*,<sup>3</sup> where I investigated the "angst" that haunts Morris's oeuvre and how it springs from the idea of "dualism" as defined by the historian of religions, Mircea Eliade,<sup>4</sup> I became fascinated by the discovery of continuous associations and ties throughout his seemingly disparate works. I was not surprised to conclude soon enough that overall thematics, within his production, do in fact exist.<sup>5</sup> Since "angst," not the overall "unity" in Morris's art was the subject of my study then, I did not at that time pursue this idea. However, the desire to investigate it further one day remained very much alive. For a long period (over fifteen years) I have been privileged to have access to the artist and have had several interviews and conversations with him, which inform this thesis. Perhaps more importantly, I have had free range through his own archive of his writings and statements, many of them unpublished, which again, have massively contributed to the analysis I present here.

However, a major obstacle I needed to overcome in my research is the fact that overall, very little has been written about Morris in comparison to his long and important career. He is also one among many great artists, past and present,

---

<sup>3</sup> Nena Tsouti-Schillinger, *Robert Morris and Angst* (Athens: Bastas Publications, and New York: George Braziller, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Eliade defines dualism as a system of "bipartitions and polarities, alterations and dualities, antithetical dyads and *coincidentia oppositorum*." See Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. I, trans. Willard Trask (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 310.

<sup>5</sup> After all, I believe that there is "unity" in every good artist's oeuvre.

whom the press has often attacked.<sup>6</sup> Is this because his art is complex and difficult to comprehend and analyze? Or perhaps because he does not tailor his art to appeal to today's marketplace while his criticism of "wall-power" "wham-bang" art with everything in front of the viewer has been relentless and therefore unwelcome? His art and his writings are indeed complex and difficult, and they clearly reveal his cultural pessimism along with his concerns about destructive contemporary attitudes. And certainly this is in direct conflict with American culture, Americans having a history of being steeped in cultural optimism<sup>7</sup> whereas Morris is not. Additionally, Morris's art is a powerfully effective force for raising questions and provoking thought and understanding in the viewer but returns no answers. And, not having usual Hollywood "clichéd" answers at their fingertips, ill-prepared art critics<sup>8</sup> are unable to engage Morris's works on any serious level.<sup>9</sup>

A number of Morris's works are discussed in significant books on modern and contemporary art, among them *Passages in Modern Sculpture* by Rosalind Krauss (1977), and *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* by Alex Potts (2000). Each of these scholars has contributed to our understanding of these pieces. However, most of the texts written explicitly about Morris's art are either newspaper or periodical articles referencing a particular

---

<sup>6</sup> It is well known, for example, that in the 1870s and '80s the artist most attacked and most mistreated by the press was Cézanne.

<sup>7</sup> On American optimism see Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950); see also Jeffrey Madrick, "Misplaced Optimism," *The End of Affluence* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1997), 93-119.

<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly good critics are rare. On critics and criticism see Randall Jarrell, *No Other Book: Selected Essays*, ed. Brad Leithauser (New York: Harper Collins, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, the following reviews of Morris's 1994 Guggenheim retrospective: Deborah Solomon, "More Body Than Mind," *Wall Street Journal*, February 4, 1994, A8:1 and Paul Richard, "Robert Morris and the Emperor's New Clothes," *The Washington Post*, February 13, 1994, G4:1.

show, or catalogue essays. Their content, therefore, is rather narrow or the analysis of the works limited to those exhibited in that show, as for instance, *Robert Morris* by Marcia Tucker in which the author merely discusses Morris's Minimalist pieces exhibited in 1970 at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Likewise, Annette Michelson examines Morris's Minimalist works in her prominent essays: *Robert Morris: An Aesthetic of Transgression*, for the 1969 Corcoran Gallery of Art exhibition. I find this essay particularly interesting because what Michelson said then regarding these early works—accurately pointing out that using critical terms such as “embodying,” “expressing,” or “symbolizing,” was irrelevant to the pieces—seems to be accurate as well for Morris's art in general even after fifty years. Other prominent catalogue texts on Morris's early works from the 1960s and '70s were written by Michael Compton, and David Sylvester for the Tate Gallery show in 1971.

Pepe Karmel and Maurice Berger wrote insightfully and in depth about Morris's early felt pieces for the Grey Art Gallery and Study Center show in 1989. Edward F. Fry, along with Donald Kuspit, contributed important texts examining Morris's *Hydrocal* works in *Robert Morris: Works of the Eighties* at New Port Harbor Art Museum in 1986. I also find noteworthy the 1990 essays: “The Odyssey of Robert Morris” by Barbara Rose and “Inability to Endure or Deny the World” by Terrie Sultan, where the juxtaposition of text and image in Morris's works is discussed in the 1991 Corcoran Gallery of Art catalogue. In 1995, Bruno Corà wrote *Robert Morris: A Path Towards the Center of the Knot*, an excellent essay regarding Morris's *Labyrinth* and other pieces in Fattoria di Celle. And the *Blind Time Drawing* series made between 1973 and 2000 was discussed by Jean-

Pierre Ciqui in a perceptive way in the *Robert Morris: Blind Time Drawings* catalogue for the retrospective exhibition in the Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci in 2005.

That is to say, among these exhibition publications since the 1960s, only two catalogues published for Morris's 1994-95 retrospective at the Solomon Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris were comprehensive and extensive, both covering Morris's oeuvre as a whole with insightful essays by, among others, Rosalind Krauss, W. J. T. Mitchell, and Catherine Grenier. Regarding monographs, no more than five have been published throughout the years: *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism and the 1960s* (1989) by Maurice Berger, a noteworthy examination of the relationship between Morris's Minimalist works and the social and intellectual settings of the 1960s; *Robert Morris à Saint-Pierre de Maguelone* (2003) by Grenier, an important detailed examination of Morris's stained-glass windows in Maguelone Cathedral; *Robert Morris: sur les traces de Mnemosyne* (2008) by Katia Schneller, an interesting study on Morris's concept of memory; *Reading Wittgenstein: Robert Morris's Art-as-Philosophy* by Brian Winkenweder (2008), a significant study of the influence of Wittgenstein's theories on Morris's oeuvre; and *Robert Morris and Angst* by the author, an investigation of the concept of "angst" and the underlying related idea of dualism in key Morris works from the 1960s to 2000 (2001).

Another reason—and not the least—for the absence of literature regarding a number of works in this thesis is that I found it more challenging and interesting to



include works about which nobody else has actually written. In fact a number of these works have not even yet been exhibited.

Despite this relative dearth of available published material, I was still able to conduct extensive archival research involving the study of unpublished correspondence and texts, contracts, emails and interviews, along with Morris's own published and unpublished criticism and texts.

Morris, is known for his contributions to virtually every postwar art movement since Abstract Expressionism: as a pioneer of Minimalist sculpture, a leader of Antiform art, and as an iconoclast breaking down traditional draftsmanship by making drawings with his eyes shut and no visual reference whatsoever (the *Blind Time* drawings). Others know him for a number of widely influential critical essays and notes on art.<sup>10</sup> Still others consider him the most prolific writer of any artist of his generation, exceeding all expectations of what an artist might accomplish with words.<sup>11</sup> He has captured audiences not only with his elusive flux of transformation as an enduring practicing artist, but also under the persona of the intellectual theorist. Morris's art and his writings are closely related.

---

<sup>10</sup> The art historian and critic Robert Pincus-Witten once remarked that when Morris's writings appeared in *Artforum*, "then every MFA student throughout the United States three months later could be doing his or her version of Morris." See Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum* (New York: Soho Press, Inc., 2000), 235.

<sup>11</sup> Fourteen of Morris's texts and notes on art written between 1966 and 1989 were published in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 1993). Among a long list of art historians and critics who have discussed Morris's prolific writings throughout the years, see E. C. Goosen, "The Artist Speaks: Robert Morris," *Art in America*, 58, 3 (May-June, 1970), 104. See also Pepe Karmel, "Robert Morris Formal Disclosures," *Art in America*, 88, 6 (June, 1995), 89.

Throughout his career he has proved incredibly prolific and always unpredictable. Explaining his view of New York artists of the 1970s and '80s, the late renowned art dealer Leo Castelli had this to say about Robert Morris: "I did take Morris on, and he has been incredibly versatile, moving in those original two directions—the Surreal and the Minimal, sometimes combining influences of the two. In fact, he has done so many things in so many styles that people are stupefied by his somersaults."<sup>12</sup> Morris has consistently renewed his art. His range was and still is broad and thus it is often hard to identify "a Morris." It is no wonder then that there are difficulties in the reception of Morris's body of work. Some see disunity.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, there is consistency in his vast oeuvre, despite its visual diversity. His seemingly disparate works, Morris's artistic "styles," are tied together in a way that upon closer examination one is able to discern in his prolific output certain features related to his growth, development, and versatility that give us an idea of a unified personality.

It would be inaccurate to view Morris's art otherwise and categorize his "changes" not as the gradual developments they really are, but instead as idiosyncrasies that occurred abruptly, referring to them as "negations."<sup>14</sup> The change in Morris's position, when he moved in the late 1960s from rigid plywood sculptures to more supple felt works for instance, was not like "a break" or "rupture" but rather a transformation. "Each new work, after all," as the poet and art critic Carter

---

<sup>12</sup> Leo Castelli, in the introduction of Gianfranco Gorgoni's book *Beyond the Canvas* (New York: Rizzoli International, Inc., 1985), 11.

<sup>13</sup> See for instance Owen Drolet, "Robert Morris: Building the Entropy Machine," *Flash Art* (May/June 1994), 2.

<sup>14</sup> For examples of such inaccurate assumptions, see for instance Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 253. See also Roberta Smith, "A Robert Morris Tour of Contemporary History," *The New York Times*, February 4, 1994, C 24.

Ratcliff argued in the context of Morris's work, "must be seen as an offspring—hence in a sense a captive—of the ones from which it derives."<sup>15</sup> And it would be erroneous to conclude that Morris was in some sort of a "crisis" and simply "abandoned his earlier concerns" as it has been remarked.<sup>16</sup> Instead it can be seen that Morris kept continually developing as an artist and thinker. It is not surprising then that even his critical writings seem to parallel the "stylistic" changes in his art.<sup>17</sup> After all, change is central to the universe according to Heraclitus's well-known aphorism that one cannot step twice into the same river. One could discuss instead the so called "shifts" and "turning points" more accurately regarding particular investigations and the different formats Morris worked in (including film, theater and dance), as well as the expansion of the materials used in making his art.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the thematic unity of Morris's art, regardless of its multiplicity of media types and artistic forms. Perhaps artists are in a way enticed to repeat themselves because we as viewers often tend to esteem those whose work epitomizes particular styles.<sup>18</sup> And Morris's "intellectual intensity and peripatetic style," in Thomas Krens's words, "disturbed an art world that demanded constant change and visual refreshment, but nevertheless prized the stability of a reliable marketable commodity."<sup>19</sup> Certainly

---

<sup>15</sup> See Carter Ratcliff, "Robert Morris: Prisoner of Modernism," *Art in America* (October 1979), 99.

<sup>16</sup> Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 250-55.

<sup>17</sup> When, for instance, Morris moved in the late 1960s from rigid plywood sculptures to non-geometric supple felt works, he wrote "Anti Form," where he argued that it was time for art to go beyond the static forms of Minimalism. "Anti Form" was published in *Artforum* (April 1968) the same month that his first felt works were exhibited at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York.

<sup>18</sup> Donald Judd, Richard Serra and Anselm Kiefer come to mind, among other contemporary highly regarded artists, whose style is instantly recognizable and their art highly marketable.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Krens was the Williams College Museum of Art director between 1981-1988, until he succeeded Thomas Messer as the director of the Solomon Guggenheim Museum in New York

there are exceptions but Andy Warhol's statement that "making money is art, and working is art, and good business is the best art"<sup>20</sup> quite accurately summarizes how today's art has overall fallen prey to the market.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, there is an unwillingness to rock the boat when "things are going well."

Commenting on the tendency toward the dumbing-down of today's museum exhibitions, Morris himself recently wrote the following:

The exhibitions in the museums were thickened with stupidity. Either entertaining in obvious ways, infantile six-year-old ways, or else sticky with narcissistic, flesh-crawling indignation. The crowds moved in unison to the voices in their headsets. Like silent moo-cows. Doe-eyed, slack-jawed. They needed something. But what? Had today's life attained such levels of overload that it had numbed their capacity for affect. Chocolate did not do it any more. Or sex. Or TV reality shows. Or movie explosions. Art was the easy new fun drug.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, spectators are inclined to value artists who do not make them feel uncomfortable and whose work is immediately recognizable, despite the lack of creativity and/or inventiveness.<sup>23</sup> So how to appreciate Morris then, whose work

---

City. See Krens, *The Drawings of Robert Morris*, exh. cat. (Williamstown, Mass.: Williams College Museum of Art, 1982), unpaginated.

<sup>20</sup> Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (New York: Harvest Books, 1977), 92.

<sup>21</sup> I refer to a number of private-collection exhibitions at various museums in Europe and America as for instance *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1999 that presented works by the British advertising magnate Charles Saatchi, and more recently a series of shows titled *The Imaginary Museum* mounted by the New Museum in New York City that focused on private collections; the initial show featured the private collection of the Greek Cypriot industrialist Dakis Ioannou (also a trustee at the New Museum), which opened in March 2010.

An interesting recently published book examining the transformation of the art economy from a retail business—dominated by a small group of insiders—into an industry that produces visuality and meaning, was written by Isabelle Graw, *High Price. Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, trans. Nicholas Grindell (Berlin and New York: Sternberg Press, 2010); see also Jack Bankowsky, Alison Gingeras et al., *Pop Life: Art in a Material World*, exh. cat. (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), which examines art and commerce by exploring artists who are themselves marketing and promoting their own works, beginning with Andy Warhol and continuing with Damien Hirst, Takashi Murakami, and Keith Haring, among others.

<sup>22</sup> Morris, "Stations," 2009, unpublished text sent to the author, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Takashi Murakami and Jeff Koons are perhaps appropriate example of artists whose work fits this category of high popularity with questionable qualities of depth.

demonstrates such a wide range of artistic styles? That is to say, how can we value “stylelessness”?

I plan to show that there are thematic similarities and structural continuities, as well as associations in the artistic forms used by Morris. I will be following a roughly chronological order for the works while underscoring along the way, from chapter to chapter, the recurrence of certain of his ideas on art making, process, time, space, memory, language, and even the odd phoneme on occasion.

The choice to follow a chronological rather than a thematic order was not an easy one to make. This structuring of the thesis is certainly the more challenging due to the remarkable diversity of work over such a long period of time. However, I chose the chronological method because I believe this option makes it easier for the reader to follow the arguments (especially a reader who is not very familiar with Morris's art). More importantly it renders the thesis more meaningful inasmuch as it shows more directly how one work begets another, one series evolves into another, and one style morphs into the next.

Given the strong, clear political sentiments that surface over and over, I will also call attention to, where appropriate, the artist's philosophical investigations and politically charged themes, which reflect a cultural pessimism that is part and parcel of Morris's prolific career. This thesis aims to identify certain motifs and structures within his entire body of work which also tend to reflect his outlook on contemporary culture and politics as embodied in his art over the fifty years

during which Morris has been a choreographer, performer, sculptor, painter, critic, philosopher, and pioneer, as well as an influential writer.

In Chapter One, we will examine the definition and the problem of “style” in relation to the writings of Meyer Shapiro and George Kubler. Concerning the establishment of artistic influences, we will discuss Morris as being a source of inspiration for other artists such as Vik Muniz as seen in his photograph *Robert Morris, Untitled (L-Beams), 1965 (2001)* [Fig. 2].

Like the artists of Minimal and Post-Minimal art in America and Arte Povera in Europe, Morris was working with industrial materials fabricated usually by workers following his instructions. We will see that these works involve the viewer, forcing an interaction. For this reason the role of the spectator will be discussed in detail. As the experience of these works has a relevance to one’s own body, we will further examine the necessity for a phenomenological analysis of viewing sculpture.

We will then look at the somewhat hefty volume of literature about this movement and particularly Morris’s art of the 1960s as reflected upon and written by Barbara Rose, Michael Fried and Alex Potts. Morris’s reluctance to accept artistic boundaries and his defiance of the traditional idea that an artist should stick to one medium or style will be further discussed. His interest in working in series as well the notion of permutation will be examined through the *Untitled (Stadium)* pieces (1967) [Fig. 5] and *Wedges* (1971) [Fig. 7], leading to the observation by

W.J.T. Michell regarding Morris's propensity to scale the size of his works to the human body.

In Chapter Two we will assess Morris's relationship and formative influences upon the emergence of dance and performance in the United States in the 1960s. His key role will be shown to be indicative of his ambition around 1960, in finding certain aspects of painting to be inadequate for what he wished to express. While we will look into his ideas on process and phenomenology of perception, the task-oriented dance vocabulary of his choreographies will be discussed along with his minimalist sculptures. We will look in detail at *Site* (1964) [Fig. 8] specifically with regard to the issue of body as presence—the movement in this piece being the result of performing various tasks or negotiating objects.

We will next compare Morris's initiatives with Joseph Beuys's contemporary works before moving on to *Arizona* (1963) [Fig. 10] and *Waterman Switch* (1965) [Fig. 11], where the topics of traces of the moving body were prioritized within the presentation. As a way of approaching Morris's key minimalist sculptures such as *Column* (1961) [Fig. 12], we will position them in relation to primary thematics in his art—phenomenology. We will discuss the impacts this form of philosophical thinking had on art criticism theory of the 1960s and '70s particularly in relation to the writings of Rosalind Krauss, Marcia Tucker and Jack Burnham. We will review Morris's incorporation of audience participation into and the resultant "activation" of his sculpture in works such as *Participation Object* (1971) [Figs. 17-18] and *Bodyspacemotionthings* (2009) [Figs. 19-20], and his

belief that this exceeded the conventional definition of Minimalism. In the concluding sections we will assess Morris's relationship to the developing reputation of Marcel Duchamp through the 1960s. Morris will be shown to have undertaken vigorous consideration of Duchamp's impact on the refigured neo-dadaist art of the time. This revision, on the part of Morris, resulted in the cluster of significant constructions, including *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961) [Fig. 21], *Card File* (1962) [Fig. 22], and *Pharmacy* (1963) [Fig. 23].

Chapter Three will explore Morris's concept of space, as well as his investigation of the horizontal as a spatial vector. His interest in structural continuity will be followed through lead, mirrors and felt works that include *Mirrored Cubes* (1965) [Fig. 27], *Threadwaste* (1969) [Fig. 28], and *Scatter Piece* (1969) [Fig. 29]. The physical space of his sculptures will be discussed along with the virtual space of his mirrors and film including the application of a fleeting evanescent space in *Steam* (1967) [Fig. 33], before moving on to *Tar Babies of the New World Order* (1997) [Figs. 36-38] and *The Fallen and the Saved* (1994) [Fig. 40], where the viewer becomes intimately involved with both the object and space. Also to be examined will be his use of a variety of non-traditional materials including felt, along with his investigation of "how to make a mark," be it the path of the recording needle during an electroencephalogram [Fig. 52], body part imprints [Figs. 53-55], work on horseback [Fig. 56], the natural world [Fig. 57], or *Blind Time* drawings [Figs. 64-67].

In Chapter Four we will investigate a more political tone to Morris's art as well as his further studies of language incorporating a juxtaposition of text and imagery,



some of an apocalyptic nature. We will discuss in details such key works as *Crisis* (1962) [Fig. 68], and *War Memorial: Crater with Smoke* (1970) [Fig. 70], before moving on to *Hearing* [Fig. 72], a very complex audio and visual installation where the language and image became intimately intertwined with a fictional investigation struggling throughout for the domination of the spectator. We will also discuss the materiality and process of his *Hydrocal* pieces [Figs. 74-75], in which Morris literally made prints of his own hands and similar body parts. His creative process and techniques will be further investigated in light of the writings of Edward F. Fry, I. Michael Danoff, Paul Schimmel and W.J.T. Mitchell.

We will analyze *Untitled (Holocaust)* 1987 [Fig. 79], where we will observe that the frame shifts the centre of the work away from the image of the photograph. There is no division of one from the other—both have become one. A comparison of his works with Goya's [Figs. 82-87] will reveal a similarity in their practice of juxtaposition of language and image. Also as Goya expressed dissatisfaction with politics, society and religion as a political instrument of his own times, we will find Morris here expressing increasing concern with contemporary attitudes and morality, particularly targeting modern technology, imperialism, wastefulness and government encroachment on personal freedoms.

In Chapter Five Morris's interest in collective and personal memory will be looked at in a study of his installation *White Nights* (2000) [Figs. 92-97], before moving on to his stained-glass window creations, which are compared with those of fellow artists like Gerhard Richter and Henri Matisse [Figs. 98-106].

Relationships between his 1999 *Blind Time V: Melancholia* drawings and the

permanent site-specific installation *Melencolia II* (2002) will be discussed alongside Morris's reference to Dürer's renowned engraving.

We will also examine a further tendency towards cultural pessimism as seen in works of various media, including lead [Figs. 115-123], video [Figs. 124-128], and encaustic paintings [Figs. 130-134]. Further depictions of the horrors of war and torture will be seen in his pieces making up the installation *Morning Star Evening Star* (2008) [Figs. 139-143]. There, while Morris continued formal explorations and historical references, his political position and ideology became more overtly and categorically pessimistic, particularly regarding the relationship between art and politics—he confronts the viewer here with the stark realities of today's world.

It is also interesting to note that Morris often tackles different projects simultaneously. Currently, for instance, he is working on drawings,<sup>24</sup> encaustic paintings, felt pieces, as well as site-specific installations such as a labyrinth for the courtyard at the Louvre in Paris, while he also continues to articulate his beliefs in a range of theoretical essays.<sup>25</sup> When asked if he enjoys dividing his attention among different projects or would prefer rather to concentrate on one type of work to the exclusion of others, Morris answered:

It has been remarked that in today's world of relentless, ubiquitous, and ever-present media and electronic assault we have been reduced to a state of "constant partial attention." Maybe I've always had a short

---

<sup>24</sup> Traditionally drawings are regarded as the most intimate works of an artist because they stand as the visual representation of his conceptual thought. Often viewed as preliminary drafts or preparatory works for a final piece, they constitute the source works scholars usually examine in researching the artist's original ideas, as one would turn to the notebook or diary. Certainly this is the case with many of Morris's drawings as well. However, when I am referring to drawings in this study, I am not referring to preparatory works but rather to series of drawings made by Morris that are autonomous and self-sustaining.

<sup>25</sup> Seventeen essays written between 1993 and 2007 were published in *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*, ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger (Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press, 2008).

attention span. But the fact is I've always worked on more than one thing at a time. Early on I was making works like I-Box, choreographing dance works and writing theoretical articles on sculpture in the midst of producing the gray plywood works. I didn't find anything unusual about this. Who legislated a monomial norm for artists? But from another point of view questions might be asked about deeper thematic similarities between the apparent formal and material differences that range across the oeuvre.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Morris, unpublished interview with the author, March 14, 2001.

## Chapter One: A Family Resemblance

*I'm not sure what the Classical and the Baroque really are. Styles based on formal organizations? Periodizations? No doubt both, from the art historian's perspective. Shall we reify these into sensibility? I'll pass on it.*

Robert Morris<sup>1</sup>

### The Sum Total of Some: The Question of Style and Artistic Influence

We will first look at the definition and problem of the term “style,” the establishment of artistic influences as well as Morris’s treatment of traditional artistic boundaries. The use of industrial materials along with the concept of viewer’s participation into his work will further be discussed. An examination of the robust body of literature concerning particular artistic movements defining his earlier works, will allow us to consider Morris’s tendency to work in series, as well as the reasons for the sense of proportion and size he chooses to adopt or reject for his oeuvre in general.

The term “style” has been defined as “a particular kind, sort, or type, as with reference to form, appearance, or character.”<sup>2</sup> Classifications such as styles, as well as schools, are mainly the products of nineteenth-century art historians attempting to define when, where, and often by whom a given work of art was created. As the influential art historian Meyer Schapiro points out, “By style is

---

<sup>1</sup> Morris, as quoted in Pepe Karmel, “Robert Morris: Formal Disclosures,” *Art in America*, 88, 6 (June 1995), 117.

<sup>2</sup> *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, The Unabridged Edition, ed. Jess Stein and Laurence Urdang (1966; rpt. New York: Random House, 1969).

meant the constant form—and sometimes the constant elements, qualities, and expression—in the art of an individual or a group. The term is also applied to the whole activity of an individual or society, as in speaking of a ‘life-style’ or the ‘style of a civilization.’”<sup>3</sup> That is to say, we keep referring to styles as a convenient way of discussing them. However, style is a word too often abused in common use and seems to suffer in its meaning. In defense of a view that the history of art can be the study of historical sequence aligned on continuous change rather than the concept of style, the architectural historian George Kubler notes:

Its [style’s] innumerable shades of meaning seem to span all experience. At one extreme is the sense defined by Henri Focillon, of style as the *ligne des hauteurs*, the Himalayan range composed of the greatest monuments of all time, the touchstone and standard of artistic value. At the other extreme is the commercial jungle of advertising copy, where gasoline and toilet papers have style... In between lies the familiar terrain of “historic” styles: cultures, nations, dynasties, reigns, regions, periods, crafts, persons, and objects all have styles.<sup>4</sup>

The same argument concerning the “style” problem also runs through Schapiro’s seminal essay “Style.” While reviewing the principal theories about style the writer concluded rather dispiritedly, “A theory of style adequate to the psychological and historical problems has still to be created. It waits for a deeper knowledge of the principles of form construction and expression and for a unified theory of the processes of social life in which the practical means of life as well as emotional behavior are comprised.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Meyer Schapiro, “Style,” in *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory*, ed. A. L. Kroeber (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 287. It is also interesting to see page 294, where Schapiro notes that “in the case of Picasso, two styles—Cubism and a kind of classicizing naturalism—were practiced at the same time. One might discover common characters in small features of the two styles—in qualities of the brushstrokes, the span of intensity, or in subtle constancies of the spacing and tones—but these are not the elements through which either style would ordinarily be characterized.”

<sup>4</sup> George Kubler, *The Shape of Time* (New Haven: Yale University, 1962), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Schapiro, “Style,” *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory*, 311.

We could say that Morris's art is a mosaic of its time as it evolves in response to social, cultural and political events and the wealth of ideas based on theoretical investigations. After all, as Wassily Kandinsky observed, "Every work of art is the child of its age and, in many cases, the mother of our emotions. It follows that each period of culture produces an art of its own which can never be repeated."<sup>6</sup> Morris's influence has been immense, and as Ratcliff once remarked "The drift of his [Morris's] art, toward a sense of the self as a prisoner of compulsive head trips, has swept along scores and scores of younger artists."<sup>7</sup> The artist Edward Allington amusingly stated that he had "stolen" the title from Morris's essay "A Method for Sorting Cows" (also the textual element of his performance *Arizona*, 1963, see chapter two) for his own essay on sculpture, published in *Art Monthly* in 1993, in the full knowledge that he "was not the first artist to steal from Robert Morris—one of the most influential, prolific, challenging and complex artists of his generation."<sup>8</sup>

It is clear that establishing artistic influence can be a tricky argument to make, in showing that any particular artist presumably had an interest in or even the

---

<sup>6</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M.T.H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ratcliff, "Robert Morris: Prisoner of Modernism," 108.

<sup>8</sup> See Edward Allington, "I Have Reasons," *Art Monthly*, 320 (October 2008), 35. This article was in fact a review of the book *Have I Reasons*. Allington used the same title taken from Morris's work *A Method for Sorting Cows*, also for his book, a collection of his own essays written between 1993-1997, published by Manchester Metropolitan University, Faculty of Art and Design, in Manchester in 1997.

See also the 2005 retrospective exhibition of the artist Jonathan Monk at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. The title of this exhibition, as well as of the catalogue, "Continuous Project Altered Daily," was taken from a 1969 work by Morris and from the title of a book by Morris with a collection of his writings, published by the MIT Press in 1993.

knowledge of another artist's work.<sup>9</sup> The list of such arguments is never-ending, especially since we see throughout art history that some artists either go to great lengths to cover up such a debt or simply disclaim that it is so. There is, for instance, the well-known case of Picasso, who denied having been influenced by African art in *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) and pointed out that it was erroneous for critics and scholars to suggest that the picture derived from African statuary because he was unaware of African art when he painted it. Picasso further claimed that even his much-discussed visit to the Ethnographical Museum (now Musée de l'Homme) at the Trocadéro in Paris had not occurred until he had completed the painting. And when Alfred Barr, the Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York at that time, and a Picasso expert, asserted that *Les Femmes d'Alger* was "the masterpiece of Picasso's Negro period," the artist insisted that the art historian Christian Zervos, who was compiling his catalogue raisonné, issue a disclaimer.<sup>10</sup> However, years later, from 1954 to 1962, Picasso actually "quoted" other artists directly, as he devoted much of his artistic energy to creating variations of well known paintings by such great masters as Eugène Delacroix, Diego Velázquez, Nicolas Poussin, Jacques-Louis David and Édouard Manet.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps, this is because Picasso was, on the one

---

<sup>9</sup> I recall once pointing out to Morris that while the baby figure in his work *Tar Babies of the New World Order* (1997), which is discussed in chapter three, stylistically recalls Donatello, with the model of the tar baby deriving from one of the little angel-putti in the Renaissance artist's *Cantoria* (1433-1438), nevertheless the overt aggressiveness, scornfulness and fussing gesture of the figure reminded me rather of the baby figure of Brancusi's *The First Step* (1913). Morris agreed with my observation but he said that the parallel was not a conscious one. Conversation with the author, New York, September 1997.

<sup>10</sup> See John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso: 1907-1917* (New York: Random House, 1996), 24-25 where the author discusses how Picasso, for reasons of his own, was continually changing his story about having visited the Ethnographical Museum in Paris and being exposed to the African sculptures, and insisted that the figures in *Les Femmes d'Alger* had clear similarities with Iberian sculpture and did not derive from African statuary as some art critics had suggested.

<sup>11</sup> In 2009, the National Gallery of Art in London in fact organized a very important and interesting exhibition titled *Picasso Challenging the Past*, which examined the ways in which Picasso used the art of the past as a source of inspiration and creativity. Picasso produced a number of variations of such iconic masterpieces as Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863), Poussin's *The*

hand, himself a recognized “great master” by then and, on the other, he wished to demonstrate that he was the twentieth-century heir to the great European painting tradition.<sup>12</sup> That is to say the “battle” was among equals. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that not only spectators but scholars as well might become uncertain about artistic influences, and so we see them often discussing circumstantial evidence. But while some artists do not reveal such influences, others not only do but in fact create works openly and obviously based upon these sources of inspiration. The artist Vik Muniz, for instance, produced a series of works in 2000, commenting on seminal Minimalist and Post-Minimalist sculptures and paintings made by “maestros of Minimalism,”<sup>13</sup> including Tony Smith, Carl Andre, Donald Judd and Robert Morris. Among the exhibited works in *The Things Themselves: Pictures of Dust by Vik Muniz* at New York’s Whitney Museum of American Art in 2001, was a photograph titled *Robert Morris, Untitled (L-Beams), 1965*, depicting one of Morris’s most recognizable pieces, a key work done in the 1960s [Figs. 1-2]. Muniz used dust collected from the Whitney’s galleries and office space at the museum and made a drawing from photographs of Morris’s *Untitled (Three L-Beams)*, from 1965. He then photographed the drawing and enlarged it; in other words, Muniz’s work is a reproduction of a

---

*Rape of the Sabine Women* (1637-8), and Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (1656), which are indeed remarkable. For more on this subject, see Elizabeth Cowling et al., *Picasso: Challenging the Past* (London: The National Gallery, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> In conversations with the author Morris has stated that he dislikes Picasso’s work. Certainly the following excerpt bluntly illustrates his view: “Peek ass oh. Oh seeing as sex. Seex. All the way to 90 a paintbrush as prick. Wo man. The woman the woman the woman. Always inside that bubble. The muse the mistress. The whore war ho. The endless variations on the obsession. Artist-model. The two of them like a hood ornament on the motor. The two of them the motor. Cranking it over. The airlessness of it. The suffocation of it. Him and her and the big eyes. And the little prick mostly out of sight. Seeing as fucking. Oh Joy de vivre. Was that it? Or was it something else? This endless subject, this tiresome subject, this sign for the juicy life force, this hog-rootin ruttin paint smearin gimme more more more.” See Morris, “Stations,” 3.

<sup>13</sup> See Grace Glueck’s review of the show, “Why, It’s the Stuff of Minimalism: Giving the Dust Mote Its Due at the Whitney,” *The New York Times*, March 2, 2001, B 38.



reproduction.<sup>14</sup> “My copies ask the viewer to look harder at the original,” explained Muniz.<sup>15</sup> While Morris’s influence is indeed immense, he has himself certainly been influenced by others. Among those whose particular influence on Morris will be discussed in more detail are the artists Donatello (chapters three and five), Goya (chapter four) and Marcel Duchamp (chapter two). Morris often refers to them either in his works or in his writings. He did and still does share interests and ideas with other artists in Europe and America. Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer and Anish Kapoor are examples of artists whose work will be compared with Morris’s and discussed in this context in the following chapters.

### The Object-Observer-Space Triad

In the 1960s and ‘70s, for instance, Morris, like the artists of Minimal and Post-Minimal art in America and *Arte Povera* in Europe, questioned the boundaries of art (could it be made from any material the artist chooses?) and how these materials fit our conceptions of what is two dimensional, three dimensional, temporary or permanent.<sup>16</sup> They explored new and nontraditional sculptural materials and techniques, expanded the ideas of what art was and how it could affect society, and they reached beyond artistic issues to embrace what the art historian and critic Gregory Battcock refers to in this context as “broad social, ecological, and intellectual concerns.”<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> All nine pieces exhibited in “The Things Themselves: Pictures of Dust by Vik Muniz” show at the Whitney in 2001 were made according to the same process.

<sup>15</sup> Vik Muniz quoted in Grace Glueck, “Why, It’s the Stuff of Minimalism,” *The New York Times*, B 38.

<sup>16</sup> See Marti Mayo, *Robert Morris: Selected Works 1970-1980*, exh. cat (Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, 1981), 6.

<sup>17</sup> See Gregory Battcock, “Introduction,” *Idea Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1973), 2.

Morris's choice of industrial and nontraditional sculptural materials (plywood, fiberglass, steel, aluminum, felt), his techniques and method of assembling them (objects fabricated industrially usually by workers following the artist's instructions, serial forms and systems), his treatment of space (in relationship to both the object and the body of the viewer), and his opposition to aesthetic beauty in art remind us of Joseph Beuys, Eva Hesse, Jannis Kounellis, Richard Serra, and Robert Smithson, to mention just a few of his counterparts. Additionally, as did these artists, Morris has given the spectator "a new role as contributor of meaning."<sup>18</sup> Concerned with what can actually be observed and experienced by the viewer (physical properties, process of creation, space), Morris's pieces involve the viewer and force an interaction by challenging his perception of them in both space and time. Furthermore, as this experience of the works has a relevance to one's own body (how high are one's eyes, the weightiness of the piece, to what extent one can navigate around it), it is a phenomenological analysis of sculptural viewing that is necessary, and that certainly includes the body of the spectator. In Morris's words:

The better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light and the viewer's field of vision. The object is but one of the terms in the newer aesthetic. It is in some way more reflexive, because one's awareness of oneself existing in the same space as the work is stronger than in previous work, with its many internal relationships. One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object and tends to eliminate the viewer to the degree that these details pull him into an intimate relation with the work and out of the space in which the object exists.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> See Francis Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 134.

<sup>19</sup> See Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, 15; the essay "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2" originally appeared in *Artforum* 5, 2 (October 1966), 20-23.

In "Sculpture as an Intimate Art," one of the most important essays of the late 1960s, the art historian and critic Barbara Rose defines the characteristics of the Minimal style, discussing Minimal sculpture in a phenomenological framework. Unlike traditional works, Minimalism is not isolated from the spectator's space on a base or pedestal, but instead intrudes upon his space, involving the viewer directly: "Claes Oldenburg's invention of soft forms 'composed' by gravity, Robert Morris's emphasis on the nature of visual perception as the content of sculpture, Dan Flavin's use of environmental relationships, and Donald Judd's elaboration of the minimal 'aesthetic'...have all extended the sculptural medium beyond Cubism, a groove it seemed bound to repeat like a broken record."<sup>20</sup>

During the Minimalist movement, in the 1960s, works were placed directly on floors, into corners, and on walls of the gallery space "invading" the place itself, revealing it as an actual space. Discussing the seven gray geometric plywood structures in Morris's solo exhibition at Green Gallery in New York in 1964 [Fig. 3]

Meyer remarked:

The massive structures occupied the actual physical space of the gallery, forcing the viewer to be aware of his or her position in space in relation to the artwork as well as in relation to the volume of the room itself. *Untitled (Corner Piece)* fit into the corner of the gallery. The back and sides of the work disappeared in the wall. By filling the negative space of the corner, Morris sculpture made the usual overlooked corner visible as a literal space and altered the room's volume.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> See Barbara Rose, "Sculpture as an Intimate Art," *New York Magazine* (April 14, 1969), 48. Regarding the functions of the base for a sculpture (to support, distance, or isolate the work) and its disappearance by the mid-1960s, see Jack Burnham, "Sculpture's Vanishing Base," *Beyond Modern Sculpture: The Effects of Science and Technology on the Sculpture of This Century* (1968; rpt. New York, George Braziller, Inc., 1987), 19-48.

<sup>21</sup> See James Meyer ed., *Minimalism* (New York: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2000), 80.

This change in relationship between the viewer and the work of art in specific spaces, caused such misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Morris's pieces that it generated a vast literature of critical writings and analyses. We might consider, for instance, the art critic Michael Fried's polemical and controversial essay "Art and Objecthood"<sup>22</sup> in which Fried criticizes the "theatricality"<sup>23</sup> of Minimal art (the "literalist" art as he calls it) and Morris's art particularly: "The literalist espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theater; and theater is now the negation of art. Literalist sensibility is theatrical because, to begin with, it is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters literalist work. Morris makes this explicit."<sup>24</sup> Even years later, in 1978, the art critic Hilton Kramer wrote in his article "The New Line: Minimalism Is Americanism" that Minimal art "is a movement still very much with us, and the literature written on its behalf is now so immense that a complete bibliographical account of it would itself fill a fat book."<sup>25</sup> Yet to categorize Morris's art and see it only within the rigid framework of a specific movement (even though some of his works became the core of such

---

<sup>22</sup> Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum*, 5 (June 1967), 12-23; rpt. in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 116-147. In this polemical essay Fried even states on page 139 that "the success, even the survival of the arts, has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theater."

<sup>23</sup> Battcock points out that "Fried characterizes the theatrical in terms of a particular relation between the beholder as *subject* and the work as *object*, a relation that takes place in time, that has duration." See Battcock, *Minimal Art*, 116.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 125. However, the art critic Annette Michelson argued that "it is [Morris's] commitment 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." See Annette Michelson, "An Aesthetic of Transgression," *Robert Morris*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), 43; see Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism 1986/96," *Minimalism*, James Meyer ed. (New York: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2000), 270-275; see Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973); see also Barbara Rose's critical and important essay "ABC Art," *Art in America* 53, (October-November, 1965), 58-64; rpt. in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, 214-217.

<sup>25</sup> See Hilton Kramer, "The New Line: Minimalism Is Americanism," *The New York Times*, March 26, 1978, D 29.

movements as Minimalism and Conceptualism) would be misleading and overly confining. Morris produces works of art that are beyond stylistic limitations, as will be repeatedly revealed as this study progresses.

Examining the Minimalists's interventions, as well as those of other avant-garde initiatives of the 1960s, the art historian Alex Potts pointed out in his notable book *The Sculptural Imagination*, that these attempts owed much to specific political and cultural circumstances of the period:

If the American artists involved did not usually envisage their work as making overt political statements, as did some Europeans such as Joseph Beuys, their conception of art had an oppositional thrust that was just as bound up with a larger politicising of culture, evident in the new political movements of the period and in the eruptions of disquiet over the flagrant consumerism of post war, American-style capitalism.<sup>26</sup>

One should also bear in mind that in the 1960s, the idea that a difficult artwork held superior value enjoyed special prestige. In many forms of art, there was a conviction that obscurity, psychological alienation and particularly an appetite for difficulty in the works produced were appropriate responses to the state of the world.<sup>27</sup>

### No Final State: "Heraclitus Is Always Laughing"

But perhaps more than any other artist of his generation, Morris has been reluctant to work within the artistic boundaries recognized by his contemporaries. He explores and expands upon existing concepts of art making as he moves seamlessly between the various techniques, believing that each offers a unique

---

<sup>26</sup> Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, xi.

<sup>27</sup> One only needs to bring to mind such film directors as Ingmar Bergman and Michelangelo Antonioni, whose mid-1960s reception in New York was epitomized by the challenging writing of Susan Sontag, cf "Against Interpretation."

visual language. He has managed to consistently defy the traditional idea that an artist sticks to one medium or style exhibiting not only a richness of ideas but also a willingness to take risks.

Morris is neither a storyteller nor a mythmaker and he shows little interest, if any, in the specific content and recording of a narrative. Yet as he himself has said, “behind every work of art there is always a theme, a story,”<sup>28</sup> which is the point of departure:

No art comes without its stories. An art story is at once a prescriptive text that imposes rules by which its participants learn to play a certain kind of game; a genealogy of certain events and of certain sets of enduring, often conflicting desires; and a concatenation of traits, tropes, obsessions, and historicized accounts by apologists who would seek to legitimize an ideological position. In short, the art story is a discourse particular to an enterprise that pretends to revolve around the production of a certain unstable class of more or less individually produced, handmade artifacts.<sup>29</sup>

However, it is not the “story” itself, but Morris’s visual language and treatment of a work that elicit such an emotional response in the viewer.

It is indeed remarkable that although he produces works with neither specific narrative nor plot, his performances, sculptures, earthworks, paintings, and writings always somehow end up confronting their audiences. Of course, one might argue that this is true of many works of art. A viewer might experience a confrontational emotional response when suddenly finding himself threatened by a massive sculpture like Serra’s *Tilted Arc* (1981) blocking his way, which was

---

<sup>28</sup> Morris, conversation with the author, New York, March 1997.

<sup>29</sup> Morris, “Three Folds in the Fabric and Four Autobiographical Asides as Allegories (or Interruptions), *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 259.

produced for the Federal Plaza in downtown Manhattan,<sup>30</sup> or being face to face with a horrifying “slaughtering rack” of hanging animal forms in Bruce Nauman's *Carousel* (1988). The aspect of visceral confrontation in their pieces is apparent, direct, and almost totally the result of the overt expression of the work itself. With Morris's art, however, the effect is quite different because his works, per se, are not horrific. The viewer's confrontation, unlike with Serra's and Nauman's art, is not head-on; it is neither specific nor necessarily immediate nor obvious. Yet confrontation as well as aggression exists, although in a much more subdued and insidious manner. The viewer is not initially shocked into an immediate sense of pathos, but is more likely to experience such a feeling slowly mounting within him. And it is rather this gradual anxiety<sup>31</sup> one senses building while examining Morris's art that tends to expose one's own inner conflicts. This effect will become obvious during a later discussion of some of Morris's specific works. In Morris's styleless style his works quietly creep on us and haunt us for days. Strikingly visual with a philosophical dimension to them, his pieces create discomfort, tension, restlessness, and strain in the viewer while at the same time revealing Morris's overall pessimism:

Freud thought humor a resistance against suffering. Could some art be a resistance against depression? My point of view has been fairly consistently pessimistic. And such an attitude must lie close to, be bound up with, the depressive. Lacan advises us to “live your symptoms.” I have made a series of *Projects for Tombs, War Memorials*, a series of *Blind Time* drawings titled *Melancholia*, and have drawn on Holocaust imagery... All of this work moves away from and against the Modernist doxa of wholeness and the celebratory.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> In 1979 Richard Serra was commissioned to create a public work of art for Federal Plaza in New York City. He designed *Tilted Arc*, a weathered tilted plate of steel (120 FT long X 12 FT high X 2.5 inches thick), which was installed in 1981 but removed in 1989 due to public outcry.

<sup>31</sup> For more on the notion of anxiety in Morris's art see Tsouti-Schillinger, *Robert Morris and Angst*.

<sup>32</sup> Morris, as quoted in “Catherine Grenier interview with Robert Morris,” in *Less Than*, exh. cat. (Reggio Emilia: Gli Ori, 2005), 126-127.

Morris's art did not gradually "became darker" but rather tended to be "dark" from the very beginning as Morris himself also has remarked.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, even in the 1960s, and despite the commonly espoused view that "the era of the '60s... saw the future optimistically"<sup>34</sup> (particularly the early 1960s in America), Morris, to the contrary, saw the future considerably less so. Who could say that works such as *Box for Standing* (1961) [Fig. 4] in which a photograph portrays Morris standing inside a pine box (made to his precise measurements) which engulfs him like a coffin, or his *Memory Drawings* of 1962 (see chapter three) are "light" works?

With regard to Morris's pessimism, should we not perhaps inquire whether this is really a quality to be looked upon as disadvantageous or rather as a strength?

One might better refer to Nietzsche's important and influential essay "The Birth of Tragedy," where we read, for instance, why the supposed "cheerful" Greeks (of all people) needed to invent tragedy. Nietzsche believed that it was a result of their pessimism:

You will guess where the big question mark concerning the value of existence had thus been raised. Is pessimism *necessarily* a sign of decline, decay, degeneration, weary and weak instincts—as it once was in India and now is, to all appearances, among us, "modern" men and Europeans? Is there a pessimism of *strength*? An intellectual predilection for the hard, gruesome, evil, problematic aspect of existence, prompted by well-being, by overflowing health, by the *fullness* of existence? Is it perhaps possible to suffer precisely from overfullness?<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Morris, in conversations with the author. See also, "Catherine Grenier interview with Robert Morris," 123.

<sup>34</sup> Colpitt, *Minimal Art*, 135.

<sup>35</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), 17.



Despite the further widely held view of the same period that Minimalist works “are not the embodiments of ideas or conceptions,”<sup>36</sup> but are about pure objecthood (“the lineaments of Gratified Desire” as Carl Andre refigured Blake’s meaning<sup>37</sup>), Morris’s art did not fit either this description or definition. It is clear that Morris, like many of his contemporaries, was not interested in the definitive recording of a narrative and thus eliminated symbolic meanings and diminished the sense that his work “represents” or “signifies” something. However, as we will see in the following chapters, Morris’s art, then and now, consists of “concepts” or “ideas” and intellectual references while simultaneously having a physical power and a striking visual impact on the viewer.

Throughout his career and even since his plywood pieces in the early 1960s, Morris has worked in series,<sup>38</sup> including the *Blind Time* drawings, felt sculptures, hydrocal pieces, encaustic paintings and drawings. Certainly, as the art historian Kimberly Paice notes, the Minimalist sculptors were calling for the use of order, repetition and sequence, “It was in Minimalist practice that seriality was introduced into the single work, which, as the composite of repeated, unvaried units, implicitly could be expanded without limit.”<sup>39</sup> However, this has not been the case with Morris, who even in the 1960s, Paice further remarks, was “less interested in this type of seriality than he was in a version that involved permuting a single form to generate changes in the way its shape would be experienced.”<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Carl Andre, *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1958-1974*, exh. cat. (Kunsthalle, Bern, 1975), 5.

<sup>37</sup> William Blake, as quoted in Carl Andre, *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1958-1974*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> Although there have been exceptions to the serial production, overall Morris indeed tends to work in series.

<sup>39</sup> Kimberly Paice, “Catalogue,” *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem* (New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Museum, 1994), 184.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

In *Untitled (Stadium)*, a series of works produced in 1967, Morris explored the notion of permutation and sought to involve viewers in a physical way, acknowledging that their perception of both the sculpture and the environment shifts as they move through space. These are not works that are only to be looked at in the traditional way, as is a painting or a piece of sculpture (separated from the spectator's space by being hung on a wall or placed on a pedestal). The role of the viewer—how he or she interacts with the *Untitled (Stadium)* pieces—is important in that process.

One of the works in this group, known as *Wedges*, consists of eight components made of fiberglass painted “pilgrim” gray<sup>41</sup>—like his plywood pieces—and was first shown at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York City in 1967 [Fig. 5]. The components were permuted every two days during the exhibition, sometimes using the same elements, sometimes substituting other elements, rearranged to produce rings, squares, wedges, and so on [Fig. 6]. In other words there was no definitive arrangement or set of components. Morris had created a type of structure, as the art critic and theorist Rosalind Krauss pointed out in her seminal book, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, “that has no fixed internal order, for each sculpture can be (and was) continually rearranged.”<sup>42</sup> A chart with lists of possible configurations accompanied the pieces.<sup>43</sup> However, as Morris himself remarked in an interview with the art critic and curator David Sylvester, it was not

---

<sup>41</sup> In conversation with the author Morris has said that he was using a brand of paint called “Pilgrim Gray,” a name that he liked “as much as the hue.” New York, April 1996.

<sup>42</sup> Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, (1977; rpt. Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 1981), 267.

<sup>43</sup> From the possible configurations of the units in the chart, however, it is clear that overall Morris tended to favour arrangements that would produce rings and squares.

that he was looking to create units that would produce all possible permutations; this situation “just developed gradually. And in one respect it developed out of the very practical, mundane matter of having to deal with sculpture that’s large, because you’d have to make a research to get it through the door.”<sup>44</sup> Morris made a series of forms that “have no definitive shapes, but rather a set of possible shapes.”<sup>45</sup>

Fiberglass, although it is a durable material, proved not to be appropriate for the sharp edges of *Wedges*, which tended to chip and abrade. In fact all the works he made in fiberglass, with the exception of the 1965-66 *Untitled (Ring with Light)*, “sagged and warped, and the edges chipped,”<sup>46</sup> according to Morris. “Fiberglass wants to take curves—in such shapes it is extremely strong. For the most part I was making rectangular forms, and these were not suited to the material... (Heraclitus is always laughing).”<sup>47</sup> Then, in 1971, Morris remade the work using another industrial material, steel, for a permanent outdoor installation of *Wedges* at Fairmount Park in Philadelphia [Fig. 7]. The piece involves a total of eight geometric and industrially fabricated forms: four curved pieces (quarter circles) and four straight pieces (isosceles triangles), which theoretically at least can be continually rearranged. That is to say, the components can be arranged differently on different days in any number of combinations. But, of course, shifting around permuting heavy steel elements requires a crane or a group of dedicated bodybuilder-art lovers at the least, so this aspect of the work has been

---

<sup>44</sup> Morris, as quoted in David Sylvester, “A Duologue,” in *Robert Morris*, exh. cat. (London: Tate Gallery, 1971), 14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Morris, as quoted in Karmel, “Robert Morris: Formal Disclosures,” 94.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

subverted. What exists in Philadelphia, what we see at Fairmount Park, is some sort of remainder, in a sense a fragment of the original concept. “A static unpermutable version of *Wedges* exists in Fairmount Park,” Morris has remarked, “in a sense it is .... a subversion of the original intention to create a work with no definitive final state. Much of the art we possess from the past exists as fragments. Would the *Venus de Milo* look better with arms?”<sup>48</sup>

Morris protests against sculpture as metaphor, a sculpture, for instance, where stone signifies flesh (as we see with Michelangelo and Rodin); fat and felt are metaphors for nourishment and healing (as with Joseph Beuys—see chapter two). In other words Morris rejects the notion of an “interior” space as the source of meanings; he protests, as Krauss argues, “against sculpture as a metaphor for a body divided into inside and outside, with the meaning of that body dependent upon the idea of the private inner self.”<sup>49</sup> One could walk around the work, into it, and see through the elements. *Wedges* consists not only of the physical object—the eight geometric components—but also of the space and the viewer, who is invited to actively participate and experience the work. The exterior of *Wedges* can be explored, but it is only when we either come close or enter the centre of the work that we are able to see and explore the configuration of the components.

*Wedges* is a phenomenological work: the viewer becomes aware of himself and his movement through the space, and as he moves the sculpture changes. Even

---

<sup>48</sup> See audio interview for Morris’s *Wedges* at Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, conducted in February 2010 by the reporter Lu Olkowski ([www.museumwithoutwallsaudio.org/vimeo.com/12321735](http://www.museumwithoutwallsaudio.org/vimeo.com/12321735)).

<sup>49</sup> See Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 269.

the openings between the components, although seemingly wide enough to allow entrance to the centre, are not quite wide enough to “openly” welcome such an entrance. As often with Morris’s art, there is ambiguity. In a search for meaning, therefore, we cannot avoid our own participation. On how this concept of viewer involvement relates to his work and just “what it means,” Morris once commented:

To this I can only reply that the distinctive difference of art, what marks it off from all other organized human activity, is that it does not seek control through explanation. That it offers the freedom to experience and question is not an opportunity that its audience always welcomes. But the value of the present work, if any, will have to be sought on these terms.<sup>50</sup>

We do not just look at *Wedges*, but become actively involved through our bodily perceptions; we become aware of our own contribution to the experience of the piece. This is one of many of Morris’s works which reinforce the relationships within the object-observer-space triad, resulting in its perception as an integral whole.

The scale of the work contributes to the establishment of a relationship with the body of a viewer. *Wedges* addresses the meaning projected by our own bodies, questioning the relationship in *that* moment (real time) within *that* experience. The viewer becomes aware that “he himself is establishing relationships, as he experiences the piece from various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial context.”<sup>51</sup> Certainly this is true of all sculpture, because it exists in real space; however Morris’s *Wedges*, unlike traditional sculpture, includes,

---

<sup>50</sup> Morris, quoted in *Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture* (Seattle: The Seattle Art Museum, 1979), 27.

<sup>51</sup> Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2,” *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, 15.

rather than excludes, the space containing it. We spend “real” time examining ourselves in relation to the piece, examining our own personal relationship with Morris’s *Wedges*, and the “real” space containing it; that is to say, we become an integral element of the work itself.

*Wedges*, at a height of 1.37 meters (4 feet), is neither so large as to appear monumental, nor so small as to render itself an intimate object. Rather it is one of the early examples of Morris’s propensity to scale the size of his works to the human body:

In the perception of relative size, the human body enters into the total continuum of sizes and establishes itself as a constant on that scale. One knows immediately what is smaller and what is larger than himself. It is obvious yet important to take note of the fact that things smaller than ourselves are seen differently than things larger. The quality of intimacy is attached to an object in a fairly direct proportion as its size diminishes in relation to oneself.<sup>52</sup>

In Mitchell’s words, Morris insists “on a certain intermediate scale between the private and the public work, the intimate and the monumental.”<sup>53</sup>

Morris’s continuity could be defined in his drive to explore and exploit the potential of his own creativity. While on the one hand each series is autonomous, on the other, it perhaps leads him to discover an additional one, from his *Passageway* (1961), for instance, to *Portals* (see chapter two), and then on to his

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 11. I am reminded of a relevant and amusing exchange Morris related to the author, between Tony Smith and himself about Smith’s *Die*, a six-foot steel cube produced in the 1960s: “Why didn’t you make it larger so that it would loom over the observer?” Morris asked Smith. “I was not making a monument,” was Smith’s reply. “Then why didn’t you make it smaller so that the observer could see over the top?” Morris persisted. “I was not making an object,” Smith answered. See also the epigraph to Morris’s “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2,” *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, 11.

<sup>53</sup> See W.J.T. Mitchell, “Wall Labels: Word, Image, and Object in the Work of Robert Morris,” *The Mind/Body Problem*, 70.

various *Labyrinths* (see chapter five); and from *Imprints and Body Casts* (1963-64), where he is registering bodily imprints, (see chapter three), to the *Hypnerotomachia* series, *Hydrocals* (1982-85) and *Blind Time Drawings* (1973-2010) (see chapters two, three and five). Asked how he came up with the idea of working in series, Morris answered:

I think the term “series” would have to be qualified. If a *Floor Slab* is made, and then a *Hanging Slab*, does the latter qualify as the second in the series? And if no further “slabs” were produced, does the series consist of two works. Or are all the plywood, so-called minimal works, being named as a series? If so, I think arguments could be made against all those works existing in a series. Then there have been obvious exceptions to series production: e.g., *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, *Card File*, *The Fallen and the Saved*; no successive variations were made on these works (if “successive variations” is to be called on as the defining term—and even here it would be necessary to state what it is that is getting “varied”). I think Wittgenstein's term “family resemblance” might be just as good or better than the notion of “series.”<sup>54</sup>

In our examination of the definition and problem of “style,” as well as the establishment of artistic influences, we observed just how difficult it is to pin that down on any specific artist or work. However, we were able to identify that among those who have influenced Morris, three come foremost to mind, Donatello, Goya and Marcel Duchamp. We also discovered that he did and still does disseminate and share interests and ideas with other artists in Europe and America, particularly Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer and Anish Kapoor. A more detailed comparison with these artists will follow in later chapters. Discussing his use of industrial materials, his integration of the viewer's participation, and his tendency to work in series, however, we gained a clear sense of Morris's relative disdain for traditional artistic boundaries. He does not stick with any one medium or style.

---

<sup>54</sup> Morris, e-mail correspondence with the author, July 12, 2010.

## Chapter Two: “To the Things, Themselves”

*I don't think that the public is prepared to accept it... my canned chance. This depending on coincidence is too difficult for them. They think everything has to be done on purpose by complete deliberation... In time they will come to accept chance as a possibility to produce things. In fact, the whole world is based on chance, or at least is a definition of what happens in the world we live in and know more than any causality... If I do propose to strain a little bit the laws of physics... it is because I would like you to think them unstable to a degree.*

Marcel Duchamp<sup>55</sup>

### “With the Body in Motion”

We will assess Morris’s ideas on process and phenomenology of perception. The task-oriented dance vocabulary of his choreographies will be investigated along with his minimalist sculptures which we will position in relation to primary thematics in his art—phenomenology. A review of Morris’s incorporation of audience participation into, and the resultant “activation” of his sculpture will be followed by an assessment of his relationship to two other influential artists of the period, Joseph Beuys and Marcel Duchamp, through the 1960s.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, on February 9, 1931, Robert Morris displayed an interest in art from his earliest years, having already been exposed by the age of seven to Egyptian art, Goya and Cézanne during visits to the Nelson-Atkins

---

<sup>55</sup> Duchamp, as quoted in Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), 62.



Museum of Art. He attended the Kansas City Art Institute and the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco, later pursuing philosophy and psychology studies at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. Like many artists of the 1950s he began his career initially as a painter working in the then dominant Abstract Expressionist style. Jackson Pollock's important break in the early '40s when he made the physical act of painting the focus of his work, using not just his hand, wrist and arm, as in a traditional painting, but his entire body, was certainly not lost on Morris. Exploring Pollock's way of artmaking, that is to say, the working process, Morris produced paintings (and drawings) that focused primarily on the materiality of the medium itself. These works were exhibited at the Dilexi Gallery in San Francisco in 1957 and 1958.

By 1960, the nature of modern dance was being called into question in both Europe and America. In the first half of the twentieth century the great American innovators of modern dance,<sup>56</sup> Ruth St. Denis, Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham, had liberated the dancer's movement from the restraints of a classical ballet vocabulary and its attire (tutus, points). They danced barefoot. However, these choreographers still remained storytellers, expressing emotions, certainly conventional elements of classical dance. In Graham's technique, for example, "contraction" (chest curved inwards, back rounded) could be used to express sorrow or fear. It was not until the late 1950s that Graham's former student and

---

<sup>56</sup> Modern dance in Europe has its roots in Mary Wigman, Rudolf Laban and Kurt Jooss at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1928 Laban published his influential system known as Kinetography (from the Greek *κίνησις*, movement and *γράφειν*, to write), a method for recording human motion, which enabled choreographers to record the dancer's steps and other body movements, including their rhythm. For more on this subject, see Vera Maletic, *Body, Space, Expression: The Development of Rudolf Laban's Movement and Dance Concepts* (New York and Berlin: Walter De Gruyter Inc., 1987).

protégé, Merce Cunningham,<sup>57</sup> in collaboration with the avant-garde composer John Cage, who wrote the music for his choreographies,<sup>58</sup> abandoned narrative completely, while investigating gestures and movements from every day life such as walking, running, sitting. Influenced by Cage, who in his working methods was using chance operations to compose music,<sup>59</sup> Cunningham also introduced the use of chance operations into his dance pieces; he found that throwing dice, for instance, allowed him to invent new movements. One should bear in mind, however, that the idea of using chance as a creative tool for artmaking has been around since ancient times.<sup>60</sup> But certainly it was Marcel Duchamp's notion of chance, seen, for instance, in his works *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913-15)<sup>61</sup> and *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, better known as *The Large Glass* (1915-1923), that influenced the arts of the twentieth-century and of course Morris. After a long history of traditional narrative in both ballet and modern dance in Europe and America, in Cunningham's dances the subject finally

---

<sup>57</sup> With the encouragement of John Cage, Merce Cunningham left the Graham company in 1944. This year marked the beginning of Cunningham's career as a choreographer. His collaboration with Cage lasted for over fifty years, until the composer's death in 1992. For more on this subject, see David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years* (New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc., 1997).

<sup>58</sup> As Cunningham's music director, Cage composed the scores that accompanied Cunningham's choreography. However, it is important to remember that Cunningham created his dances to stand independently of the music. His dancers would rehearse to rhythms and hear the music for the first time at the premiere.

<sup>59</sup> See *Musicage: John Cage in Conversation with Joan Retallack* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1996).

<sup>60</sup> In *The Grove Book of Art Writing: Brilliant Words on Art from Pliny the Elder to Damien Hirst*, one finds various examples of chance in art: from the Greek painter Protogenes in the fourth century B.C.E., to Francisco Goya, Joan Miró, and Francis Bacon, just to mention a few. See *The Grove Book of Art Writing: Brilliant Words on Art: from Pliny the Elder to Damien Hirst*, ed. Martin Gayford and Karen Wright (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 453-457.

<sup>61</sup> In order to capture the effects of chance in *Three Standard Stoppages*, Duchamp dropped from a height of one meter a horizontal piece of thread one meter long onto a prepared canvas, letting it twist at random. He then repeated this procedure three times, fixing each piece of thread in place where it fell with varnish. That is to say, each thread created a new image of the unit of length: a meter was transformed by chance. Together they suggest an infinite number of possible meters. See also Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1996), 131-132.

became the dance itself.<sup>62</sup> And it was these kinds of innovations that were investigated by, among others, the choreographer Ann Halprin, on the West Coast in the 1960s at her dance workshops that included the dancer and choreographer Simone Forti, Morris's wife at the time.

During this period Morris himself became involved in dance performances and organized a theater workshop with Forti.<sup>63</sup> However, while his interest in dance increased, his interest in painting dwindled. Not surprisingly then, in 1960 Morris abandoned painting because, as he himself stated, he came to find the medium inadequate for what he wished to express:

Certain problems exist with painting. I quit painting for a particular reason—certain problems I couldn't solve. There was a kind of ontological character to painting I couldn't accept. Because on the one hand you were involved in some activity, on the other hand you ended up with an object. That was something that became more and more disturbing to me on an intellectual level. I couldn't deal with that and unlike Pollock... he was the only one who managed to put those two things together.<sup>64</sup>

Between 1962 and 1965, Morris also participated in projects at the Judson Dance Theater<sup>65</sup> in New York and choreographed *War* (1962-63), *Arizona* (1963), *21.3* (1964), *Site* (1964), *Check* (1964), and *Waterman Switch* (1965).<sup>66</sup> His interest in these pieces was not simply to communicate a story to the audience but rather to

---

<sup>62</sup> Introducing "walking" into his dance steps while working with university students in 1952, Cunningham suggested that they begin to dance with ordinary gestures. He said, "These were accepted as movement in daily life, why not on stage." See Rose Lee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art since 1960* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 147.

<sup>63</sup> In conversations with the author Morris has stated that Simone Forti had been influential on him.

<sup>64</sup> Morris, audio taped conversation with Krens, December 13, 1978, and published in "The Triumph of Entropy," *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, xix.

<sup>65</sup> For a detailed history of the Judson Dance Theater, see Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-64* (Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press, 1993).

<sup>66</sup> *Arizona* (1963), *21.3* (1964), *Site* (1964), and *Waterman Switch* (1965) were reenacted and videotaped at the 1994 Guggenheim retrospective.

explore new forms and processes,<sup>67</sup> movement, sound, light and language, through which he would be able to investigate less structured dance movements—movements that had nothing to do with balletic formulas of trained dancers. “The ‘movement’ was the result of performing various tasks or negotiating objects (*Site*, *Waterman Switch*, *Arizona*), or using ‘found’ movement (21.3), or manipulating large crowds of people (*Check*).”<sup>68</sup> Morris’s choreographies included movements that were actually mundane tasks, walking, carrying things, changing clothes, pouring liquids, all executed on stage. Certainly one does not need lengthy or even professional ballet training to perform such “dances.”<sup>69</sup> In his “Notes on Dance,” Morris explains:

My involvement in theater has been with the body in motion. However changed or reduced the motion might have been or however elaborate the means used might have been, the focus was this movement. In retrospect this seems a constant value, which was preserved. From the beginning I wanted to avoid the pulled-up, turned-out, antigravitational qualities that not only give a body definition and role as a “dancer” but qualify and delimit the movement available to it.<sup>70</sup>

It is also worth mentioning that not only performing artists like Cunningham, as I have already mentioned, but also visual artists were inspired at that time by Cage's innovations,<sup>71</sup> his ideas about chance and his belief that "ordinary sounds

---

<sup>67</sup> All dance, in a way, is process in that it is temporal. Existing only in the moment literally, it evaporates after each and every rendering.

<sup>68</sup> Morris, interview with Anne Bertrand, “Labyrinth II,” *From Mnemosyne to Clio: The Mirror to the Labyrinth* (Lyon: Musée d’Art contemporain, 2000), 183.

<sup>69</sup> This is one of the reasons why this kind of experimentation attracted the participation of artists looking to work outside their own discipline, i.e., painters and sculptors such as Yves Klein, Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Morris. However, most of the original group had classical ballet or modern dance training and some had studied both.

<sup>70</sup> Morris, “Notes on Dance,” *Tulane Drama Review*, 10 (Winter 1965), 179.

<sup>71</sup> In conversations with the author Morris has stated that Cage’s ideas of chance and indeterminacy were influential on him. See also Moira Roth, unpublished interview, February 8, 1973 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York). Between 1960-63, there was also a correspondence between Morris and Cage regarding a theater work entitled “Wind Ensemble” that Morris had sent to Cage enquiring about the possibility of a performance. See Joseph Branden, “Robert Morris and John Cage: Reconstructing a Dialogue,” *October* (Summer 1997), 59-69.

of daily life were more interesting than the sounds produced by musical cultures.”<sup>72</sup> Morris notes in an essay entitled “Some Notes on the

Phenomenology of Making”:

Certain art since World War II has edged toward the recovery of its means by virtue of grasping a systematic method of production that was in one way or another implied in the finished product. Another way of putting it is that artists have increasingly sought to remove the arbitrary from working by finding a system according to which they could work. One of the first to do this was John Cage, who systematized the arbitrary itself by devising structures according to deliberate chance methods for ordering relationships. Cage’s deliberate chance methods are both prior to and not perceptible within the physical manifestation of the work.<sup>73</sup>

Cage’s well-known argument that it is impossible to find silence because it does not exist in this world is radically illustrated in his composition *4’33”*, a piece consisting of four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence, first presented in 1952 by the pianist David Tudor. The piece famously plays out as follows: a musician holding a stopwatch comes on stage, sits at a piano for a duration of four minutes and thirty-three seconds, raising and lowering the keyboard cover to signal the beginning and end of the movements. The composition *4’33”* was a breakthrough in terms of shifting the focus from the performer to the audience, who, in the absence of musical sound, became aware of the sounds/noises like coughing, whispering, etc. that occurred while waiting for a sound from the performer’s piano over the duration of the piece.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Cage, as quoted in Ann Temkin and Bernice Rose, *Thinking Is Form: The Drawings of Joseph Beuys* (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1993), 49.

<sup>73</sup> Morris, “Some notes on the Phenomenology of Making,” *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 75.

<sup>74</sup> A very interesting installation titled *Merce Cunningham Performs Stillness (in Three Movements)* to John Cage’s *Composition 4’33”* was created by the artist Tacita Dean at the Dia: Beacon, Riggio Galleries, in Beacon New York, in 2007. Commemorating John Cage and his piece *4’33”*, the work consisted of six 16mm films projected on six life-size screens, all showing Cunningham performing his piece *Stillness*. In *Stillness* Cunningham created a counterpart to Cage’s silent composition *4’33”*. While he was sitting nearly motionless in a chair in a studio against a wall-length mirror, Cunningham was shot from a different angle and distance in each of the six films: face front close up, full length from the left side, three quarter view, etc. He assumed a series of fixed postures as a second performer, his collaborator Trevor Carlson,

Morris's piece *Site* [Fig. 8], which was originally performed by himself and Carolee Schneemann at Stage 73, Surplus Dance Theater in New York<sup>75</sup> in 1964, was reenacted and videotaped with Andrew Ludke as the Man with Mask and Sarah Tomlinson as the Nude at the Guggenheim 1994 retrospective. One reads in the museum's exhibition catalogue:

He stands upstage and right of center. His arms are folded. His back is to the audience. He is dressed in work clothes and boots.<sup>[76]</sup> He wears a papier-mâché mask that reproduces, without expression, his facial features. Downstage left, a white box conceals the hardware for the sound track, a tape of construction workers drilling with jackhammers. He walks upstage center to a large structure composed of white-washed plywood boards. He slowly begins to dismantle it. He takes the first board off stage. He returns. He removes the rest of the boards, relocating them to other parts of the stage. He takes away the last panel. She is revealed reclining on a lounge of pillows and white fabric. Naked, except for a dusting of white powder and a ribbon around her neck, she recreates Olympia's pose. He moves one of the plywood boards into various positions. He carries it on his back. He kneels next to it. He puts the board down. He walks upstage center. He covers her with a board. He returns downstage left. He turns his back to the audience. Blackout.<sup>77</sup>

Throughout his career Morris often invokes art history in his works, in this particular piece, of course, referring to Manet's *Olympia*. However, there is no story telling in *Site*. Nor does his choreography have complicated entrechats, pirouettes, or jetés, although surprisingly the flow of movement is quite graceful and beautiful. Instead Morris employs nonballetic everyday movements, some very difficult, despite their apparent simplicity, and includes common sounds of ordinary life. Furthermore, these dance movements neither appear to symbolize anything nor express feelings. On the contrary, one observes merely task-related

---

signaled the divisions. At each signal Cunningham changed position slightly: he turned his head, rested his head on his hand, repositioning his arms on his legs—no musical sound except the sound/noises of the environment/studio.

<sup>75</sup> When *Site* was performed in Europe (Stockholm, Copenhagen, etc.) a European performer was substituted for Schneemann; in Philadelphia, Morris was accompanied by the artist and performer Olga Adorno Klüver. See Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theatre, 1962-1964* (Durham, N. C. and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 206.

<sup>76</sup> Morris also wore working gloves.

<sup>77</sup> Maurice Berger, "Wayward Landscapes," *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, 23.

movements, along with simple yet calculated theatrical visual effects that “produce wholeness.” Morris himself points out in this regard that “the solving of a task or the handling of an object can focus the performer's concentration.”<sup>78</sup>

*Site* begins and ends the same way, in darkness, with the incessant city sound of drilling jackhammers (recorded outside Morris's studio window in Manhattan). Once the stage is lit, the view is that of three white elements, a square box (front left), which contained the tape recorder activated by Morris in the dark, a horizontal slab (rear centre), and a vertical slab (rear right). The white-painted plywood slabs, however, give the impression of being everyday standard-size (1.22 X 2.44 m) white construction sheetrock. The Nude, powdered similarly white and set in the pose of the reclining odalisque in Manet's *Olympia* (1863), is revealed by the Man with Mask<sup>79</sup> at the beginning of the dance when he removes from the stack of horizontal slabs the piece of plywood (the third such piece he displaces) that was blocking her from the audience's view. She is likewise hidden again just prior to the final scene.

It is an eighteen-minute-and-forty-five-second choreography of continuous, almost hypnotic procession and repetition of slow-motion-like movements of bending, balancing, examining and relocating slabs. Indeed Morris's manipulation of the plywood boards was, in Steve Paxton's words, "an amazing dance."<sup>80</sup> The meaning is found in both, in the fixed on-stage square box and horizontal slab, and in the arranging of the two other slabs by the Man with Mask and his movements themselves. Morris choreographed *Site* as a set of relations between formally equal objects. It is a work deeply rooted in Morris's phenomenological endgames.

<sup>78</sup> Morris, as quoted in Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 181.

<sup>79</sup> The mask (papier mâché painted over with encaustic) that Morris was wearing in the original performance was made by Jasper Johns, taken from a mold of Morris's face.

<sup>80</sup> Steve Paxton, as quoted in Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 206. The dancer and choreographer Steve Paxton was a founding member of the Judson Dance Theater.

But we should not come away from the piece reading it only in these terms. The performance *Site* is also loaded with the symbolism and sexual connotation that underlies so much of Morris's art.<sup>81</sup> As the dance critic Jill Johnston argues, "The workmanlike activity of Morris as performer and the sound of the drill, juxtaposed to the 'ideal poetic image of the transfixed lady,' create a revealing opposition between the work of the artist and the cultural meaning of the work."<sup>82</sup> The analogy between the labour of a worker and that of an artist is indeed implicit. In addition, *Site* further "questioned... progressivist mythologies of labour and production, principally by challenging the problematic liberal tradition that treats the body as capital."<sup>83</sup> Lest we forget, *Olympia* represents a kind of "worker" herself, a prostitute.<sup>84</sup>

Morris's inclusion of an actual naked female presence in *Site* certainly makes the relationship between the spectator, the object, and space sexually charged. But despite the sexual references and the naked female performer, the choreography per se is not shocking because a sense of the mechanical is so strong that it overpowers the sexual imagery. In a brief but poignant moment during the performance, for instance, when the Man with Mask removes his left glove and very delicately touches his covered face, he remains totally expressionless of course due to the mask. The features of his masked face remain indifferent to his physical efforts. Neither fatigue, pain, or any other kind of feeling emerges,

---

<sup>81</sup> Morris once remarked that he had been approached by a dancer wishing to work with him, who while talking to him proceeded to unbutton her blouse. His "solution" was *Site* in which the nude woman is completely immobile for the entire duration of the performance. In conversation with the author, New York, January 1997.

<sup>82</sup> Jill Johnston, "The Object," *Village Voice*, May 21, 1964, 12; quoted in Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 206.

<sup>83</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 7; quoted in Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism and the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1989), 97.

<sup>84</sup> For more on this subject, see T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 87-102.



nor does this motion of the hand seem to express any particular state of mind. In that sense, it seems to be just another movement, one of many bodily possibilities. Curiously this gesture of the Man with Mask also brings to mind August Rodin's well-known sculpture *The Thinker* (1902). But one cannot penetrate the mask to discover the meaning behind the sign.

As cultural objects, masks have been used since the Stone Age. According to the cultural historian John W. Nunley, many prehistoric rock and cave paintings and sculptures portraying humans wearing masks have been found in Europe, North and South America, Africa, Australia and Asia. Even in the well-known Lascaux cave paintings in France, c. 15,000 B.C.E., there is a scene that includes a male figure (the only scene in the Lascaux caves to feature the image of a human being) wearing a birdlike mask.<sup>85</sup> And as devices for theater, masks have been central to the art since the ancient Greek poet Thespis, who is credited as the first actor and originator of Greek tragedy in the sixth century B.C.E.<sup>86</sup> The significance of the mask, however, and its use were diminished in the twentieth century and thus its appearance in Morris's *Site* seems indeed unusual. The experience of wearing a mask appears to mirror the alienation one might experience in the world, invoking the Frankfurt School philosopher, social theorist and political activist Herbert Marcuse,<sup>87</sup> whose work was particularly

---

<sup>85</sup> See John W. Nunley, "Prehistory and Origins," *Masks Faces of Culture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 23.

<sup>86</sup> The use of masks in ancient Greek theater made possible for actors (only two in Aeschylus's tragedies, three in the plays of Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes) to play various roles by switching masks off stage and returning to the stage as a different character.

<sup>87</sup> Herbert Marcuse was also "a leading theorist of the liberation of the body as a form of radical politics." He "spoke of the need 'to make the human body an instrument of pleasure rather than labour.'" See David Alan Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene In London*, exh. cat. (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1993), 133.

influential during the 1960s and '70s.<sup>88</sup> Krauss accurately notes, "The mask entered the art of this century as a challenge to psychology, a refusal of the personal, individualized, privatized interior space that had been the construction of nineteenth-century naturalism."<sup>89</sup> It is interesting in this respect to mention another artist who, like Morris, appeared masked in a piece from the 1960s: Richard Serra is indeed seen wearing a mask, in fact a gas mask, in the well-known photograph by Gianfranco Gorgoni depicting him throwing molten lead in the Castelli Warehouse in New York in 1969. Analyzing Serra's work in *Richard Serra / Sculpture*, Krauss explains:

To the impersonal status of the mask, the gas mask adds the depersonalizing conditions of industrial work, having associations with repetition, seriality, things-in-a-row all alike, but also associations with labor itself, with a kind of work in which a task is given in relation to a set of materials, in which operations are fixed by matter rather than inspiration. Thus the mask not only collectivizes the notion of expression, but it folds creativity back into the condition of labor.<sup>90</sup>

Certainly the above analysis, though it is written about Serra's mask, might well apply to Morris's as well. Unlike Serra's gas mask, however, Morris's papier mâché version manifests ambivalence and the idea of hiding and revealing, a quality that is common to all masks nonetheless and an essential element of Morris's art in general. Finally, what we seem to perceive in *Site* is an overpowering sense of remoteness, coupled with the feeling of a communication void, melancholy (also evident in Morris's dance piece *Waterman Switch*, performed a year later in 1965), and death. Indeed there is a certain deathlike aspect to *Site*, which the art historian Catherine Grenier rightly picks up on: "The

---

<sup>88</sup> For an important analysis of social "alienation" (including alienation of labour, the mechanics of the assembly line, the routine of the office), see Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A philosophical Inquiry Into Freud* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. and Random House Inc., 1955).

<sup>89</sup> Krauss, *Richard Serra / Sculpture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1986), 16.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

artist—covered with a mask in his own likeness—and the woman dancer—who brings to life the character of *Olympia* with almost obscene physical realism—are ritual figures of death who expose each other in the enactment of the piece.”<sup>91</sup>

Task-oriented and exploring new movements, Morris's performances were slow and meditative but in no way ceremonial or ritualistic. It is not surprising then that when Joseph Beuys invited Morris to participate in his performance *The Chief* in 1964,<sup>92</sup> Morris declined.<sup>93</sup> *The Chief* [Fig. 9], which is also known as one of Beuys's so-called Action pieces, was a slow, meditative and ritualistic work like a long Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*.<sup>94</sup> Created for two performers, Beuys and Morris would have acted out the work simultaneously, though independently: Beuys in Berlin and Morris thousands of miles away in New York, at exactly the same time. *The Chief* was performed by Beuys, nevertheless, at the Galerie René Block in Berlin. He appeared in the gallery at precisely 4 P.M. and for the next eight hours lay wrapped in a piece of gray felt with two dead hares on each end of the felt roll. A few other elements from Beuys's repertoire were also

---

<sup>91</sup> Grenier, "Robert Morris and Melancholy: The Dark Side of the Work," *Contemporains Monographies: Robert Morris*, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1995), 318.

<sup>92</sup> First performed in 1963 in Copenhagen, Beuys's *The Chief* was to be repeated on December 1, 1964 at the Galerie René Block in Berlin. See John F. Moffitt, *Occultism in Avant-Garde Art: The Case of Joseph Beuys* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1988), 21.

<sup>93</sup> Heiner Stachelhaus in his noteworthy book *Joseph Beuys* stated erroneously that Morris was Beuys's co-performer in *The Chief* in New York in 1964. See Heiner Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys*, trans. David Britt (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1991), 134. When I asked Morris about it, he confirmed that this was not accurate because he had not participated in Beuys's performance. In conversation with the author, New York, July 1997.

<sup>94</sup> Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the "total work of art," first used by him in his 1849 essay "Art and Revolution," refers of course to a sought-after synthesis of the arts, specifically music, literature and dance. For more on this subject, see Jack Madison Stein, *Richard Wagner and the Synthesis of the Arts* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973). See also Charles Baudelaire, "Richard Wagner and Tannhäuser in Paris," *Baudelaire The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London and New York: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1965), 111-146. However, the aspiration for a genuine synthesis goes back to the fifth century B.C.E. Greek drama (tragedies) where the six elements of tragedy, mythos, ethos, thought, language, spectacle and song, are united in harmony. For more on this subject, see Aristotle, *Poetics*, which is a study of Greek drama.

included in the space (*Fat Corner*, a piece of copper tubing) to further emphasize the room's ritualistic function. The work is autobiographical with political overtones. Certainly his choice of nontraditional materials reflects the spirit of his time and reveals that Beuys, like other artists in Europe and America, was not concerned with the conventional concept of artistic beauty, form, or even purpose. Felt and fat were materials of great importance metaphorically for Beuys and with layers of interpretation. On the one hand, they are symbols of human labour: fat can serve as nourishment (food), which is transformed into energy, though felt serves as an insulator and provides heat; both can be experienced as formless forms. On the other hand they refer to the artist's experience during World War II, when he was serving in the military flying as a radio operator with the Luftwaffe and crashed in the Crimea during the winter of 1943. Certainly this is a well-known story that has been often treated as an anecdote or a myth by many scholars and art critics.<sup>95</sup> However, perhaps of utmost significance here is not whether Beuys actually had such an experience or not, but rather the use he made of this "myth." Nevertheless, as Beuys claimed, he survived through the assistance of Tatar tribesmen, who took care of him and "brought him back to life" by covering him with felt to keep him warm and salving his wounds with animal fat. Fat and felt were indeed to become Beuys's basic sculptural materials.

At irregular intervals during the performance of *The Chief*, "Beuys uttered noises through a microphone and amplifier: he breathed audibly, groaned, coughed,

---

<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Buchloh, in his article "Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol," *Artforum*, 18, 5 (January 1980), 35-43, says Beuys's story is a fantasy, a "myth of origin." Certainly others take Beuys's narrative at face value; see Heiner Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys*, 22, and Wim Beeren, "Robert Morris," *Robert Morris: Recent Felt Pieces and Drawings*, 19.

hissed, whistled, and sighed. In addition, a tape recorder played, also at irregular intervals, compositions by Eric Andersen and Henning Christiansen.”<sup>96</sup> As for the predominant sound “uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh,” this represented, as Beuys himself explained, the poignant cry of a stag.<sup>97</sup> At the end of the show, precisely at midnight, Beuys unwrapped himself from the felt roll and announced that “this had been the demonstration of a sculptural principle.”<sup>98</sup> Beuys’s “intention,” as the art historian and critic Heiner Stachelhaus noted, “had been to convey information on behalf of the dead hares, to the extent that human language incorporates animal elements.”<sup>99</sup> In other words, Beuys’s *The Chief*, like his art in general, emphasizes the material’s symbolic association.

Certainly Morris investigates broad social or intellectual contexts and his exploration of the art, labour and production triad, one might say, raises questions about the function of art and the role of the artist in a society. However, his involvement in dance has been “with the body in motion.... The challenge was to find alternative movement.”<sup>100</sup> And the objects that he used, as he pointed out in discussing his dance performance *Arizona* for instance, held no inherent interest for him:

[The objects] 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

<sup>96</sup> See Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys*, 134.

<sup>97</sup> See Moffitt, *Occultism in Avant-Garde Art: The Case of Joseph Beuys*, 21.

<sup>98</sup> See Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys*, 134.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Morris, “Notes on Dance,” 179.

darkness only the moving point of light is visible as it revolves in the large space above the heads of the audience. Both of the above instances occurred in *Arizona*, the first dance I made.<sup>101</sup>

*Arizona* (1963) was a solo running seventeen minutes and thirteen seconds, divided into four sections, each separated by a blackout [Fig. 10]. In section one Morris twisted his torso from the frontal position (facing the audience) to ninety degrees over a duration of five minutes—the movement was almost imperceptible—while a monologue of detailed instructions, a “method for sorting cows,” was read aloud on tape by the artist/performer (see Appendix 1). It is worth mentioning that the elaborate text describes the actual method for sorting cows in preparation for slaughter used by Morris’s father, who was a livestock man working in the stockyards in Kansas City, Missouri. That is to say, *Arizona*, like all of Morris’s dances, contains autobiographical references. The stockyard experience comes into play often in Morris’s art and writings, witness the chapter of his essay “Three Folds in the Fabric” titled “The Stockyard Shaman,” where Morris narrates in a remarkably vivid way his own visits to the stockyard as a child:

I remember seeing crazed Brahma bulls rip 8 X 8 gateposts out of the bricks as if they were matchsticks, and seeing 200 head of longhorns running wild-eyed across an elevated chute, and learning that, until they were loaded onto a train in West Texas, they had never seen a man.<sup>102</sup>

The reader is urged to visualize in his mind the physical space of the stockyard, grasp the horror that the animals were going through right up to the moment of their slaughter. “Despite the raucousness, the color, and the high spirits of the men, I knew what the shouts of ‘Cudahay,’ ‘Armour,’ ‘Wilson,’ ‘Swift and

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 180-183.

<sup>102</sup> Morris, “Three Folds in the Fabric,” 276.

Company' at the scale-house meant," Morris continues, "This was one big zone devoted to death.... Is that why Father brought me there and, like Virgil, guided me through its noxious circles—so that I would know earlier than most what was out there?"<sup>103</sup>

In part two of *Arizona* Morris adjusted the metal T-form object as discussed above. In part three he took aim and launched a javelin. And the last part, as he swung in a lassolike motion over his head the small blue light secured at the end of a cord while the stage lights dimmed, recalls the artist's work as a horse wrangler in the 1950s.

Morris's performances have a theatrical yet mechanical effect. *Waterman Switch*<sup>104</sup> (1965) is another example where a sense of the tightly controlled automatonlike motion is so strong that it overpowers the sexual imagery of the twenty-minute trio performed by Morris and the dancers and choreographers Yvonne Rainer and Lucinda Childs [Fig. 11]. Perhaps it did scandalize the audience when first performed in Buffalo, New York, as might be suggested by Morris's innocuous reply (published in the April 2, 1965 issue) to a *Time* magazine article on his dance titled "Oiled":

Sir: Re your report of my dance at the Albright-Knox Festival of the Arts in Buffalo [March 19]: I was not "stark naked." Both Miss Rainer and myself were covered completely with a thick coating of mineral oil. We did not simply "move across the stage in slow motion," but proceeded carefully in a rhythm too complicated to explain. Furthermore I have a stiff knee and am unable to do a great many steps. I think it is more important to realize

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 276-277.

<sup>104</sup> Morris explained that *Waterman Switch* was the name of a road he surveyed in California when he was working as a surveyor in the 1950s. In conversation with the author, Gardiner, New York, January 1, 2010.

that this dance was performed by a handicapped person rather than a naked one.<sup>105</sup>

The sexual references and the naked bodies notwithstanding, the choreography per se is not shocking. The stage set consists of artificial rocks and two sets of plywood tracks 20 cm tall, 10 cm wide and 6 m long.

*Waterman Switch* begins with “boulders” (made of foam rubber) being rolled along the stage by some “unseen force” and the recorded soundtrack of their rolling; however, the sound of the stones rolling on tape is out of sync. Then a woman (Childs) appears dressed as a man wearing a suit and tie and a hat, who lays two of the plywood tracks parallel to one another on stage. Blackout. Lights on. A couple (Morris and Rainer) appears nude, covered with mineral oil shining in the light, and in a tight embrace (thus concealing their genitalia); she stands on his feet. The nude man and woman locked together as one, eternally, reminiscent of Brancusi’s primordial blocklike sculpture *The Kiss*. She walks backwards. He walks forwards. The two performers carefully walk slowly in lock step along the parallel tracks. It takes about five minutes. Meanwhile, the third dancer, Childs, still dressed as a man, walks alongside the couple (the audience can see her behind them), slowly unraveling a ball of twine over her shoulder.<sup>106</sup> Their continuous movement is accompanied by the voice of the great Italian opera soprano Mirella Freni singing the aria “Come in quest’ora bruna”<sup>107</sup> from

---

<sup>105</sup> See “Did You Ever, Ever, Ever,” *Time*, March 19, 1965; and letter from Morris to *Time* magazine (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

<sup>106</sup> This woman dressed like a man (as others have also suggested) is reminiscent of the transvestism of Rose Sélavy because the figure seems to be an inversion of the Duchamp portrait. See Berger, *Labyrinths*, 64.

<sup>107</sup> It is the aria “Come in quest’ora bruna” sung by Maria, Simon Boccanegra’s illegitimate daughter (Act I, scene 1). In the version used by Morris, the aria lasts four minutes and twenty-six seconds.



Giuseppe Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*.<sup>108</sup> This ever-so-slowly marching dance continues to the end of the track. Blackout. Lights on. Childs stands centre stage holding a long pole with a small red flag on the end. Morris holds the red flag in front of his genitals and runs around in circles. His recorded voice talks about rearranging the stage (what the piece is like, how it can be changed, what is he going to do next time). Black out. Lights on. Morris, Rainer and Childs hold a rope while balancing themselves on three large rocks (actual rocks). A nineteenth-century, human locomotion, study of a nude man lifting a stone, by the English photographer Eadweard Muybridge (a sequence of five slides<sup>109</sup>), is projected at the rear of the stage—suggesting coexistence of the “static” (nude standing figure on a rock) and the “mobile” (nude man lifting a stone), both essential elements in Morris’s work. His recorded voice now reads a passage about water from Leonardo’s *Notebooks* (see Appendix 2). Blackout. Lights on. The last sequence is the same as the first. Morris and Rainer stand at the end of the track. Without turning around, they simply reverse direction and once again walk along the tracks across stage at the same slow deliberate pace accompanied by the Verdi aria. Childs walks back and forth, off and on stage creating lines in the space with the string of twine (hooked over objects off stage).

---

<sup>108</sup> Although because of the entwining embrace one might mistakenly assume that this is a “love” aria, actually it is not. From the garden of the Grimaldi Palace, in fourteenth-century Genoa, Maria is looking at the sky and the sea and remembers the old woman, who brought her up in a small dwelling by the sea. She promises never to let the lavish environment of the palace make her forget her humble background.

<sup>109</sup> In the original performance of *Waterman Switch* in 1965, Morris had used a sequence of seven or eight of Muybridge’s slides. However, in the reenacted and videotaped performance, which I myself observed many times on various occasions, there were only five. Morris stated that he believes that a couple of the slides originally used were lost. In conversation with the author, Gardiner, New York, July 31, 2010.

Morris holds a small container filled with mercury and slowly pours the poisonous liquid over Rainer's back.<sup>110</sup> They return to the track's beginning. Blackout.<sup>111</sup>

*Waterman Switch*, along with *Arizona* and *Site* would be among the elements of Morris's installation *Labyrinth II* in Lyon, France, thirty-five years later, in 2000 (see chapter five). He made a total of six choreographies, all in the 1960s. However, the art of performing, as such, was not enough for Morris, who was (and still is) an artist constantly questioning the boundaries of art and artmaking.

### To Strip Sculpture Bare, Even

Morris certainly played a central role in defining the movements of the period: Minimalist sculpture, Process Art and Earthworks/Land Art. But in fact, it was the gray geometric plywood pieces he showed at Richard's Bellamy's Green Gallery in New York in 1963 and 1964 that placed Morris in the front ranks of the Minimal movement.<sup>112</sup> Morris had this to say about his early inspirations derived from his visits to the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, which eventually culminated in such works as his gray columns and slabs:

I had my crayons and two nickels, one for each way. I got the drawing paper at the museum. I would have been eight years old and would spend the morning drawing in the galleries. Maybe Nelson had set it all up in his

---

<sup>110</sup> In conversations with the author, Morris stated that along with the general public, he then knew very little about the inherent dangers of mercury poisoning.

<sup>111</sup> Inspired by New York "Happenings" (particularly the performances of Yvonne Rainer and Robert Morris), as well as by "Happenings" in Europe (those of artist and poet Jean-Jacques Lebel), the theatrical impresario and film producer Michael White organized "Festival of Self-Expression," London's first "Happenings," at the Denison Hall in June 1964. See Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene In London*, 134.

<sup>112</sup> Morris once narrated the following amusing story: when Richard (Dick) Bellamy visited Morris at his studio he saw some of Morris's gray plywood works, as well as the *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961). He then stretched out on one of the large pieces, the *Untitled* (Slab) (1962), which was like a plywood platform a few inches off the floor and took a nap. When he woke up, he offered Morris a show in the Green Gallery. In conversation with the author, New York, April 1998. See also Morris, "Thinking Back About Him: On the Death of Richard Bellamy," *Have I Reasons*, 101.

will—kids improving themselves with art on Saturdays. But only half the day, not cutting into baseball time. I remember most drawing from the Egyptian objects. Reliefs. Disembodied eyes, hands and snakes floating in the hieroglyphic dream space, unburdened by the horizon that designated that weary, dualistic real world of the West where there always had to be a choice between earth and sky, heaven and hell, mind and body. In 1961 I made my first works that would later come to be called Minimal sculpture. Those gray columns and slabs I copied directly from the photographs of the ruins of the King Zoser complex at Saqqara, Egypt.<sup>113</sup>

These 1960s sculptures, however, resemble common, ordinary objects, and their view is grounded in everyday experience—meaning (usually a major concern in art) has become irrelevant. “Morris’s work *shows* us, rather than *tells* us...,” the curator Marcia Tucker points out in a 1970 catalogue essay, and “by showing, Morris renders the literal question ‘What does it mean?’ irrelevant. The central issue becomes instead, ‘What does it do?’ The implications of this change in attitude have become crucial to an understanding of the major art of our time.”<sup>114</sup>

Emphasis on the positioning of bodies in space, task-oriented dance vocabulary and anthropomorphism marked the first sculptures.<sup>115</sup> It is interesting to note that Morris also occasionally used his earliest Minimalist pieces as props for his dance performances.<sup>116</sup> The relationship between the two, however, is more concerned with the involvement of the human body than their theatrical aspect.

---

<sup>113</sup> Morris, “Indiana Street,” *Have I Reasons*, 34.

<sup>114</sup> Marcia Tucker, “Outdoor Pieces, Activities,” *Robert Morris*, exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970), 55.

<sup>115</sup> Discussing the basis of anthropomorphism, Burnham noted “all art, whether abstract or representational, is in fact anthropomorphic if one considers art not in terms of appearances but in terms of its function and relation to human activity.” See Burnham, “The Aesthetic of Intelligent Systems,” *On the Future of Art; Essays by Arnold J. Toynbee, et al.* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), 96.

<sup>116</sup> Morris occasionally used pieces as props but he did not “create his Minimal works as prop pieces for performances,” as James Meyer remarked. See Meyer, *Minimalism*, 47 and 64; see also Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 240, in which the author stated that “his [Morris’s] early Minimalist objects were props incorporated in performance pieces.”

Morris's sculpture called *Column* [Fig. 12], for instance, was adapted for a performance piece at the Living Theater in New York in 1961;<sup>117</sup> as the artist himself stated, it was after he made the piece when he realized that it could have only two positions, down/horizontal and upright, and also that he could get inside of it (as in other objects such as his cabinets).<sup>118</sup> The performance was as follows: at centre stage there stood a two-foot square gray plywood column rising to a height of eight feet. The stage was otherwise empty. For three and a half minutes nothing happened. No one entered or left. Suddenly the column fell. Three and a half more minutes elapsed. The stage lights were extinguished marking the end of the performance.<sup>119</sup> Simple as *Column* was, the art critic Kenneth Baker remarked:

This performance was rich in implications. It reduced dramatic action to the vicissitudes of a stage prop.... The performance deprived its audience of a "subject" with which to identify, thwarting subjective responses other than expectation and boredom, which heightened the spectator's awareness of time. It also enacted the shift from vertical to horizontal structure in American sculpture to which Morris would soon contribute.<sup>120</sup>

Reduced to the essentials of a geometric form and made with an extreme economy of means, *Column* is the quintessential example of Minimalist sculpture.

---

<sup>117</sup> The performance was organized by the avant-garde composer La Monte Young to raise money for the publication of *An Anthology*.

*An Anthology* was planned as a special issue of the poetry magazine *Beatitude East*. It was a collection of writings and performance ideas, including the works by John Cage, Bertold Brecht, Simone Forti, Dick Higgins, Walter de Maria, Dieter Rot, and Nam June Paik, published in 1963 by the New York gallery owner George Maciunas. See Berger, *Labyrinths*, 27 and 47.

<sup>118</sup> Morris, conversation with the author, New York, July 2007. His cabinets were forcing the body into various positions such as sitting and standing. These pieces were destroyed.

<sup>119</sup> In conversation with the author, Morris said that the original plan was for him to make the hollow column fall over while he was standing inside. However, when the column hit the ground during the rehearsal on the day of the performance Morris injured his head and had to go to the emergency room at a hospital to have his forehead sewn up. He returned to the theater with very little time available to prepare for the performance. Instead of him standing inside the column he tied a string in the top of it to topple the column in the actual performance. New York, April 1996.

<sup>120</sup> Kenneth Baker, *Minimalism* (New York: Cross River Press, 1988), 68.

"Its only action within the course of the performance," Krauss points out, "is to change its position."<sup>121</sup> *Column* also suggests Morris's concern regarding the phenomenological basis of the viewer's experience and how he or she perceives the internal relationships among the parts of the piece and of the parts to the entirety, the whole—hence the gestalt aspect of his work. In an interview with Sylvester that was recorded by the BBC in New York at the time of his show at the Leo Castelli Gallery in the spring of 1967, Morris discussed the importance of "wholeness" in his work. "I don't want the situation where there is a composition," he said. "I want the piece to have a wholeness which symmetry does better than asymmetry for me. That's why. It's more immediate. It's more direct."<sup>122</sup> Morris has also often said that in his early Minimal works he drew on—among other sources—certain phenomenological ideas:

If Donald Judd appealed to a hard, reductive Deweyan empiricism, Robert Morris inserted the gestalt of unitary forms and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty into the game, stepping over the discreet, Deweyan distance of vision into a bodily engagement with the self-reflexive. The transformation of experience from the optical to the haptic as the self-reflexive body's perception of a dualistic gestalt/space came to form the stronger formal core of minimal art. The objects of minimal art were in your space, and you had to confront them with both body and eye.

But the epicenter of minimal work lay above any overt appeals to experience or a latter-day materialist phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty's body, a body that had to move to perceive, and therefore foregrounded the importance of space. For a charged world hovers over any negotiations of space sucked in by these in-your-face objects.<sup>123</sup>

Commonly understood as a disciplinary field in philosophy or as a movement in the history of philosophy, phenomenology can be broadly and debatably defined as that movement of the twentieth-century thought which devotes itself to the

---

<sup>121</sup> Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 237.

<sup>122</sup> A version of this interview was published in the exhibition catalogue of the Tate Gallery in London in 1971. See Morris, "A Duologue," *Robert Morris*, exh. cat. (London: The Tate Gallery), 17.

<sup>123</sup> Morris, "Size Matters," *Have I Reasons*, 125. Morris is referring to himself in the third person.

analysis and the study of *phenomena*, literally, appearances as opposed to reality.<sup>124</sup> In that movement, the discipline of phenomenology is prized as the proper foundation of all philosophy—as opposed to ethics, metaphysics or epistemology. Launched in Germany by Edmund Husserl in his *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901)<sup>125</sup> and further developed in his *Ideas* (1913), phenomenology gained adherents in Germany during the first quarter of the twentieth century and later on in France and America. The best known practitioners and critics of phenomenology over the years include Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.<sup>126</sup>

Merleau-Ponty argued that space is not the setting where objects are arranged but the means whereby the position of things becomes possible. His study *The Phenomenology of Perception*, published in French in 1945 and translated in English in 1962, was appreciated by, among others, writers on contemporary art such as David Sylvester, Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss. Even Michelson in her 1969 essay “Robert Morris: An Aesthetic of Transgression,” explicitly stated that discussing his works using critical terms such as “embodying,” “expressing,” or “symbolizing,” was irrelevant. Instead, she argued that it was more appropriate to relate Morris’s works to the writings of the semiotician and founder of pragmatism Charles Sanders Peirce and the phenomenological discussions of

---

<sup>124</sup> From the Greek *φαινόμενα*, appearances. This ancient distinction launched philosophy as we emerged from Plato’s cave. See Plato’s *Republic*, Book VII.

<sup>125</sup> Edmund Husserl’s slogan “To the things, themselves” became phenomenology’s rallying cry.

<sup>126</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (1943; rpt. London: Routledge Classics, 2003); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962).

Merleau-Ponty, which indeed greatly influenced the artist.<sup>127</sup> Merleau-Ponty's insights into viewing, his ideas regarding perception, bodily movement, ambiguity, and relations with others feature in essays on contemporary art as early as the 1950s.<sup>128</sup> As Potts wrote, Sylvester's analysis of Giacometti's sculpture "is often couched in phenomenological and existential language, and specifically refers to Merleau-Ponty in an illuminating analysis of the complex impact made by Giacometti's figures as human presences simultaneously mirroring and distancing themselves from the viewer."<sup>129</sup> However, Potts further notes that in fact it was Krauss more than anybody else who associated Merleau-Ponty's ideas with the concerns of the 1960s art world in her seminal book *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. Discussing Morris's *Column* as well as his *Untitled (Three L-beams)*, made in 1965 [Fig. 13], Krauss refers to Tucker's description of Morris's Minimal works in the catalogue published on the occasion of his exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970. In her catalogue essay "Outdoor Pieces, Activities," Tucker states that "Morris eliminates distinctions between 'aesthetic' experience and 'real' experience by making material and perceptual processes self-evident."<sup>130</sup> Tucker further describes the work as being like "a child's manipulation of forms, as though they were huge building blocks. The urge to alter, to see many possibilities inherent in a single shape, is typical of a child's syncretistic vision whereby learning of one specific form can be transferred to any variations of that form."<sup>131</sup> Invoking Merleau-Ponty, however, Krauss

---

<sup>127</sup> See Michelson, "Robert Morris: An Aesthetic of Transgression," 7-75.

<sup>128</sup> Morris read Merleau-Ponty when he was a student at Reed College in the 1950s. He has acknowledged his debt to Merleau-Ponty many times. See Morris interview with Bertrand, "Labyrinth II," 195.

<sup>129</sup> Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 208.

<sup>130</sup> Tucker, 55.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

argues that this description seems inadequate because “it does not fit one’s actual experience of the column. Upright, the column seems light and thin, its erectness unburdened by the downward pressure of weight. It seems fluid, linear, and without mass. But in a prone position, the column changes in kind. It appears massive, constricted and heavy; it seems to be about weight.”<sup>132</sup> And as they are placed in different positions in relationship to the floor/space, it is hard to view the Columns or the L-Beams as identical. A viewer has to move around and through the objects to experience the work in real time. As the art historian and critic Maurice Berger remarked “The viewer’s preconceptions must be set aside, for what is known mentally is rendered somewhat irrelevant by public experience.”<sup>133</sup>

The art historian Jack Burnham, discussing the work of Morris (as well as that of Donald Judd and Dan Flavin) in *Beyond Modern Sculpture* has the following to say concerning the relationship between the object and the viewer as it is perceived:

As the viewer walks between sculptures, he may find two or three pieces positioned so as to engage him at the same time. This is not an inspection tour with an ideal vantage point—each view has its contradictions and illuminations taken as they come. What arises from the first glance is what Merleau-Ponty called “carnal intersubjectivity.” Thus the viewer becomes aware of a set of latent and primordial truths concerning his habits of perception through the nature of the objects involved.<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 239.

<sup>133</sup> Berger, “Wayward Landscapes,” *The Mind/Body Problem*, 18.

<sup>134</sup> Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, 179.



Tracing the course of his reflections on art making during this period, Morris likewise wrote a series of seminal essays in which he analyzed in depth the making and viewing of sculpture; they originally appeared in *Artforum*.<sup>135</sup>

*Passageway* (1961), *Portal* (1961), *Pine Portal* (1961), *Mirrored Portal* (1961) and *Box for Standing* (1961) are among Morris's early sculptural works that engage the audience. All suggest some sort of passage, as one is invited either to walk into the piece (*Passageway*) [Fig. 14], pass through it (*Pine Portal*) [Fig. 15], either pass through or remain standing as in a kind of limbo watching oneself in the mirror (*Mirrored Portal*) [Fig. 15], or simply remain standing (*Box for Standing*) [Fig. 4]. That is to say, while they maintain their literalness, these works reinforce the relationships within the object-observer-space-triad—in essence concerns that Morris would express throughout his career. Morris changed the role of the viewer from a passive to an active mode, thus raising questions of perception. In the words of the art critic Lawrence Audette, "The question is not what his work represents, but rather what his work does, how it is oriented, how it relates to itself, to other objects, to other spaces and to human beings. His works are explorations into the well of common experience from which we all drink."<sup>136</sup> The spectator is dealing with an art which is alive. One can see this art not only with one's eyes, but it can include and appeal to one's entire body. On this phenomenological plane, Morris's art can be a sensuous experience.

<sup>135</sup> The following essays originally appeared in *Artforum*: "Notes on Sculpture" 4, 6 (February 1966), 42-44; "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2" 5, 2 (October 1966), 20-23; "Notes on sculpture, Part 3" 5, 10 (June 1967), 24-29; "Anti Form" 6, 8 (April 1968), 33-35; "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making: The Search for the Motivated" 8, 8 (April 1970), 62-66; "The Art of Existence. Three Extra-Visual Artists: Works in Process" 9, 5 (January 1971), 28-33; "Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide" 11, 6 (February 1973), 42-49; and "Aligned with Nazca" 14, 2 (October 1975), 26-39.

<sup>136</sup> Lawrence Audette, "Robert Morris: Learning to See Again." *Ulster Arts* (Fall 1978), 10.

In *Passageway* (1961), built originally in the artist Yoko Ono's loft on Chambers Street in Lower Manhattan, not only do we experience the piece in real time, but we also get the sense of being controlled by the artist, as one's body becomes gradually channeled and confined into a narrowing space. There is no better description of this piece than that provided by the artist himself:

Reading Wittgenstein's remark in the *Tractatus* that "I am my world. (The microcosm)," my heart skips a beat. I make a fifty-foot-long plywood *Passageway*, which narrows as it curves. Two arcs of a circle converging. I wedge my body between the narrowing walls, which curve ahead and out of sight. I am suspended, embraced and held by my world. I listen to the faint sound of the mechanical heartbeat I have installed over the ceiling of *Passageway*. There is nothing to look at here in this curving space which diminishes to zero. In this blind space, whatever constitutes the "I" of my subjectivity evaporates and I think of that other remark by Wittgenstein: "The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world." Others who visit *Passageway* leave messages written on the walls such as "Fuck you too." I repaint the gray walls once a week.<sup>137</sup>

Elinor Richter further argues that Morris's *Passageway* "intended the space to enclose the viewer," evoking similar ideas to spatial relationships found in Lorenzo Bernini's well-known tomb of Pope Alexander VII (1672-78) in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.<sup>138</sup> And as Paice notes, "Morris's *Portals*, and, similarly, *Passageway*, *Box for Standing* and the *Columns*, establish themselves doubly as architectural appendages and as corollaries to the space of the body, coextensive with it by virtue of its movement or how it occupies space."<sup>139</sup> In simple geometric forms and all on a human scale,<sup>140</sup> Morris's early Minimal works

<sup>137</sup> Morris, "Backwards," August 2008, unpublished essay sent to the author, 7.

<sup>138</sup> Bernini's *Tomb of Alexander VII* is situated in a narrow passage which forces "the spectator to see it from close by and from below." See Elinor Richter, "Changing Relationships: Viewing Sculpture. A Historical Perspective," *Moved*, exh. cat. (New York: Hunter College of the City University of New York, 2004), unpaginated.

<sup>139</sup> Paice, "Catalogue," *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, 100.

<sup>140</sup> All these sculptures are built in a scale either the same or slightly greater than an average man.

were made from plywood or laminated fir painted a light gray to remove the appearance of the wood grain because, as Morris often stated, he wanted to eliminate “its suggestion of the organic.” His choice of the color gray was due to the neutrality of the color. “To Morris,” the art critic Irving Sandler remarked, “color has no place in sculpture, for as an ‘optical element,’ it ‘subverts the physical.’”<sup>141</sup>

By 1967, “theater” had invaded the realm of sculpture. Many postwar sculptors in Europe and America had become interested in theater and in the experience of time itself. This interest perhaps gave rise to the implementation of sculpture to be used as props in productions of dance and theater, for instance Isamu Noguchi’s pieces employed in Graham’s dances—as with Graham’s spectacular dress in *Cave of the Heart* (Medea) [Fig. 16].<sup>142</sup>

This relationship between spectator/body and sculpture/object was pushed even further in a form of anticipatory art—as witnessed in Morris’s *Untitled* (*Participation Objects*) installation at the Tate Gallery in London in 1971 [Figs. 17-18]. Challenging the role of art exhibitions and the hierarchies of such institutions as museums and galleries, Morris refused to have a traditional retrospective of his art in this institution. Instead he created a number of large but human scale

---

<sup>141</sup> See Irving Sandler, “Gesture and Non-Gesture,” *Minimal Art*, 311.

<sup>142</sup> Isamu Noguchi created more than twenty pieces for Martha Graham’s dances between 1935 and 1966. The first, *Frontier*, as Noguchi explains “had within all the elements of space perception, of the volume of space, perception of volume of not just two-dimensional, but of three-dimensional space of theater.” See “Tribute to Martha Graham,” *Isamu Noguchi: Essays and Conversations*, ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994), 120-123. See also Dore Ashton, *Noguchi: East and West* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1992), 53-61.

sculptural constructions<sup>143</sup> specifically for the Duveen Sculpture Galleries at the Tate Gallery (now Tate Britain), with instructions posted on the walls inviting the public to participate physically and suggesting ways in which one could interact: kicking a large wooden ball around a circular track; climbing up, sliding down and balancing on ramps; crawling inside cylinders, etc. As Morris pointed out, these were the first pieces he ever made that actually allowed a viewer “to go over them,” to alter one’s “physical relationship to gravity.”<sup>144</sup> The entire space of the Duveen galleries “was transformed into an aesthetic gymnasium, littered with implements which call out—successively—for the energy of an athlete, the poise of an acrobat and the exuberance of a child.”<sup>145</sup> Describing one of the pieces in *Untitled (Participation Objects)*, the art historian and critic Richard Cork had this to say, “A tunnel rises up from the floor inviting all comers to the discomfort of a journey that finishes in an exit barely large enough to crawl through.”<sup>146</sup>

The concept in *Untitled (Participation Objects)* was to replace optical engagement, that is to say passive observation (the traditional museum experience) with active physical engagement and exploration of the pieces. A short film called *Neo Classic* made in connection with the installation depicted a nude female model (and a few other figures) interacting with the pieces. The idea of the public being allowed to touch a work of art rather than simply looking at it was indeed revolutionary at the time. This was the very first interactive

---

<sup>143</sup> Morris had specified that when the exhibition was finished the plywood constructions used for the *Untitled (Participation Objects)* installation at the Tate should be dismantled and recycled as raw material.

<sup>144</sup> Morris, quoted in Simone Field, “Robert Morris-Sculpturestar,” *Time Out*, May 7-13, 1971 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

<sup>145</sup> See Richard Cork, “Assault Course at Tate Gallery,” *Evening Standard*, April 30, 1971 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

exhibition ever to be installed at this prestigious art gallery. Morris, as Potts noted “sought to break with the hands-off rituals governing the viewing of work in a gallery and offer an opportunity for new kinds of sculptural experience, where members of the audience involved themselves physically with the work, literally becoming actors in a performance that they would stage partly on their own initiative.”<sup>147</sup> During the preview Michael Compton, then keeper of Tate exhibitions, said, “We intend to have extra staff on duty to monitor what people do. If we find we cannot cope we shall limit the number of people allowed into the exhibition at any one time.”<sup>148</sup> However, as the art critic Marina Vaizey reported, “What had been unforeseen was the athletic energy of the visitors, and the unbridled enthusiasm with which they tried everything out, staying much longer than is statistically normal for an exhibition visitor.”<sup>149</sup> The participants did not act as Morris perhaps had anticipated; they did not simply become engaged with the pieces but in fact “went bloody mad,” the *Daily Telegraph*<sup>150</sup> quoted a guard as saying of the visitors, and a number of them were injured. Caroline Tisdall, who was the art critic of *The Guardian* in the 1970s, noted that “some of the 1,500 visitors became so intoxicated by the opportunities that they went around ‘jumping and screaming,’ to quote the exhibition’s keeper, Mr. Michael Compton. They went berserk on the giant see-saws, and they loosened the boards on other exhibits by trampling on them. It was just a case of exceptionally

---

<sup>147</sup> Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 254.

<sup>148</sup> See Robert Adam, “Visitors Play Role in Funfair Art,” *Daily Telegraph*, April 28, 1971 (Morris Archives, Gardiner New York).

<sup>149</sup> See Marina Vaizey, “Vigorous world of Robert Morris,” *Financial Times*, May 11, 1971 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

<sup>150</sup> Adam, “Wrecked Tate Sculpture Show Closed,” *Daily Telegraph*, May 4, 1971 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

exuberant or energetic participation.”<sup>151</sup> The result of this frenzied response to the show was that many visitors injured themselves.

After only four days following the opening, the exhibition was closed. The press treated the closure with witty headlines announcing “No More Smashing Fun at the Tate.”<sup>152</sup> However, in the spring of 2009, that is to say nearly forty years later, in collaboration with the artist, the Tate Modern recreated this seminal Morris exhibition in its entirety, this time in the space of the Turbine Hall [Figs. 19-20]. As the curator of the restaged installation Kathy Noble explained, “The idea was to revisit Morris’s work and see how a modern audience would react to it.”<sup>153</sup> The 1971 installation “was a landmark moment in Tate’s history. The idea was to encourage viewers to become more aware of their own physicality.

Contemporary audiences have changed, so will have very different expectations to those of 1971.”<sup>154</sup> The “infamous” four-day exhibition entitled

*Bodyspacemotionthings* opened on May 22, 2010.<sup>155</sup> Photographs of the 1971

<sup>151</sup> See Caroline Tisdall, “Sculpture for Performing On,” *The Guardian*, May 8, 1971 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

<sup>152</sup> See Barbara Reis, “A Tale of Two Exhibitions: The Aborted Haacke and Robert Morris Shows,” *Studio International*, 182 (July 1971), 30.

<sup>153</sup> Kathy Noble, as quoted in Stephen Adams, “Tate to Restage Sculpture that Sent Public ‘Mad’ in 1971,” April 5, 2009 ([www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/howaboutthat/5109245](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/howaboutthat/5109245), accessed April 9, 2009).

<sup>154</sup> Noble, as quoted in Arifa Akbar, “Tate Rebuilds Installation that Left the Biggest Impression,” *The Independent*, April 6, 2009 ([www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/tate-rebuilds-installation-that-left-the-biggest-impression-1663392.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/tate-rebuilds-installation-that-left-the-biggest-impression-1663392.html), accessed April 9, 2009).

<sup>155</sup> Unlike the 1971 installation, in which Morris had used splinter-loaded raw materials, including unfinished wooden logs and coarse chipboard, the pieces in the 2009 installation *Bodyspacemotionthings* were made with much safer contemporary materials, thus making the participation less dangerous for the thousands of people who visited the show. Yet, despite the safety measures to reduce risk, and the large number of rather stern inflexible guards (making sure that everybody behaved) *Bodyspacemotionthings* left twenty-three people injured in just over a week. Based on the records released under the Freedom of Information Act, *The Guardian* reported that “the injured included a two-year-old girl who was taken to hospital after banging her head, and two boys aged eleven and seven who were taken to hospital with a crushed finger and grazed forehead in separate incidents involving the installation. Other injuries included a cut leg, a rope burn to the hand, bruised ribs, and a bruised shoulder.” It is hardly surprising to conclude, as this article by Ben Quinn states that, “Morris’s *Bodyspacemotionthings* has lost none of its potential for danger after clocking up a string of casualties during a special reappearance at Tate

installation were included in the show as well as the short film *Neo Classic*, which Morris had decided to shoot just forty-eight hours before his opening at the Tate in 1971 to document the exhibition.<sup>156</sup>

Morris acknowledged his early-1960s plywood works' demand for a phenomenological bodily engagement. Reacting to the comment that not all Minimalism is non-metaphorical, particularly his works, regardless of the Minimalists' rhetoric of the 1960s that "what you see is what you see,"<sup>157</sup> Morris had this to say:

If, in the works you cite, metaphor rests on nonverbal bodily or cultural associations it would seem difficult to retrieve these metaphors in articulated verbal terms. I take this question to refer to the early '60s plywood works' demand for a phenomenological bodily engagement. But how we squeeze metaphors out of this I am at a loss to say. Although I have come to see these early gray objects as stand-ins for the figure—something I was blind to in the beginning—this "stand-in" status is a very qualified one. Nelson Goodman has pointed out that one can always find some aspect of resemblance between any two given things in the world. But rather than make an iconic, metaphorical connection here I would opt for the synecdochical. That is to say, I've come to see these works as suggestive of bodily states or positions not through the object's resemblance to the figure, but rather via a much more indirect connection, one in which some aspect of the object's presence foreshadows or portends a physical state with which the body might identify. And in passing let me say that whatever these might have been, they were never celebratory. And I believe it was this implicit, lurking negativity, rather than the formal nonresemblance to past sculpture, that provoked in the beginning. But does metaphor lurk here after all?

---

Modern." See "Tate Modern Perfects the Art of Living Dangerously," *The Guardian*, July 12, 2009 ([www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/jul/12/tate-modern-robert-morris-injuries](http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/jul/12/tate-modern-robert-morris-injuries), accessed July 30, 2009).

<sup>156</sup> The film *Neo Classic* depicts a nude female model (and a few other figures fully dressed) interacting with the various sculptures of the installation. The female model's movements are slow, calm, hypnotic, and seemingly controlled; one might say the film is rather meditative, as we see the nude model slowly maneuvering the rolling cylinder back and forth for instance, or balancing a slab over her body. It is also interesting to notice that, as Potts pointed out, the title *Neo Classic* is appropriate because this is "the kind of gazing implicit in the classicising representations of the female nude in late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century art—though rarely so evidently controlled and framed by the artist's sexualized fascination with the model as in Morris's film." See Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 249-250.

<sup>157</sup> The artist Frank Stella has been credited with this remark. For more on Frank Stella, see Sidney Guberman, *Frank Stella: An Illustrated Biography* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1995).

Kafka has a little story, a fragment really. I can't recall the title. Anyway, in this tale an alpinist is climbing and comes to a torrent he sees no way to cross. He speculates that he might just get across by planting his feet on the bank and stretching out and over the abyss to grab the other side. But when he tries the maneuver he finds himself frozen in a rigid horizontal position with no way to move lest he fall into the chasm below. Decades later another alpinist finds himself on the same route. Seeing what he takes to be a bridge over the crevasse he decides to cross. Pausing to rest above the torrent he removes his backpack and drives his ice ax into the bridge, whereupon the first alpinist screams and lets go and they both fall into the abyss. Well, think of the floor slabs.<sup>158</sup>

### A Green Box in a Green Gallery

Marcel Duchamp, "patron saint of postmodernism,"<sup>159</sup> redefined art as an active tool for thinking rather than a passive object to look at, and he is without doubt the artist who pushed the boundaries of art in the twentieth century and opened up the possibilities for art making in radical ways. Roger Shattuck, the late professor emeritus at Boston University wrote in 1972, "After Duchamp, it is no longer possible to be an artist in the way it was before."<sup>160</sup> Duchamp's ideas on process, his irony and questioning of the nature and purpose of art had a profound effect on Morris. In the 1960s, in the artistic tradition of Duchamp (whom he met when he moved to New York in 1961), Morris seemed to value the idea or concept (specification, process of making) over the artwork itself.<sup>161</sup> He created *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961) [Fig. 21], a box in unpainted walnut containing a tape recording of the sounds of sawing, sanding and hammering—the carpentry that produced it—lasting three and a half

<sup>158</sup> Morris, interview with the author, 1-2.

<sup>159</sup> See Holland Cotter, "Philadelphia, Surreal to Silly Landscape of Eros, Through the Peephole," *The New York Times*, August 28, 2009, C 21.

<sup>160</sup> Roger Shattuck, quoted in Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company Inc., 1996), 458.

<sup>161</sup> The term "conceptual" covered works that emphasized the idea behind a work of art, foregrounding context rather than visual form. We should also recall that Plato considered artists as low figures in the hierarchy of his ideal society because they deal with real objects while the philosopher considers ideas that define reality.



hours.<sup>162</sup> Certainly the piece evokes Duchamp's *With Hidden Noise* (1916), a ball of twine pressed between two small square brass plates that are held in place by four long screws. On Duchamp's instructions a small object was placed inside the ball of twine by his patron, Walter Arensberg; however, the artist was not told what the object was.<sup>163</sup> But in Morris's *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, there is neither secrecy nor mystery involved with the work—nothing is really hidden inside the box. And as the visual part of the piece has been reduced to just a simple geometric form, a cube, a viewer soon realizes that there is “not much to see.” One can experience *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* only with one's ears, by listening to the tape recording of all the sounds (and often complete silence) produced during those three and half hours it took Morris to construct this piece.<sup>164</sup> Paice notes that “This kind of recording or inscription of production characterizes Morris's later anti-form, or process, work, for example *Felts, Threadwaste* (1968), and the series of *Blind Time* drawings that he began in 1973.”<sup>165</sup> A strong element of time rather than process permeates this work. This is perhaps Morris's earliest piece revealing his lifelong interest in the link between the visual and the verbal, image and language (discussed in chapter three).

---

<sup>162</sup> In conversation with the author, Morris noted that when the architect Phillip Johnson saw *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* he confessed that he “wanted to kill it with a broom.” New York, April 1996. See also Morris, “Thinking Back About Him: On the Death of Richard Bellamy,” *Have I Reasons*, 101.

<sup>163</sup> See Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*, 161. The Philadelphia Museum has X-rayed the piece but the hidden object remains a museum secret.

Another example of “creating mystery” in the tradition of Duchamp, is Piero Manzoni's *Merda d'artista* (1961), ninety small boxes supposedly with the artist's canned feces. Each of the boxes, which weigh about an ounce, was priced to sell at the market value of gold at the time of purchase. As opening a box would destroy the work, what is actually inside these pieces has been a matter of debate.

<sup>164</sup> The first person that Morris asked to come to his studio and see the *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* was John Cage. In conversation with the author, Morris said that Cage sat and listened to it for the whole time—three and half hours. New York, April 1996.

<sup>165</sup> Paice, “Catalogue,” *The Mind/Body Problem*, 104.

*Card File* (1962), *Pharmacy* (1963), *Litanies* (1963), as well as *Location* (1963) are among the works that certainly reveal a deliberate dialogue with Duchamp. *Card File* consists of an ordinary flat file (like those seen in libraries in the 1960s<sup>166</sup>) containing in alphabetical order on forty-four indexed cards the artist's various considerations and decisions in making the piece [Fig. 22]. As a strong element of time permeates this work, cross-reference with *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (a box containing a tape recording the sounds of the carpentry that produced it discussed above) is apparent. One reads for instance in *Card File*: "Accidents," "Changes," "Considerations," "Decisions," "Delays," "Mistakes," "Possibilities," "Recoveries," "Repetition," "Time," among other headings. Morris's fascination with and respect for Duchamp, as he himself once stated, "was related to his linguistic fixation, to the idea that all of his operations were ultimately built on a sophisticated understanding of language itself."<sup>167</sup> *Card File* deals with information; Morris explains: "It was all information; every one of the entries in it was about a decision or a mistake or an interruption or one thing or another. It was all recorded. And yet it ended up in that very iconic form of a card file on a wall."<sup>168</sup>

*Pharmacy* (1963), is named after Duchamp's "assisted" or "rectified" readymade<sup>169</sup> with the same title, *Pharmacie* (1914), essentially a cheap

<sup>166</sup> In conversation with the author, Morris stated that he had been working in the New York Public Library when he conceived *Card File*. New York, May 1998.

<sup>167</sup> Morris, in conversation with Berger, in Berger, *Labyrinths*, 22.

<sup>168</sup> Morris, in a transcript of a tape-recorded interview with Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, March 10, 1968.

<sup>169</sup> "Assisted" or "rectified" is a readymade requiring something more than just Duchamp's signature and a title. See Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*, 177.

reproduction of a winter landscape in which Duchamp added a red and a green dot of paint<sup>170</sup> and his signature, thus questioning the idea of authorship once his name was added to a lowly piece.<sup>171</sup> Or to quote Duchamp, it was simply “a distortion of the visual idea to execute an intellectual idea.”<sup>172</sup> Morris’s *Pharmacy* consists of a pseudoscientific structure incorporating a small rectangle piece of glass with a pharmacy jar painted on both sides—one green, one red—and placed between two circular facing mirrors [Fig. 23]. All three objects are mounted on posts. Looking into the mirrors, one sees an infinite series of alternating reflections of red and green jars stretching away into virtual space. The effect is one of disorientation, recalling Duchamp’s optical illusion machines like the *Rotorelief Discs* (1923), or even the dizzying opening scenes of Hitchcock’s film *Vertigo* (1958), where we see close ups of colorful rotating spirals.

*Pharmacy* is also Morris’s first work in which he used mirrors. However, as he himself stated, he did not use mirrors in his sculptures for the same reasons:

Each time I used mirrors—in *Pharmacy*, or *Mirror Cubes*, or *Threadwaste*, or the installation works with very large mirrors, such as *Williams Mirrors*, and then later in the series of distorting mirrors—they served different purposes. *Mirror Cubes* utilized the capacity of mirrors set below eye level to reflect the floor and disappear in the space. *Williams Mirrors*, with large two-meter tall, right-angle mirrors, reflects (and reverses) the body, as well as gives multiple images of oneself and others in the room. This multiplication of images throws doubt on the perception of what is actual and what is virtual. Other large mirror works, say *Portland Mirrors*, use timbers on the floor to activate the virtual space. Here one sees the back

<sup>170</sup> The title clearly draws on the color additions that Duchamp made to the print, as most scholars seem to agree that red and green refer to the bottles with colored water that stood in the old-time pharmacy windows.

<sup>171</sup> This is quite interesting when one thinks that only a few years later, in 1919, Duchamp did exactly the opposite by making additions to a cheap print of Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa*. He added to the famous portrait a mustache with upturned points, a small goatee and the letters L.H.O.O.Q., which when read in French notoriously sound like the phrase *elle a chaud au cul* something like “her ass is hot” but idiomatically “she is hot to trot” or “she wants it.”

<sup>172</sup> Duchamp, as quoted in Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*, 135.

of one's own body, and the timbers move toward an infinite multiplication of virtual images/spaces.<sup>173</sup>

In one group of small sculptural works that Morris made in 1963, he used lead over wood. Duchamp had used lead as early as 1915 when he employed lead wire on glass in *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. However, unlike Duchamp, Morris coated his works with sheet lead because he liked the idea of a physical surface, a surface that was not painted:

There was something about those surfaces that wasn't painted, that was a physical surface and yet it was a surface, it wasn't—the things were reliefs, they were about surface. It wasn't the kind of surface you painted on. Some of the early reliefs were wood as well. But I did use lead a lot. I liked the idea that it was a kind of hide or skin, or something that was about being surface, I guess.<sup>174</sup>

*Litanies* (1963), which is the first lead relief that Morris made, consists of a thin lead-covered box with a lock hang twenty-seven keys on a steel key ring [Fig. 24]. On each one of the keys is stamped a word from Duchamp's *Green Box* (a collection of notes, including "Litanies of the Chariot," that Duchamp made while working on *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*).

*Litanies* was acquired by the architect Philip Johnson at Morris's Green Gallery exhibition in New York in 1963. However, when Johnson delayed payment for the work, Morris responded to the oversight with *Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal* (1963), a legal document notarized by the state and county of New York in November 15, 1963 in which he withdrew the aesthetic value of *Litanies* [Fig. 25]. The document, which is juxtaposed with frontal and profile views of

<sup>173</sup> Morris, interview with Bertrand, "Labyrinth II," 175.

<sup>174</sup> Morris, unpublished interview with Burnham, November 21, 1975 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York), 5.

*Litanies* etched in lead, reads:

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 aesthetic quality and content and declares that from the date hereof said construction has no such quality and content.

In other words, Morris uses language itself as an art medium. Disguised within the legal jargon of *Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal* seems to be a declaration which is the very antithesis of Duchamp's bold claim that "it is art if I say so," the very core idea that transformed a "readymade object" into a work of art and turned the art world upside down, leaving it forever changed. With his *Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal*, Morris brings Duchamp's argument full circle, declaring that the artist's denial can just as easily reverse that process.

*Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal* is testimony to the power of the word, even when it functions as an image. One can even recognize "parallels" between Morris's action here (to withdraw the aesthetic value of the work) and Wittgenstein's "theory of language games," as the art historian Brian Winkenweder argues, referring to the following excerpt from *Philosophical Investigations*: "Someone suddenly sees an appearance which he does not recognize (it may be a familiar object, but in an unusual position or lighting); the lack of recognition perhaps lasts only a few seconds. Is it correct to say he has a different visual experience from someone who knew the object at once?"<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, as Berger noted, "Morris's work not only challenges conventional notions of ownership and authenticity but also affirms his waning belief in the

---

<sup>175</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 197; quoted in Brian Winkenweder, *Reading Wittgenstein: Robert Morris's Art-as-Philosophy*, (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, 2008), 164.

artist's (and the art object's) magical powers."<sup>176</sup> Morris here confronts the viewer by shaking up his smug confidence in the conventional wisdom of acquisition and ownership, one of the very "rules" and "standards" that sustain orderliness in our lives. The result is that he forces us to question the way we see things as "reality," "truth" or "fact," not only as they pertain to the physical space around us, but also, in the case of *Litanies*, as they concern some of our established and accepted societal norms.

Such is also the case with *Location* (1963). A work that consists of a lead-over-composite-board panel, with words and arrows engraved in bas-relief, certainly draws attention to the relationship between the piece and its immediate surroundings since the four small arrows point towards the floor, the ceiling and the walls on either side of the work while the four little meters (placed next to each arrow) are adjusted to indicate the actual distance of the work from the floor, ceiling and the side walls [Fig. 26]. That is to say, *Location*, on the one hand, is self-referential by recording with these measurements its own precise position in a given place while on the other, makes the viewer aware of his own relationship to the same space. In addition, as Paice argues, "a work such as *Location*, underscoring the contingency of the work's position and site, stresses at once the possibility of infinite redefinition and the corruption of placelessness—the disembodied and atemporal viewing of high Modernism."<sup>177</sup>

---

<sup>176</sup> Berger, *Labyrinths*, 21.

<sup>177</sup> Paice, "Catalogue," *The Body/Mind Problem*, 132.

In the detailed examination of Morris's dance pieces, we determined that they were task-orientated, with emphasis placed on new movements based on the performance of various tasks. Considering his early minimal works, the primary thematic evident is phenomenology. We witnessed increased emphasis on the inclusion of audience participation or "activation." Morris's use of linguistics and language, as a medium in a number of seminal works, revealed a deliberate dialogue with Marcel Duchamp.

### Chapter Three: Into the Entropic Void

*Let us suppose that the idea of art can be expanded to embrace the whole range of man-made things, including all tools and writing in addition to the useless, beautiful, and poetic things of the world. By this view the universe of man-made things simply coincides with the history of art.*

George Kubler<sup>1</sup>

#### Lead Mirrors Felt

An exploration of Morris's concept of space, as well as his investigation of the horizontal as a spatial vector is addressed here; his interest in structural continuity will be followed through discussion of lead, mirrors and felt works. Also to be examined will be his investigation of "how to make a mark," be it the path of the recording needle during an electroencephalogram, body part imprints, work on horseback, the natural world, or *Blind Time* drawings.

Morris's interest in structural rather than morphological continuity in his art can be seen throughout his oeuvre. Even the artist himself had been discussing for some time this interest in conversations and interviews,<sup>2</sup> an interest he had developed while reading George Kubler's influential book *The Shape of Time* during the 1960s. Based upon studies in fields such as linguistics and anthropology, Kubler's methodology presented a new approach to the problem of

---

<sup>1</sup> Kubler, beginning his best-known book *The Shape of Time*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> In various conversations with the author; see also interview with Krauss, undated (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York). This interview was published as "Robert Morris: autour du problème corps/esprit/Around the Mind/Body Problem," *art press* 193 (July-August 1994), 24-32.



aesthetic historical change, replacing the concept of style of art forms (the basis for conventional art history) with the notion that human actions and ideas manifested through time are reflected in art, and that works of art<sup>3</sup> can be recognized as versions of the same actions and ideas through time; that is to say, the notion of a linked succession of works of art through time. “Kubler’s concern has been to find a coherent pattern in the development as well as the morphology of related forms,”<sup>4</sup> as Morris writes in the preface of his Master’s thesis at Hunter College<sup>5</sup> titled “Form-Classes in the Work of Constantin Brancusi.” Kubler, he points out, “is concerned with neither cycles of style, biological metaphors, categories of forms, or biographies to give meaningful generalizations about the nature of form. Rather he is more concerned to see in a concrete object, taken always with its antecedents, the problem which the creation of this object solved.”<sup>6</sup> Morris’s Master’s thesis<sup>7</sup> is an analysis of the formal aspects, that is to say, the development of formal sequence in Brancusi’s art based on the concepts of Kubler.<sup>8</sup> He establishes a series of identifiable “form classes” within the

---

<sup>3</sup> It is important to notice here that in *The Shape of Time*, Kubler is expanding the definition of art to include all “material culture” as well as ideological culture, and therefore is extending art history into the realm of anthropology. See *Shape of Time*, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Morris, “Form-Classes in the Work of Constantin Brancusi,” M.A. thesis, Hunter College, New York, 1966, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Morris’s advisors at Hunter College were the art historian William Rubin (later the director of the Museum of Modern Art’s department of painting and sculpture), and the art critic and curator Eugene C. Goossen.

<sup>6</sup> Morris, “Form-Classes,” 3.

<sup>7</sup> Morris has remarked that he did not like either Brancusi’s mysticism or his compulsion (for polishing his sculptures so much), but he did like very much his *Endless Column* series, which do not have any base (particularly the extraordinarily high version of the column at Tirgu Jiu in Brancusi’s birthplace Hobitza, in Romania, made in 1937). He also found the bases of his sculptures interesting, their rawness—as opposed to the polished elements on the top—as well as Brancusi’s methodology in stacking and making a number of variations on a given form or material that seem to have influenced his own way of working, to permute things. He further stated that now he would have approached Brancusi’s work very differently, to include elements of the content, for instance. Conversations with the author, New York, September 1997. See also Morris, “Some Notes on Brancusi’s Brain Case,” 1995, unpublished manuscript (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

<sup>8</sup> As Morris points out, the linking of forms through the bonds of influence or tradition establishes the sequence of the form-class. Therefore, formal sequence and form-class are identical terms. See Morris, “Form-Classes,” 3.

development of Brancusi's sculpture—including the forms as they apply to the bases. For Morris, much of Brancusi's work "was generated through long sequences of closely related forms."<sup>9</sup>

Morris's interest in pursuing a structural continuity—his investigation of the horizontal—began with early works like *Slab* (1962) and *Mirrored Cubes* (1965), and then *Tangle* (1967), *Stacked and Folded* (1967), *Threadwaste* (1968), *Scatter Piece* (1968-69),<sup>10</sup> and into *Williams Mirrors* (1977), and *Second Study for a View from a Corner of Orion Day* (1980). Even one of the earliest pieces he made, *Column*, dating from 1961 (discussed in chapter two), is not exactly vertical because it had two positions: standing/upright, and lying down/horizontal. Discussing these works and his investigation of the horizontal as a spatial vector with respect to art's fixation on verticality (whether in painting or sculpture) in an interview by Krauss, Morris said:

Horizontality is the space available to the body. We don't easily move up but instead out, across. Of course we climb, go up in elevators as well. But horizontality is the vector of bodily movement that is the least impeded, that requires the least effort... Both visually and kinesthetically the horizontal, open expanse invites the secular impulse, the mundane beginning, the practical invitation. The space of utopia is upward, ascending. *Slab* was the contemptuous salt sprinkled on the ruined Troy of past sculpture.

*Mirrored Cubes* extends the emptiness. The illusion produced by the mirrors makes it seem as though the floor moves through the objects and the ceiling is brought down. Another act of negation. Clear out the space.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 6. Discussing the "phenomenology of the object" in Brancusi's work Morris noted that "a sequence implies an open-ended continuity of changing forms and their attendant problems, while a series implies a closed or finite grouping." Ibid., 61. As for the *Endless Column*, Morris observed that "it is the only work in the [Brancusi] oeuvre which is composed by a single geometric unit whose only inflection is that of a repetition." Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>10</sup> As most of Morris's works are usually untitled, *Slab*, *Mirrored Cubes*, *Tangle*, *Stacked and Folded*, *Threadwaste* and *Scatter Piece* are subtitles.

<sup>11</sup> Morris, interview with Krauss, 9; see also Morris, Bertrand, "Labyrinth III," 217-18.

Comprised of four units (53.3 X 53.3 X 53.3 cm) of Plexiglas mirror laminated onto wood, *Mirrored Cubes* (1965) [Fig. 27] is a work that indeed “extends the emptiness.” Being mirrors, the work makes us think that we can see the reflection not only of the floor but also of ourselves (as is usually the case with either mirrored or polished surfaces); however, as we approach the units, which are far below our eye level, we soon realize that this is impossible. In fact, the closer we move towards a cube the more we realize that not only are we unable to see ourselves but that the floor appears to recede and the ceiling appears to drop down.<sup>12</sup> The sense one has of the four-mirrored cubes is also related to the way the pieces occupy the space. There is a certain tension with the volume of the cubes because they tend to disappear. Being mirrored, they are almost invisible in the room and yet they seem to aggressively obstruct the viewer’s space at the same time.

Another predominantly horizontal piece is *Threadwaste*, which was originally exhibited at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1969 [Fig. 28]. It is made of such heterogeneous materials as threadwaste, asphalt, and felt strips laid on the floor with a number of rectangular upright doubled-sided mirror pieces incorporated within the piece that seem to replicate the reflected scattered materials; the positioning of the materials on the ground afforded one a bird’s-eye view of the work. As Rose accurately remarked, in *Threadwaste*, Morris was interested “in delivering, in the most immediate and direct manner possible, the specific properties of untransformed materials.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that *Mirrored Cubes* at the Tate Modern is installed below another Morris work, *Plastic* (made of fiberglass), a cloudlike piece suspended from the ceiling, which appears to come down as you come closer to a cube.

<sup>13</sup> Rose, “Sculpture as an Intimate Art,” 48.

The elements for this piece were not fabricated but found instead. Threadwaste was a material Morris had first encountered when he was working as a railroad switchman for the Southern Pacific Railroad in San Francisco in 1957. "Back then the bearing systems for freight cars were fairly primitive: no ball bearings, just a half-round bronze shoe that rode the axle and upon which the entire weight of the car rested,"<sup>14</sup> Morris once explained. "Naturally these needed a lot of lubrication. Hence the journal boxes packed with threadwaste. It was the job of certain 'car knockers' to go down the length of any train brought into the freight yards, pull up the flap on the journal box with a steel poker, poke around in the threadwaste and then give it a giant squirt of oil from the can held in the other hand."<sup>15</sup>

That same year, in 1968, for yet another work, *Scatter Piece*, Morris instead fabricated all two hundred elements that make up the installation [Fig. 29].<sup>16</sup> He constructed one hundred of them using six metals, zinc, copper, brass, steel, aluminum and lead; and the other hundred pieces using industrial felt, cut so that each piece of felt corresponded to the size and shape of a counterpart in metal. There was no specific image involved. The elements were then arranged along the floor in "seemingly random" configurations depending on the given space and

---

<sup>14</sup> See Karmel, "Robert Morris: Formal Disclosures," 95.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 95, 117.

<sup>16</sup> Morris himself explained that the elements for the original show at the Castelli warehouse in 1969 were inadvertently discarded afterwards by the clean-up crew, mistakenly under the assumption that they were trash. In conversation with the author, New York, April 4, 2010. In 2010 Morris recreated the work. All two hundred elements were specifically made by the artist on the basis of nine original drawings that contain the specifications for each element. These drawings were also exhibited along *Untitled (Scatter Piece)* at Leo Castelli Gallery in the spring of 2010.

the installer (who needed not to be the artist).<sup>17</sup> This was the first work to which Morris deliberately applied chance methodology, as he explained, “This piece started completely from a set of specifications that is not any kind of visual image.”<sup>18</sup> More recently, in a catalogue featuring the work, the art historian Jeffrey Weiss wrote that the chance methodology applied to the length, width, thickness, and number of bends (0, 1 or 2) for each unit, including “coin toss plus numbers randomly selected from the New York City telephone directory.”<sup>19</sup> He further accurately noted that “the forms and dimensions of the metal elements vary according to possibilities that fall within a pre-established range: each begins as a rectangular plate; some remain flat while others are bent either once or twice at right-angles (forming L-shapes, square-U shapes, and channels).”<sup>20</sup>

One sees an extended horizontal scale in Morris’s early minimal pieces, as well as in later site-specific outdoor works. Certainly as Morris himself has often stated,<sup>21</sup> his relationship to space in general can also be traced to childhood experiences, a number of these described in his autobiographical book *Telegram The Rationed Years* and in his essay “Indiana Street.” He refers to his differing perceptions of space: absence of space describing small crowded bungalows and areas between houses in his neighborhood in Indiana Street; imperturbable

---

<sup>17</sup> However, in the two specific instances of the exhibition of the work at the Castelli warehouse on West 108<sup>th</sup> Street in 1969 and at the Castelli Galley in 2010, the artist himself participated in the actual installation.

<sup>18</sup> Morris, interview with Cummings.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Weiss, “Things Fall Apart,” *Untitled (Scattered Piece) 1968-69*, exh. cat. (New York, Leo Castelli Gallery, 2010), 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> In various conversations with the author regarding his relationship to space Morris has talked, for instance, about the great flat expanses of the prairies of the Midwest. See also the interview with Cummings, in which Morris talks about how impressed he was by the landscape of Kansas: “My father was in the livestock business and he would take trips out to Kansas a lot. And I would go with him sometimes. And that kind of scale and stretch of landscape was, I think, a pretty important image. It’s extremely flat in every direction. You can see for miles and miles.”

inner space referring to one of his neighbors, a widower; territorial spaces for the end of his block and the lower block; two life spaces, two distinct realms that his preteen life was divided into, i.e., his life space in Indiana Street, where he lived during his early childhood years in Kansas City, and the other at the Kansas City Stockyards, his father's work space; and secret, silent spaces:

There was the abandoned well on an old overgrown house site on which only a few foundation walls remained. I would peer down the well for what, in memory, seems hours. I could see frogs and an occasional snake at the bottom at high noon when the sun penetrated to the depths of this hole. There was the abandoned limestone rock quarry with a steel cable swinging from an overhanging oak on the small bluff above. Such places had all the silent presence I recognized many years later in the late landscapes of Cézanne: breathless, unpopulated, sun-dappled, profoundly silent. I went to these spaces to be enfolded in their presence. It was as though I could feel time stop there, as though I was an unseen eye witnessing a certain infinity, complete forever in its light and drowsy heat.<sup>22</sup>

Reading his narrative about such confined spatial experiences calls to mind a number of Morris's works starting with his *Passageway* of 1961, discussed in chapter two:

One special space was formed by two garages that had a telephone pole planted between them so that only those with narrow nine-year-old bodies could pass between. It was with a secret pleasure that I squeezed my body between the pole and the side of the garages, making my passage usually at dusk. Although unnamed, and perhaps unnamable, such spaces, of which there were many around the neighborhood, took on a special character. I would usually visit each once a week.<sup>23</sup>

These are among a number of experiences that have inspired, shaped and nourished the concept of space in Morris's art and provide the basis for his incorporation of various and differing types of space in his work, from the actual space of his sculptures and installations, to the virtual space of his work with

---

<sup>22</sup> Morris, "Indiana Street," *Have I Reasons*, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

mirrors and film. Sometimes the space is more optical, in other cases more haptic, even phenomenological—as it is perceived in one’s consciousness.

Made up of twelve units measuring 213.4 X 243.8 cm, *Williams Mirrors* is another mirrored installation that Morris produced in 1977 that incorporates virtual space, since the space of the room and the viewers are reflected in the mirrors [Fig. 30]. However, the reflection in each mirror seems to multiply because of the positioning of the twelve units, that is, a double-sided pair of mirrors in the middle of the room and four pairs of one-sided mirrors in the corners. And as the piece requires the viewer’s participation, it is one’s body that is reflected in the units; it is one’s image duplicated and reduplicated in the mirrors. The viewer’s perception of the space is indeed confused by his or her exact location within the space being impossible to accurately determine—the surroundings appear dislocated. As Paice points out regarding *Williams Mirrors*, “Organized around duplication and reflection, on the one hand, and mirroring as a temporal event, on the other, the installation was experienced as a complex interplay of shifting identifications, recognitions, and misrecognitions.”<sup>24</sup>

Morris certainly is not the only artist who made sculptures/installations using mirrors, and it is interesting at this point to make a comparison with other contemporary artists who used similar materials. Anish Kapoor and Olafur Eliasson are among artists of a younger generation who often use mirrors as a sculptural material in their works, while exploring this notion of destabilization of viewer’s assumptions about the physical world. Both also invite us (as does

---

<sup>24</sup> Paice, 268.

Morris) to become actively involved with their work [Figs. 31-32]. However, while Morris's works capture more the stimulation and engagement of our intellect as well as the physical, already discussed in *Mirrored Cubes* (1965) and *Williams Mirrors* (1977), the two younger men's art emphasizes more the physical engagement tending toward a spectacularization that often seems to be on the edge of entertainment—pleasurable amazing spectacles indeed (particularly Kapoor's). Two examples that immediately come to mind are Kapoor's sculptures *Cloud Gate* (2004), installed in Chicago, and *Sky Mirror*, a mirror measuring eleven meters in diameter and made of polished stainless steel which was exhibited at the Rockefeller Center in New York City in the fall of 2006. Installed on a low platform *Sky Mirror* featured a concave side (angled upward) that showed an inverted view of the iconic skyscraper and the surrounding sky, while its convex side reflected viewers and passing street scene immediately in front of the entrance to the Channel Gardens and Fifth Avenue, including the Saks department store located directly across the street.<sup>25</sup> It is clear that Kapoor's gigantic works, unlike Morris's (scaled more to the size of the human body), have the dominating presence of intimidating "big" art. They are monumental and further fit Morris's criticism of the contemporary postminimalist fetishization of size and his definition of contemporary art as being what he calls "Wagner effect" art (discussed in chapter four).

As for Eliasson, his recent show in New York included a number of spinning mirrors, houses of mirrors, and mirror doors, along with his centerpiece

---

<sup>25</sup> For more on Anish Kapoor, see Homi Bhabha, Nicholas Bourriaud et al., *Anish Kapoor*, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2009).



installation *Take your Time*—hence the title of this artist’s retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in 2008.<sup>26</sup> The sculpture *Take your Time* was a slightly tilted massive circular mirror suspended from the ceiling spinning high above viewers’ heads. And as the mirror spun, one side of the room seemed to rise while the other side descended, further destabilizing one’s perception of the surroundings and the actual space involved.<sup>27</sup>

Morris has used mirrors in numerous ways throughout his career. In a 1979 text about his use of this material, the artist even refers to, among other things, Archimedes’s death-ray legend. According to the ancient rhetorician, satirist and writer Lucian of Samosata, during the Roman siege of Syracuse in 212 B.C.E., at the height of the Second Punic War, Archimedes,<sup>28</sup> who spent part of his career designing and building weapons<sup>29</sup> to defend the city, constructed “burning mirrors,” an arrangement of mirrors made of bronze that were supposedly capable of focusing sunlight on approaching Roman ships and setting them on fire.<sup>30</sup> Morris’s text is worth quoting:

The mirror, that most insubstantial of surfaces, has appeared periodically in my work for some seventeen years. At first I begrudged its appearance,

---

<sup>26</sup> Olafur Eliasson’s sculpture *Take Your Time* was a singular installation located in one room at the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City, New York; P.S.1 is an affiliate of MoMA.

<sup>27</sup> For more on Olafur Eliasson, see Philip Ursprung and Olafur Eliasson, *Studio Olafur Eliasson: An Encyclopedia* (Los Angeles: Taschen America, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> It is widely accepted that Archimedes was born c. 287 B.C.E. in the seaport of Syracuse, Sicily, a Greek colony at that time, and died during the siege of Syracuse c. 212 B.C.E.

<sup>29</sup> Archimedes designed and built ballistic weaponry, which was used effectively against the Romans. See Plutarch, “Marcellus” in *Parallel Lives*, trans. John Dryden, ed. Arthur Hugh Clough (New York: Modern Library, The Random House Inc., 2001), I, 417-420.

<sup>30</sup> The story of the death ray, as it is known, has been much debated by scientists and a number of attempts to recreate it have been made over the ages. The story was also attacked by the French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes, who sought to discredit all claims from antiquity. See René Descartes, “Optics,” *Discourse on Method, Optics, Geometry and Meteorology*, rev. (1965; rpt. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001), 147. Closer to our times, however, one of the successful attempts to recreate the legend was done in 2005 by David Wallace, a mechanical engineer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with a group of students. See Clifford Pickover, *Archimedes to Hawking: Laws of Science and the Great Minds Behind Them* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 44-45.

attempted to suppress it, then ended by accepting it. In the beginning I was ambivalent about its fraudulent space, its blatant illusionism. Later its very suspiciousness seemed a virtue. I came to like its hovering connotation of abject narcissism, its reek of the cheaply decorative, its status as a kind of disco-degenerate category. Mirrors have had a curious history. The Egyptians, a culture no less vain than it was early, slavishly polished stones until they reflected their maker's image. The ingenious Greeks, as practical as they were sublime, found in the mirror a weapon of startling power. It is said that a battalion of soldiers, each equipped with a five-foot polished bronze mirror, was once assembled in the hills surrounding the threatened harbor of Syracuse. By simultaneously concentrating the sun's reflected rays on one ship after another they burned the entire invading fleet at anchor in the harbor. Archimedes is credited with having had the idea, as well as having presided at the event—an early instance of genius in the service of the military.... Michel Foucault has waxed long and tortuously on the role of the mirror in Velázquez's "Las Meninas," claiming it provides a "metathesis of visibility" in the hands of the Spanish Master.... Recently the French psychoanalyst Lacan has, in his opaque way, pointed to the infant's experience with the mirror as essential to the construction of its selfhood. I once observed a raven attack its reflected image incessantly. It was seeing itself in one of my "Mirror Cubes" on the lawn of the Tate Gallery in London....<sup>31</sup>

We even find the application of a fleeting evanescent space—a space encompassing a gradually vanishing image—on those occasions when Morris actualizes the use of water vapor, as in *Steam* (1967), a work that consists of multiple steam outlets placed beneath a bed of stones on the ground confined within a wooden frame.<sup>32</sup> The work can be experienced not only from the outside as an amorphous and ever-changing white cloud seeps through the rocks, but particularly from the inside as well [Fig. 33]. Certainly, as is often the case with Morris's art, one does not quite know what to do. Doubt arises: are we truly "invited" to participate and enter the centre of the piece to experience it from inside—the frame after all is almost flat with the ground—or are we being "invited"

<sup>31</sup> Morris, *Mirror Works 1961-1978*, exh. cat. (New York: Leo Castelli Inc., 1979), 5-6.

<sup>32</sup> In the 1994 Morris retrospective exhibition at the Solomon Guggenheim Museum of Art in New York, *Steam* was installed directly outside the main entrance to the venue. A few visitors, who did not realize that this was an artwork, thought instead that there was some problem with the heating system of the newly renovated museum. Of course one should bear in mind that New York is one

to get scalded, injured by the heat of the steam and the rocks? Looking around, however, we soon realize that there are neither guards nor signs to stop us—this occurs in other of Morris's works such as *Hearing* (which we will discuss in chapter four). Once we enter the centre of *Steam* the experience also becomes physical since now we actually feel the warm air and our vision is blurred; the surrounding area appears and disappears for the steam—its density and shape—is in constant flux. In 1995, almost thirty years after he had produced *Steam*, Morris turned out an essay on the site-specific installation in which he encapsulates, in his inimitable historico-philosophical style, the epitome of the ephemeral:

The epitome of the ephemeral. A refusal of “form” that does not, however, collapse into the sublime. A summation and cancellation of all the *clouds* ever represented in art. A veritable *Aufhebung* of the cloud. (Yet perhaps a tinge of nostalgia for Turner?) An expenditure of heat: that which life itself mortgages from the sun. A coldly calculated sculpture formed with warmth. A monument to both Heraclitus (you can't put your foot into the same steam twice in this work) and Parmenides (we will not speak of the work's “nothingness” in the face of heat which is the “one” of every living thing).<sup>33</sup>

An extended horizontal scale can also be seen in *First Study for a View from the Corner of Orion (Day)* of 1980,<sup>34</sup> a work made of steel, acrylic mirrors, aluminum tubing, and silver-leafed human skeletons suspended from the ceiling [Fig. 34]. Though installed overhead, the work has a horizontal aspect to it; the viewer walks under the work. It is a “dance macabre”<sup>35</sup> installation inspired by Bernini's

---

of the cities in which some building machinery is still powered by an underground supply of steam, which can be seen escaping upward through the street and sidewalk surfaces at times.

<sup>33</sup> Morris, “Steam,” *Have I Reasons*, 61.

<sup>34</sup> In 1980 Morris made *First Study for a View from the Corner of Orion*, which is a work in two parts, “Day” and “Night.”

<sup>35</sup> See Grenier, “Robert Morris and Melancholy: The Dark Side of the Work,” 324.

tomb of Pope Alexander VII (1672-78) [Fig. 35], which Morris had seen during his visit in Rome in the 1970s:

I was impressed with Bernini's *Tomb for Alessandro VII* on my first visit to Saint Peter's in the '70s. I began to think about tombs as a genre that had more or less disappeared, been discontinued as a genre open to artists. Tombs are then added to my repertoire of previous spaces of confinement, memory, paranoia, entropy, personal trauma, etc. It would be too reductive to say that death has always been my subject; on the other hand, I don't think my art can be accused of having been celebratory.<sup>36</sup>

As in many of Morris's works, the idea of death is indeed very present in *First Study for a View from the Corner of Orion (Day)*. Instead of just one skeleton of death as in Bernini's piece (holding an hourglass), Morris includes three, all installed overhead, above viewers' bodies and looking down upon us from their position of authority. And as if this menace were not enough, Morris incorporates curved mirrors that appear to fly overhead accompanying the human skeletons while of course reflecting viewers themselves—however distorted. This explicit imagery of death can also be seen, for instance, in Morris's two groups of drawings of 1982, the *Psychomachia* and *Firestorm* series (see chapter four).

A viewer also walks under the installation *Tar Babies of the New World Order*, which Morris created specifically for his exhibition in Venice (June - September 1997), organized by Nuova Icona [Fig. 36]. The show was held in a particularly interesting space, a former boathouse dating from the seventeenth century. We enter a huge room in which fifteen columns are arranged in three rows of five columns. They recall industrial pipes, factory made. Identical in shape, size and

---

<sup>36</sup> Morris, as quoted in "Catherine Grenier Interview with Robert Morris," 126-127.

color (all painted salmon pink), the columns are neither classical nor Brancusian, with that artist's concept of the infinite: limitless, unrestricted, "endless."

An equal number of black-painted oversized baby figures hang by a thread from the ceiling over each and every column. At first glance all the babies seem individualized. However, as we move around the columns and towards the tar babies, a more detailed inspection reveals that, like the columns, they are all exactly the same; they are, in fact, mass produced, machine-made from a single mold, thus undermining any hierarchical relationship a viewer might wish to impose on them.

The tar babies appear at first to have individual traits because each is suspended with a slightly different orientation and body inclination [Fig. 37]. They are positioned as if "flying" over the columns, varying from the horizontal to nearly 10° from the vertical. Interested in the quality of repetition, as is often the case in his work, clearly Morris here seems to exploit just about every possible variation in the position and orientation of the babies' figures, thereby emphasizing the fact that multiple facets can derive from a single form.

While such dramatic staging devices have often occurred in Morris's art, in this case the result is most powerful. Morris enjoins viewers' participation, thereby altering their perception in the process. Viewers can hardly now consider the object outside its spatial relationship with themselves. As a result, they are forced into experiencing it within a particular space, which has now become common to both the work and viewers themselves. In other words, Morris's piece

reinforces the relationships within the object-observer-space triad, resulting in its perception as an integral whole.

We are experiencing a “real” object within a “real” space in “real” time; we recognize every device. Yet, as usual with Morris’s work, *Tar Babies of the New World Order* clearly resists our desire to read it with a simple or obvious interpretation. Morris’s enigmatic text “Tar Babies of the New World Order” in the exhibition catalogue makes this clear:

To the frequently asked question, “Where do Tar Babies come from?” we can only answer, “From behind you.” Tar Babies are stretched over the long Proc[r]ustean bed and their arms and legs become like taffy. Or they are put on the short Proc[r]ustean bed and their feet sliced off with the vorpal blade that goes “snicker-snack.”<sup>37</sup>

Supplementing the striking black color of the baby figures is the title itself, which reminds us of the sticky tar doll that is a central figure in African-American folktales. The American journalist Joel Chandler Harris (1845-1908) wrote animal stories based on African-derived folktales, which sparked some controversy at the time; he certainly revolutionized children’s literature. In his “Tar-Baby” (1879), a sticky tar doll is placed in the roadside by Brer Fox to trap his rascal/nemesis Brer Rabbit. When the Tar-Baby does not reply to his questions, Brer Rabbit gets angry and strikes the doll. Naturally, Brer Rabbit gets stuck, and the more he strikes, the more he gets stuck.

Is this work perhaps a suggestion of a “new world order,” one dealing primarily

---

<sup>37</sup> Morris, “Tar Babies of the New World Order,” *Robert Morris: Tar Babies of the New World Order*, exh. cat. (Milano: Edizioni Charta, 1997), 61.

with the post Cold War era,<sup>38</sup> including the Gulf War<sup>39</sup> particularly as it relates to dwindling global oil reserves? After all is not oil tar (or tar sands) a by-product of petroleum? Could this work be a metaphor for our contemporary world, in which people are often forced to adopt an unnatural behavior pattern or fit someone else's mold? Is it an autobiographical metaphor for Morris's own "inability to endure or deny the world"? Could it be about the loss of youth and innocence, or perhaps a pessimistic vision of humanity, a premonition of a threat?

Morris's enigmatic statement that they come "from behind you" only weakly hints at the disturbing visual reality of this work. It seems to suggest that ominous tar babies of life are in fact lurking everywhere and are poised to wreak havoc upon us at a moment's notice, from any angle, any direction, even while the viewer himself navigates while seeing the world through the rose-colored glasses of life's misconceptions. Surely danger lurks everywhere no matter how secure one's surroundings appear. That it threatens from apparently darkened and demonized versions of the innocent infant stage we all once passed blissfully through serves as a final twist from Morris: it is we ourselves who pose the greatest threat to our own security and well-being.

---

<sup>38</sup> When Mikhail Gorbachev became President of the Soviet Union in 1985, major changes in the Cold War took place. Gorbachev held a number of meetings with the American President Ronald Reagan; he signed an agreement with the United States to destroy all intermediate and short-range nuclear missiles; he withdrew Soviet forces from Afghanistan. And in 1989, when widespread unrest broke out in Eastern Europe as Poland and Hungary cut their ties with the Soviet Union and declared their independence, Gorbachev did not intervene. Finally, in 1989, the Berlin Wall, the symbol of German division for twenty-eight years, cutting through the heart of the old capital city, was demolished. Probably the most central conflict of the Cold War was the division of Germany between east and west. November 9, 1989, the day that the border unexpectedly opened, marked the end of the Cold War, as it signified the end of this division. Germany was united the following year (October 3, 1990).

<sup>39</sup> The Gulf War (August 2, 1990 – February 28, 1991) was authorized by a coalition force from thirty-four nations against Iraq (an ally of the Soviet Union throughout much of the Cold War) after its invasion of Kuwait with its intention to annex it and claim its oil reserves. The American President George H. W. Bush deployed American forces to Saudi Arabia to support and protect its U.S. ally.

Stylistically, the baby figure recalls Donatello, the model of the tar baby deriving from one of the little angel-putti in the Renaissance artist's *Cantoria* in the Museum of the Opera del Duomo in Florence.<sup>40</sup> And similar to Donatello's, Morris's figures of children appear to be "little monsters" [Figs. 38-39]. Certainly at first glance one might say that the little angel-putti appear cheerfully to be singing, dancing, or playfully touching one another. But upon closer examination they are not. Donatello's *Cantoria* angels, with their hermaphroditic appearance and overall twofold significance (joining the classical and Christian art), can also be seen as displaying demonic grins revealing an aggressive and violent nature, resembling in fact young maenads, forming groups and dancing in orgies. But Morris's "putti" carry that aggressiveness still further and seem even scornful, belligerent and distressed, their gesture being that of anxious activity, fussing. They remind us of the baby figure of Brancusi's *The First Step*, 1913 (destroyed).

Although *Tar Babies of the New World Order* does not strike the viewer as particularly claustrophobic, perhaps due to the large space in which it is contained, one cannot help feeling somewhat threatened by its presence. Morris's visual language urges the viewer to walk around the columns and particularly beneath the tar babies. The contrast of the colors, the pink of the columns against the black of the tar babies, as well as the variation of the latter's orientations, makes the tar babies appear even more massive and heavy (and potentially harmful, dangling from a Damoclean thread) than they really are. And as if all this threat were not enough, all fifteen of them seem poised to plunge

---

<sup>40</sup> Morris, conversation with the author, New York, September 1997.



down through and among the columns and onto the spectator's head with no warning whatsoever. Morris here, once again, aggressively involves the viewer. Thus, as in many of his works before *Tar Babies of the New World Order*, conflict lies not only in the relationship between the work itself and the surrounding space, but also between the sculptures, the space and viewers themselves for they are invited to walk around, through, and under the work. *Tar Babies of the New World Order* seems to come “alive” because of viewers’ active participation, during their approach to and experience of the piece.

After the Northridge earthquake in Los Angeles in January of 1994,<sup>41</sup> Morris made *The Fallen and the Saved*, an installation consisting of eight large jars suspended from the ceiling [Fig. 40].<sup>42</sup> Each unit, in the shape of a neckless amphora, is 167.64 cm high by 152.40 cm in diameter (around the largest circumference of the body of the vessel), and all are identically made from the same material, fiberglass. But again (as with the tar babies) the amphorae seem individualized because each is suspended with an orientation and inclination that differ considerably from the others, varying from horizontal to nearly vertical. Arranged in two rows of four units each that leave only a narrow space between for a spectator to move through, the amphorae are even suspended at different distances from the ceiling, making the lower ones, situated closer to the viewer’s body, to appear more massive and heavier than they really are. *The Fallen and*

---

<sup>41</sup> The earthquake was named for the Northridge community in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles, based on estimates of the location of the epicenter. Later studies though showed it to be in the nearby district of Reseda. Originally *The Fallen and the Saved* was made as an installation for the Alyce de Roulet Williamson Gallery, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, California, in 1994. Then the work was shown in Morris’s 1995 retrospective exhibition *The Mind/Body Problem* at the Deichtorhallen Museum, Hamburg, and from there went to Fattoria di Celle, in Santomato di Pistoia (collection of Giuliano Gori).

<sup>42</sup> *The Fallen and the Saved* is hung permanently in a relatively small stone building, a former storage house for firewood in Fattoria di Celle.

*the Saved* is an aggressive work. These amphorae do not suggest “nourishment,” vessels for storing food,<sup>43</sup> but instead evoke “death”; they rather seem to be funerary urns.<sup>44</sup> And these urns are intimidating with both their large size—enough to accommodate a human body—and positioning, threatening either to smash down on our bodies, or to crush us between them as we try to squeeze our bodies through; suspended with the rim of the opening of the jar facing the narrow passage where we might be positioned to experience the piece, three of them look as if ready to swallow us whole.<sup>45</sup> In an unpublished text, written fourteen years later, Morris describes the various possible historic uses of these objects as he hypothesizes:

The dozen large urns suggest storage possibilities, but for what? Grain perhaps. Each urn is more than large enough for a body. Jars large enough for storing the dead. Urns for nourishment or for commemoration.... What could these empty urns commemorate? Perhaps their volumetric absences mark forgetting, resonating to how now everything must be disposed of without a trace. The past and our dead must be emptied out, recognition obliterated, for memory itself has become a burden, a hindrance, an obsolescence. The densities of affect must be hollowed out, made weightless, declared void, receptive only to the imperial claims of the market.<sup>46</sup>

And perhaps as Grenier points out “In these giant funerary urns... the artist portrays the apocalyptic feeling oppressing man as contemporary artist: no one knows what will be saved from this maelstrom.”<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Amphorae made for storing food would traditionally have handles.

<sup>44</sup> These urns also bring to mind Ancient Egyptian canopic jars, used during mummification to separately store and preserve the viscera (stomach, intestines, liver and lungs) of the deceased for afterlife; placed inside canopic chests, the jars were located in the tombs beside the mummy. For more on this subject see Renate Germer, “Mummification,” in *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs* (Köln: Könemann Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1998), 459-480.

<sup>45</sup> It is also interesting to note that originally *The Fallen and the Saved* had sounds inside the urns—a bulldozer crushing a building. But Morris took out the sound, although “at Celle there is the occasional sound of one of the urns rubbing the stone wall when a slight breeze comes in through the small high window.” Morris, e-mail correspondence with the author, May 10, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Morris, “The Fallen and the Saved,” 2008, unpublished text sent to the author, 1-2.

<sup>47</sup> See Grenier, “Less Than,” *Robert Morris: Less Than*, 43.

The list of “sub-Morrisian art,”<sup>48</sup> as Ratcliff once said, is endless. An artist of a younger generation whose work has obvious affinities with Morris’s is Tara Donovan, from her numerous sculptures with a definitive horizontal aspect—*Ripple*, 2004; *Untitled (Plastic Cups)*, 2006; *Untitled (Mylar)*, 2007—to her treatment of space (in relation to both the object and the body of the viewer), to the effect her pieces have on viewers as the material employed comes alive when one examines the work closely [Fig. 41]. Donovan’s attention to the material’s specificity and process, in other words how she did the work of art, also reminds us of Morris. Rubber bands, pencils, straws, buttons, toothpicks, plastic cups (often millions of them) figure in her sculptures, the repetitive use of a single material object making up each sculpture in its entirety. But the materials in her work, unlike in Morris’s, are turned into something else, for instance geological and biological forms. Rolls of tar paper are transformed into oceans,<sup>49</sup> millions of pencils into cities, plastic cups into glaciers, and styrofoam cups and twist ties into clouds.

Regarding his interest in such a great variety of materials—plywood, felt, mirrors, aluminum—and whether he is still seeking out new ones, is it material itself that suggests ideas or projects to him? And is there any relationship between his moods and the materials he prefers? Morris answered:

---

<sup>48</sup> Ratcliff, “Robert Morris: Prisoner of Modernism,” 108.

<sup>49</sup> It is also interesting to mention that scale plays a major role in the way her sculpture is perceived. She has exhibited *Tar Paper* (1997) five times in different spaces, and as Donovan herself noted, “It really reads as a different thing each time. The smaller it is, the choppy it seems and the more earthy it looks. Whereas the larger it gets, the more like a sea it becomes.” See “Animal, Mineral, Vegetable: The Material Coming to Life: A Conversation between Lawrence Weschler and Tara Donovan,” *Tara Donovan* (Boston: The Monacelli Press and The Institute of Contemporary Art, 2008), 145.

The various materials were important but not for themselves as such—although a sheet of lead or piece of felt has amazingly specific and astonishing properties. Much of my early effort was guided by the desire to re-frame ways of making, to find new premises that would lead to different, unknown results. My concern was to find what might be described as productive or “generative” premises—ways of proceeding that once the initial state of affairs was set in motion the work made itself in some fashion. Whether it was the decision to make sculpture an automated procedure by adapting construction principles that rendered irrelevant a previous range of aesthetic decisions, or incorporating language or sound into objects as both a record of working as well as a rejection of the modernist dogma of the pure, autonomous, visual object, or selecting felt that subverted the *a priori*, or working with my eyes closed and estimating lapsed time to put drawing on a different basis—something like generative or self-completing hypotheses guided these involvements. Maybe we want to call this procedure theoretical. But of course this was not a theoretical practice in the scientific sense of positing an empirically undermined hypothesis to predict truth. Art, as we know, makes no truth claims. But the materials I employed—plywood, felt, lead, language, sound, powdered graphite—served these quasi-theoretical, generative aims.<sup>50</sup>

Among these nontraditional materials used by the artist, perhaps the most interesting has been felt. It was in fact in the alpine setting of Aspen Colorado that he made the first felt pieces in the summer of 1967.<sup>51</sup> Morris, who had already worked with “soft” materials previously (his rope sculptures of 1963 prefigured his anti-form works of later years) explained his use of felt as a sculptural medium:

I have had a long-standing interest in various materials and processes. That is to say, I’ve had a curiosity about those aspects of the physical world the individual agent could manipulate and cause to transform or permute. Here it is possible to think of the physicality of things and the transformative processes they undergo as linguistically equivalent to noun and verb. I don’t mean to imply that art making is supervenient on the linguistic so much as inseparable from it. After all only linguistic beings make art. But getting back to felt: there is the dialectical aspect: the early plywood works proceeded in an *a priori* fashion: think of the thing and then make it according to a preconceived plan. It did not seem too extreme at

<sup>50</sup> Morris, interview with the author, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Morris, together with Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Les Levine and Yvonne Rainer, had attended the Aspen Institute’s Artists and Scholars in Residence Program, invited by a trustee of the Institute, John G. Powers. See Paice, “Catalogue,” *The Mind/Body Problem*, 212.

the time to want to turn the tables here and find a situation in which a priori control could not operate. Felt obliged, being a soft, flexible, yet weighty material which fell in unpredictable ways.<sup>52</sup>

By 1967, the idea of working with soft materials like rubber, latex, rope and felt had become common practice among artists such as Eva Hesse, Richard Serra and Bruce Nauman who were seeking to extend the definition of art by challenging traditional assumptions. But it was Claes Oldenburg who as early as 1962 had begun making sculptures of hard mundane objects (lipsticks, toilets, fans), using soft materials like vinyl, rubber and plastic—so instead of being rigid, the everyday objects became collapsible as they drooped and sagged. Oldenburg's work was greatly influential in the 1960s.

Since 1967, Morris has produced a remarkable number of works that employ industrial-quality felt as a sculptural medium (a new series of felt works has just been done at this writing in 2010). Whether rolled on the ground or piled up, stacked up, hung from the wall from hooks, suspended from wires, with or without cut slits, with or without incorporated pipes, Morris's felt works reveal his interest in the property of the material, the role of gravity, and the idea of liberating form through chance.<sup>53</sup> Yet his felt is not formless because, in Potts's words, it involves "a particular kind of shaping... There is weight and measure to it, weight and measure that one simultaneously knows, feels and sees."<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Morris, interview with the author, 2.

<sup>53</sup> For more on Morris's felt works, see Karmel, *Robert Morris: The Felt Works*, exh. cat. (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, 1989).

<sup>54</sup> Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 13.

Morris's first sculptures made of industrial-quality felt were exhibited at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in April of 1968. His influential essay "Anti Form," focusing attention on the *process* of making in art, was published that same month in *Artforum* magazine during his show at Castelli:

The visibility of process in art occurred with the saving of sketches and unfinished work in the High Renaissance. In the nineteenth century both Rodin and Rosso left traces of touch in finished work. Like the Abstract Expressionists after them, they registered the plasticity of material in autobiographical terms. It remained for Pollock and Louis to go beyond the personalism of the hand to the more direct revelation of matter itself.<sup>55</sup>

Felt provided Morris with a flexible material designed to adapt to a specific space and thus change the sculptures each time they were installed. From 1967 to 1983, as the art historian Pepe Karmel points out, "Morris's felt works evolved from complexity to utter simplicity, and back again."<sup>56</sup> Of the early works one piece, *Untitled* (1968), consisted of felt simply rolled on the ground like a carpet ready to be stored (exhibited as "raw material") [Fig. 42]. In others like the "tangle" series, felt strips of varying lengths and widths were piled up in a seemingly chaotic way [Fig. 43]. And then the series of "legs" and "catenaries"<sup>57</sup> consisted of vertical and horizontal bands of felt respectively [Figs. 44-45]. Incised with evenly spaced slits and secured to the wall, the "legs," connected by a horizontal band on the top, fall to and lay on the ground; while the "catenaries," connected by a vertical band on either side, are held fast at the ends, allowing gravity to make the bands sag.

---

<sup>55</sup> Morris, "Anti Form" *Artforum*, 6, 8 (April 1968) 34; rpt in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, 44.

<sup>56</sup> Karmel, "The Evolution of the Felt Works," *Robert Morris: The Felt Works*, 39.

<sup>57</sup> A catenary is a curve formed by a cord, chain, or cable suspended at its ends and supporting only its own weight.

In a 1983 interview with Phil Patton, Morris, explaining his choice of felt as his working medium, revealed not only his concern with issues of process but also with materials, gravity and chance, “Felt has anatomical associations; it relates to the body—it’s skinlike. The way it takes form, with gravity, stress, balance, and the kinesthetic sense, I liked all that.”<sup>58</sup> Yet it is just these properties of freedom and chance, the refractory nature of felt that can wreak havoc with the insistence of most museum and gallery curators and collectors that the felt works be reproduced exactly as they appear in the photographs of their “original” installation by Morris. Karmel relates an amusing anecdote concerning the mounting frustrations one major museum experienced with a misbehaving felt work that stubbornly refused to assume the contours of its original installation. According to Karmel, “Days of work failed to achieve quite the desired effect, which was obtained only when Morris himself arrived for the opening and gave the work a few well-placed kicks.”<sup>59</sup> That being said, however, some of his felt works are in fact so complicated that not only curators, but Morris himself ends up struggling at length to replicate the original installation as closely as possible—and even he is unable to do so exactly every time. It should be pointed out here that Morris at that time also made flags from felt which were shown in public only once, in the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. in 1970. More than twenty years would pass before they were exhibited again, at the Sprüth Magers Gallery in London in 2008, as we will discuss in chapter five.

---

<sup>58</sup> Morris, as quoted in Phil Patton, “The Fire Next Time,” *Art News* 82, 10 (December 1983), 50; quoted in Paice, “Catalogue,” *The Mind/Body Problem*, 213.

<sup>59</sup> Karmel, *The Felt Works*, 43.

In another felt series, the *House of the Vettii* works [Fig. 46] of 1983,<sup>60</sup> we see biomorphic forms that are in fact suggestive of female genitalia, and while they certainly iconographically bring to mind the House of the Vettii in Pompeii,<sup>61</sup> morphologically the pieces recall Georgia O'Keeffe's *Black Iris* [Fig. 47] of 1926.<sup>62</sup> But looking closely at Morris's work one can also recognize that the felt pieces are arranged and draped over a steel cylinder that protrudes three feet from the wall at about eye level. In other words a new element, a pipe, is incorporated in this piece, suggesting the form of a penis. Asked if such charged sexual imagery was intentional, Morris replied:

I did make a series of Felt Works dedicated to O'Keeffe at one time. I don't know if these could be genderized as female, male, hermaphroditic, or one of the other half-dozen genders Tennessee Williams claimed for himself. I think I might prefer to characterize them as carrying a more generalized, non-genderized erotic charge.<sup>63</sup>

And this idea of the hermaphrodite or sexual dimorphism reminds us of course of works by other artists whose art unintentionally or intentionally seems to have influenced Morris, including Marcel Duchamp's *Rose Sélavy*,<sup>64</sup> Brancusi's *Adam and Eve* (1921)<sup>65</sup> and Donatello's *David* (1425-30) with its hermaphroditic figure [Figs. 48-49]. One reads the following in the textual element of Morris's two-

<sup>60</sup> This is the first felt work with an assigned title; all of Morris's earlier felt pieces were untitled.

<sup>61</sup> Named for its likely owners, the Vettii brothers, the house, with its sexually charged art works, is certainly one of the most famous buildings in Pompeii. Destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 C.E., it was restored at the end of the nineteenth century. Among the various frescoes decorating the house, which have been preserved, one in the entrance foyer depicts the fertility god Priapus weighing on a scale an enormous erect phallus, which appears beneath his clothing, as he lifts with his hand his chiton. For more on Pompeii, see Erich Lessing and Antonio Varone, *Pompeii* (Paris: Finest S.A./Editions Pierre Terrail, 1996).

<sup>62</sup> See also Tsouti-Schillinger, *Robert Morris and Angst*, 155.

<sup>63</sup> See interview with the author, 3.

<sup>64</sup> The name Rose Sélavy, one of Marcel Duchamp's pseudonyms and a pun, sounds like the French phrase "Eros c'est la vie." It first appeared in a series of photographs of Duchamp by Man Ray in 1921 and was "retired from the scene" in 1941. See Calvin Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp*, 231-34.

<sup>65</sup> In Brancusi's paired figures of *Adam and Eve*, the objects are not clearly distinguished. Are the twin ball-like objects breasts or scrotum? See also Friedrich Teja Bach et al. *Constantin Brancusi*, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1995), 184-185.



screen video-and-sound installation *The Birthday Boy*<sup>66</sup> at the Galleria

dell'Accademia in 2004-5:

Here is a *David* in prepubescent nakedness. It is dark, sleek, polished, life-size, inviting, glorious, somewhat elaborate. This first freestanding bronze figure since classical antiquity seems to announce that a certain “gayness” can now be celebrated in the Renaissance worship of the body. Neither of Donatello's *David*s can be described as heroic, but the later one is typical of his mature work in its penchant for the shocking. His constantly innovative oeuvre resisted the repetitive, signature style. Look closely at this bronze *David*. The elaborate hat [*slide 3 of bronze David*] and boots [*slide 4 of bronze David*], which seem to make the sensuous surface of nakedness all the more startling. The tumbling locks [*slide 5 of bronze David*], the soft, protruding belly, the arms akimbo, and the head almost bowed beneath the wide brim of the hat shading the face—all of these features seem to frame the focus on the pudenda... Then there is the pun implied by the bird's wing from Goliath's helmet, which slides so sensuously up the inside of *David's* thigh—the word “uccello” being slang for the phallus [*slide 7 of bronze David*]. Part of the tension that hovers over this work has to do with its mocking irony. A child warrior stands dreamily contemplating the huge giant's head, which he has just severed with his massive sword, a weapon his delicate arms could never have brandished. By exaggerating the contrast between hoary, yet oddly handsome severed head of the adult giant, and the dreamy pubescent boy who teases Goliath's mustache with his toe [*slide 8 of bronze David*], Donatello puts an uneasy twist on the narrative that informs the work. The artist had no trouble giving a cast of madness to children. Look at his marble *Cantoria* (1433-39) [*slide of marble Cantoria*] where the dancing angels are more like miniature monsters. But in his bronze *David* [*slide 9 of bronze David*] an aura of eroticism bordering on child pornography suffuses the work, flooding every polished, undulating surface. Is there something inherently pornographic about the encounter of giant and child? Did Goliath “fall” for the child?<sup>67</sup>

The same biomorphic forms suggestive of sexual dimorphism are also seen in some of Morris's 1996 felt works, and most recently in those of 2010 [Figs. 50-51]. However, although in the 1983 *House of the Vettii* felt pieces the artist used intertwined bands of different color felt (gray and pink; gray, black and pink), in the recent ones he used only a single color, gray for the 1996 piece and red for

<sup>66</sup> For a further discussion of Morris's *The Birthday Boy* installation see chapter four.

<sup>67</sup> Morris, “The Birthday Boy,” *Have I Reasons*, 105-106.

the 2010—and what a red! It is a striking, deep cadmium red that overpowers the viewer. And though these more recent felt works are untitled, they certainly belong to the *House of the Vettii* pieces with the same biomorphic forms suggestive of sexual dimorphism.

Another one of the structural continuities in Morris's work, as others have also suggested, turns on the investigation of the trace, or, as he put it: "how to make a mark."<sup>68</sup> In his work *Self-Portrait (EEG)* of 1963, for instance, the "drawing" was made by the path of the recording needle during an electroencephalogram [Fig. 52]. Morris went to New York University Medical Center and had an electroencephalogram taken for a period that would produce a line the length of his own body. In an interview with the art critic Achille Bonito Oliva in 1972, Morris explained how he did this self-portrait:

I wanted to make a self-portrait, a drawing, so rather than make the drawing physically, I connected myself to an electroencephalogram machine that records the brain waves, and I thought about myself, for the amount of time that it took the needle to travel the length of my height, so my thinking made the drawing for me, and it happened to be connected with my own body.<sup>69</sup>

It is also significant to note that the height of *Self-Portrait (EEG)*, which is 179.7 cm corresponds to the actual height of the artist, who stands 1.79 m (5'8") tall.

Morris's lead pieces *Untitled (Hand and Toe Holds)* (1964), *Untitled (Stairs)* (1964) and *Untitled (Footprints and Rulers)* (1964), among others, registered the body's imprints (hands, toes, feet), taking into consideration issues such as the

---

<sup>68</sup> See Interview with Krauss, 11.

<sup>69</sup> Achille Bonito Oliva, "Robert Morris: Intervistato da Achille Bonito Oliva," *Domus* 516 (November 1972), unpaginated.

body part's weight and pressure, as well as the material's resistance; lead is a rather soft metal and one can make a mark in it quite easily [Figs. 53-55]. And this "body contact," Krauss argues "creates an awareness of the body as sheathing, isolating it as a kind of boundary that can be peeled away from the self and presented as pure corporeality. It is body as physical pressure, as touch, as what might be called the haptic (or tactile) as opposed to the optic."<sup>70</sup> The works convey a sense of a "body" executing the imprints, that is to say the "task performance" (also discussed in other works): the artist's hands and forefeet grasping to two lead surfaces (bars) positioned a few feet apart (*Hand and Toe Holds*); a lady's footsteps walking upwards in three lead-over-wood steps (*Stairs*).

Regarding the choice of this material, which he has used in various series since the 1960s (his most recent works on lead are discussed in chapter five), Morris explains, "It [lead] registers things, not only that it registers your touch. It's constantly changing. You touch it and it becomes blue. It's not always flat, sometimes you can see the material wrinkling. I think it has a receptiveness to things that happen to it. Not only what I do to it, but it kept changing all the time—after that. That appealed to me."<sup>71</sup> Certainly these works recording the body's imprints are related to Morris's series *Body Casts* made a year earlier in 1963, challenging, as Paice noted, "the fantasy of a whole body, refiguring it instead as so many sites—of movement, of torsion, of intellect."<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> See Krauss, "The Mind/Body Problem: Robert Morris in Series." 10.

<sup>71</sup> See interview with Burnham, 5.

<sup>72</sup> Paice, "Catalogue," *The Mind/Body Problem*, 162.

For the *Place and Process* exhibition in Edmonton, Canada, Morris made *Pace and Progress* in a ranch outside the city on September 6, 1969 [Fig. 56]. Morris rode one horse after another back and forth along a line between two posts over a 200-yard span repeatedly until he became exhausted.<sup>73</sup> As a record of the event, for each horse he rode, a set of nine sequential photographs was taken “à la Muybridge” according to his instructions. Using a horse as the instrument he produced a deep worn track on the ground, a mark, an earthwork by the seemingly endless repetition of an action. As Baker accurately noted the horse had served “as a kind of animate, large-scale marking tool and as means for Morris to propose behavior—his own shaping that of the horse—as the operative medium.”<sup>74</sup>

But of course nature also “makes a mark” as Krauss points out, and “by the early 1970s Morris had begun to think about the structures both made (like Stonehenge) and found (like caves) by prehistoric societies to convert the arc of the sun’s revolution into the straight line of the intelligible, arrowlike trajectory, and thus to ‘read’ the solstice.”<sup>75</sup> *Observatory* of 1972 then, is Morris’s response to such questions as, “How can a trace function outside the world of representation or mimesis: How can it work otherwise, outside of imitation?”<sup>76</sup> *Observatory*, a Land Art work, was built in Swifterweg in Oostelijk Flevoland, the Netherlands. Influenced by Stonehenge (c. 2500 B.C.E.), the greatest

---

<sup>73</sup> In a document prepared by Morris regarding his project for *Pace and Process* in 1969, we read that “after the first circuit of animals had been ridden, Morris, undeterred by either his own fatigue or that of the animals, was well into the second circuit when the stable owner called a halt to the exercise.” See Morris, “A 1969 Proposal,” *Hurting Horses*, (Brussels: MFC-Michèle Didier, 2005), VII-42. See also Baker, *Minimalism*, 91 where he discusses Morris’s anti-form pieces *Steam* and *Pace and Progress*.

<sup>74</sup> See Baker, *Minimalism*, 91.

<sup>75</sup> Krauss, “The Mind/Body Problem: Robert Morris in Series,” 12.

<sup>76</sup> See interview with Krauss, 11.

prehistoric stone monument in England,<sup>77</sup> since the 1960s Morris had been developing his ideas for earthworks and a structure, an “observatory” to track the winter and summer solstices and the fall and spring equinoxes. The opportunity to realize such a work came in 1971 when he was invited to participate in *Sonsbeek buiten de Perken* (*Sonsbeek off the beaten track*), an exhibition of contemporary art held in Sonsbeek Park, Arnhem. Since 1949 Sonsbeek Park had been the site of numerous international exhibitions; however, unlike the previous years, for the show in 1971 (organized and curated by Wim A.L. Beeren<sup>78</sup>), the artists were commissioned to create site-specific works that appeared not only in the park but throughout the country.<sup>79</sup>

Originally built in a smaller scale near the coastal town of Velsen, *Observatory* [Fig. 57-58] was not preserved after the end of the exhibition and less than a year later, it had eroded badly and was demolished. Morris remarked that he was erroneously advised about the stability of its construction and for that reason it had not been built properly “It was mostly built with sand, not enough top soil. It was a very dry period at the time, and the sod they put on didn’t grow every place. And they had no funds to maintain it.”<sup>80</sup> Afterwards, however, funds were raised and a permanent version of it was rebuilt through the efforts of his original sponsors and the generous support of the Dutch government (which is currently responsible for maintaining it). Constructed mainly of earth and granite blocks

<sup>77</sup> In conversations with the author Morris has stated that he admires a great amount of prehistoric art.

<sup>78</sup> Wim A.L. Beeren (1928-2000) was an influential art critic and curator who also served as the Director of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam from 1985 until he retired in 1993.

<sup>79</sup> For more on *Sonsbeek buiten de Perken*, see Wim A.L. Beeren, Piero Gilardi et al., *Sonsbeek 71*, a two-volume catalogue published in conjunction with the exhibition (Arnhem: Sonsbeek Park, 1971).

<sup>80</sup> See interview with Burnham, 16

found locally, *Observatory*, the first of Morris's series of Land Art works, consists of two raised concentric rings of earth with an outer total diameter of nearly ninety-two meters (300 ft). In *Earthworks and Beyond*, the work is clearly described in detail by John Beardsley:

The inner ring—nine feet high and seventy-nine feet in diameter—is formed of earth piled up against a circular wooden stockade. The outer circumference consists of three embankments and two canals. Entrance to the piece is gained via a triangular passage cut through the embankment to the west; a path leads from there through a break in the central enclosure. Once inside the stockade, three other openings are visible. The first looks due east along two parallel channels, each of which terminates in a ten-foot-square steel plate propped on a diagonal. The interval between these plates, as seen from within the central enclosure, marks the position of the sunrise on the equinoxes. Two other openings look thirty-seven degrees northeast and southeast, through notches on the outer embankment lined with granite boulders and marking the points of the sunrise on the summer and winter solstices, respectively.<sup>81</sup>

Apparently, as the art historian Edward Fry observes, “Morris has chosen as the model for *Observatory* the similar structures devised by prehistoric men for marking the seasons.”<sup>82</sup>

*Observatory* is a work, which, because of its size and complexity, cannot be viewed at a glance but instead requires active involvement. A viewer needs to experience it gradually, walking around and between the concentric rings, passing through the open passages and entering its centre. Understandably, the “ideal experience” would be during those specific days and moments in time when the sun can be observed through the openings of the construction at the solstices and equinoxes. However, in order to fully comprehend the structure of *Observatory*, it would be better for one to fly over it and look down from a bird's-

---

<sup>81</sup> See John Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond* (New York: Cross River Press, Ltd., 1989), 26.

<sup>82</sup> Edward Fry, “Introduction,” *Robert Morris/Project*, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1974), unpaginated.

eye view. Then one might have an experience similar to what Morris felt when he visited Peru to see the enigmatic Nazca lines, the ancient geoglyphs, in the Nazca Desert in 1975. In his influential essay “Aligned with Nazca,” written following his trip and originally published in *Artforum* in 1975, Morris noted that “there is something intimate and unimposing, even offhand, about the work. The lines were constructed by a process of removal. They do not impress by indicating superhuman efforts or staggering feats of engineering. Rather it is the maker’s care and economy of insight into the nature of a particular landscape that impresses.”<sup>83</sup>

Certainly one might draw parallels between Morris’s *Observatory* and Robert Smithson’s site-specific earthworks such as his well-known *Spiral Jetty* (1970) made at about the same time, a period when a number of artists, including Morris and Smithson, wished to move their work outside the traditional museum and gallery space. But perhaps more importantly, these projects reveal their shared interest in time and entropy (land was removed from one site and taken to another) and also their interest in prehistory, particularly in prehistory as it relates to the present. A prehistory which functions 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.”<sup>84</sup> However, despite the similar ideas shared by the two artists and seen in these works, there is one important difference.

Smithson made *Spiral Jetty* knowing that the water level of the Great Salt Lake varies from season to season, year upon year, and that his work consequently

---

<sup>83</sup> Morris, “Aligned with Nazca,” *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 171-72.

<sup>84</sup> Lippard, “Breaking Circles: The Politics of Prehistory,” in Robert Hobbs, *Robert Smithson: Sculpture* (Ithaca, New York, and London: Cornell University Press, 1981), 31; quoted in Berger, *Labyrinths*, 141-42.

would constantly submerge into and reemerge from the lake's changing level, and perhaps eventually would even disappear. That is to say, he had taken into account this kind of interaction of his work with the natural elements and the changes brought about by nature. In fact, he even seemed to welcome this kind of interaction as one might infer by his statement that "any kind of natural change would tend to enhance the work.... Sediment plays a part in my work."<sup>85</sup>

Morris's attitude towards his *Observatory* though, unlike Smithson's, is not about the eventual disappearance of his work. The interaction with nature is in relationship to the changes of the seasons, the yearly astronomical phenomena of the two solstices and two equinoxes, observable from the openings in the rings of the *Observatory*. In addition, unlike *Spiral Jetty*, *Observatory* is easily accessible. Morris accurately points out that we know Smithson's project, located in a remote area of Utah's Great Salt Lake, mainly from photographs:

Only the gods above see it all (if God is in the aerial photograph). The real work, the real experience, is to be had on the ground where the walking body is subservient to and dependent on the ambulatory, visually challenged phenomenological absorption of the extensional, not the (intentional) aerial photograph by which the work has come to enter consciousness as a denatured sign.<sup>86</sup>

### To See with Blinding Sight

Morris's investigations of how to "make a pictorial mark that would have no interior, no connection to virtual space, and no expressive overtones"<sup>87</sup> can be seen in his *Memory Drawings*, in which it is language that makes a mark, as well as *Blind Time Drawings*, where the device is graphite; the markings are powerful

---

<sup>85</sup> Robert Smithson, interview with Gregoire Müller, "The Earth, Subject to Cataclysm, is a Cruel Master," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 256.

<sup>86</sup> Morris, "The Labyrinth and the Urinal," *Critical Inquiry*, 36, 1 (Autumn 2009), 92.

<sup>87</sup> Krauss, "The Mind/Body Problem: Robert Morris in Series," 7.



visual statements as the action of Morris's hands and fingers applying, smudging and smearing the medium on the paper are ever present. To quote Morris:

Making and Marking. It is how these two zones, the flat and the spatial, are to be inhabited by the body that has been the subject of an endless meditation for me. The body (my body) is essentially in the assault mode, given my view of the world. Marking goes on in a hysterical space, a space congealed into that threatening membrane. Claustrophobia. Devising strategies to push away the membrane leaves marks: the graphite in the Blind Time drawings, the path of the recording needle in EEG, etc.<sup>88</sup>

*Memory Drawings* [Figs. 59-63] were made over a two-month period in September and October 1963. These five drawings reveal Morris's interest in scientific theories of memory, perhaps suggesting a kind of mockery of the celebrated achievements of science and technology. The art historian Katia Schneller has also accurately noted in *Memory Drawings*, as in other works of the 1960s (see chapter two), that Morris was practicing the principle of "task performance."<sup>89</sup> The artist drew the first piece and memorized it. He then reproduced the narrative from memory four times on four subsequent occasions separated by a geometric progression of four, eight, sixteen and thirty-two days.<sup>90</sup> The essence of this work then was the revelation of the significant extent of the change evident in each reiteration resulting from his own memory lapse. "Memory is delay," Morris once remarked. "Memory is a Fragment. Memory is of the body that passed. Memory is the trace of a wave goodbye made with a slightly clenched fist. Memory is politics. Memory is a loss. Memory is

<sup>88</sup> See interview with Krauss, 12.

<sup>89</sup> See Katia Schneller, "De la fragilité de la mémoire: les *Memory Drawings* de Robert Morris," *Images Re-Vues*, 2 (février 2006). ([imagesrevues.org/ARTICLES/10/pdf/N02ART04.pdf](http://imagesrevues.org/ARTICLES/10/pdf/N02ART04.pdf)).

<sup>90</sup> Morris made the five *Memory Drawings* respectively on the 3rd of September 1963 at 8 PM ("Drawing established and memorized"), the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1963 at 9 PM, the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 1963 at 12 PM, the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 1963 at 3:30 PM and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1963 at 9 PM.

hunger.”<sup>91</sup> Self-sustaining and with no dependence on the realization of other projects on paper or canvas, or in stone, lead, felt or any other traditional or nontraditional medium, the definitive works were the writings themselves.

Although such freestanding narratives are common in Asian art, as exemplified by calligraphy, nothing quite like *Memory Drawings* had existed in the Western tradition.<sup>92</sup> That these text-drawings created quite a sensation when first exhibited is hardly surprising.

Language as a form of human behavior has always been important in Morris’s art and his interest in the relationship of visual experience to words is well known:

Both language and images never stop in our heads. Why repress language when making images? It is partly this endless, bottomless meditation on the relation of the linguistic to the visual, the obscure nature of the tie between memory, images, and languages, the inseparability of visual and verbal signs that are nevertheless not the same, etc., etc., that fuels my impulses to so-called “impurity” in art making. That, and my rejection of the ideology of art as a silent visual ontology, a guarded, marked-off reification of “form” that would banish language as an impurity sully the image—to which even I, in my more addled and less critical moments, have on occasion succumbed. Every object in the world that arrives without a label is immediately given one. Not literally affixed, but nevertheless applied.<sup>93</sup>

Morris created drawings such as *Litanies* in 1961 that were not representational images but just texts. In *Litanies*, Morris repeatedly wrote for two and a half hours the words “Litanies of the Chariot” from Duchamp’s notes for *The Bride*

---

<sup>91</sup> Morris, as quoted in “Golden Memories: W. J. T. Mitchell Talks with Robert Morris” *Artforum*, (April 1994), 89. Regarding the theme of memory in Morris’s work see also Katia Schneller, *Robert Morris sur les traces de Mnemosyne* (Paris: Éditions des archives contemporaines, 2008).

<sup>92</sup> In the West language was traditionally inscribed in medieval art—particularly in Gothic manuscripts. For the use of language as an artistic tool in the twentieth-century visual arts, see *Art and Text*, ed. Aimee Selby (London Black Dog Publishing, 1990). This book is a “visual anthology” of a long list of significant as well as lesser artists. However, and to my astonishment, Robert Morris was not included in this list.

<sup>93</sup> Morris, e-mail correspondence with Brian Winkenweder, March 15, 2000 (Morris Archives, Gardiner New York). See also his interview with Bertrand in which he discusses his view regarding the relation of visual perception to verbal predication, “Labyrinth II,” 161-63.

*Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even*.<sup>94</sup> Morris kept track of the time needed to make the work and recorded it on the drawing. “For *Litanies*” Berger remarked, “Duchamp became Morris’s alter ego, as the latter diligently copied over his teacher’s writings like a student condemned to writing words of penance on a blackboard.”<sup>95</sup>

But perhaps it is in Morris’s *Blind Time Drawings* series where “making a mark” becomes more explicit. Though visually striking, the drawings address the mind. Morris actually begins with an idea, that is to say intellectually rather than visually, an approach that reminds us of the French architect Jean Nouvel, who once stated that he starts off with an idea he can express in words and then he creates the missing pieces of a city as in a puzzle.<sup>96</sup> By the 1960s we find Morris becoming more engaged with philosophical concerns and reading, among other philosophers, Ludwig Wittgenstein.<sup>97</sup> As Winkenweder accurately notes in his book *Reading Wittgenstein: Robert Morris’s Art-as-Philosophy*, “Morris consciously incorporated Wittgenstein’s writings to such an extent in his art that to overlook or ignore this influence would be to misunderstand the key issues with which Morris grapples, especially those concerning his Minimalist

---

<sup>94</sup> In Duchamp’s notes for the “Litanies of the Chariot,” one finds the following words: “Slow Life. Vicious circle. Onanism. Horizontal. Buffer of life. Cheap construction. Tin. Cords. Iron wire. Crude wooden pulleys. Eccentrics. Monotonous fly wheel.” See Marcel Duchamp, “Bride’s Veil” in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1989), 56-57.

<sup>95</sup> See Berger, *Labyrinths*, 29.

<sup>96</sup> See Arthur Lubow, “The French Architect Jean Nouvel,” *The New York Times Magazine*, April 6, 2008, 32-37.

<sup>97</sup> The focus of Wittgenstein’s major works, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, is the function of language. *Tractatus* is a work dealing with “a picture of reality”—things that cannot be pictured cannot be said because saying does not mean anything, “What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence.” However, in *Investigations* Wittgenstein rejected this concept. His emphasis became language as a means of communication—we use language to solve problems and dissolve confusion, not to discover essential truth.

sculptures.”<sup>98</sup> And although it is during this period that the impact of Wittgenstein on his art is more explicit, Wittgenstein’s “language-game” will continue to play an important role in Morris’s oeuvre. Little wonder then that this philosopher is referenced repeatedly in Morris’s writings.

In the 1970s, Morris incorporated text into his “image” drawings, eventually coming up with the idea of creating drawings with his eyes closed. The year 1973 marked the beginning of an ongoing series of drawings entitled *Blind Time*. In his essay “Writing with Davidson: Some Afterthoughts after Doing Blind Time IV: Drawing with Davidson,” Morris discusses some of the reasons behind these works, including an “ambition for, and a search to find, a basis for drawing other than straightforward representation, on the one hand, and the nonrepresentational on the other.”<sup>99</sup> He adds:

A long series of experiments (all rejected) involving the body addressing the sheet of paper under various constraints led (perhaps by chance?) to the attempt to work by not watching the page. The ambition to put drawing on a new footing may have been there, but this may not have been the reason the drawings were made in the first place. Such reasons sound too much like rationalizations put forward after the fact.<sup>100</sup>

This writer intends neither to illuminate fully the works nor to supply the reader with “all” the answers. Perhaps the closest response might best be found in his following quotation from Wittgenstein: “Have I reasons? The answer is my reasons will soon give out. And then I shall act, without reasons.”<sup>101</sup> With respect to “rationalizations” in his own discussion in “Writing with Davidson:

---

<sup>98</sup> Winkenweder, *Reading Wittgenstein: Robert Morris’s Art-as-Philosophy*, 221.

<sup>99</sup> Morris, “Writing with Davidson: Some Afterthoughts after Doing *Blind Time IV: Drawing with Davidson*,” *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Summer 1993), 619; rpt. in *Have I Reasons*, 41-59.

<sup>100</sup> Morris, “Writing with Davidson,” 619.

<sup>101</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958), 84, (Remark 211); quoted in Morris, “Writing with Davidson,” 617.

Some Afterthoughts after Doing Blind Time IV: Drawing with Davidson,” Morris also remarked to Krauss:

The essay... was an exploration of those many intentions that were not reasons but have to count in the interpretation of an action, i.e., that “tangle of intentions” that fall outside the reason I could state: wanting to find a new way of marking. This reason counts and is part of the explanation. But it doesn’t end there. I suppose in the *Critical Inquiry* essay I was working out how to say these two things, how to make the distinction, groping toward it. The writing in this sense is like the action of making the drawings themselves.<sup>102</sup>

Morris has completed seven *Blind Time* series to date, the last one in 2009 (see chapter five). For each drawing, the process has never varied; they are all based on the same technical structure. Morris imposed an order, a system. He set himself a task, estimated the time needed to carry it out, closed his eyes, covered his hands with powdered graphite or graphite mixed with oil (or ink, as in the case of the last two of the series), and began to draw by rubbing and touching his hands to the surface of the paper in order to complete the task as planned. Once finished, he calculated the difference between the estimated and the actual time it took for him to complete the drawing. He then recorded the time lapse directly onto the image along with the description of the planned task. “This was partly to underline the temporal aspect,” Morris explained, “that the works were made in time as well as space, and partly as analogue to what went on in the drawing. The apparent ‘error’ of the time estimation is as meaningless as the ‘errors’ in the drawing.”<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> Morris, interview with Krauss, 15.

<sup>103</sup> Morris, interview with Bertrand, “Labyrinth II,” 203.

*Work in Progress*, a film by the producer and director Teri Wehn Damisch,<sup>104</sup> presents Morris at work. It shows Morris “blindly making his drawings, and superbly conveys the primacy of touch in this works in which the artist goes bare-handed at the paper.”<sup>105</sup> A date/time/location stamp begins the piece: 25 septembre 1994, 18h04-18h28, Paris, France. He stands in front of a drafting table with a sheet of paper on it. Beside this there is a smaller table holding a roll of tape, a palette knife and three small bottles, one containing graphite and the other two oil. He faces the audience. He wears a worker’s jumpsuit. He unfastens his sleeves. He pulls the sleeves. He opens the graphite bottle. He pours graphite into a small cone-shaped pile. He grasps the palette knife. He separates a portion of the graphite on the small table. He pours oil over this. He mixes powder and oil. He pours more oil. He mixes again. Over and over Morris pours and mixes. Finally, the bottle is empty. We witness here Morris as a task-performing automaton. He now puts his palms in the graphite. Ever so slowly, eyes shut, he touches his hands to the paper, making marks using rubbing and touching motions.

*Work in Progress* ends with Morris putting back into the bottle the remaining unused graphite, cleaning the table and his hands of the material used to make the work and then taking the drawing and saying goodbye. We have watched precisely twenty-four minutes and twenty-three seconds of a continuous, almost hypnotic repetition of slow-motion-like movements. And despite Morris’s statement that “‘performance’ had nothing whatsoever to do with the *Blind Time*

---

<sup>104</sup> Filmed September 25, 1994 on the occasion of the Morris retrospective exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, July 5 through October 23, 1995.

<sup>105</sup> Jean-Pierre Criqui, *Robert Morris: Blind Time Drawings, 1973-2000*, exh. cat. (Prato: Centro per l’Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, 2005), 22.

works,”<sup>106</sup> one cannot avoid recalling Morris’s dances, his “task performances” of the 1960s such as *Site* (see chapter two). Here we also witness the art-labour-production cycle. As in the earlier works, the artist/performer provides the labour, participating in the unfolding drama event which culminates in the making of a drawing, a *Blind Time* drawing in fact.<sup>107</sup>

The series *Blind Time I* [Fig. 64] was made in 1973. As with all *Blind Time* drawings, the concept of process is primary and explicit. Traces of Morris’s touch are visible; he has registered the process of the making in relation to pressure, distance, location and so on. But perhaps these drawings are more about the time that has elapsed from the beginning of the process to the completion of the task. Similarly, time was recorded in his revolutionary work, *Box With the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961), which was discussed earlier in chapter two. This extraordinary piece involves a cube containing a tape recording of the various sounds produced during the three and one-half hours it took Morris to build the box; it is another work harking back to the Duchampian tradition that likewise reflects the artist’s fascination with the time factor. Ninety-eight drawings were completed in 1973. As Morris himself stated, “That was really obsessive.”<sup>108</sup>

In 1976 Morris began a second series, *Blind Time II* [Fig. 65]. Through the American Association of the Blind he employed a woman known to us only as A. A. who had been blind since birth. While applying ink on paper with her hands, A. A. followed his oral direction. This is a natural extension of the project, similar

---

<sup>106</sup> Morris, interview with Bertrand, “Labyrinth II,” 203.

<sup>107</sup> See Tsouti-Schillinger, “Drawing in Time,” *Robert Morris: Blind Time Drawings*, exh. cat. (New York: Haim Chanin Fine Arts, 2003), 4.

<sup>108</sup> Morris, conversation with the author, Athens, 1998.

to the manner in which some of Morris's other works have been produced by anonymous assistants under his direction. Morris remarked "For many of my projects I've always had assistants, and I somehow thought why not extend this *Blind Time* series, only have someone else do it."<sup>109</sup> However, in the case of A. A., the situation was different because, having been blind since birth, she could not possibly grasp certain criteria for some things, for instance, perspective and how objects appear smaller in the distance.<sup>110</sup> Fifty-two drawings were directed by Morris and drawn by A. A. in this series. One can get an idea of the difficulties of this project from the recorded conversations between Morris and A. A., excerpts of which are transcribed beside each drawing:

"But I don't see that that would get you what you want, because I wouldn't be able to move my hands in quite the same way."

"No, you wouldn't. It would create a different kind or way of working. But then we deal with that. I mean, this is simply beginning where I left off, you know. This method is not anything I'm absolutely wedded to."

"It would be good to change this method because there's a ...I mean, it's hard to explain, but it's upsetting to..."

"To do something that you can't understand?"

"Understand, yeah. That doesn't mean we shouldn't proceed tonight."

Blind Time II  
Directed by R. Morris  
Drawn by A. A.

Complicating this collaboration even further was the fact that A. A., who had asked to be informed of any transcription of her words, refused to return the text to Morris. In an e-mail to the art critic and historian Jean-Pierre Criqui in 2004, Morris explained the situation:

I had not made a copy of the ms. I had however typed out maybe a dozen excerpts of my choice for an exhibition at Castelli where I showed maybe 10 or 12 drawings fairly soon after the series was completed. I had

---

<sup>109</sup> Transcript of Krens interview with Robert Morris, tape 3/side 10, 8 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York); quoted in Berger, *Labyrinths*, 151-152. See also Morris, interview with Bertrand, "Labyrinth II," 169-70.

<sup>110</sup> Morris, conversation with the author, New York, 1997.



provisionally framed these excerpts separately (I was still hoping A. A. would come around and we could later make a definitive choice and I would letter the chosen excerpts on the drawings). Time went by and she continued to refuse to return the ms. or approve any excerpt being used. I then decided to put all of these drawings into archival limbo... Then when the idea of showing all of the BTB series together came up I scrambled to put back some texts with drawings—as separately framed little typescripts. Of course in the time that had passed I had forgotten which text went with which drawing, so I just began arbitrarily matching what I had on hand, pulling out of my file a typed page I had saved and putting it next to a drawing.<sup>111</sup>

Morris's language/image juxtapositions continued into the *Blind Time III* [Fig. 66] series, done in 1985. In this case, however, in addition to the text by Morris detailing the physical task, the artist included a second text that refers directly or indirectly to a number of scientists:

The themes of light, time, mechanism, error, blindness, etc., wind through the series. Reference was made to Young's 19<sup>th</sup> century two-slit experiment and use was made of Feynman diagrams. John Wheeler's diagram is quoted re the anthropomorphic universe (although I don't remember if I ever mentioned his name). I believe Ernst Mach and Ludwig Boltzmann were referenced by name in the texts of this series. No doubt Planck would have shown up, or some reference made to black body radiation in one of the drawings. The ideas of Schrödinger and de Broglie probably appeared in some allegorized graphic form.<sup>112</sup>

That is to say, in this series Morris makes comments on the philosophy of physics (as it relates to perception and our notion of reality), thermodynamics (the science of energy) and related physicists. Among others, he is referring to the nineteenth-century Austrian physicist Ludwig Boltzmann (1844-1906), who formulated the mathematical equations that are the basis of thermodynamics,<sup>113</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Morris, as quoted in Criqui, *Robert Morris: Blind Time Drawings, 1973-2000*, 17.

<sup>112</sup> Morris, e-mail correspondence with Winkenweder, August 18, 2001 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

<sup>113</sup> The first law concerns the conservation of energy, not the direction in which processes may proceed. It is the second law of thermodynamics dealing with the direction of processes that states that every process a thermodynamic system may undergo can go in one direction only and the opposite process, in which both the system and its surroundings would be returned to their original states, is impossible. Examples of the law's validity can be seen in life every day (air conditioners, refrigerators etc.). For more on this subject, see Martin Goldstein and Inge F.

and to the Danish Nobel laureate Niels Bohr (1885-1962), who participated in the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos, New Mexico, in 1944. Some of the drawings indeed suggest deep concerns focused on perils associated with modern technology and innovations, the nuclear bomb, and the devastation of war. The text in one of the drawings reads:

Working blindfolded for an estimated 7 minutes, the hands begin working together in the attempt to rub out orderly rows. Progressing toward the right, pressure increases in proportion to the increasingly dissimilar motions made between the right and left hands.

For Boltzmann, who formulated the second law of thermodynamics, as the probable tendency for systems to move toward less order, his belief in atoms occasioned merciless attacks from phenomenologists. Information degenerated into noise, his hope into despair and his life into the entropic void when he committed suicide Sept. 6, 1906.

Morris depicts the uncomfortable, the unwanted. The viewer finds no reassuring illusions in his works. Entropy, one should bear in mind, is sometimes presented as the essence of the second law of thermodynamics. In the natural course of events, energy is continually expended in the transformation of matter (as in any chemical process) and the production of work. And if all such processes are irreversible, as is generally accepted, then the total entropy of the universe is increasing (more and more energy becomes unavailable for conversion into mechanical work). As a result, the universe is gradually, inevitably “winding down” in a process of slow decay. In light of this, one might now better understand Morris’s interest in entropy and how he considers this notion in his work. In a 1995 interview with the art historian and curator Christophe Cherix

that was originally published in *Notes on Print*. *With and after RM*, Morris talks about this state of affairs:

If there had been a fourth Fate perhaps she would have been Entropy—the one who tangles the thread: A kind of goddess of antiform. Parmenides would not have liked the lady but Heraclitus would have welcomed her. Devolution, accident, the drift between intention and the act, the misshapen and the failed, age, death, the ironic: antihumanism personified.

A possible entropic ratio: Knowledge degrades inversely as “information” becomes increasingly fetishized in the “New World Order.”<sup>114</sup>

Morris’s preoccupation with entropy certainly recalls Smithson’s musings on the subject. In a 1973 interview about “entropy made visible” with the artist Alison Sky, Smithson gave a variety of examples of entropy (from the Watergate situation<sup>115</sup> to Marcel Duchamp’s *The Large Glass*) and further remarked that “on the whole I would say entropy contradicts the usual notion of a mechanistic world view. In other words it’s a condition that’s irreversible, it’s a condition that’s moving towards a gradual equilibrium and it’s suggested in many ways.”<sup>116</sup>

More evidence of that concern can be seen when, in 1997, Morris stated about his work *Tar Babies of the New World Order* that “Tar Babies, like matter itself, can never be destroyed, only transmuted. Immune to the second law of

---

<sup>114</sup> Morris, as quoted in Christophe Cherix, “Questions for Robert Morris,” *Robert Morris: Estampes et Multiples 1952-1998. Catalogue Raisonné* (Geneva: Cabinet des estampes du Musée d’art et d’histoire, and Chatou: Centre National de l’estampe et de l’art imprimé, 1999), 152.

<sup>115</sup> Smithson argued that “you have a closed system which eventually deteriorates and starts to break apart and there’s no way that you can really piece it back together again. Another example might be the shattering of Marcel Duchamp Glass, and his attempt to put all the pieces back together again attempting to overcome entropy.” See interview with Alison Sky, “Entropy Made Visible,” *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 301-02. For more on Smithson see also Gary Shapiro, *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art after Babel* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

thermodynamics, it is suspected that Tar Babies might spontaneously erupt from dung heaps.”<sup>117</sup>

Surely the viewer/reader is able to now glean “some” answers from these excerpts of Morris’s writings. Without a trace of human sentimentality, he suggests perhaps that something terrible is eventually bound to happen, although just “what” and “where” are not revealed. Yet it is not merely the theme of nuclear destruction and world decay that provokes a sense of discomfort and restlessness in the viewer of *Blind Time III*, but rather Morris’s visual language, his manipulation of these drawings. The observer is confronted with abstract images encompassing the use of light and darkness in a sometimes haunting combination. The contrast of black and white, the striking black marks and patterns that often dominate and the vestiges of Morris’s hands make the images surprisingly aggressive. A dialogue with other works, such as the lead imprints and body casts of the 1960s, or his Hydrocal works of the 1980s points to an endless number of parallels and cross-references.

But perhaps it is in a set of drawings from 1991, namely, *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)*, that viewers feel mentally trapped, forced to fully comprehend and witness the actual process of Morris executing the drawing, a sentiment that invites them to bring the past into the present. Traces of Morris’s hands on the paper have been recorded in such a way that viewer participation seems unavoidable. As Paice points out, unlike his earlier series, the *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)* drawings often employ recognizable imagery like

---

<sup>117</sup> Morris, “Tar Babies of the New World Order,” 61.

Cézanne's paintings of *Mont Sainte-Victoire*,<sup>118</sup> or other shapes such as squares, rectangles, crosses, plusses and minuses fixed to the paper before the action. Morris's attempts and intentions are described by the artist himself in the lower left corner of the drawing. In other words, viewers are invited to participate by examining and comparing, on the one hand, Morris's intentions and, on the other, the outcome. Then, alongside Morris's own handwritten text, we see a fragment excerpted from the influential philosopher Donald Davidson's books *Essays on Actions and Events* (1980) and *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (1984).

In one of the drawings from *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)*, Morris refers to Joseph Beuys's well-known autobiographical story of being downed as a radio operator flying with the Luftwaffe during the war discussed in chapter two [Fig. 67]. Alongside Morris's own handwritten text in the bottom margin of the drawing, there appears a quotation from Donald Davidson (1917-2003). While Morris's text perhaps explains the procedure and the physical task of making the drawing, it does not give us any specific insight into the meaning of the piece. As is often the case, his written "explanations" confuse rather than elucidate. Here we are puzzled simultaneously by both the tactile and visual information about his work that Morris provides:

First two crosses are laid out on the page in the upper section. Then working blindfolded and estimating the lapsed time, the hands attempt to enlarge the cross on the left. The same thing is tried again on the right. Time estimation error: +20'

Let the large cross on the left stand for the Stuka that crashed in a snowstorm somewhere in the wastes of the Russian steppe in 1943, and from which the pilot, Joseph Beuys, was pulled by Tartar tribesmen, who wrapped the unconscious airman in felt and butter, preserving his warmth for the 12 coma-like days he lay near death in a frozen yurt. Let the large

---

<sup>118</sup> Paice, "Catalogue," *The Mind/Body Problem*, 296.

cross on the right stand for the Stuka listed in the Luftwaffe archives which notes a crash in 1944 a few miles from an airfield at the Russian front, and records that a corporal Joseph Beuys, tail gunner and radio operator, was brought to hospital by Russian workers one half hour after the accident.

Although *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)* can be understood as a kind of personal and emotional painting, the intentions and the result are much more complex than the narratives indicate. We know that Morris does not believe Beuys literally experienced his “resurrection” as described.<sup>119</sup> However, by juxtaposing his own text and Davidson's writing, Morris seems to concede with a wink that Beuys's personal experience is not a “lie” but a metaphor that serves as a moral lesson to the viewer.<sup>120</sup> One can draw this conclusion because, as Davidson argues, a metaphor is not about truth but about leading us to see one thing as something else and therefore expanding our view of the world:

What makes the difference between a lie and a metaphor is not a difference in the words used or what they mean (in any strict sense of meaning) but in how the words are used. Using a sentence to tell a lie and using it to make a metaphor are, of course, totally different uses, so different that they do not interfere with one another, as say, acting and lying do. In lying, one must make an assertion so as to represent oneself as believing what one does not; in acting, assertion is excluded. Metaphor is careless of the difference.

There is a tradition of opposition between art and philosophy. According to this tradition, art concerns sensible appearances whereas philosophy concerns intelligible realities; art is a matter of practical skill while philosophy is an exercise of rational understanding; art engages the emotions, philosophy addresses the

---

<sup>119</sup> Joseph Beuys has often been quoted explaining this experience in Crimea. During a conversation with the author in April 1995, Morris affirmed that according to the Luftwaffe archives in Germany (which he had personally checked), Beuys was brought into a hospital directly following his crash in 1944.

<sup>120</sup> Beuys used his art as well as his life (he had become an object of the media's attention like no other contemporary German artist) as a tool to foster optimism and catharsis in the German people. He meant to “heal” spiritually the wounds of the war and, in his own words, “to bring a form to chaos.”

intellect.<sup>121</sup> Morris's art, however, brings these two opposites into balance as his pieces engage our emotions while at the same time addressing our intellect.

Morris's interest in philosophy—particularly in Davidson's work in the philosophy of mind, language, and action<sup>122</sup>—is well known and he is indeed a prolific writer on the subject. It comes as no surprise then that in the *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)* series he has entered into a dialogue with the work and thought of the renowned influential philosopher; we find him *drawing* philosophical concepts.

In fact Davidson contributed the catalogue essay "The Third Man" for the 1992 Morris exhibition at the Frank Martin Gallery in Muhlenberg College. In "The Third Man," an essay on Morris's drawings that incorporates quotes from his own writings, Davidson draws connections between elements of his thinking and Morris's *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)*. He argues:

These pictures have four clearly distinguished elements. Taking them in the reverse of their narrative order, they are:

- 1) The marks and patterns made by Morris with his eyes closed. I will call these the "action."
- 2) The symmetrical, paired squares and rectangles and other shapes carefully placed on the paper before the action. I call these the "targets."
- 3) Morris's description of how the action was performed and the rules that guided it. This is both the "description" and the "intention."
- 4) A fragment of a philosophical discussion of the general nature of action.

Taken in the order from 4) to 1) it is easy to notice that there is a progression from the abstract to the concrete, from the very general to the particular. The texts are about actions, and the "action" illustrates and exemplifies what the texts say. The four elements also variously present to the mind and eye the fundamental features of any intentional action.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> This formulation is drawn from the philosophy of John Joseph Haldane, the Director of the Centre for Philosophy and Public Affairs at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

<sup>122</sup> In conversations with the author, Morris has often expressed his abiding interest in Davidson's work on language and interpretation.

<sup>123</sup> Davidson, "The Third Man," exh. cat. *Robert Morris* (Allentown, Pennsylvania: The Frank Martin Gallery in Muhlenberg College, 1992), unpaginated.

That is to say Davidson sees the drawings, as Kenneth Surin points out, “as powerful instantiations of the relations between belief and action, truth and metaphor, and so forth, that he has sought to elucidate philosophically.”<sup>124</sup> In “Getting the Picture: Donald Davidson on Robert Morris’s *Blind Time Drawings IV (Drawing with Davidson)*,” Surin further states, “Davidson’s essay on Morris presents the outline of a philosophical account of the act of artistic production that deserves closer scrutiny than it has received to date.”<sup>125</sup> Therefore, examining what is possibly going on with Morris’s *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)* series he presents his own version of what he believes to be the issue. Surin’s primary concern is “with perception and visual fields and, perhaps more centrally... touch and its connection with bodily awareness and spatiality.”<sup>126</sup> Surin argues that Morris is less interested in an account of intention per se and more concerned with what happens when the painter cannot use intention *ab initio*. He further believes that Morris’s “target of inquiry has more to do with vision and tactility than with intention.”<sup>127</sup>

Once he has finished with a particular work, Morris often writes about it. For instance he wrote “Steam” in 1995, more than twenty years after his site-specific installation of the same name at Western Washington University in Bellingham in 1971. As he explained, once he finishes with a project he is no longer interested in continuing with it and so he writes about it: “It’s a kind of therapy; it makes it

---

<sup>124</sup> See Kenneth Surrin, “Getting the Picture: Donald Davidson on Robert Morris’s *Blind Time Drawings IV (Drawing with Davidson)*,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101:1 (Winter 2002), 136.

<sup>125</sup> Surrin, “Getting the Picture,” 133.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.



clearer for me but it's always after the fact... When I'm working on something I almost never write about it, so it's looking back."<sup>128</sup>

In 1993, only two years after Morris had completed *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)*, he came back to these drawings and wrote an essay examining, on the one hand, the remarks that Davidson had made on the drawings and on the other his own "reasons" for using Davidson's texts. One reads in "Writing with Davidson: Some Afterthoughts After Doing *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)*":

What were Donald Davidson's writings doing in Morris's *Blind Time Drawings*? Evidently Morris had a desire to use Davidson's writings and did use his writings with the belief that, all things considered, the engagement with these writings, excerpted and out of context as they were, would yield an empowering relationship between the complex of what Morris was doing in the drawings and the language of the excerpted texts. But could we say that this was the "reason" for using the texts?<sup>129</sup>

Referring to this text Criqui remarked that the reader might become puzzled by Morris's reference to himself in the third person:

The reader cannot but be struck by the author's reference to himself in the third person ("Morris"), redoubling as it does the type of decentering or subjective distancing that the works under discussion themselves put in place—works carried out blindfolded, so that the artist's experience of them, necessarily deferred until the moment when, regaining his sight, he suddenly becomes the witness of his own finished drawing, puts him in the place of any other spectator.<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> Morris, Bertrand, "Labyrinth III," 242.

<sup>129</sup> Morris, "Writing with Davidson: Some Afterthoughts After Doing *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)*, *Have I Reasons*, 41.

<sup>130</sup> Criqui, "On Robert Morris and the Issue of Writing: A Note Full of Holes," trans. Rosalind Krauss, *The Mind Body Problem*, 80.

However, such a reference is really not unusual as we find this practice occurring in other Morris texts as well.<sup>131</sup> Criqui further points out that Morris speaks in the first person using “I” only once in the sentence “In 1978 I hired a woman who had been blind since birth to execute, under my direction, the second series of Blind Time Drawings.” But it seems that Criqui’s argument about the significance of Morris’s false statement that *Blind Time II* series was made in 1978 and not in 1976, which is the correct date given in previous exhibition catalogues, is rather a stretch. He sees this assertion as “remarkable” because “it is false.” He further sees that there is “an incredible irony in the fact that the only “I” here referring directly back to Morris himself is articulated within the context of the “false.”<sup>132</sup> However, when this false statement was pointed out to him, Morris had no knowledge of how it might have occurred, stating nevertheless that it was not intentional.<sup>133</sup>

We recognized Morris’s emphasis on the horizontal as a spatial vector; this structural continuity began with works from the early 1960s extending through various ones through the 1990s. Also it has been shown that he returns to the thematic of “how to make a mark,” be it the path of the recording needle during an electroencephalogram, body part imprints, work on horseback, the natural

---

<sup>131</sup> See for instance Morris’s texts: “Robert Morris Replies to Roger Denson,” *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 287-315; “The Jury,” *Hurting Horses*, V33-V35; and “Size Matters,” *Have I Reasons*, 125, where Morris makes reference to himself in the third person.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Morris, in conversation with the author, Gardiner, New York, July 31, 2010.

world, or *Blind Time* drawings; a continuum extending from the 1960s through and into the new millennium. We also saw how Morris applies the concept of space in his art as being actual, virtual, or fleeting evanescent.

### Chapter Four: A New World Order

*Maybe the Athenian democracy worked because (a) they had no professional politicians and (b) they had an empire, and (c) slavery. But we have professional politicians, couldn't run an empire if we had one, and everybody is enslaved to commodity consumption.*

Robert Morris<sup>1</sup>

### Saying, Seeing

We now turn to investigate Morris's studies of language incorporating a juxtaposition of text and imagery, with the language and image struggling throughout for the domination of the spectator. We will also discuss the materiality and process of works in which Morris literally made prints of his own hands and similar body parts. A comparison of his works with Goya's will reveal a resemblance in their practice of juxtaposition of language and image. Also, we will find Morris expressing increasing concern with contemporary attitudes and morality.

Morris experienced and observed a great number of events which ushered in a new age in twentieth-century history: World War II and the atomic bomb; the Holocaust; McCarthyism; the Cold War; the Korean and Vietnam wars; and the more recent genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia in 1994 and 1995 respectively. Living through the major events of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States

---

<sup>1</sup> Morris, e-mail correspondence with the author, August 14, 2006.

along with the assassinations of John F. Kennedy (1963), Martin Luther King (1968), and Robert F. Kennedy (1968), he also watched Neil Armstrong imprint man's first footsteps on the moon (1969). Morris became increasingly affected by the social and informational revolutions fostered by the birth of television, the personal computer and later, the Internet. He became more keenly attentive to and vociferous in his analysis and criticism of the many implications and sometimes unintended consequences wrought by these accelerating scientific and technological discoveries that transformed the world more rapidly than at any time in the past. But he also witnessed the unprecedented use of high-technology warfare that these very advancements made possible. As he himself noted, "All we need to remember about the last century is that it was, as Elizabeth Bishop reminded us, 'the worst so far.'"<sup>2</sup> Morris's life astride the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, along with his works, reveal both the man and the artist. It is also particularly interesting that his art, as Ratcliff accurately pointed out once "fits the decades in which it appears. The work from 1961 to 1963, for example, looks very '60s, a time when a variety of people—from flower children to Pentagon planners—denied time, felt constrained to ignore the past and to conceive the future as a corollary to their view of the immediate present."<sup>3</sup>

In response to the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962—the most critical U.S. – Soviet confrontation of the Cold War—Morris created a series of drawings titled *Crisis* [Fig. 68]. The drawings were made on pages from New York City newspapers and they all bear the same title, taken from one of the newspaper

---

<sup>2</sup> Morris, "The Birthday Boy," *Have I Reasons*, 212.

<sup>3</sup> Ratcliff, "Robert Morris: Prisoner of Modernism," 105.

headlines. The process was the same: every day Morris bought a newspaper and painted over with gray paint those pages containing Cuban Missile Crisis articles and images, leaving only partially visible text and/or images.<sup>4</sup> For example, on one of the sheets, though the word “Crisis” is visible, additional information on the specific nature of the “crisis,” associated text and/or photographs is mostly invisible, faint and unclear, having been covered with layers of gray pigment.<sup>5</sup> On another, only the following capitalized words are not covered with paint: UN TALKS SET, BUT REAL TEST STILL MAY COME AT SEA. Morris’s interest in the communication of language is here explicit. According to Thomas Krens, who organized a comprehensive exhibition of the artist’s drawings at Williams College Museum of Art in Williamstown Massachusetts in 1982,<sup>6</sup> commenting on Morris’s implication of language on his art, “The Crisis series is one of Morris’s first attempts to use language as an element in his work. In his own words, ‘he was investigating the borderline area in art where something is both looked at and read at the same time.’”<sup>7</sup> However, one should keep in mind that the relationship between object and label, art and language, is one of the principal “paradoxes” of Minimalism. For as Mitchell noted, “The whole situation of Minimalism seems designed to defeat the notion of the ‘readable’ work of art.... On the other hand Minimalism is often characterized

---

<sup>4</sup> It is also interesting that the *Crisis* drawings have been framed in such a way that one can also see and read the current events of the period from the backside of the now yellowed newspapers.

<sup>5</sup> Referring to the *Crisis* series works, Mitchell calls them “gray paintings.” See “Wall Labels: Word, Image, and Object in the Work of Robert Morris,” *The Mind/Body Problem*, 75.

<sup>6</sup> The Morris show at the Williams College Museum of Art, which featured a selection of 124 works made between 1956 and 1981, traveled to the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, MA; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA; Laguna Art Museum, Austin, TX; Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids, MI; Rijkmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, The Netherlands; and Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy.

<sup>7</sup> See Krens, *The Drawings of Robert Morris*.

as an unprecedented intrusion by language—especially critical and theoretical language—into the traditionally silent space of the aesthetic object.”<sup>8</sup>

Among artworks made by other politically concerned artists of the 1960s and particularly the '70s which dealt with the relationship between art and politics, for instance, and which examined the issue of whether or not a political work of art undermines its aesthetic purpose, one would have to include Beuys's *Battery* (1974). Consisting of a pile of *Guardian* newspapers tied with twine and painted with brown pigment forming a cross, it is certainly a work that shares formal similarities with Morris's *Crisis* series. The date on the first folded *Guardian* newspaper is clearly visible: November 23, 1974. However, only a partially visible title of the newspaper and a few headlines are readable: “tough laws against IRA”; “world went black”; “Arabs flown to hijack airport.”<sup>9</sup>

Another work of the period was *War* (1962-1963) [Fig. 69], which Morris performed at the Judson Memorial Church in New York with the artist Robert Huot. In this collaboration the two artists appeared on stage dressed in a kind of panoply made from found objects—Morris had a picture of the United States President Dwight Eisenhower on his shield—and for about five minutes flailed away at each other with sticks. The responses were mixed, ranging from astonishment and “an imaginative abstraction of hurried motion in complex,

---

<sup>8</sup> Mitchell, “Wall Labels: Word, Image, and Object in the Work of Robert Morris,” *The Mind/Body Problem*, 63-64.

<sup>9</sup> Discussing his use of newspapers Beuys once said, “If all that remained of our century was a pile of newspapers, you would still have an incredibly rich cross-section of human activities and specializations on record, a battery of ideas.” Quoted in Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys: We Go this Way* (London: Violette Limited, 1998), 51.

dispersed patterns,”<sup>10</sup> to “political cartooning” and “preposterous.”<sup>11</sup> In a 1980 interview, Yvonne Rainer describes the piece, which she recalls as “incredible”:

The whole place was in darkness, and La Monte [Young] was up in the cage. He very slowly made the gong vibrate with soft beats... The lights went up, these two guys in these outlandish costumes released two pigeons and ran toward each other, yelling and screaming at the top of their lungs, beat at each other with wooden weapons, which splintered, and the lights went off. And that was the piece... It was somewhere between medieval and pop art.<sup>12</sup>

There is no doubt that warfare has been one of the ongoing themes in Morris's art. For Morris the American involvement in the Vietnam War (1959-1975) represented oppression and colonialism. His involvement in the New York Art Strike Against War; in New York University's Loeb Student Center; and in the Art Workers' Coalition, as well as his participation in various protests in the 1970s is well known.<sup>13</sup> This was a particularly confrontational period especially as it relates to the social, cultural and of course, political realms. The 1970s, years that included the Nixon administration and the expansion of the war in Vietnam, was a period when Morris, like many other artists, was questioning his relation to galleries and museums, that is to say, to cultural institutions, which, in the artist and poet David Antin's words, “seemed to function primarily as the legitimators of a brutal, technocratic imperialism.”<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Jill Johnston, Flyer, *A Concert of Dance #3 and #4*, Judson Memorial Church, New York City, January 29 and 30, 1963; quoted in Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 101.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Steve Paxton, April 11, 1980; quoted in Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 101.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Yvonne Rainer, July 20, 1980; quoted in Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 101.

<sup>13</sup> The New York Art Strike Against War was a coalition of artists, dealers, museum officials and other members of the art community. Among other things, the coalition was protesting against the war in Vietnam; however its supporters also aimed to strengthen the position artists occupy within contemporary society. Angered by Nixon's incursion into Cambodia that same month, on May 22, 1970, it called for a one-day closure of galleries and museums, with optional continuance for two weeks. On that day the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Jewish Museum and a number of galleries closed, while the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim suspended their admission charges. Before the end of 1970 this coalition was losing steam and dissolved shortly thereafter.

<sup>14</sup> See David Antin, “Have Mind Will Travel,” *The Mind/Body Problem*, 39.



Therefore, that a more obvious political tone appears then in Morris's works and writings as well as warfare as a theme for some of his pieces comes as no surprise. A powerful series with five lithographs of war memorials (never materialized) depicting some "hard" truths of warfare were made in 1970: *Trench with Chlorine Gas*; *Infantry Archive—To Be Walked on Barefoot*; *One Half Mile Concrete Star with Names*; *Crater with Smoke*; *Scattered Atomic Waste* [Fig. 70]. Their explicit titles, which certainly evoke a sense of uneasiness in the viewer, are self-descriptive and leave little ambiguity.

Morris pursued a number of other war memorial proposals in the 1970s, including a project commissioned by the United States Department of the Navy for its administration building of one of the largest veterans hospitals, located in Bay Pines, Florida (see Appendix 3 for the actual proposal). It was a piece, as Mitchell remarked, of "ready-made Minimalism, the casings of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan," to be installed in the plaza of the hospital [Fig. 71].<sup>15</sup>

Discussing this project in an interview twenty years later in 1998, Morris noted:

I did some research and found that at many military hospitals there were weapons as décor: old planes, tanks, cannons of all sorts were put on the grounds. So I thought there was a precedent for using weaponry as a kind of sculpture for these places. I did some further research and found that there were two different types of atomic bombs dropped by America on Japan. Both of these bombs, because of the way they detonate, require different casings. One was very round and was nicknamed "Fat Man" for Churchill, and the other was very long and they nicknamed that one "Little Boy" after Roosevelt's dog.<sup>[16]</sup> I found out that there were casings still in

<sup>15</sup> See Mitchell, "Wall Labels: Word, Image, and Object in the Work of Robert Morris," *The Mind/Body Problem*, 70.

<sup>16</sup> "Fat Man" was the codename for the plutonium bomb detonated over Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, possibly named after Winston Churchill. However, "Little Boy," the codename of the uranium bomb detonated over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, was rather named after President Franklin Roosevelt himself, not his dog Fala. For a comprehensive history of the Manhattan Project and the men responsible for the overall project—encompassing that period from their

storage—they made hundreds for practice dropping. I proposed that we get two from the War Department, paint them the beige color of the building and put them on pedestals at 45° angles, indicative of their position a few seconds after they were released. The Navy cancelled the project.<sup>17</sup>

*Hearing* (1972) and *Voice* (1974) are two more examples of works, which air political issues as well as philosophical speculations and show Morris's concern about violence, conflict, repression and capital punishment.<sup>18</sup> Certainly the title *Hearing* refers to some sort of investigation and brings to mind Congressional hearings during which witnesses give oral testimonies and are then questioned by members of Congress. Among the most infamous of such hearings in the history of the United States are, of course, those conducted by the House Un-American Activities Committee during the post-World War II era of McCarthyism—taken from the name of the United States Republican Senator from the state of Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy (1908-1954), who brought forth numerous serious charges of Communist infiltration and espionage against those at the highest level of the State Department and other federal agencies. Between 1950 and 1954 (perhaps the peak of the Cold War with the Soviet Union), thousands of Americans were accused of being either Communists or Communist sympathizers, and they in turn became subjects of investigations and interrogations; many of the secret hearings took place at the federal courthouse in New York City.<sup>19</sup> Countless people were affected by McCarthy's anti-

---

conception, to developing and ultimately dropping the bombs, see Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, 1986).

<sup>17</sup> Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Concrete Utopias of Printing to Make Public," *Robert Morris Estampes et Multiples*, 164.

<sup>18</sup> This installation might also be recognized as a re-assembly of elements of an iconography evoking the tragedy of the principal victims of McCarthyism such as the American Communists Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were executed by electric chair in 1953 for conspiracy to commit espionage.

<sup>19</sup> When Dwight Eisenhower was elected President in 1952, he carried Republican majorities in both houses of Congress (the Senate and the House of Representatives) and the senate seniority

Communism fanaticism and paranoia. Among those targeted particularly were government employees, educators and artists, many of whom lost their jobs, were blacklisted or had their careers destroyed altogether. And although in most cases the evidence was inconclusive and/or the accusations exaggerated,<sup>20</sup> some were even sentenced to jail, like the English Professor Morris Schappes of City College in New York.

Morris was certainly impacted during this reactionary period of American history as he relates in his whimsical autobiographical essay "Trains." This text was a narration of his formative experiences in various railroad jobs, particularly when working as switchman for the Southern Pacific Railroad in the San Francisco train yards in 1957:<sup>21</sup>

I slept poorly through those hot and humid summer days, rising in the afternoon to watch the junior senator from Wisconsin denouncing Reds in black-and-white on our new television. The McCarthy hearings numbered

---

system awarded McCarthy the position of Chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee of Investigations.

<sup>20</sup> Although some of the hearings were public, many were secret, held in closed-door sessions by McCarthy and his staff. The transcripts were sealed for a fifty-year period, which expired in January of 2003, when they became available to the public. These five-volume transcripts are available online ([senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources](http://senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources)). Volumes 1-4 cover the 1953 hearings and volume 5 the 1954 hearings that included the so-called Army-McCarthy hearings when "the investigators found themselves becoming the subject of the investigation." For more on McCarthy, see David Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joseph McCarthy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Morris's brief railroad career was cut short by an incident which can be best described in the artists own words as narrated in his original and poetic text "Trains":

It was a night late in August when we went south with a drag of cars and stopped at a distillery to set out two boxcars of corn. The spur track veered off sharply to the northeast from the main line into the dock of the brewery. The night was dense with fog and I was not fully awake when I uncoupled the grain cars. As I backed the two boxcars into the spur track, giving the signal to the brakeman (I was on his side of the engine), I heard a scraping sound. Thinking this was just malfunctioning airbrakes, I spun my lantern for more back up from the locomotive, but the sound got worse. Three-quarters of the way into the spur the engine stopped and the engineer, fireman and foreman climbed down and walked around to the other side of the box-cars. I had not left sufficient clearance between the main line and the spur track, and the scraping I was hearing was the shearing off of the sides of the grain cars as they contacted the metal corner of a gondola of coal. There were already two large pyramids of corn covering the ground, but it would be five working days before I received the letter terminating my services as switchman for the Southern Pacific Railroad.

See Robert Morris, "Trains," July 2006, unpublished essay sent to the author, 22.

me and exacerbated my claustrophobia. I wanted to turn off the television but sat riveted and paralyzed.<sup>22</sup>

In Morris's *Hearing* [Fig. 72] (see Appendix 4 with Morris's drawing regarding this piece), which was initially installed at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in the spring of 1972, the viewer was presented with "an elaborate theatrical ensemble"<sup>23</sup> composed of three immediately recognizable pieces of furniture: a bed, a table and a chair, three common everyday objects that certainly should not pose any kind of immediate threat to anyone. But then why are there signs placed on the floor cautioning us to neither touch the objects, nor step on the platform: "Caution: Injurious heat and amperage. Do not touch objects or step on platform." As is often the case with Morris's art, the threat builds as we experience the work and move closer to and around the installation. Soon we realize that these objects are not made of the usual materials one expects such as wood, but instead they are made from metal (characterized by high electrical conductivity): the bed and its pillow are covered with lead, the rusted table is made of zinc, and the chair from copper. Arranged on a large six-inch-high cruciform<sup>24</sup> platform (made of wood with bronze molding) filled with sand, the three units are wired to six wet-cell<sup>25</sup> batteries buried in sand inside a bronze trough. These batteries, connected to an electrical circuit on the wall, in turn were electrifying the bed and the table while also heating to the boiling point an immersion heater inside the chair causing the copper to glow. And as if this

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Schjeldahl's review of *Hearing*, "Robert Morris: Maxi of the Minimals," *The New York Times*, May 7, 1972 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

<sup>24</sup> The platform is a large twelve-foot square with twenty-four-inch square sections cut from each corner.

<sup>25</sup> Wet-cell battery (with liquid electrolyte) is the precursor of the now common and safer dry-cell battery (with pasty electrolyte, which does not leak).

visual/“physical” threat were not enough, conflicting sounds of human voices emanating from two speakers near the platform and filling the room also provided an aural threat.<sup>26</sup> Morris incorporated written and heard text that certainly recalls the tape-recorded reading of the detailed instructions from “A Method of Sorting Cows” in his performance *Arizona* (1963), discussed in chapter two. However, the reading in *Hearing* is not autobiographical, as in *Arizona*, but philosophical. For a three-and-a-half-hour period we are listening to a fictional investigation of some unknown character, “a drama of ideas”:

The world began without man and will surely end without him. In any case, your questions have no reply except some vague, dialectical speculations that if the revealed forms of finitude of language are insupportable or inadequate, a kind of freedom yet remains which has something both mad and mute about it and which is beyond even refusal. But at this point we are beyond speech.<sup>27</sup>

A Witness (voices of the filmmaker and photographer Hollis Frampton and the writer and critic Stephen Koch) is interrupted by the Counsel (voice of the actress Norma Fire), and the Investigator (voice of the actor José Ferrer). Paraphrased texts and quotations [Fig. 73] by about thirty modern thinkers that include such luminaries as Noam Chomsky, Marcel Duchamp, Michel Foucault, Gabriel García Márquez, Jean Piaget, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Ludwig Wittgenstein<sup>28</sup> echo in a Kafkaesque way throughout the room as the Witness uses them to support his defense in reference to various theories of representation. But Winkenweder accurately points out that the text is too complex for a spectator to comprehend

---

<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to note Schjeldahl’s recognition of the ominous tone of *Hearing* by the final statement in his review that “as often as not, Morris’s work gives me chills.” See “Robert Morris: Maxi of the Minimals.”

<sup>27</sup> Taped voice of the Witness. *Hearing* text, section III, page 42 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

<sup>28</sup> When the Investigator, for instance, asks the Witness to remember something, he replies, “What is memory? How do I know that I am remembering?” Certainly this is taken out of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (xiii, 231e).

just by listening to it: "Hearing the text would not make it intelligible; given its intellectual density, one must read it to fully digest its meaning... The text, however, reveals Morris's obsession with language and the process by which interpretation arises. The text, borrowing the rhetoric and tone of a Congressional hearing... obliquely referenced some of Morris's key works from his early years in New York."<sup>29</sup> "In response to interpretations advanced by the Investigator," Paice writes, "the Witness circles, without overtly embracing, various theories of representation: those concerning language...; those related to the perception of stable objects...; and those involving history."<sup>30</sup> Discussing the installation further, Paice also explains that the Witness rejects three ways of considering these objects:

In due course, the Witness rejects certain ways of approaching these objects, among them: intentionality (securing meaning for an object by way of an artistic intention prior to its creation); formalism (interpreting an object or text through privileging the formal relationships that can be read off its surface); and empiricism (limiting meaning to the observable world).<sup>31</sup>

Berger carries the interpretation of the scene even further when stating that "in the end, *Hearing* established an analogy between the space of the exhibition and the carceral realm of courtrooms and prisons. The trial represented in this work reads as a metaphor for Morris's own indictment of modernist culture. The claustrophobic and unnerving experience of *Hearing* represents a microcosm of late capitalism."<sup>32</sup> Of course, one should not lose sight of the fact that a hearing is not a trial designed to achieve a resolution or a final verdict. Rather it is a preliminary proceeding with the intention to investigate and explore all the

---

<sup>29</sup> Winkenweder, *Reading Wittgenstein: Robert Morris's Art-as-Philosophy*, 134.

<sup>30</sup> Paice, "Catalogue," *The Mind/Body Problem*, 202.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Berger, *Labyrinths*, 135.

available evidence to determine whether there is sufficient cause to go forward and proceed with a trial. Morris was later to state “that when he read W.J.T. Mitchell’s *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, he was reminded of the overriding concerns of *Hearing*, namely the interposition of words and images, and the struggle between them for dominance within the history of culture, that ever-refigured opposition named so long ago by Leonardo as the *paragone*.”<sup>33</sup>

*Hearing* is a piece that “talks about how institutions form us, the kind of power they have over us, and how they give us our identity, and constrain that identity,”<sup>34</sup> but it does not provide answers or solutions, nor does it seek to heal the “wounds of society.” Its nontraditional sculptural materials rather are chosen for what they are and not for any symbolic association, as is often the case when considering works of other artists of the time. In Beuys’s approach, for instance, historical events and personal experiences in his art are often intertwined with myths, metaphors and alchemy to serve as lessons to the viewer. Beuys saw himself as a shaman, as many scholars have accurately observed, one who believed that individual self-transformation (transformation of soul, mind, and will power) could result in both personal and social healing. Perhaps he himself followed the messianic tradition of Nietzsche and Wagner in wanting to create a “new ideal man.”<sup>35</sup> Certainly zinc, copper, and wet-cell batteries are familiar elements in the works of both artists, Beuys and Morris. But Morris’s batteries,

---

<sup>33</sup> Paice, “Catalogue,” *The Mind/Body Problem*, 202. For Leonardo’s *paragone* (his well-known argument that painting was superior of all arts), see “Trattato della pittura di Leonardo da Vinci,” a collection of Leonardo’s arguments relating to the art of painting, compiled from his notes and published in 1651 by the French art historian Raphael Trichet du Fresne (1611-1661); it was first translated into English and published in London under the title “Treatise on Painting” in 1721.

<sup>34</sup> Morris, as quoted in an unpublished interview by Stephen Shapiro, October 25, 1986 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York), 2.

<sup>35</sup> See for instance Donald Kuspit, “Joseph Beuys’ Mission,” in *Warhol/Beuys/Polke: Three Artists of Their Time*, exh. cat. (Wisconsin: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1987), 55.

just to mention one of the materials in his *Hearing*, do not symbolize either “batteries of ideas” or “batteries of energy” with reviving qualities, as do Beuys’s. To the contrary, in Morris’s *Hearing* they are tools of destruction, bearing no symbolic intent.

It can also be observed that Morris’s approach differs from that of another artist who, like Beuys, chooses materials for their symbolic association, namely, Anselm Kiefer.<sup>36</sup> The *Siegfried Forgets Brünhilde* (1975) and *Siegfried’s Difficult Way to Brünhilde* series (1991), two of Kiefer’s versions of *The Ring* theme, are the titles of these works, which include the names of two major characters in Richard Wagner’s opera cycle *The Ring of the Nibelung*, based on Germanic and Norse myths. We are reminded of their love as well as the moment of forgetting, which caused their emotional suffering and loss.<sup>37</sup> This particular mythical “signpost of history” serves as a lesson because, for Kiefer, “you cannot just paint a landscape after tanks have passed through it, you have to do something with it.”<sup>38</sup> Concerned with problems of ideology Kiefer’s art acts as a vehicle for the

---

<sup>36</sup> I believe that a comparison with Kiefer’s art is appropriate because similarly he uses materials such as wood, lead, felt, mirrors and straw, and either depicts them or actually incorporates them literally into his works. However, unlike Morris, he chooses them for their symbolic associations. And certainly Kiefer’s art (especially after 1980s) is monumental, belonging to Morris’s definition of contemporary “Wagner effect” art as discussed in chapter four.

<sup>37</sup> The young hero Siegfried slays the dragon that guards the gold ring, which was stolen from the bottom of the river Rhine. He later discovers the daughter of the god Wotan, Brünhilde, who after disobeying her father, has been punished by him and placed asleep on the top of a mountain surrounded by a ring of fire. A generation later Siegfried braves the fire, awakens her, gives her the ring and they pledge eternal love. Later, however, Siegfried is tricked by a magic potion and forgets all about her. At the conclusion of the Ring cycle Siegfried dies and Brünhilde rides her horse, Grane, into Siegfried’s funeral pyre. That fire also ignites the home of the gods, Valhalla, destroying it, and the ring returns to the Rhine. For more on *The Ring of the Nibelung*, see Charles O’Connell, *The Victor Book of the Opera* (Camden, New Jersey: RCA Manufacturing Company, Inc., 1929), 387-433.

<sup>38</sup> C. M. Joachimides, N. Rosenthal, and W. Schmied, *German Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1985), 131.

Additionally, “Siegfried forgets Brünhilde” was a theme very much loved by the Nazis and later became a historical taboo as a result. Therefore, for Kiefer, the myth should be demystified and remembered for its destruction; it should be remembered as an act of historical terror. For



present and prophesizes the future. He seems to suggest that art can affect or even transform society much in the same way that alchemists practiced the medieval art of transforming metals into gold. Associating the role of artist with alchemist, Kiefer subjects his materials to fire<sup>39</sup>—in the process of which straw is reduced to ash and lead becomes purified. The true goal of an alchemist is rather spiritual transformation or redemption, an idea to which Kiefer repeatedly returns. However, while both artists, Beuys and Kiefer, approach their work in the context of mythology, their overall final outlooks diverge somewhat. Beuys's work culminates with his somewhat optimistic view of man's possibilities, while Kiefer's concern, despite his preoccupation with "transformation," tends more toward the pessimistic and in the end the result is that "Siegfried always forgets."

Confronting the twentieth-century historical events of World War II, the Holocaust, and the Allied occupation of Germany, Kiefer utilizes symbols to link our consciousness with the past because he himself once responded to the effect that the symbols create a kind of simultaneous continuity and we recollect our origins.<sup>40</sup> But this is not the case with Morris. In an unpublished text titled "Vertiginous Spaces," Morris denies the ability of art to enable transcendence and states emphatically:

Notions that art occupies a transcendent space, that it emits an aura independent of the institutions that promote it, that some quasi-spiritual values and universal code animates it—all these are cultural lies that a long history of Western art history has burdened us with. That the aesthetic is tied to the moral and that both are innate is neither a

---

more on Kiefer's early works done between 1969 and 1986 that confront recent German history, see Mark Rosenthal, *Anselm Kiefer*, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1987).

<sup>39</sup> As Mark Rosenthal points out, fire is an archetype, one of several that frequently resonate within Kiefer's work. See Mark Rosenthal, *Anselm Kiefer*, 22.

<sup>40</sup> Kiefer, in response to the author's question following his introduction to the opening of his exhibition *Melancholia* at Sezon Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan, June 3, 1993.

contradiction to this, nor does it offer a false hope of art achieving transcendence.<sup>41</sup>

Explaining his rejection of a transcendental spirit as it relates particularly to the postwar period, Morris goes on to expand further:

Modernism, an historical episode in the reification of this self-consciousness, has always been on the side of the political right. For spaces of the political right and the modernist aesthetic (of which American abstract art is the most emblematic example) coincide in their demand for an unquestioning clarity of hierarchies and boundaries, not to mention a relentless policing of the totalizing whole. That is to say both coincide in the will toward the non-democratic.<sup>42</sup>

### Schism

Questioning modernism in the 1980s, Morris violated a taboo of the period by presenting his *Hypnerotomachia* series<sup>43</sup> made of Hydrocal,<sup>44</sup> as well as his works with the massive ornate frames depicting apocalyptic imagery suggestive of the human potential for destruction [Figs. 74-75]. That is to say, Morris in fact had broken two taboos of the “modernist faith” at once, as Edward F. Fry argues, “The integrity and purity of a given medium and the corruption of high art by literary and metaphorical intrusions from the outside worlds of politics, science, and power”;<sup>45</sup> Morris caused in fact a critical uproar in America. Made in 1982, his first Hydrocal pieces, according to the art historian I. Michael Danoff, “fall somewhere between shallow relief sculptures and thickly impastoed paintings.”<sup>46</sup> They were done by making imprints of objects in plaster and then reversing their

---

<sup>41</sup> Morris, “Vertiginous Spaces,” August 2002, unpublished essay, mailed to the author, unpaginated.

<sup>42</sup> Morris, “Vertiginous Spaces.”

<sup>43</sup> Although the title of the series is *Hypnerotomachia*, the individual works are untitled.

<sup>44</sup> Hydrocal is the brand name of a type of plaster.

<sup>45</sup> See Edward F. Fry, “Robert Morris in the Eighties,” *Robert Morris Works of the Eighties*, exh. cat. (Newport Beach: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1986) 5.

<sup>46</sup> I. Michael Danoff, *Robert Morris: Works of the Eighties*, 24.

“negative” impressions and casting them in Hydrocal, thus producing reliefs, all of which were painted white surely to recall “ancient friezes.”<sup>47</sup> And because the imprints are of body parts, Danoff further notes, “these works also suggest the fossilized record of a great disaster. Indeed, Morris uses images of human debris to convey a vision of chaos: skulls, brains, torsos, feet, phalluses, bones and teeth tumble about in a maelstrom of apocalyptic devastation.”<sup>48</sup> Interestingly enough, the hands, forearms with fists and of course the sexual body parts are all masculine, suggesting male aggressiveness in Western culture—another recurrent theme throughout Morris’s art that is so evidently displayed in his 2004 installation *The Birthday Boy* (see chapter five).

The title *Hypnerotomachia*<sup>49</sup> derives from *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (meaning “Poliphili’s<sup>50</sup> Strife of Love in a Dream”), an erotic mythological allegorical Italian romance traditionally attributed to the Franciscan monk Francesco Colonna, printed in 1499 in Venice. There is no doubt that this is a peculiar book with a rather difficult text to read (written in Italian and Latin but also with passages in Greek, Arabic and Hebrew), mysterious images and an even more puzzling plot—though conventional at first glance<sup>51</sup>—about love (and antiquarianism). And as Danoff remarks, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is dealing “with the recovery of past values, alchemy, the destruction of edifices, dismemberment of bodies, and the loss of love discovered in a dream. Thus, the book may be seen as “an

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> *Hypnerotomachia* is drawn from the Greek words *ύπνος* (sleep), *έρως* (sexual love, desire) and *μάχη* (fight/struggle).

<sup>50</sup> *Polyphili* is drawn from the Greek words *πολύ*, meaning many (things), and *φίλος*, friend/lover.

<sup>51</sup> Lover’s rejection, pursue of love, love’s triumph, illusion dashed (Polyphilo conquered Polia only in his dream).

analog to the kinds of concerns” Morris demonstrates in his *Hypnerotomachia* series as well as throughout the works of the 1980s.<sup>52</sup>

But certainly these works are also about process, a long-standing interest in Morris’s art, and the passage of time. We see, for instance, long tracing paths of forearms and fists projected through the image of one of the works, *Untitled* (1982). And we find this image of a fist to be a recurrent motif in Morris’s art, which can in fact be traced as far back as 1963 to the small plaster fist in *Untitled (Fist)* [Fig. 76], one which will again appear on the top part of the *Morning Terror* relief in 2008 (see chapter five).

The same concerns are also evident in the two groups of multipanel drawings the *Firestorm* and *Psychomachia* series, both done the same year in 1982. Like in *Hypnerotomachia*, in the *Firestorm* and *Psychomachia* groups [Fig. 77] Morris deal with nuclear energy and its massive destructive force, “the issue of modern science run amok, corrupted, and enlisted in the service of domination leading to a potential nuclear holocaust.”<sup>53</sup> The titles<sup>54</sup> themselves suggest agony and desolation.<sup>55</sup> Paice notes that “*Psychomachia* is the name of a poem, written in the fifth century A.D. by Prudentius, in which the figures of good and evil debate for control of humanity.”<sup>56</sup> Even the name itself, *Psychomachia*, means battle or struggle of a soul (spirit, mind) just before death.

<sup>52</sup> See Danoff, *Robert Morris: Works of the Eighties*, 24.

<sup>53</sup> See Fry, *Robert Morris Works of the Eighties*, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Contrary to his previous penchant for leaving his works untitled, both these names were devised by the artist himself. Morris, conversation with the author, New York, May 1997.

<sup>55</sup> *Psychomachia*, a Greek word, means battle or struggle of a soul (spirit, mind) just before death.

<sup>56</sup> See Paice, “Catalogue,” *The Mind/Body Problem*, 288. In fact *Psychomachia* is the name of an allegorical poem on a Christian theme written in the fifth century by the Roman Christian poet Prudentius (348-after 405), in which he describes the conflict between vice and virtues—the

As Morris himself has stated, his source of inspiration for this series was the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II,<sup>57</sup> about which he in fact once theorized in his own sardonic style:

AND THEN IT ENDED WITH THE BOMB—BOBBY OPPY'S DOUBLE WHAMMY OVER JAPAN—TWO THUMPS THAT TOOK THEIR PLACE IN LINE AFTER THE FIRST THUMP OF THE FINAL SOLUTION—OUT OF LINE TO LINE THEM UP LIKE THAT?—PLUTO DIDN'T PRESIDE AT THESE BIRTHS OF SUPERDEATH?—WHAT ABOUT THE SUN?—PLUTONIUM IN THE SUN PLUTO BLINKING IN THE FIREBALL—THAT WAS DIFFERENT?—THOSE DOUBLE TECHNOLOGICAL ORGASMS TOOK YEARS OF TENSION-FILLED BRAIN GRINDING STARING THE DEITY IN THE KISSER<sup>58</sup>

Yet it is not merely the theme of war and death that provokes a sense of discomfort and tension in the viewer, but also Morris's manipulation of *these* drawings. Although we certainly see images of chaos and destruction in the *Firestorm* and *Psychomachia* works, it is rather the dark colour, the rough texture of the works themselves, and the large scale that intensify our sense of anguish. At a normal gallery/museum viewing-distance, an observer is confronted with an almost abstract and "panoramic" work comprising six large-scale panels (formed by joined sheets of paper); some of the drawings measuring over two by six meters.

In the *Firestorm* and *Psychomachia* series Morris used ink washes, pulverized charcoal, graphite and black pigments on white paper. Morris's emphasis on materials and process, always central to his work, is clear in these drawings.

---

struggle of faith supported by the cardinal virtues (temperance, justice, fortitude, and prudence) against idolatry.

<sup>57</sup> Morris, conversation with the author, New York, April 1997.

<sup>58</sup> Morris, *TELEGRAM THE RATIONED YEARS*, unpaginated.

"The traces of his [Morris's] fingertips and palms," the curator Paul Schimmel argues "are a constant reminder of the creative process."<sup>59</sup>

Paice observes a relationship with works by Leonardo and Géricault, "Swirls excerpted from Leonardo's *Deluge* drawings, (1515), and from other visions of natural or man-made catastrophe, such as Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818-19), were layered onto documentary images of the destruction at Hiroshima and Nagasaki."<sup>60</sup> However, the variations of the materials' intensity, as well as some patches of ink, remind us more of the technique and abstract character of Chinese and Japanese paintings of stormy water (including the "splattered ink" technique) than Leonardo's scientific approach to moving water in his *Deluge* drawings.

Looking closely at Morris's drawings, one sees that there are human skeletal parts flung into the air, perhaps by the whirling waves of a fire and storm [Fig. 78]. They are motifs of body parts that echo Morris's earlier works. *Firestorm* drawings even recall Morris's installation *Second Study for a View from a Corner of Orion*, 1980 (see chapter three). Schimmel observes that "the drawings envelop the viewer in an atmosphere of smoldering fires, eruptive hot spots, and the ash and soot of cataclysm, creating a space where phantom figures intertwine rhythmically with human skeletons."<sup>61</sup> However, what is particularly striking is that traces of Morris's own fingertips and palms are also clearly visible. In some areas these vestiges seem to have become one with the skeletal parts.

---

<sup>59</sup> See Paul Schimmel, *Robert Morris: Works of the Eighties*, 40.

<sup>60</sup> Paice, "Catalogue," *The Mind/Body Problem*, 288.

<sup>61</sup> Schimmel, *Robert Morris: Works of the Eighties*, 40.

And as with the skeletal forms, the traces of his hands are left in negative space. Matter is organized around emptiness.<sup>62</sup> Rather than depicting or representing hands, Morris was making prints of his own hands literally; their passage have been recorded on the paper. This literalist element, which likewise can be seen in Morris's body casts and imprints, dominated the art of many artists especially in the 1960s. Jasper Johns made bronze casts of real objects such as beer cans and light bulbs; Yves Klein created paintings during performances using the naked female bodies of models instead of paint brushes. Literalism is an important element in Morris's art in general.

*Firestorm* recalls both the human powerlessness that Leonardo suggests in his *Deluge* drawings, and the stark depiction of human self-destruction that Géricault presents in his enormous painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818-19, Paris, The Louvre). Certainly Morris, like Géricault, is commenting upon what unspeakable havoc human beings are capable of inflicting upon others. There is another work from Morris's *Firestorm* series that is in fact entitled *After The Raft of the Medusa*.

Morris has also left the figures at the edges of the drawings in the *Firestorm* and *Psychomachia* series "unfinished." On the one hand, the figures seem to go beyond the edges of the picture, while on the other they are cut as in a snapshot taken from above (bird's-eye view), perhaps to emphasize the impersonality of the depiction and the lack of individuality of the victims. Morris's "victims" are not merely the specific people killed by the bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but any human destroyed by technology, a political system, or "society" in general.

---

<sup>62</sup> See Grenier, "Robert Morris and Melancholy: The Dark Side of the Work," 313.

Morris heightens the impersonality of the depiction, moreover, for the time and place of the scene are not distinguishable, historical narrative being hidden and intertwined with the image. Morris, without a trace of human sentimentality, suggests that something terrible “may” have happened (or will happen), yet exactly “what” and “where” are never revealed. The concealed elements seem to be in conflict with those revealed: these works are not dealing with what can be seen but with what cannot be shown. Indeed, as Schimmel observes, the life-size figurative and “architectural elements continue beyond the edge of the picture, revealing only a portion of the nightmarish wasteland.”<sup>63</sup>

Once again we have arrived at a point where we are not simply observers of a work, a painting, but are active participants in the piece. The actual space (image) of the *Firestorm* and *Psychomachia* drawings (scenes of chaos, destruction, apocalypse) seems to intrude on the viewer's space as a continuation of his own point of view. The drawings invoke a profound pessimism and remind us of human destruction and the devastating effects of warfare.

Developed out of Morris's *Hypnerotomachia* series are the framed works he made in the 1980s that include *Enterprise*<sup>64</sup> and *The Astronomer*, both from the *Burning Planet* series in 1984, as well as *Untitled (Holocaust)* in 1987. The “look” and “scale” of these “baroque” phase works, Mitchell remarks, “is surely appropriate to a meditation on the monumentalization of death and annihilation in

---

<sup>63</sup> Schimmel, *Robert Morris: Works of the Eighties*, 40

<sup>64</sup> For an analysis of *Enterprise* see Edward F. Fry, *Robert Morris Works of the Eighties*, 10. According to Fry this was Morris's greatest work in his entire career until then.



the 1980s, the decade of greed, Star Wars, and Reagonomics—the final glorious days of triumph over the ‘Evil Empire,’ the transition from the prospect of sudden nuclear catastrophe to slow environmental destruction.”<sup>65</sup>

In his *Untitled (Holocaust)*,<sup>66</sup> 1987 [Fig. 79], we look up at the photograph<sup>67</sup> of a woman with seemingly disjointed body parts, her position reminiscent of Andrea Mantegna’s well-known painting *Dead Christ* (ca. 1501) with its strong foreshortening.<sup>68</sup> However, Morris’s image of a cadaver, unlike Mantegna’s painting, is not from a biblical tragedy but from a disastrous modern war. This photograph is a silkscreen version of an archival photograph depicting the corpse of a female inmate taken by a British photographer in the last days of World War II during the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany by the British 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. The woman in the photograph died in a concentration camp. Though her young face and right arm below the elbow are fully visible, part of her neck, and the left arm and chest—up to the waistline—are concealed, obscured, partially painted over with encaustic.<sup>69</sup> The background areas of the image are also covered with encaustic, thus creating a sharp contrast of the dark and the light that shines somewhat on her face, right arm and

---

<sup>65</sup> See Mitchell, “Wall Labels: Word, Image, and Object in the Work of Robert Morris, *The Mind/Body Problem*, 62.

<sup>66</sup> The title of this piece is *Untitled*. As with many of Morris’s untitled works, a nickname was later added (*Holocaust* in this case) to make it easier to specify the particular work.

<sup>67</sup> In a telephone conversation with the author on September 13, 2009, Morris explained that this is one of the photographs that he saw in the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem.

<sup>68</sup> Morris also created *Prohibition’s End or The Death of Dutch Schulz* (1989), which is a direct quotation from Mantegna’s *Dead Christ*. The figure of the dead New York gangster of the 1920s and ‘30s, Dutch Schulz, is indeed depicted in the exact same pose.

<sup>69</sup> In the actual photograph, which I was able to find and see on the website of Yad Vashem ([www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org), accessed September 15, 2009), part of the woman’s neck is concealed by what it appears to be a print piece of clothing (perhaps what is left of her dress), and the left arm and chest up to the waistline are covered by a worn out sort of blanket (a large hole through the material reveals the woman’s sternum).

what appears to be a disjointed left hip (or a dislocated left breast). Certainly this treatment brings to mind the Baroque style. And perhaps to reinforce even further the Baroque dramatic imagery, Morris made and combined an elaborate fiberglass bas-relief frame containing sculptural motifs of bits of body parts, cogs, wheels and machinery parts. That is to say, we are confronted visually with implements of aggression, warfare and death. *Untitled (Holocaust)* is not a work about the “specific” content. Without the subtitle we have no clue where, how or when this woman died, as the photograph is manipulated in such a way that every visual reference to a precise location and time has been eliminated. The specific has become general, thus creating a universal symbol, a timeless work. The photograph is not the focal point either because the powerful sculptural frame ends up shifting the “centre” of the work. One might even say that there is no division between the two elements, for the photograph and the frame are not only interdependent but have become one. Because we come away with a sinking feeling of the futility of death and violence, it seems that there are no lessons to be learned from the contemplation of life’s end.

*Untitled (Holocaust)* is also a work providing a reference to imprints and casts of earlier pieces, particularly from the 1960s, in which the elements were primarily hands, feet and genitals, as in *Hand and Toe Holds* (discussed in chapter three), which is composed of two units, one recording the imprints of Morris’s fingers and the other of his toes. Morris’s blending of a personal and universal vision is laid out in both series. But as the curator Terrie Sultan wrote in her essay “Representation and Text in the Work of Robert Morris” in 1991, “Morris’s expressive melding of personal and universal vision is nowhere more clearly

defined than in his affinity for the work of Francisco Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828)."<sup>70</sup>

### From the Disasters of War to Mont Sainte-Victoire

That some of Morris's works refer to Goya should come as no surprise since the artist himself has often discussed the importance of Goya's imagery. Sultan talks about this relationship to Goya and she further notes that "in particular, Morris's distanced perspective on an obsessive pessimism is strikingly similar to the world-weary view Goya expressed in the three print portfolios *Los Caprichos*, *Disparates* and *The Disasters of War*, and in his late period masterworks, collectively known as the *Black Paintings*."<sup>71</sup>

There has been much speculation concerning Goya's social as well as political views. Did he really believe in the French Revolution? Did he share the same ideas with his friends, the statesman Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744-1811), the playwright Leandro Fernandez de Moratín (1760-1828), the French-born Spanish financier and writer François Cabarrus, the first Count of Cabarrús (1752-1810), and other men of the Enlightenment?<sup>72</sup> What kind of feeling did he have for King Ferdinand VII? What was his position towards the Church and clergy? It is known that among his friends were men of the Enlightenment but also men who sided with Joseph Bonaparte. One of his friends, Juan Antonio

---

<sup>70</sup> Terrie Sultan, "Representation and Text in the Work of Robert Morris," *Inability to Endure or Deny the World*, exh. cat. (Washington D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1991), 19-20.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> When King Charles III died in 1788, the administration of his son and heir to the Spanish throne, Charles IV, put an end to all Enlightenment reforms (religious tolerance, freedom of speech, etc.).

(known also as Canon) Llorente, was an ex-secretary to the Inquisition;<sup>73</sup> his brother Camilo, with whom Goya remained on good terms, was a priest.<sup>74</sup> The list of contradictions in Goya's life is indeed vast, justifying the difficulty some feel in trying to discern the painter's views. It is rightfully said that "we really cannot know Goya's allegiances, and to classify him as francophile (*afrancesado*) or as patriot is perhaps a gross oversimplification and his works do little to clarify the issue. The *Disasters of War* are not overtly partisan: they seem to condemn the atrocities of war."<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, Goya's art reflects the politics, society and religion (as a political instrument) of his time. Additionally it reveals a great amount of pessimism concerning man's negative qualities, his wicked and evil nature. Goya was the creator of horrifying images of war as well as the painter of unbearable scenes of torture used by the Inquisition. However, he seems more concerned with the exploration of man's "human nature" than with providing a solution to the "problem," the Inquisition itself. Perhaps Goya lacked any confidence in man. He may even have lost all hope for improvement in the human condition and therefore was simply "reporting" man's inhumanity to his fellow man. His human images, so often appearing instinctively evil in his works, force the viewer into a powerful emotional response. Thus, even if Goya was not one of those artists who intentionally used his art as a vehicle to create a new world order and bring about social change, his work "embraces precisely the

---

<sup>73</sup> Juan Antonio Llorente (1756-1823) was the secretary of the Inquisition in Madrid from 1789 until 1791. Between 1809 and 1811 the archives of the Spanish Inquisition were placed at Llorente's disposal. Based on these archives, he wrote a book covering the history of the Inquisition from the time of its establishment in the thirteenth century to the reign of Ferdinand VII; the monograph was published (in four volumes) in Paris. See Jean Antoine Llorente, *Histoire critique de l'Inquisition espagnole*, trans. Alexis Pellier (Paris: Treuttel et Würz, 1818).

<sup>74</sup> Goya painted *The Assumption of the Virgin* (1812) in the village church of Chinchón where his brother Camilo had been a priest.

<sup>75</sup> Janis Tomlinson, *Francisco Goya y Lucientes 1746-1828* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1994), 181.

marginal, the forgotten, the outraged,” as Carlos Fuentes writes, “so as to include them in a vision of humanity that enlarges our own historic and human possibility by looking at what we also are, but have perhaps forgotten.”<sup>76</sup> His work becomes a vehicle which prophesizes the future in his time and place, the future in which we are coming full circle and face to face with such events as the Holocaust, Hiroshima and even the tortures practiced at Abu Ghraib, the central prison in Baghdad. Indeed Goya’s stark depictions of the tortures of the Inquisition, for instance,<sup>77</sup> seem somewhat tame compared to the many inhumanities and mass brutalities more recently witnessed.

Goya often incorporated loaded text (one of the most important and original aspects of Goya’s series) in an equally charged image. And by the same token, we find a similar propensity for Morris to practice language/image juxtaposition—a remarkably consistent element in Morris’s oeuvre which was discussed above. However, where Morris differs from Goya, as Sultan accurately observes, “is in his insistence on the importance of the emblematic character of the language.”<sup>78</sup>

Morris’s show *Inability to Endure or Deny the World*, held at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1990, featured works incorporating visual images and texts. It included encaustic paintings, drawings<sup>79</sup> and etchings in which personal memories, art history, and historical and philosophical ideas are embedded either in the images

---

<sup>76</sup> Carlos Fuentes, “Goya and the Spirit of Revolution,” *Art News*, 88 1 (January 1989), 95.

<sup>77</sup> Many drawings in Goya’s series from Album C reveal the horror of torture by the Inquisition in Spain after 1814. For more on Goya’s drawings, see Pierre Gassier, *Francisco Goya: Drawings* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973).

<sup>78</sup> Sultan “Representation and Text in the Work of Robert Morris,” *Inability to Endure or Deny the World*, 21.

<sup>79</sup> A great many of the etchings and drawings that Morris produced in 1990 are also inspired by Goya.

or in the texts. Among the many motifs borrowed by Morris one quickly recognizes the catoptric anamorphosis of the skull from Holbein's *Ambassadors* (1533) in *Improvident/Decisive/Determined/Lazy...* (1990) [Figs. 80-81]; the famous photographs of Jackson Pollock in action by the photographer Hans Namuth in *Monument Dead Monument/Rush Life Rush* (1990); and of course a number of striking images that go back to Goya [Figs. 82-87]. In *Horde/Hoard/Whored* (1989), *Memory Is Hunger* (1990), and *Continuities* (#1) (1988) among others, Morris clearly encompasses renditions of Goya's works: *Great Colossus Asleep* (1824-28) and *The Giant* (c. 1818), along with *Duel with Cudgels* (1820-1823), where two peasants from Galicia are engaged in a battle to the death as we watch their knees sinking into the ground.

Morris's choice of Goya as a major inspiration in his work makes sense because, "like our own time, the fin de siècle crisis Goya witnessed in the years leading up to 1800," Rose points out, "was one of profound paradoxes: unbelievable luxuries coexisted with great suffering and mass uprisings, stimulating both remarkable artistic, technological, and scientific discoveries and human degradation, moral corruption, and political weakness."<sup>80</sup> Looking at Goya's *Torture of a Man* (Album F. 56<sup>81</sup>), c.1815-20, where a man is subjected to the *strappado*<sup>82</sup>—still currently

---

<sup>80</sup> Rose, "The Odyssey of Robert Morris," *Inability to Endure or Deny the World*, 10.

<sup>81</sup> The use of the term "album" is relatively recent and though perhaps convenient, it is not accurate since only the drawings from the Sanlúcar and Madrid albums show traces of having been bound. In the case of the other six albums, it is probable that the drawings were kept loose in portfolios. Therefore, it would be more accurate to refer to them as "series" or "cycles." See Pierre Gassier and Juliet Wilson, *The Life and Complete Work of Francisco Goya*, 2d. English ed. trans. Christine Hauch and Juliet Wilson (New York: Harrison House, 1981), 230.

<sup>82</sup> *Strappado* is a form of torture in which the wrists of the victim are tied with a rope behind their backs and then the body is suspended in the air with the rope passed over a pulley attached to the ceiling; sometimes weights were added to the legs of the victim not only to increase the pain but also to cause damage by dislocating both arms and legs. This form of torture sadly continues into the present era. One known victim was the Iraqi prisoner Manadel al-Jamadi, who died during interrogation by the C.I.A. in Abu Ghraib prison in 2003; it is believed that he had been

in practice at the time of the Spanish Inquisition—it becomes obvious that the artist was expressing his outrage at the barbarous practices of torture;<sup>83</sup> we find Morris doing the same in his portrayal of another method of torture, waterboarding, as later discussed in chapter five. Not surprisingly, like Goya Morris seeks to bear witness to the insensate and purposeless cruelties of war and his art is a time bomb of contemporary anxiety.<sup>84</sup>

As with these works incorporating Goya's motifs, other paintings make clear Morris's skills at absorbing imagery from disparate sources, then editing and creatively redeploying them to suit his own ends. In 1997 Morris created four large wall size paintings, exhibiting them at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York. An interesting aspect of these works was that they were painted using the encaustic technique, each constructed by assembling 112 square panels arranged in seven rows of sixteen panels: a dialogue with the Minimalist grid is explicit. Morris had used wax in the past; his earliest such work using this

---

subjected to the *strappado*. See Jane Mayer, "A Deadly Interrogation: Can the C.I.A. Legally Kill a Prisoner?" *The New Yorker* (Nov. 14, 2005), ([www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/11/14/051114](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/11/14/051114), accessed January 25, 2008).

<sup>83</sup> *Torture of a Man* is a drawing from Goya's final album from this period known as album F. (no. 56) showing a victim of the Inquisition. In F. 56, as well as in about thirty drawings from Album C. showing prisoners and tortured men, victims of the repression in Spain following the return of Ferdinand VII in 1814, Goya expresses his political ideas visually and literally on this worst period of repression that Spain had ever experienced. Goya clearly denounces oppression and the atrocities committed in the name of religion and morality and he comments on the clergy's support for such injustice. For more on this subject see Pierre Gassier and Juliet Wilson, *The Life and Complete Work of Francisco Goya*.

Additionally, Goya clearly confronts the viewer with the inclusion of text in these drawings (not in the F.56 though), which then becomes the title of the work. Titles such as *For Being Born Somewhere Else* (C.85); *For Being of Jewish Ancestry* (C.88); *Because he Spoke Differently* (C.89); *It's Better to Die* (C.103); *Don't Open your Eyes* (C.106) and *What Cruelty* (C.108) further increase the horror of the scene. Interestingly (and sadly), these images of brutality seem all too "familiar" in our present day despite their overall direct application to Goya's contemporary events more than 200 years ago.

<sup>84</sup> It is interesting to note that Goya's series of prints known collectively as *The Disasters of War*, were not intended for publication during the artist's lifetime; they were not presented to the public until more than fifty years after Goya's death and seventy years after he had made them. See Fred Licht, *Goya: The Origins of the Modern Temper in Art* (1973; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1989), 128.

material was a lead-over-wood piece he made in 1964 in memory of Leonardo da Vinci entitled *Leonardo*, in which he used encaustic (and wires) in the lower portion. However, now Morris handles the centuries-old technique in such a way that it lends a strong tactile sense to the presence of the material, while the rather large size of the works suggests grandeur bordering on the abstract sublime. The Castelli show was entitled *Robert Morris, Horizons Cut: Between Clio & Mnemosyne*. As their titles indicate and Morris himself explained,<sup>85</sup> three of the paintings are of landscapes, derived from works by some American predecessors: Frederick Edwin Church, George Inness and Albert Pinkham Ryder titled respectively *After a Detail of the Icebergs 1891 by Frederick Edwin Church*; *Derived from a Part of the Coming Storm 1880 by George Inness* and *From a Fragment of the Race Track 1895-1910 by Albert Pinkham Ryder*. The fourth composition, entitled *Based on a Section from Mt. Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves 1904-1906, Cézanne*, stems from the French artist Paul Cézanne. This work reminds us of two 1997 prints, as well as a *Blind Time* drawing with the same theme that Morris created blindfolded as he “recalled” Cézanne's painting in 1991 (discussed in chapter three) [Figs. 88-89].

Initially presenting us with ambiguities of perception, *Based on a Section from Mt. Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves 1904-1906, Cézanne* is a painting that evokes private meanings grounded in the layering of memory. Surely it is a work that explicitly conjures up art history, as do so many other of Morris's works previously mentioned, the subject of the painting being none other than the most famous mountain of the Western art world. However, the painting clearly resists

---

<sup>85</sup> Morris, conversation with the author, New York, January 1997.



any immediate or obvious reading no matter how familiar the subject of this work is, inasmuch as Morris has “recreated” the famous picture, not the mountain per se, and he did so using not one but 112 square panels assembled rectangularly on a metal framework. Morris addresses Cézanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* paintings in a 1996 essay called “Cézanne's Mountains”:

In what sense are these works representations based on the code of resemblance? ... What name is there for this so-called sky that transmutes with so little transition into this so-called mountain? What name is there for this faceted skein of marks that fall now like a veil and now like a wall below a horizon that is itself permeable to a surge and flow between top and bottom, not to mention the suggestion of far as near and near as far? ... What sort of space has the capacity to both hover and yet anchor itself to a surface? (Surely that grotesque, clanking *grid* leaning in the art historical corner is a far too rusty and Procrustean bed on which to stretch these works.)<sup>86</sup>

However, if Morris is not simply presenting us with a contemporary depiction of an earlier mountain scene (which he is not), then what might be the motive behind his painting *Based in a Section from Mt. Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves 1904-1906, Cézanne?* Could it be possibly that we are actually experiencing a message from the past, from the work of an earlier artist, transposed and integrated into the contemporary scene? For clues to perceiving just what lies beneath the obvious here, we can do no better than to turn to Morris's own philosophical essay on Cézanne's mountains in which he draws our attention to the notion of space in the French master's work by articulating an alternative understanding of these landscapes, examining them within the context of memory loss:

The space Cézanne arrived at was an unstable one. In the Mont Sainte-Victoire works, where objects begin to lose their identities, space begins to compress. The feeling induced by these works is both grand and anxious, informed by both dread and relief. It is the feeling of an incipient blindness

---

<sup>86</sup> Morris, “Cézanne's Mountains,” *Have I Reasons*, 102-103.

in which we are about to lose the visual world and its objects and the demands and terrors these inflict on us. This visual world of depth and objects is exchanged for another delivered by means of the haptic algorithm. This landscape becomes an abyss where visual depth darkens into touch... The *Mont Sainte-Victoire* works teeter on a phase change. They stand, as it were, at the entrance to the world, shutting down visually, collapsing into the space of blindness, where depth is lost to touch, which, in these late works, are the hesitant touches of mourning and farewell.

On another level these works can be read as an aggressive, destructive gesture, or rather, such a gesture can be read within the works, arising from Cézanne's despair and anger at the progress of "development" arriving to disrupt and destroy his childhood spaces.<sup>87</sup>

While referring to Cézanne's sentiments, the perceptions here expressed by Morris might also be interpreted as applying to his own as well. Even as he is discussing Cézanne's work we are also hearing about his own artistic production: "The very 'unfinish' of these works reiterates the refusal of resolution and closure of those conflicts and hesitations that were the conditions of their making—and all art since seems far too finished. The glory of these late works lies in their perpetuation of risk, in their refusal to shut down the contradictions upon which they were built."<sup>88</sup>

Likewise, Morris intertwines his interest as an artist in earlier imagery with personal memories. He has often talked about how impressed he was when, as a mere boy of about eight years old, he first saw Cézanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves* (1904-1906) in the Nelson Gallery of Art in Kansas City, Missouri:

Half a century ago I stood on a rocky Missouri hillside beneath a heavy canopy of oaks and persimmons and massive walnuts... On that day, in that throbbing heat, the spaces between me and the world had yet to be measured; I had yet to assess the world's spaces and those of my body; I had yet to risk my movement within and against the spaces of the world; I had yet to measure my margins of mobility against the weight of history. Being as green as the summer landscape, I was also as empty as the sky of

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 119.

those future clouds that would demand redemption in the midst of ambition. On that sweltering Missouri late afternoon summer day, nothing interrupted the innocence of a sensed awkwardness. There was only a ringing anxiety, a desperate insecurity, and a frightening sense of absence. And if the power of Cézanne stirred my hand, it was a power that was too old for me and one I could not grasp, one that youth could not touch, for I had at such a time no nostalgia to redeem, and my quiet spaces of childhood had yet to be demolished by the world and my own desire. Loss and mourning and grief were mine yet to discover, as was the surrender of desire. Death had not yet made its more formal appearances, and so I could not see it acknowledged as well as subdued there beneath the flurry of brush strokes vibrating within the rectangle on the wall of the Nelson Gallery in *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves*. (1904-6).

Do I want to assert that when I first saw *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves* as a child, transfixed by it in September 1939, I did not take its tripartite divisions for a representation of sky, mountain, and an area that was not so much foreground or background as neither and both?<sup>89</sup>

He has even spoken of the emotions experienced during a visit to Cézanne's studio in Aix-en-Provence in 1988, when he felt the driving need to touch Cézanne's cloak.<sup>90</sup> Even the theme itself of Morris's exhibition evokes a powerful essence of memory of the past within his own life, the title *Horizons Cut: Between Clio & Mnemosyne* referring to both the muse of history, Clio, and the mother of the nine muses in Greek mythology, Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory.

Rather than unity, division and fragmentation predominate in *Based in a Section from Mt. Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves 1904-1906*, Cézanne, thus provoking a sense of uneasiness and doubt within the viewer. We also discover that no human figure can be found, nor even sensed anywhere in this painting. Herein lies the reason why while we first perceived this landscape as a source of delight, one we were expecting to "enjoy," in reality we find that the reverse is true and instead it changes into a terrifying underlying threat: that of the eventual

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 112-113.

<sup>90</sup> Morris, conversation with the author, New York, January 1997.

loss of this very landscape, soon to be forever disintegrated by “progress” and technology. Morris’s visual language imprisons the viewer’s mind, capturing it in a lingering consideration of the forever-altered condition of modern mankind and the idea that a once certain reality is gradually but unmistakably slipping away. Thus Morris’s work, similar to that of Cézanne’s, suggests the mourning of a loss. However, Morris’s mourning additionally appears to be bound up with the premonition of a threat, as is similarly suggested in other works, such as *Tar Babies of the New World Order* (see chapter three).

### IMPUNC Undermined

Morris seems always concerned about the way art is made, exhibited and received, and even more interested in the physicality of a work and the viewer’s perception than in any idea of monumentality, which in fact he opposed as early as the 1960s. “Monumentality for what?” Morris once declared “What is there to monumentalize in the twentieth century? At the end of this century the idea is obscene. I don’t think there is anything to monumentalize. My work has always been opposed to that kind of grandeur.”<sup>91</sup> In his essay “Size Matters,” Morris writes about the commercialization of art within the museum, the transformation of New York and the world in general into a place where there is little space (if any) for marginality, and the contemporary postminimalist fetishization of size. He writes about Richard Wagner’s style of intimidation and the grandiosity of his music, and he compares it to the dominating presence of intimidating “big” contemporary works, which he calls “Wagner effect” art:

But wait. What about really big art? Big enough to be heard over the guilty giggles and sticking up far above the shoulders of those slacker

---

<sup>91</sup> See Obrist, “Concrete Utopias or Printing to Make Public,” 161.

slouches. Big stuff that makes you wonder what it cost, even in a time when money is out of control... Big is what matters... Work falling under the rubric of the Wagner effect would be aimed at servicing the upper echelons of a would-be ruling class who, in their driven generosity, demand those vast and sanctified spaces of the museum as testimony to the importance of their class and self-congratulatory public service... Lit more by a dim, somber romantic sky, art emanating the Wagner effect perhaps dumbs down (as opposed to the Mozart effect, which makes even rats smarter) or numbs down with a massive, swooning, mystical aesthetic awe whose price per square foot alone can induce vertigo. Style doesn't much matter for the Wagner effect, gigantic size and expense being the generating engine. Of course, besides the grandiosity, touches of the mystical and allusions to origins don't hurt either—they didn't hurt Wagner.<sup>92</sup>

In a note on "Size Matters," Morris further explains that besides the Romantic concerns with guilt, origins and mysticism, he has included some other specific contributions of Wagner: "the sense of endlessness and huge scale, the numbing awe, the droning of the repetitive, the heaviness and portentousness of the once again reworked sublime, the coming-to-get-you-ness of the aggressively theatrical—in short, all of those things (and a few more) that Nietzsche came to detest as decadent in Wagner's work."<sup>93</sup> Certainly Morris's criticism in "Size Matters" parallels Nietzsche's "declaration of war" upon Wagner (and German "taste") in his brilliant essay "The Case of Wagner," published in 1888.<sup>94</sup> For Nietzsche, Wagner was decadent, "A typical decadent who has a sense of necessity in his corrupted taste, who claims it as a higher taste, who knows how to get his corruption accepted as law, as progress, as fulfillment."<sup>95</sup> This was a symptom, of course, of a broader European decadence at that time.

---

<sup>92</sup> Morris "Size Matters," *Have I Reasons*, 128-129.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, n.9.

<sup>94</sup> See Nietzsche, "The Case of Wagner," *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, Inc., 1967), 155-192.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

In his essay “From a Chomskian Couch: The Imperialistic Unconscious,” which reads like a psychoanalytical session between the well-known American linguist, philosopher and political activist Noam Chomsky and Morris, we find the latter expanding on his ideas of imperialistic tendencies in American art since the mid-twentieth century. Responding on the matter of Chomsky’s alleged inquiry he responds:

Me: The challenge of ambitious American art since mid-twentieth century was to be up to the task of producing cultural icons befitting a world empire. What makes Jackson Pollock's canvases function as banners for an empire? First, their implicit defeat of European painting; second, their focus on energy to sustain the agonistic triumph; and third, their pragmatism in harnessing process. Besides the large-scale requirement, these characteristics—the agonistic, the energetic and the pragmatic—have remained requirements of ambitious American art regardless of genre affiliations. A pessimistic attitude, always judged anti-American, has generally disqualified, but if writ large, even a Claes Oldenburg could be run up the flagpole.<sup>96</sup>

For Morris, a large number of American artists since the 1950s did not resist “the rhetorical, all-American, self-congratulatory monumental scale, which continues down to today, that American art of the imperialistic unconscious (IMPUNC)... Aggressively large scale, grand spatial occupation, the buzz of spectacle. From Pollock and Newman on down to Stella, Di Suvero, Heiser, Turrell, Kelly, Serra. From Andy Warhol's yard goods of camouflage to Jeff Koons' flowering puppies.... The list goes on...”<sup>97</sup>

Morris continues about what he thinks of the World Trade Center site display [Fig. 90] (known of course as Ground Zero following the September 11, 2001 attacks), “A temporary monument in the form of a ‘theater of lights’ marked the site of the

<sup>96</sup> Morris, “From a Chompskian Couch: The Imperialistic Unconscious,” *Have I Reasons*, 174.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-176.

two most monstrous and egregious pieces of architecture to have ever burdened the island of Manhattan.”<sup>98</sup> And he concludes by relating the theatrical display of the Towers of Light with the Nuremberg Parade Ground [Fig. 91] of the Third Reich in 1934, “where seventy years ago Albert Speer installed his memorable searchlights.”<sup>99</sup> Naturally, Morris is referring here to Albert Speer’s plan to surround the Zeppelinfeld stadium (the Nuremberg parade grounds) with one hundred and thirty anti-aircraft searchlights aimed skyward to create vertical bars surrounding the audience. This created a dramatic lighting effect, a “cathedral of light” as it is known, or as it was called by the British Ambassador Sir Neville Henderson, a “cathedral of ice (both solemn and beautiful).”<sup>100</sup>

Even more recently, when invited to give a lecture at the Royal Institution of Great Britain on the occasion of his 2008 exhibition *Morning Star Evening Star* in the Sprüth Magers Gallery in London, Morris reassessed different strategies since the 1950s in the context of current theories of perception in a talk titled “The Labyrinth and the Urinal.” He begins by referring to such monumental works of antiquity as obelisks, pyramids, temples and palaces among others:

Any history of the monumental would document a long list of triumphal works in the service of military victories... Objects of large physical scale have always impressed. This was the intention. Power, high status, and the sacred demanded sublime expressions in order to elicit submission. Look up and be aware of your feeble smallness in the face of the greater authority and glory represented by the monumental artifact.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> See Albert Speer, “Architectural Megalomania,” *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs*, Richard and Clara Winston trans. (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1970), 59.

<sup>101</sup> Morris, “The Labyrinth and the Urinal,” *Critical Inquiry*, 36, 1 (Autumn 2009), 76-77.

Then Morris moves on to discuss the subject of modernity, with regard to nationalism and American romantic modernism:

America was on top after defeating the Axis in 1945. Something was needed to acknowledge this new world power. Something untainted by the still-smoldering European ruins. America needed, demanded, a triumphal art. Only something grand and sublime would do. How about Jackson Pollock's large-scale abstract art? This art defeated that tired European Cubist space of ambiguous objects. If Cubism had deconstructed the object, Pollock eliminated it by a detonation of pure indexical signs. On a small scale those swirls and drips would have collapsed into the decorative... Could one even get back far enough in the usual gallery space to see both ends of a really large Pollock? Maybe. But being close up, in front, vision and body submerged in the roiling energy of the anti-gestalt, visual pulsations—this was the way to experience this work. One soaked in a Pollock. One surrendered one's body to its indexical rush... An allegorical sign of American power had been achieved.<sup>102</sup>

Over time Morris's art (like his writings<sup>103</sup>) has become oriented more toward his concerns with contemporary social attitudes and issues, and his works are often polemical, given that his concerns focus on current manifestations of corporate excess, the hidden perils of modern technology and innovations, the risky trends toward international disengagement, unilateralism, and preemptive belligerence, and the commercialization of the aesthetic. Morris's concerns closely mirror the stark realities of the turbulent times we now face. Can it be possible that Morris's increasingly outspoken criticism is a response to the recent eight years of the Bush administration's promotion of optimism at all cost while "outlawing" serious thinking under any circumstances? Certainly American culture tends to be very much in the optimistic vein, but in recent years we have witnessed this phenomenon spreading globally.

---

<sup>102</sup> Morris, "The Labyrinth and the Urinal," 86.

<sup>103</sup> For Morris's writings after 1993, see *Have I Reasons*.



Morris with his writings and his art certainly raises questions that exhibit a rather pessimistic view that puts one in mind of the ancient affliction of melancholy. Melancholy,<sup>104</sup> known since the times of Hippocrates, who mentioned it in his writings on the impact that the natural environment has on humans,<sup>105</sup> seems to be a rather common thread throughout Morris's oeuvre. In fact he even incorporates the term itself in some of his works, like his 1999 *Blind Time V: Melancholia* drawing series, as well as the installation in Tuscany entitled *Melencolia II*, 2002 (discussed in chapter five). As Robert Burton, the English scholar and vicar at Oxford University, reminds us in his description of his own methods of dealing with this depressive malady:

I writ of melancholy, by being busy to avoid melancholy. There is no grater cause of melancholy than idleness, no better cure than business, as Rhasis holds: and how but to be busied in toys is to small purpose, yet hear that divine Seneca: Better do to no end than nothing. I writ therefore, and busied myself in this playing labour that I might avoid the torpor of laziness, with Vectius in Macrobius, and turn my leisure to purpose.<sup>106</sup>

During this investigation of Morris's interest and study of language we discovered that the struggle he presents between language and image for the domination of the spectator is in no way static, but somehow adjusts to and fits the decades in which it appears, regardless of the medium. A comparison of his works with Goya's revealed a similarity in their treatment of juxtaposition of language and image. Also, we saw Morris's expressed concern with contemporary attitudes and the morality of our times as not dissimilar to those of Goya. Morris's rejection

<sup>104</sup> From the ancient Greek μέλας (black) and χολή (bile).

<sup>105</sup> "...τοῖσι δὲ χολώδεσι τοῦτο πολεμιώτατον γίνεται· λίην γὰρ ἀναξηραίνονται καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῖσιν ἐπιγίνονται ξηραί, καὶ πυρετοὶ ὀξέες καὶ πολυχρόνιοι, ἐνίοισι δὲ καὶ μελαγχολία." See Hippocrates, "Περὶ ἀέρων υδάτων τόπων" in *Ιπποκρατική ἰατρική*, Δ. Λυπουρλής ed. (Θεσσαλονίκη: Παρατηρητής, 1983), 220.

<sup>106</sup> Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy, What It Is: With all the Kindes, Causes, Symptomes, Prognosticks, and Several Cures of It: Philosophically, Medically, Historically* (London: J.M. Dent; New York: E.P. Dutton, 1932), 16.

of monumentality and the contemporary infatuation with power and size becomes even more pronounced.

## Chapter Five: Five Hundred Years of Whiteness

*The danger is in the neatness of identifications.*

Samuel Beckett<sup>1</sup>

### "How at This Dark Hour"

Morris's interest in collective and personal memory will be discussed within the context of his works over the last two decades. The spectator's experience of works in relationship to space will be examined in secular as well as sacred commissions. His tendency towards cultural pessimism will be closely look at with respect to works of various media, including lead and encaustic paintings. We will also investigate a recycling of some of his earlier pieces.

And the versatility, which we found throughout Morris's previous output, continues to prevail in his works of the 1990s and on into the first decade of the twenty first century, including his most recent efforts. These include the stained-glass windows installed in Maguelone Cathedral (2001); his permanent site-specific installation *Melencolia II* (2002) in Fattoria di Celle in Pistoia; his two-screen video-and-sound installation *The Birthday Boy* (2004); *Less than* (2005), his permanent installation in Reggio Emilia; and the encaustic paintings depicting

---

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Beckett, beginning his essay "Dante...Bruno. Vico..Joyce"—each dot following the names represents the passage of real time: from Dante Alighieri in the fourteenth century to Giordano Bruno in the seventeenth is three centuries; from Giambattista Vico in the eighteenth to James Joyce in the twentieth is two. See *James Joyce-Finnegans Wake: A Symposium* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1972), 3. This book is a collection of critical essays about "Work in Progress" (what was to become *Finnegans Wake*) written before Joyce's last novel was published in 1939.

interiors and domestic landscapes from the '40s commenting on war and memory (2004-2006).

During the late 1990s Morris created a trilogy for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Lyon, which was exhibited over three successive summers between 1998 and 2000. Although the installations were new, conceived specifically for this space, the artist used a number of his earlier works as elements to be included into each of the three installations. More specifically, *Threadwaste* (1968), *Williams Mirrors* (1977), *Portland Mirrors* (1977), *Passageway* (1961), and *Mirror Film* (1969-1971) were among the parts making up the first installation, entitled *Labyrinth I*; of Morris's performances and choreographies from the 1960s, video projections of four of them (*Arizona*, *Waterman Switch*, *Site* and *21.3*) were among the contents of his second work, a one-thousand-square-meter maze entitled *Labyrinth II*, also known as *Lyon Labyrinth*; and *Mirror Film* (1969-1971) was included in the third one, called *White Nights*.

One of his most breathtaking installations, *White Nights* [Fig. 92] is a synthesis of Morris's ideas regarding perception, image, memory, and especially time, since a particularly lengthy time period must necessarily be devoted by the viewer in moving through this installation. "I think of this work as extending time," Morris once said, "I wanted the work to establish a space where one could reflect on one's life, a space where a certain kind of slowed timespace permitted such reflection."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Morris, interview with Bertrand, "Labyrinth II," 165-66.

The vast room on the second floor of the museum was transformed into a labyrinth made not from a concrete, firm, solid material such as steel, wood, or marble (as Morris's other labyrinths), but instead from soft, fine, white semi-transparent fabric suspended from the ceiling. Once we approach its entrance, we feel encouraged to enter and follow a single path. When inside we move through the narrow passage experiencing, on the one hand, an anticipation of the unknown, as we do not know exactly where we are going and what will follow our next step, and on the other a sense of confinement, as we are enclosed by the ten-feet-high "wall."<sup>3</sup> And this feeling of confinement occurs even though this "wall" is not solid. We can, in fact, brush against it or push it away from our body—before the wall-curtain returns to its original position. The "subtext" that drives this work is certainly time and duration.

The path has no alternate turns available so we soon arrive at the centre, which is rather wide open, unlike in other Morris labyrinths (for instance in Pistoia or in Pontevedra, where we get to the centre of the labyrinth through tight aisles Figs. 93-94). In the centre, we find ourselves surrounded by images projected on the fabric from a rotating table placed there;<sup>4</sup> two sets of images move in opposite directions, then fuse along the "walls." They are all World War II photographs, [Figs. 95-96] chosen from the archives of the *Centre d'Histoire de La Résistance*

---

<sup>3</sup> There is also an approximately four-inch gap at the bottom edge to allow people's feet to slide under the wall-curtain.

<sup>4</sup> A total of eighty-six images were chosen for the *White Nights* installation. In addition to the photographs I mention above, the images include: a 1939 portrait of the Resistance fighter Jean Moulin (1899-1943), the cell where Moulin was tortured in the Montluc fort, some collaborators, crowds cheering General Henri Philippe Pétain (1856-1951), General Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970) at the liberation of Lyon, poet and novelist Louis Aragon with his wife the author Elsa Triolet at the liberation of Lyon, the Allied bombings, and a powerful photograph of hand prints on walls left by people who had been tortured in the quarters of the Ministry of the Interior. See also Anne Dagbert, "Robert Morris: Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon," *Artforum* (September, 2000), 27 (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York).

*et de la Déportation* in Lyon—headquarters of the Gestapo during the German occupation. They show the execution of hostages; prisoners being taken to concentration camps (June 29, 1944); Wehrmacht officers in front of the Grand Hotel (1942); a swastika in front of the Hotel de Ville (1940); explosions of bridges and buildings in Lyon such as the Lyon-Vaise<sup>5</sup> train station after the bombardment in May 26, 1944; a torture helmet found after the liberation in the Gestapo prisons. In his essay “Threading the Labyrinth,” Morris noted:

And what about evil? Couldn't there be an anti-aesthetic linked to evil? Or are there only good innate faculties? In the archives of the Resistance in Lyon, France, there is on file a Gestapo photograph of an elegant kind of helmet penetrated by large screws that when turned...<sup>6</sup>

Standing in the middle of the labyrinth we turn around to look at these images as they alternate with a film-like quality in front of our eyes. Soon we realize that these fragments of collective memory come into collision with images of private memories in the form of an actual film also being projected on the “wall.” It is Morris’s *Mirror Film*, an eight minute and thirty-one second 16mm film shot in 1969 in Wisconsin [Fig. 97]. He appears to be walking through a snowy landscape. He is holding a large mirror in front of his body while walking in a circle. Acting as a frame within a frame, the mirror reflects the surroundings—bare trees, snow covered ground and sky.<sup>7</sup> Morris moves off towards the trees, whose reflection we see on the mirror. Then he disappears. Then he appears again. In both cases, the *Mirror Film* and the World War II photographs, the spectators cannot help but feel like participants, particularly as their figures

---

<sup>5</sup> Vaise was one of the five arrondissements in Lyon. Since 1964, with the population increase, four more arrondissements were created, making the total nine.

<sup>6</sup> Morris, “Threading the Labyrinth,” *Have I Reasons*, 143.

<sup>7</sup> Initially the mirror also reflects the cameraman shooting the film, but as Morris moves further away he disappears.

appear silhouetted on the “walls,” intertwined with images of the innocent—the tortured and torturers alike.<sup>8</sup> Surrounded by these images we are trapped into experiencing the work from within and perhaps even see ourselves as accomplices to the horrific acts committed during that time. In addition we soon realize that the path that took us to the centre of the labyrinth is not the only one and that there are more—none of which will take us to an exit. They are mazelike corridors formed by the same “wall-curtains,” where additional World War II photographs are projected and/or mirrors placed to reflect us as we wander through the different paths. Discussing his decision to create a maze-type labyrinth (for the 1999 and 2000 installations), Morris explained:

I don't remember when the idea of putting the video projections of the dance performances into the 1999 *Lyon Labyrinth* occurred. Early in the development of the work I knew I wanted to make a labyrinth that was different from the previous ones I had built. And there is only one other basic type, that of the maze.<sup>9</sup>

While we are moving around, continuing our journey through the maze without knowledge of our exact position in space, disoriented and searching for an exit, we are listening in the distance to the great Italian opera soprano Mirella Freni singing the aria “Come in quest’ora bruna” from Giuseppe Verdi’s *Simon Boccanegra*—the very same aria in fact that Morris used for his performance *Waterman Switch* (1965) discussed in chapter two. The experience is indeed powerful. As Anne Dagbert notes, we are “grappled physically and mentally with the images and associations they provoked, concretely illustrating one aspect of

---

<sup>8</sup> It was a powerful experience seeing my silhouette next to Gestapo officers and Klaus Barbie (1913-1991), known as the Butcher of Lyon, who was in charge of the Gestapo in Lyon between 1942 and 1944. For more on Klaus Barbie, see Tom Bower, *Klaus Barbie: The Butcher of Lyon* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> Morris, interview with Bertrand, 181.

the mind/body problem, a key point in Morris's process."<sup>10</sup> She further accurately points that "this metaphorical use of the arrested time of memory's repetitive moments was felt in *White Nights*, a labyrinth whose path Morris traced from memory based on the one he had made here [in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Lyon] a year earlier, and which called on the 'private memory' of *Mirror Film*, on the one hand, and on the collective memory evoked by archival photographs on the other."<sup>11</sup>

Also in France, and while he was making the trilogy in Lyon, Morris was working on another project for Maguelone Cathedral in the south, near Montpellier. Maguelone Cathedral, also known as Saint-Pierre de Maguelone, is an eleventh-century Romanesque church built by Bishop Arnaud (1030-1060)<sup>12</sup> and now designated a French national historical monument by the French Ministry of Culture. Located on the small isolated island of Maguelone,<sup>13</sup> whose rich history goes back to antiquity, the fortress-like cathedral is a single monument in an austere, isolated, and quiet location, only a few hundred meters from the shoreline. One approaches the church over a long causeway through marshes surrounding the tiny island. That is to say, a visitor experiences not only an important architectural and interesting building, but also a rather unique and remarkable place. It is not surprising then that Morris was eagerly looking forward to being the finalist for such a significant project to create seventeen stained-glass windows for the cathedral. Morris was selected over a number of

---

<sup>10</sup> See Dagbert, "Robert Morris: Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon," 27.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> For more on this subject, see Robert Saint-Jean, "L'ancienne cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Maguelone," *Languedoc Roman* (St. Leger-Vauban: Zodiaque, 1975), 226-244.

<sup>13</sup> Maguelone is located near the well-known seaside resort of Palavas, in the south of France.



other competing artists by the delegation of the French Ministry of Culture in the summer of 1998.<sup>14</sup> The installation of the seventeen stained-glass windows was completed in 2002.<sup>15</sup>

Morris chose only two hues for the windows [Figs. 98-101], “colors of sky, water, sun.”<sup>16</sup> He selected a light blue for the windows on the east (the choir and the Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher), and the west side of the church. However, for the south window locations (the Chapel of Saint Mary and the Chapel of Saint Augustine), he incorporated a honey color. Certainly, as he himself stated, the concept of this installation was developed from his response to the site, the architecture and the monument.<sup>17</sup> The design of the windows draws on the motif of the concentric ripples made by a stone dropped into still water.<sup>18</sup> In some of the windows the outline is closer to the centre of the ripples while in others it is close to the edges. This is quite striking in the three windows [Figs. 102-104] in the apse, where the outline in the middle window is placed closer to the centre, though the side ones have the outline close to the left and right respectively. Therefore, the undulating forms of the stained-glass windows, particularly the blue ones, evoke waves, reminiscent of the surrounding sea, whereas the yellow

---

<sup>14</sup> In conversation with the author Morris said that he did not expect to be the finalist because he was competing with six French artists for this project. Athens, June 1998.

<sup>15</sup> The glass master Dominique Duchemin (along with Gilles Rousvoal) was responsible for the execution of the stained glasses using a type of thermoforming (glass forming at high temperature). The realization of the whole project, which also required the needed restoration of the bays, was under the control of the architect Dominique Larpin. (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York). For more on this subject, see also Grenier, *Morris à Saint-Pierre de Maguelone* (Paris: Editions Ereme, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Morris, *La création des vitraux*, unpaginated. Text given to the author. This text was published as “Avant-Propos,” in Grenier, *Morris à Saint-Pierre de Maguelone*, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Morris, in conversation with the author, Athens, June 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

panes suggest the illuminating sunshine/sunset—in other words the pervasiveness of the sea and sunlight of the Mediterranean coastline.<sup>19</sup>

The fusion of Morris's contemporary creation with this historic one-thousand-year-old setting is indeed striking. Sitting on a bench inside the austere, impressive church, watching the radiant daylight stream through the blue and honey stained-glass windows to transform the interior in an ever-changing manner over time, indeed makes for a powerful spiritual experience. In a poetic manner the artist Claudio Parmiggiani describes his response when he visited Maguelone Cathedral to see Morris's stained-glass windows:

In a solitary place not far from the sea.  
The Cathedral of Maguelone with Robert's stained-glass windows.  
The sea's waves, blown into the ice as I was telling him....  
Robert keeps going back and forth in silence. It's like facing the end of the world as he tells me.<sup>20</sup>

Certainly Morris is neither the first nor only contemporary artist commissioned to create a work for a church. Since the 1930s, and particularly after World War II (many European churches had suffered substantial damage during the war of course), it was not unusual to ask twentieth-century artists to create designs for the destroyed windows of religious buildings [Figs. 105-106]. From Marc Chagall, to Joan Miró, Henri Matisse, Pierre Soulages and more recently Gerhard Richter, the list of artists who created designs for such stained-glass windows is lengthy. However, it is perhaps only in Morris's work for Saint-Pierre de Maguelone that we can truly experience the unity between contemporary visual arts and ancient

---

<sup>19</sup> The glass was also washed in acid to make it iridescent. Morris, in conversation with the author, Gardiner, New York, December 31, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Claudio Parmiggiani, "Untitled," *The Gori Collection: History and Nature*, exh. cat. (Valencia: IVAM, 2003), 214.

architecture, between present-day aesthetics and spirituality. In the many other cases of the designs by the artists mentioned above, it is difficult to realize any sense of unity. Either the setting overpowers contemporary visual art, as we see in the Gothic Saint Étienne Cathedral in Metz (Chagall) and in the Gothic Cathedral of Cologne (Richter),<sup>21</sup> or vice versa. In the case of the Chapelle Royale de Saint-Frambourg de Senlis (Miró), and Sainte-Foy Abbey in Conques (Soulages) the stained-glass windows not only overpower the setting, but even tend toward the decorative. More importantly, no significant experience seems inspired by them—even in the case of Vence's Chapel of the Rosary, a "new" twentieth-century structure built and decorated on plans from Matisse (1949-1951).<sup>22</sup> One views these stained-glass windows (and his murals on tiles) as if walking through an exhibition.

---

<sup>21</sup> A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1996, Cologne Cathedral is one of Germany's most important buildings. Its construction began in 1248 and was completed in 1880. The original stained-glass windows on the south side of the church was destroyed during World War II. Described as "a symphony of light," Richter's design for the 11,500 squares of glass filling the twenty-meter high window is an abstract multicolored kaleidoscope. See "Cologne Cathedral Gets New Stained-Glass Window," *Spiegel* online, August 27, 2007 ([www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,502271,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,502271,00.html), accessed September 28, 2008). The Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Joachim Meisner, opposed Richter's design. Reportedly he wanted a figurative work, with saints and martyrs rather than an abstract one. But Richter found it impossible to create figurative windows commemorating the Polish saints Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein, martyred by the Nazis. See D.E.P., "Gerhard Richter weist Meisners Kritik zurück," *Welt online*, August 31, 2007 ([www.welt.de/politik/article1148224/Gerhard\\_Richter\\_weist\\_Meisners\\_Kritik\\_zurueck.html](http://www.welt.de/politik/article1148224/Gerhard_Richter_weist_Meisners_Kritik_zurueck.html), accessed September 28, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> The Chapel of the Rosary was inaugurated by the bishop of Nice on June 25, 1951. Picasso, who was furious that Matisse was decorating a church, once asked the artist, "Why don't you do a marketplace instead? You could paint fruit and vegetables.' And Matisse confided in Marie-Alain Couturier: 'But I really don't care: I have greens that are more green than pears and oranges more orange than pumpkins. So what's the point?'... Picasso, still angry insisted: 'It would be all right if you believed in God. Otherwise, morally, I don't think you have the right.' 'For me,' replied Matisse, 'all of that is essential to a work of art. I meditate and become absorbed with what I am undertaking. I don't know if I have religious faith. Maybe I am more of a Buddhist. What is essential is to work in a state of mind that is close to prayer.'" See Gilles Néret, *Matisse*, trans. Lisa Davidson (New York: William S. Konecky Associates, 1993), 232-233.

This is hardly the case with Morris's work. In his plan, the windows are in no way overpowering but in fact become one with the structure. He in fact describes the integration of the individual components in his own words, accurately stating that "the windows stand in a subdued respectfulness to the whole, functioning as an ensemble that enhances the entire space, rather than calling undue attention to themselves as independently interesting objects."<sup>23</sup> Morris goes on to further discuss his installation in Saint-Pierre de Maguelone:

Neither the forms nor the colors of the windows are intended to call special attention to themselves. The windows are lenses that admit the light by which the interior play of mass and volume is seen and felt. The colors and forms of the windows are suggestive and metaphorical, their reticence is intended to compliment the reserved physical and transcendental presence of the Maguelone cathedral rather than assert an autonomy as objects in their own right. They exist only as sympathetic lenses, lending an enhancing context to those larger purposes to which the church itself has always been dedicated.<sup>24</sup>

The stained-glass windows in Saint-Pierre de Maguelone are not Morris's only pieces of work made for a church. In 2002, he also completed two public installations in Prato Cathedral (Italy), also known as Saint Stephen's Cathedral (the patron saint of the city of Prato), one placed in the presbytery of the cathedral, the other in the cloister space, work commissioned by Giuliano and Pina Gori. The group of works that Morris conceived for the presbytery [Figs. 107-108] comprises an altar, made from white translucent slabs of alicarnasso marble containing a light inside, which is illuminated during the church service; a three-armed red marble candelabrum (with bronze base) evoking the Holy Trinity and/or the crosses on Golgotha; and a bronze ambo. Four spherical red marble stones rest on the floor (two at the foot of the ambo and two at the candelabrum)

---

<sup>23</sup> Morris, "Concept for the Windows for the Cathedral at Villeneuve-les-Maguelone," undated (1998?) (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York), 1.

<sup>24</sup> Morris, "Avant-Propos," in Grenier, *Morris à Saint-Pierre de Maguelone*. 9-13

commemorating the martyrdom of Saint Stephen (the first Christian martyr), stoned to death around 34 C.E. Again, as in the Maguelone Cathedral, contemporary visual arts and medieval architecture have been brought into harmonious balance in the Prato Cathedral. This collection of works installed in the presbytery is perfectly sited within the setting of the twelfth-century Romanesque church, which houses masterpieces by a number of artists, including Giovanni Pisano, Filippo Lippi, Paolo Uccello, and Ghirlandaio. As for the external marble pulpit created in 1438, it is by none other than Donatello, the great Renaissance sculptor, also considered one of Morris's so called "friends." To quote Morris: "Donatello, an artist whose work continually reveals new aspects to me, feels like a friend; I feel like I know him and that he challenges my own work and inspires and encourages me. Maybe he also judges me. Does the past judge us?"<sup>25</sup>

As already discussed earlier (chapter three) the baby figure in Morris's *Tar Babies of the New World Order*, an installation created specifically for an exhibition in Venice in 1997, was stylistically modeled after one of Donatello's little angel-putti in *Cantoria* (1433-1438), in the Museum of the Opera del Duomo, in Florence. In his project in Prato, Morris makes reference to other works by this great Renaissance master. His ambo is both a commemoration of the martyrdom of the city's patron saint and a tribute to Donatello. The work, in the shape of a dramatic mantle [Fig. 108], recalls Donatello's sculpture of *Saint Louis of Toulouse* [Fig. 109], commissioned by the Parte Guelfa for a marble niche at Or

---

<sup>25</sup> Morris, interview with Bertrand, "Labyrinth II," 191.

San Michele in 1423.<sup>26</sup> *Saint Louis of Toulouse* is among the works that had a strong impact on Morris.<sup>27</sup> Donatello's view of *Saint Louis of Toulouse* was not that of the saint's conventional iconography.<sup>28</sup> Instead, he presents us with a peculiar and puzzling figure. The spectator does not come face to face with the figure of a seemingly imposing human being, but rather with dramatically beautiful, voluminous, chaotic heavy drapery with powerful deeply undercut folds and curves, which disguises and definitely overpowers the unassuming body within. And as if that ambiguity were not enough, Donatello even dressed the figure of Saint Louis in huge gloves instead of bare hands, which seem to be empty. In other words, there is no attempt to convey any message whatsoever that a hand, arm or even a body exists behind all that "metal." In Morris's work, however, the human figure has been eliminated altogether. There is no body under the drapery; one comes face to face with just a freestanding cloak—a dramatic form of drapery that induces in the viewer a strong emotional response. We are seduced into thinking in terms of spirit and flesh, of Plato's "shadows and ideas," life and death.

---

<sup>26</sup> Since the time of Vasari Donatello's sculpture of *Saint Louis of Toulouse* has often been criticized, but also, as Janson pointed out, "has been a bone of scholarly contention for more than half a century." See Horst W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 51; see Giorgio Vasari, "Donatello," *Lives of the Artists*, Volume I (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987), 184; see Alfred Gotthold Meyer, *Donatello*, trans. P. G. Konody (Bielefeld and Leipzig: Velhagen and Klasing, 1904), 30; see also John Pope-Hennessy, *Donatello Sculptor* (New York: Abbeville Press Inc., 1993), 52.

<sup>27</sup> Morris, in conversation with the author, Florence, February, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Saint Louis (1274-1297) was the elder son of Charles II, King of Naples and Sicily. However, influenced by the Spiritual Franciscans (an extremist group later condemned as heretical), he chose to abdicate his succession to the throne to become a member of this order. Due to Louis's royal position, Pope Boniface VIII did not countenance such a move and withheld his permission for Louis to join the Franciscan order. Instead the pontiff forced him to accept another ecclesiastical position, that of the Bishop of Toulouse. See Bonnie A. Bennett & David G. Wilkins, *Donatello* (Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1984), 212. Nevertheless, it is well known that during his brief time as bishop, Louis wore threadbare garments and begged for alms. He was canonized in 1317 by Pope John XXII.

Also dedicated to Donatello, as well as complimenting the group of works inside the church, is of course Morris's public installation entitled *Quattro per Donatello* (2002), placed outdoors in the Prato cloister of the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo. As Bruno Corà noted, the work seems "to tread on the terrain of a dual register, linguistic and formal."<sup>29</sup> Made from gray diorite, these four cubic forms with canted outer walls certainly recall Morris's *Untitled (Battered Cubes)* from 1965.<sup>30</sup>

Morris has stated on more than one occasion that he is an atheist. In his text "Backwards," an autobiographical essay in which the narrative begins with recent summer dreams and encompasses personal memories, working its way back through the years until reaching 1932, the year when Morris, just eighteen months of age, barely escaped death. Perhaps it was the circumstances surrounding this terrifying experience that turned him into an atheist at an extremely early age:

On August 8 at 18 months of age I pull from the stove a pot of boiling tomatoes which splashes over chest and abdomen and across the shoulders. Not expected to survive the burns. A long hospital stay during which the parents cease to be recognized. The mother, desperate and guilty, turns to prayer and Christian Science. The child survives. Mary Baker Eddy's egregious prose blathering about God is validated in the mind of the mother, who repeats and repeats it over and over to the son. Enough to turn him into an atheist at age ten.<sup>31</sup>

However, when asked what his thoughts and feelings were as he found himself working on sacred commissions, particularly creating an altar upon which is

---

<sup>29</sup> Bruno Corà, "Forme per il David: Contributo sulla crisi della forma," *Forme per il David/Forms for the David*, exh. cat. (Florence: Galleria dell'Accademia, 2004), 102.

<sup>30</sup> Morris's *Untitled (Battered Cubes)* was made from plywood painted light gray. The work was first exhibited in Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles in 1966.

<sup>31</sup> Morris, "Backwards," 15.

prepared the most spiritual element of the Catholic mass, the sacrament of the Eucharist, Morris replied:

Being an atheist perhaps prepared me to work on the altar as just another job. After all, Donatello was not a believer. And the bishop took one look at the ambo—that voluminous black-patined robe in bronze with the two large, red marble eggs peeking out from beneath the hem—and declared, “All they are going to talk about are Saint Stefano's big *cazzones*.” So he didn't seem so exercised about the spiritual either. I could smell the Eucharist wine on his breath as he spoke to me.<sup>32</sup>

Among contemporary artists worth mentioning who have been commissioned to create works for churches, we find Claudio Parmiggiani, Mark Rothko and Anthony Caro. Parmiggiani, also an atheist,<sup>33</sup> was asked by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 to create for the Vatican a work made with smoke.<sup>34</sup> The following amusing story took place: “The telephone rings: ‘The Vatican City speaking,’ says the voice. ‘Boring joke,’ thinks Parmiggiani and puts down the receiver. The telephone has to ring another couple of times before he is persuaded that it really is the Vatican.”<sup>35</sup>

Regarding Rothko and Caro, it is interesting that both are of the Jewish faith. When Caro was asked about how he felt as a Jew making a crucifix, one of the works he was commissioned to do for the choir of the Norman church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Boubourg in Pas-de-Calais, France, he replied: “I didn't feel

---

<sup>32</sup> Morris, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 23, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Parmiggiani said: “I was brought up with atheism as though it were a religion... Everything was rooted in the land, in myth: memory was about death, the pity of it all, the war.” See Anna Somers Cocks, “Pope Suggests Church Should Have Closer Relationship with Contemporary Art,” *Art Newspaper* 185 (November 2007), 51.

<sup>34</sup> It was in the 1970s when “Parmiggiani started to work with smoke, dust and soot: a self-portrait of himself as a projected shadow; memories of paintings on a wall, and rooms lined with shadows of burned books. These are the works that appealed to those monsignori in the Vatican.” See “Pope Suggests,” 51.

<sup>35</sup> Despite the artist's atheism, Parmiggiani's work “is full of images that come from the Church before the Second Vatican Council swept away so much.” See “Pope Suggests,” 51.



anything about it, it was a job. Rothko was Jewish. What the heck!”<sup>36</sup> Of course one might say that this is not the same because the Rothko Chapel<sup>37</sup> (as it is now known) is not for a particular faith but for people of every faith, which of course includes Judaism.

### Melencolia and the Moral Void

It is widely accepted that the complex symbolism of Albrecht Dürer’s engraving *Melencolia I* is a spiritual self-portrait of the artist himself.<sup>38</sup> Based primarily on concepts derived from Florentine Neoplatonism, the work shows a seated winged figure lost in thought and surrounded by the contemporary instruments of the arts and sciences. This winged genius is the personification of knowledge, which, without divine inspiration, appears unable to fly, to act. She seems defeated by human frailty. According to the astrological theory of the day,<sup>39</sup> such a person is identified with Saturn/Cronus, the Titan of Greek mythology who is said to have devoured his own children and is thus characterized by melancholia bordering on madness that either plunges him into deep despair, or conversely raises him to the heights of creative frenzy. Dürer (like Michelangelo) was regarded as suffering from this malady.

---

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Caro, as quoted in Laura Gascoigne, “Rising from the Ashes in the Hands of Anthony Caro,” *The Art Newspaper* 196 (November 2008), 42.

<sup>37</sup> The Rothko Chapel was founded by John and Dominique de Menil in Houston, Texas. Rothko was commissioned to create site-specific works for a meditative place. Rothko did not live to see the chapel’s completion in 1971, as he committed suicide in 1970. For more on Rothko see *Mark Rothko*, exh. cat. (London: Tate Gallery, 1987, 1996).

<sup>38</sup> See for instance Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1964), 317-365.

<sup>39</sup> Along with painting, sculpture, literature and science, the art of astrology flourished in the European Renaissance. The “revival” of classical antiquity also included rediscovery of the astrology of the great second-century C.E. mathematician and astronomer Ptolemy. For more on this subject, see Eugenio Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance: The Zodiac of Life*, trans. Carolyn Jackson and June Allen (London and Boston, Mass.: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd. 1983).

Certainly Morris's 1999 *Blind Time V: Melancholia* drawings, as well as the installation in Tuscany entitled *Melencolia II*, 2002 [Figs. 110-111], evoke Dürer's renowned engraving, suggesting a dialogue between past and present. But does Morris also perceive himself at one with the great masters of the Renaissance, some genius who struggles to translate the pure idea in his mind into visible matter? Furthermore, Cronus is not only associated with melancholy but also with time, (Cronus, or *Κρόνος* in ancient Greek, was often merged with Chronos, *Χρόνος*). Both themes figure prominently in Morris's art.

The textual commentaries on the *Blind Time V: Melancholia* series are predominantly personal: memories of friends who passed away like the art historian Edward Fry and the architect/designer Alan Buchsbaum, or childhood memories<sup>40</sup> when Morris recalls, for instance, his blacksmith grandfather's hands.

The text in this drawing reads:

Working blindfolded, estimating the lapsed time, and approaching the page from the top, I concentrate on remembering my blacksmith Grandfather's huge, callused, and misshapen hands. I rub downward trying to expand the imprints of my own hands to the size I felt his to be when I was seven and sitting beside him at sundown while he told me a story about snakes and foxes as he casually dipped his hands into a basket of crayfish he had seined that afternoon. When several crayfish had fastened their pincers onto his rough fingers he drew up his hands and proceeded to crack off their tails, throwing the heads over the fence to the chickens without a pause in the story. I make pinching motions at the bottom of the page, and finally, I rub the edges of the page trying to generate something like the heat we felt on our backs as we leaned against the sun-

---

<sup>40</sup> For more on this subject, see Morris, *TELEGRAM/THE RATIONED YEARS* (Geneva: JRP Editions, 1998).

warmed house on that hot, Missouri July  
evening so long ago. No time error as watch  
stopped.

The shapes fixed to the paper, before the action in the *Blind Time V: Melancholia* series and the objects in the *Melencolia II* installation, are geometric, all three out of Dürer's renowned engraving: the polyhedron, the wheel and the sphere.<sup>41</sup>

*Melencolia II* is a collaboration between Morris and Claudio Parmiggiani. Morris's three pieces are made from alicarnasso marble, Parmiggiani's column from cipollino marble and the bell from bronze. This work is installed in a bamboo grove on a site where there once stood a pre-Romantic garden, now a private sculptural theme park, in Fattoria di Celle in Tuscany. It is not visible from outside to a passerby; one must enter the bamboo grove. The impact is immediate and physical, this being one of Morris's most captivating and visually breathtaking installations. The space has become part of the work it engulfs. Nature (bamboo and earth) itself has suddenly intruded as one of the integrated components of the installation. The initial impression is that of quiet, contemplative space soothingly illuminated by leaf-shaded sunlight. But once the eyes readjust to the reduced brightness, the mood switches to one of heightened physical oppression which visitors sense as they weave among the bamboo plants seeking out the five pieces.

Deep inside, the sky now obscured by the bamboo canopy, the atmosphere seems to move further toward melancholy; finally a growing restlessness sets in. Another disturbing feature is that like his nearby *Labyrinth*, this installation sits not

---

<sup>41</sup> The three underlying geometric shapes from Dürer that appear beneath the rubbing of all the fifteen blind drawings in this series were made by the artist with his eyes open.

on a level plane but on sloping ground, making progress awkward and difficult. The work is experiential and comes alive with the viewer's participation. Time must be spent moving through the bamboo and among the polyhedron, the sphere, the wheel, the bell and the column. One has no choice but to deal with space, which is at the same time open and confined—also characteristics shared with Morris's nearby *Labyrinth* and all his labyrinths in general.

Discussing the deliberate reference of *Melencolia II* to Dürer, Parmiggiani has this to say: "Who decides what is inside time and what is outside time? I feel I am in the present and in the past, certainly in the future and also naturally in a situation of absolute transitory temporality."<sup>42</sup> Morris describes his perception as follows:

The bamboo and the *Column*, the *Wheel* and the *Bell*, the *Sphere* and the *Polyhedron*: these mark a path in time. First the timeless bamboo, then the Neolithic column, followed by the wheel of the Sumerians, and with the Bronze Age, the bell. The artless Neanderthal carved patterns of tiny hemispherical voids in the massive slabs of stone with which he covered his dead... But the polyhedron refuses utility, its facets resonating to Cubism's shattered planes where the effort was made to shatter representation as available to either distal or proximate vision. And an earlier century initiated the practice of cutting the diamond's surface into polyhedral facets to dazzle vision with shattered and refracted light. Dürer's *Polyhedron*. This uneasy object, with its capacity to refract thought into anxious, uneasy meditations, rests at the center of our collaboration.<sup>43</sup>

Responding to a query about whether the 2002 installation at Fattoria di Celle, *Melencolia II* was derived from his 1999 set of *Blind Time V: Melancholia* drawings, Morris did assert the existence of a particular relationship between them:

---

<sup>42</sup> Parmiggiani, as quoted in Kosme de Barañano, "The Site: The Fattoria di Celle," *The Gori Collection*, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Morris, "Melencolia II," *The Gori Collection*, 212.

Maybe the angel in Dürer's print is blind. Maybe the angel could feel around the landscape for the polyhedron, the sphere, the mill wheel, the bell. But what would the angel learn? Vision is not the issue in this image, it seems to me. Anyway not literal seeing. The angel stares off into space. Unseeing or blind. Maybe the angel is thinking. But we would not know what such thoughts are about. We humans are, according to Chomsky, somewhere on a scale between rats and angels. A rat could not solve a maze requiring the application of prime numbers. So why should we have answers to questions about the self, the mind/body relation, consciousness, a priori knowledge, etc.? And would we really want to know what the angel knows about these things? We should be satisfied with our blindness about such questions. But of course we are not. Any more than the angel is satisfied with not having answers to those unimaginable questions angels ask. The angel's is a superior brand of blindness. Melancholia is the condition of mourning for answers that don't arrive—on whatever level the questions might be asked. Let the relations between disc, polyhedron and sphere stand as allegory for relations between sets of questions without answers—whatever level these might exist on. Off in the distance a bat holds the scrolled inscription "Melencolia"—thought flying blind, mocking the angel who sits immobile, the tools surrounding him/her (I don't think this angel has a sex, or is both) abandoned. We are witnessing a scene of great restraint: the angel sits passively and blind. Universes might collapse in fiery implosion should the angel lose its patience and actually act. Wouldn't we like to think. Wouldn't we like to think the massive physique beneath that robe was a metaphor for potentiality. But look again. Dürer went deeper. There is only mockery here. Mockery of the great Other. Or rather mockery of our impulse to extend authority to the Other. Mockery of our incorrigible compulsion to first dream up the other and then endow him with power. Dürer mocks transcendence itself in the image of this hulking incompetent sitting passively, surrounded by scattered tools he doesn't know how to use, staring blindly into space. This strapping angel can make sense of nothing, make use of nothing, get off his butt and do anything. The dividers, the balance, the hourglass, the carpentry tools, the ladder, the nails—these will wait for all eternity for this brainless ox of an angel to act. The image is subversive in the extreme. Melancholia is the condition of never learning, of being taken in by our own inflated hopes. Melancholia is the condition of expectation. Melancholia is the bet placed on the long shot. Of course the most melancholy condition imaginable would be no more horse races, no more making fun of angels.

On the drawings I always started with the sphere, the polyhedron and the disc. I traveled from one to the other in my blindness, learning nothing. I am always reduced in the B[lind] T[ime] drawings to my lowest levels. Groping and pathetic, absent the illusions of sight. Fragmented and spastic, absent the illusions of wholeness. Subhuman, beneath the angel's suffocating skirt. And freed into a chthonic realm where it is easy to hold my breath. Freed to act outside of expectations set for the enterprise by others. Freed to feel for my darker lump of being.

White marble and bamboo and the steep ravine. A dim but visible scene. The bell is reassuring, and it makes a bell-like sound. The anxiety

between the five objects is mild. And the available names reassure. Maybe a certain smug nominalism prevails, but there are no dark lumps lying around. I can still hear the echo of the conversation with Parmiggiani. The suffocation of blindness does not threaten. No bat flits through the bamboo with inaudible screams of warning. It is of course possible that Kesselring walked the ravine 60 years ago with dried blood on his boots.<sup>[44]</sup> We know he was in the area and we know what he did. But “Melencolia II” commemorates no past atrocity. Nor does it mark any site of angelic blindness. The angel has long ago taken leave of the site with a smirk. And that’s a relief. There is air here and a certain filtered light and the earth is soft underfoot. It is quiet and contemplative. There are no inhuman demands placed upon us here. That sudden drop of soft, heavy blindness, that suffocating weight of the angel’s skirt falling over our breathing does not threaten here. Neither threat nor mockery presides at this site because we have banished that overbearing lout of an angel.<sup>45</sup>

The *Blind Time VI* series [Figs. 112-113] was created in 2001. All the drawings in this series include notations with the epithet “moral,” which is fixed to the paper before the action, bringing to mind Aristotle’s “*Nicomachean Ethics*,” his work on virtue and moral character.<sup>46</sup> Aristotle’s approach to ethics is not in terms of absolutes but of what is conducive to man’s good. He believes that man needs ethical virtues (*ἀρετή*), in order to improve his life.<sup>47</sup> That is to say one becomes good by doing good.

Morris, like Aristotle, treats moral problems<sup>48</sup> in terms of the potentialities of individual men. And like in *Ethics*, one can find a picture of oneself in the *Blind Time VI* drawings. However, while Aristotle, in order to identify the highest good

---

<sup>44</sup> Albert Kesselring (1885-1960) was a Luftwaffe General Field Marshall and the Commander-in-Chief of the German forces in Italy during World War II.

<sup>45</sup> Morris, e-mail correspondence with the author, June 1, 2003. It was published in *Have I Reasons*, 166-169.

<sup>46</sup> Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* comprises of ten books, which are based on a set of notes from his lectures at the Lyceum between 335-323 B.C.E., believed to be collected and edited by his son Nicomachus. See “*Nicomachean Ethics*,” *Aristotle: On Man in the Universe* (1943; rpt. New York: Gramercy Books, 1971), 85-243.

<sup>47</sup> Some of the virtues examined in the *Nicomachean Ethics* are courage, temperance, justice, high-mindedness, good temper and prudence. Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Another important problem arises when individuals seem not to distinguish between illegal and immoral.

with the attainment of happiness (*ευδαιμονία*), examines various kinds of virtues/good, Morris seems to investigate the opposite, various kinds of evil, with such notations on the drawings as "Moral Disdain," "Moral Void," "Moral Chaos," "Moral Amnesia" and "Moral Limit." Drawing blindfolded is a metaphor for our own blindness, both on a personal as well as a social level. The text inscribed by Morris in "Moral Limit," which is expanded in two directions, reads:

Working blindfolded with ink on my hands and estimating the lapsed time I press first in the upper corners and work downward along the vertical edges. Then beginning at the bottom corners I work upward. Then I work horizontally along the estimated upper edge and finally along the lower edge. The intention here is to touch and rub out a perimeter rectangle. I then rub toward the center with the intention of filling the interior of the rectangle. Then I draw the blind.

I think of the nation numbed with fatuous, endless entertainment, saturated and distracted with media idiocy, hypnotized with useless information. An environment of political control - in which fantasy parades as reality and puerile phalanxes clamor and claw in the great market of cyberspace, buying and selling the meaningless. A culture of and for Luftmenschen for whom the sky is the limit. Time estimation error: - 49"

Even in the drawing with the notation "Moral Search" his tone is pessimistic:

Working blindfolded with ink on the left hand and water right I begin at the upper left to make convoluted marks with the inked left and then try to superimpose identical watermarks with the right. There is the attempt here to first mark and then obliterate. I work an estimated halfway across and down. Then I switch to ink on the right hand and water on the left and proceed as before, but this time I work from the right edge inward. After my groping attempts to simultaneously map and obliterate convoluted marks I try to draw the blind over the page. Time estimation error: -3'14"

The nature of the moral, being an a priori faculty, is not revealed to us. And even empirically guided effort to locate the ethical in spatial and causal terms is doomed to failure. Imagine staring blindly at the convolutions of the brain and expecting the map of consciousness to reveal itself. And this expectation is as absurd as expecting that the mind, because of its capacity to represent some aspects of the world, could also represent itself.

Also visually striking, these drawings reveal a number of qualities, most clearly their fine texture and tactile sensibility. They are more demanding in the sense that a viewer is asked not only to decipher the text, which is often intertwined with the “image,” but to read it in reverse as if seen in a mirror—the text is written on the back surface of the mylar [Fig. 114]. Perhaps Morris simply does not wish for us to read the text, or perhaps he is trying to emphasize the convoluted, nearly incomprehensible dialog of these present turbulent times. The only recognizable imagery, that of a window blind, seems somehow to confront the viewer. In the drawing with the notation “Moral Void,” one reads:

Working blindfolded with ink on the hands I first touch the page near the top and then work down toward the center increasing the pressure as I feel the ink become dryer beneath the fingers. And I continue rubbing as though into an emptiness, as though the pressure of the fingers pressed against nothingness. Finally I try to trace the outline of the drawn blind. Time estimation error: -1’23”

As I work I think of this monstrous, self-congratulatory age, so free of moral doubt, so assured in its fatuous, self-centered distractions, so avid for and transfixed by its public inanities, so full of faith in the endless flow of its marketable drivel, so obese and adrift in its technological glut.



Could it be Morris has given such messages a Leonardo-style reversal<sup>49</sup> in *Blind Time VI* to underscore the widespread self-denial of contemporary messages we prefer not to hear or accept?

All the familiar elements that characterize Morris's art throughout his career we see, sense and experience in the *Blind Time* drawings. Process, perception, memories and time are all retained in these works, translating pure mind's idea into visible entity. The viewer participates, visually first and then mentally, by witnessing Morris the artist, the worker, the performer, attempting to accomplish his predefined task; whether he attains that or not is irrelevant. The impact of the result still endures, providing us some insight into our own personal sightless voids. We might relate to Morris's evocative recollection in his "rationed years" of an instance when, as a child, he laid himself out inside the closed confines of the family cedar chest:

I SOMETIMES CLIMBED INTO THE LONG CEDAR CHEST LOWERED  
THE LID AND CROUCHED DOWN IN THE NEST OF BLANKETS  
ENFOLDED IN THE SPICED SMELL OF PITCH BLACKNESS—A  
SEQUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTS AVAILABLE ONLY TO MY BODY—  
PROTOBLIND SPACES—ECCENTRIC IGNORED SPACES UNVISITED  
BY ANYONE BUT ME—SPACES I SENSED WAITED FOR ME AND  
INVITED ME BACK FOR CONFRONTATIONS<sup>50</sup>

### The Lemma at the Heart of the Labyrinth

In the spring of 2003, Morris exhibited a series of works in the Leo Castelli Gallery that dealt with, among other things, political and moral concerns as well

---

<sup>49</sup> Leonardo is perhaps the most well-known left-handed artist. He wrote in reverse and his script could not be read except with a mirror or by holding the back of the sheet against the light. For more on this subject, see *Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003), in which the world's leading Leonardo scholars investigate the artist's left-handedness for a better understanding of his drawings and his artistic personality as well as the relationship between word and image in his drawings and manuscripts, among other issues.

<sup>50</sup> Morris, *TELEGRAM/THE RATIONED YEARS*, unpaginated.

as linguistic matters. Titled *The Lemma Leads*, all pieces were indeed made of lead, a malleable material that Morris has explored since the early 1960s and first employed in 1963 when he made *Litanies* (see chapter two).

The word “lemma,” generally defined as a subsidiary proposition introduced in proving some other proposition; a helping theorem, comes from the Greek word *λήμμα*, premise, from the root of *λαμβάνειν*, to take, receive, grasp.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, in psycholinguistics, lemmas are “abstract lexical forms”<sup>52</sup> that occur after the words have been thought of, but before having been turned into sounds, that is to say, before any information has been accessed about the pronunciation of the words; lemma selection is called “the stage of specifying in a prephonological, abstract way the word that we are just about to say.”<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, one might suggest that Morris’s works are lemmas in the sense that they contain information concerning meaning and/or the relation of each piece to others as one word to the whole sentence. Also a number of the *Lemma* pieces hint at the ambiguity in language in more than one way. There is the ambiguity when such terms as terrorism and genocide can contain totally opposite definitions depending upon the observer or victim’s experience or personal point of view. Likewise, images of entirely different objects having similar shape, such as those of a hog carcass and the island of Manhattan, conjure up totally divergent verbal (textual) responses as seen in the work *Talking Splaces* (2002).

---

<sup>51</sup> The *Book of Lemmas* is a treatise with fifteen propositions on the nature of circles attributed to Archimedes. Introducing various “new” geometrical forms, such as *ἀρβηλος*, the statements in the *Book of Lemmas* do not seem to take shape around a central theme. For more on this subject, see *The Works of Archimedes with The Method of Archimedes*, trans. and ed. T. L. Heath (1897; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1912).

<sup>52</sup> See Trevor Harley, *The Psychology of Language: From Data to Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Hove, East Sussex and New York: Psychology Press, 2008), 275.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

*Talking Splaces* (2002) [Fig. 115-116] consists of two separate opposing units, each in the shape of Manhattan, one appearing shiny and the other dull, the two interacting in a way as antonyms. Both units are completely covered with a text by the artist, which addresses communication on the island or perhaps a rather significant lack thereof. It is also interesting to note that the shape of these units resembles that of pork loins:

EVERYBODY ON HOG ISLAND SPEAKS TWO LANGUAGES.  
EVERYBODY SPEAKS HOG. HOG ON EVERYBODY SPEAKS.  
ISLAND IS LAND LANGUAGE TOO. TO SPEAK TO EVERYBODY.  
HOGS EVERYBODY TO SPEAK. LANGUAGE SPEAKS. EVERYBODY  
SPEAKS HOG OR HOG PRIME. IMAGINE AN ISLAND WITH HOGS  
SHOULDER TO SHOULDER.<sup>54</sup>

In another piece, *Five Catenaries for J.J.* (2002) [Fig. 117], the words “GOD” “BOMBS” “TELEVISION” “FAT PEOPLE” “MONEY” are incised and repeated on sixteen small elements, each hanging from an individual hook placed on a wall device with the shape of five catenary lines that certainly recall Morris’s *Catenary* series of 1968-1969.

*Slaves/Masters* (2002) [Fig. 118] is an eight-unit wall installation depicting a procession of stylized heads, each linking a foot. Each unit has a different text written on it: “DEVELOP A CULT FOLLOWING” “DISGUISE YOUR INTENTIONS” “DELIVER COMPELLING SPECTACLES” “PLAY TO THEIR FANTASIES”—all possible comments on political leadership.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Morris, text on one of the two units of *Talking Splaces* (2002).

<sup>55</sup> In an e-mail to the author in April 2, 2002 Morris sent the following known quote from the commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, Hermann Göring: “Naturally, the common people don't want war. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. This is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are

In two other *Lemma Lead* works [Figs. 119-120] the incised texts are quotations from Chomsky who has had an abiding influence on Morris for at least three decades. In *Noamian Fragments* (2002), three lead pieces are shaped as though fragmented by an explosion; statements such as “WE ONLY TALK ABOUT GENOCIDE WHEN OTHERS DO THE KILLING. TERRORISM IS ONLY WHAT OTHER PEOPLE DO” are incised on the fragments. In *Squeeze* (2002), the opposite effect, compression, becomes apparent. A piece of lead is squeezed between two square plates clamped together by four bolts in the corners and nuts on either side; the plates have been pressed together by screwing the bolts into the nuts. The piece in *Squeeze* is attached onto a horizontal rectangular plate in which one reads “REAL POWER IS IN THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE WHO OWN THE COUNTRY. REAL POWER IS THE CAPACITY TO INFLICT PAIN ON LARGE GROUPS OF PEOPLE.” In these pieces indeed Morris “fuses his knack for elaborate, graceful sculpture and penchant for provocative statements.”<sup>56</sup>

*Universals* (2002) [Fig. 121], contains a classification of fifteen concepts considered universal to all human beings:<sup>57</sup> antonyms, childhood fears, classification of body parts, containers, disapproval of sucking wounds, divination, economic inequalities, imagery, moral sentiments, mourning, nouns, promises, tools for pounding, world view. All these concepts are incised in a

---

being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and for exposing the country to danger. It works the same in every country.” Due to its applicability to the war in Iraq, certainly this quote has undergone a revival.

<sup>56</sup> Jennifer Fishbein, “Robert Morris at Leo Castelli,” *The New York Sun*, March 20, 2003, 15.

<sup>57</sup> This list was compiled by Morris; the artist does not recall his various sources. In conversation with the author, Gardiner, New York, December 31, 2008.

vertical format on a rectangular plate, which is attached to a larger one protruding from the wall towards the viewer.

Another piece, *Western Wastes* (2002) [Fig. 122], presents a barren Western landscape with cloud formations on the upper part of the piece. Certainly the title in a way prepares the viewer for Morris's ideas regarding this work, but it is rather the rough texture as well as the reddish/brownish color of the material of the landscape that suggest burning, destruction and death. A closer examination further reveals on the cloud above the barren landscape written words such as Grantsville, Wendover, St. George, and Tooele Depot, all elements of an actual list of locations in Utah that have been exposed to nuclear radiation. Wendover, for instance, is the home of the 509<sup>th</sup> Composite Group, the first unit organized and trained expressly for atomic warfare, at Wendover Army Base in Tooele County, Utah.<sup>58</sup> Beginning in December 1944 the unit had practiced with test bombs over the surrounding ranges; this was prior to the Enola Gay's famous flight when piloted by the commanding officer of the 509<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Paul Tibbets, and the dropping of the first atomic bomb, called Little Boy, on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945. It was not until years later that the people of Wendover realized what their base had housed and what they had been participating in for more than nine fateful months. Tooele Army Depot holds the largest stockpile of chemical weapons in the nation.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, above-ground nuclear testing had been taking place in southern Nevada from 1951 to

---

<sup>58</sup> For more on this subject, see *The Manhattan Project: The Birth of the Atomic Bomb in the Words of Its Creators, Eyewitnesses and Historians*, ed. Cynthia Kelly (New York: Black Dog and Leventhal Publishers, 2007), 304-323.

<sup>59</sup> For information concerning the U.S. government's long standing denial that radiation from its atomic tests in the 1950s was the direct cause of the illnesses and deaths of those living

1962 at the Nevada Test Site. No less than one hundred above-ground tests had been conducted during those eleven years, when the prevailing southwestern winds would transport deadly radioactive fallout into southern Utah.<sup>60</sup> That is to say, the residents of these towns had been exposed to years of atomic radiation and possibly amounts of nerve gas due to military testing. They had been the victims of radioactive dust drifting over from the atomic tests carried out in the nearby Nevada desert. Also located in Tooele County, Utah, is Dugway Proving Grounds, another US Army facility, still in existence, that had also been built in the early '40s to test biological and chemical weapons.<sup>61</sup>

Two other American artists who became engaged with the dark history of the bombing ranges in the deserts of the United States are the photographers Richard Misrach and Carole Gallagher. Misrach spent over eighteen months documenting the effects of the high-explosive bomb tests conducted by the U.S. Navy at Bravo 20.<sup>62</sup> His photographic documentation in northwestern Nevada, as David Alan Mellor has remarked, is “centred on the residues of military

---

downwind, see Keith Schneider, “Foreword,” in Carole Gallagher, *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), xv-xix.

<sup>60</sup> For more on this subject see Howard Ball, *Justice Downwind: America's Atomic Testing Program in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>61</sup> For information on the infamous Dugway sheep incident, in which thousand of sheep were found dead from a chemical or biological agent on ranches in the Skull Valley, twenty-seven miles northeast of the Army base, and for which the U.S. government refused to accept responsibility, see Albert Mauroni, *America's Struggle with Chemical-Biological Warfare* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000) 29-60; see also “Contaminated Lives and Landscapes,” in Carole Gallagher, *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War*, 367.

<sup>62</sup> “Bravo 20” (bombing range) was the name given by the U.S. Navy to the public land where the bombing test took place. This area near the town of Fallon in northwestern Nevada had been sacred to the Northern Paiute Indians, who called it the “Source of Creation.” See Richard Misrach, with Myriam Weisang Misrach, *Bravo 20: Bombing of the American West* (Baltimore, Maryland, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

destruction by high explosive.”<sup>63</sup> “Misrach has dealt in his desert photographs with a species of the paranoid sublime.”<sup>64</sup>

Gallagher spent eight years in the Southwest documenting the effects of the nuclear tests in the region on people living downwind from the explosions. For an article in the *New York Times* in 1994, she said, “I can remember going to McDonald's and seeing four-and five-year-olds in wigs, unable to eat.”<sup>65</sup> Gallagher's photographs and interviews of men, women and children who were anywhere near the testing were collected in her notable book *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War* (MIT Press, 1993).

One of the stories in Gallagher's book is about a father who had witnessed the deadly clouds while working in southern Utah when his son was born:

[My son] was born in the Panquitch hospital. His face was a massive hole and they had to put all these pieces of his face back together. I could see down his throat, everything was just turned inside out, his face was curled out and it was horrible. I wanted to die. I wanted him to die.<sup>66</sup>

And surely this tragic, gruesome tale reminds us of a Morris piece from 2002, *Swallows* [Fig. 123]. A rectangular lead piece with a vertical elongated concave middle section that proposes in a graphic way a segment of the throat of a human being. Morris's work suggests classification of both body parts and text, as the words “Cassandra throat” repeatedly appear flanking the throat. Certainly

---

<sup>63</sup> Mellor, in correspondence with the author, May 25, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> Mellor, “Rents in the Fabric of Reality: Contexts for Sophie Ristelhueber,” Bruno Latour, David Mellor, and Thomas Schlessler, *Operations: Sophie Ristelhueber* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2009), 217.

<sup>65</sup> Carole Gallagher, as quoted in Michael Zanoofsky, “Cold War Chill Lingers Downwind from a Nuclear Bomb-Testing Site,” *New York Times*, January 11, 1994, D 1.

<sup>66</sup> Gallagher, *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War*, 169.

Cassandra, the daughter of King Priam of Troy and Hecuba, was one of the most tragic figures in Greek Mythology. She was blessed by Apollo with the gift of prophesy, but when she later refused to give herself to him, the god changed his gift and cursed her to always tell the truth and never to be believed.<sup>67</sup> Today we call a Cassandra a person whose true words are not to be believed and/or are to be ignored.

Five hundred years of whiteness. White boys calling the tune... Five hundred years of capitalist market economy... Socrates and Wittgenstein: two white boys who went to war. But only to endure it. One stood barefoot in the snow, the other whistled Beethoven in a prisoner of war camp. The most dangerous class on earth: young, unmarried males sixteen to thirty-five. Give them a rock and a sling, a bow and arrow, a sword, a rifle, and watch the world burn. We are strong white boys and we will rule the world by force, so George W. Bush tells us.<sup>68</sup>

This is a quote from Morris's text "The Birthday Boy," an element of his installation of the same name. *The Birthday Boy* [Figs. 124-127] was created in 2004 for the exhibition *Forme per il David* at the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence in commemoration of the restoration and five hundredth anniversary of Michelangelo's *David*. In Morris's installation *The Birthday Boy*, two video screens show two middle-aged academics (a woman and a man) lecturing pompously on Michelangelo's depiction of the biblical hero. They drink wine throughout their presentation. The two grow increasingly intoxicated and their remarks increasingly surreal as they offer their interpretations of *David* as a

---

<sup>67</sup> Among Cassandra's many prophesies the best known predictions were: about her brother Paris (when he was born), that he would be responsible one day for the destruction of Troy; the Greek siege behind the gift of the Trojan Horse; the tragic ending of the war and the fall of Troy; and the doomed fate of the Greeks upon their return home. Cassandra was always misunderstood taken to be a mad doomsday prophetess. She was killed by King Agamemnon's wife Clytemnestra when she was taken as his mistress to Mycenae. On Cassandra see Karl Kerényi, "Οι Ηρωες του Τρωϊκού Πολέμου," *Η Μυθολογία των Ελλήνων*, trans. Δημήτρης Σταθόπουλος, 3d ed. (1966; rpt. Athens: Εστία, Ι. Κολλάρου Α.Ε., 1974), VIII, 553, 557, 562, 570.

<sup>68</sup> Morris, "The Birthday Boy," textual element of his installation of the same name, published in *Have I Reasons*, 213.



symbol of manhood; of white oppression; a glorification of violent youth.

Ultimately, *David* is transformed from the traditional giant slayer into a young feminist black woman and a declining middle-aged man:

But, oh, wait a minute. What's happened here to our youthful giant? Crumbling into old age? Unthinkable. The *David*, before he was anything else, he was a kind of guarantee of eternal youth. Ageless. It's a little frightening. Terrifying actually. A statue aging? Are my eyes deceiving me? Has the story of Dorian Gray taken over here, like some form of art virus? Yes, that must be it. And if it has got to our perfect *David*, even after being cleaned with a million q-tips, where else might it have found a host? What is happening at the Louvre? Has the *Mona Lisa* grown a moustache [slide of Duchamp's postcard], has her face wrinkled, her smile become a sneer? And all the Botticelli ladies, have they become dreadful old crones [slide off]? Nietzsche promised that "we have art lest we perish of the truth." Looks like this art virus has been gnawing at that remark as well. Oh, it looks like it is over. Downhill from here. All the art getting old. Forget it. Turn on the TV.<sup>69</sup>

Certainly *The Birthday Boy* is a piece that also brings to mind Morris's work from 1964 entitled 21.3, a critique of art historical methods<sup>70</sup> and a parody of the art historian Erwin Panofsky, in which the artist himself performed as the somewhat pompous lecturer standing behind a podium [Fig. 128] miming the reading of Panofsky's well-known essay *Studies in Iconology*.<sup>71</sup> "Concerning the three levels of significance in a work of art: subject matter, content, and form. Traditionally, each level had been treated and analyzed separately; Morris was determined to synthesize them, but not as abstract art had condensed the three into one, putting the entire burden of meaning on form."<sup>72</sup> The soundtrack in 21.3 was prerecorded with Morris's voice; his gestures, crossing his arms, putting on his glasses, looking around, pouring water in a glass, drinking, were theatrical and

<sup>69</sup> Morris, "The Birthday Boy," *Have I Reasons*, 224.

<sup>70</sup> The course number of an art history course that Morris taught at Hunter College in 1964 was 21.3.

<sup>71</sup> See Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (1939; rpt. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1972).

<sup>72</sup> Rose, "The Odyssey of Robert Morris," 7.

staged both to underline the lack of synchrony between sound and action<sup>73</sup> and to confuse the viewer who is therefore unable to connect the gestures with the text and generate any meaning. “Lost in these articulations and gestures, the issue at hand—Panofsky’s search for the cultural codes that define the tipping of a hat—is soon forgotten.”<sup>74</sup> But as Berger also notes, 21.3 demonstrates that Morris’s “theater is one of negation: negation of the avant-gardist concept of originality; negation of the desire to assign uniform cultural meanings to diverse phenomena; negation of a worldview that distrusts the unfamiliar and the unconventional.”<sup>75</sup>

#### “Does the Past Judge Us?”

Another recent work revealing one of Morris’s lifelong interests, the link between the visual and the verbal/sound, is the *Less than* (2005) installation in Reggio Emilia [Fig. 129]. This piece features a slightly larger than life bronze human figure and includes a light-activated audio element (four amps, four speakers) that begins at dusk. The sounds are high-pitched hums, motors, rushing air, etc. For approximately six minutes, they begin softly, build in volume and then fade—recorded on four separate quadraphonic tracks (one located inside the bronze *pithos*, the other three in the courtyard).

---

<sup>73</sup> All of Morris’s major performances and dances were reconstructed in 1993 at the television Studio at Hunter College in New York City. The performer in the restaging of 21.3 was Michael Stella.

<sup>74</sup> Berger, *Labyrinths*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Sited in the centre of the small medieval Cloister of San Domenico,<sup>76</sup> the figure seems to confront the viewer with its imposing body and posture. Although the body is certainly male—particularly when viewed from the back or side—it has no sexual identity. Yet, there is no, as one might say, ambiguity of gender. The figure in *Less than* is neither male and female together, as has been implied,<sup>77</sup> nor what one would call a hermaphroditic form (neither wholly male nor wholly female), but rather a castrated one—a subtraction perhaps? This comes as a surprise if we consider some of Morris's earlier works with sexual imagery, such as *House of the Vettii* felt pieces of 1983 and 1996, which suggest in fact both female and male genitalia (discussed in chapter three). Furthermore the body in the *Less than* installation has neither arms nor head; the figure terminates just below the shoulders. Armless and headless, with textured surface and realistic details of the muscles, tendons and bones, particularly of the calves and feet, the piece also brings to mind Rodin's works like *The Walking Man* (1877-78).<sup>78</sup>

Morris's powerful form, hunched over and compact, even recalls Goya's mezzotint *The Colossus* (1810-1818). Though *Less than* does not seem

---

<sup>76</sup> It is one of the two cloisters of the nearby Church of San Domenico, a Dominican convent until the end of the eighteenth century. The place became a barracks for the Estensi troops until 1860; Royal Stables depot until 1945; and the Institute for the Promotion of Horse Racing until the 1980s. Today it houses Municipal Offices for Culture.

Morris said that he liked better the small cloister not only because it was quiet and modest in size, but also and especially because on one of the surrounding walls there were sculptures of five horse heads, which he felt were staring down at him when he first visited the place "one hot summer dusk." In a conversation with the author, Florence, February, 2005. Morris was quite impressed with this space and in fact he wrote a text about his experience there, "The Jury."

Morris, conversation with the author, Gardiner, New York, January 1, 2009.

<sup>77</sup> See "Nel mio vaso c'è il mistero dell'uomo: Un'opera...senza ragioni," *Quotidiano*, 1 (February 19, 2005), 43.

<sup>78</sup> In *The Walking Man* Rodin had captured the sense of a body in motion. As Albert Elsen noted, this bronze sculpture was a study for *Saint John the Baptist Preaching* (1878). And it was this study that had become of greater interest to modern artists and writers, "for it combines a torso and legs that have obvious differences in the relative hardness and softness of their surfaces and the degree of their detailing." See Albert E. Elsen, *Rodin* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1963), 32.

threatening, viewed with his back towards the spectators (and the world), Morris's figure, like Goya's giant, suggests a man prophesizing or perhaps in the process of experiencing a premonition that some catastrophic event is about to take place or is lurking just around the corner. Conversely, one could postulate that perhaps he sees no hope and is just giving up, surrendering to whatever fate may have in store.

And it is just this kind of ambiguity that one experiences with Morris's piece. The body in *Less than* is caught in movement, seemingly carrying on its back a large *pithos* without a lid,<sup>79</sup> though clearly the positioning of the vessel on the human back is reversed with the bottom part at the neck, thus making it impossible for the contents (if any) to be preserved. Or perhaps, like Pandora's *pithos*,<sup>80</sup> there is nothing left because everything that was once inside flew out when the cover was removed? A closer look inside the *pithos* reveals the word ESPERANZA ("hope" in Italian) written on a wavy bronze plate attached to the bottom. In an essay on this site-specific installation Morris notes, "When the stopper was removed from Pandora's jar, so the Greek myth goes, all the evil of the world flew out, leaving Hope at the bottom."<sup>81</sup> Clearly Morris here raises questions about the origin of evil. He poses additional questions about the role of art since he seems to have turned to the allegory of a classical figure, a headless and armless body straining under the weight of a *pithos*, a funerary urn, a symbol of death and finitude, but also the source, and therefore a symbol, of life. A funerary urn

---

<sup>79</sup> The shape of this *pithos* is similar to the amphora Morris made in *The Fallen and the Saved*, discussed in chapter three (both are funerary vessels/urns).

<sup>80</sup> Although in English it is Pandora's box, in the original Greek myth it is *pithos* (πίθος).

<sup>81</sup> Morris, "Notes on *Less than*," *Have I Reasons*, 203.

certainly reverberates with *The Fallen and the Saved* (1994), discussed in chapter three.

It is also interesting to note that although *Less than* was created for the quiet Small Cloister in the former medieval convent, the piece incorporates noises of everyday life into a place once conceived for silent meditation. Why did he include sound? Although when asked about the “reason” of doing or not doing something Morris often quotes his favourite philosopher Wittgenstein, in this case when queried about the inclusion of sound in this installation he said:

Again, no reason for the sound. I first experienced the space at sunset as I said, and the silence seemed dense and impenetrable and massively heavy with memories which excluded me. As the 5 horses asked, “What did I know about the past of this place?” What monks had walked there, prayed there, and then been buried there under the stones upon which I will set up *Less than*?<sup>82</sup>

And who were these five horses that were “talking” to him? For answers we can best look at Morris’s text “The Jury.” There we read that when the artist visited the Cloister of San Domenico, standing in the courtyard wondering “how long whatever so-called permanent work he might install here will last,” he was confronted by a jury of “five elegantly carved stone horse heads staring down at him from the high wall”.<sup>83</sup>

**The Five Horses:** Look at us, what do you see?

**A** I see five horses’ heads looking down on me from the high wall.

**H1** You are here to occupy this space we watch over? What do you intend to do here in this space, our silent space of memory?

**H2** Who and what has given you permission to disturb us?

---

<sup>82</sup> Morris, as quoted in “Catherine Grenier Interview with Robert Morris,” 149.

<sup>83</sup> Morris makes reference to himself in the third person. See “The Jury,” *Robert Morris: Hurting Horses*, V33.

**H3** How can you know what went on here?

**H4** What can you bring here for us?

**H5** Pay attention. We might sit in judgment on you.

**H1** Do you know what lies beneath this stone floor?

**A** No, but I know something about horses. Long ago in my youth I worked with horses up in the mountains.

**H1** “Worked with” is not accurate. Enslave is the word you need here.

**A** I was just a horse back guide and was very careful with the horses. In fact, I was rather afraid of them.

**H3** The only species your kind has mistreated more than us has been your own.<sup>84</sup>

Morris's point of view has been consistently pessimistic, which is rather obvious in his art in general. *Box for Standing*, *Projects for Tombs*, *War Memorials*, the *Blind Time V (Melancholia)* series, his installations *White Nights* and *Morning Star Evening Star*, the most recent *Blind Time VII (Grief)* series, long is the list of works that suggest death, guilt, memory, blindness, the evil side of humankind. Either in a subtle way or more obviously, Morris's art has been anything but optimistic or “light.”

It is indeed difficult not to feel a kind of melancholy before *Less than*, which comes in contrast to the happy times Morris had while he was making this sculpture, working and laughing with his daughter, Laura, in Italy during the summer of 2004.<sup>85</sup> In fact it was Laura who made the torso of the body.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, as Morris pointed out in his text “Notes on Less than”:

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> In conversation with the author, Florence, February, 2005.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

Marcel Duchamp spoke of the artist as half the equation. The artist makes the work and the public tells him (or her) what it is. The artist's intentions count for nothing. Like everyone, the artist always says more and less than he intends. There is no final publicly shared meaning for art or language. Communication is not the mission of either. Both allow us to express ourselves.<sup>87</sup>

It could be said that stemming from nineteenth-century British and French art, realist art of the twentieth century, though strikingly diverse, displays a commitment to the modern world and to things as they are, while also retaining the element of the personal in the realist vision of the artist. Therefore, the realist language appears individualistic, as in Richter's paintings and photographs, or in the paintings of Kiefer. Such works are deeply psychological, raising questions about ways in which viewers see things and how they respond to new information about life. Can art influence the external world? Since the 1980s we see a revival of both figurative imagery and painting itself in the work of many artists, including Morris.

The last seven years have found Morris working in new series of works including paintings done in encaustic.<sup>88</sup> A method of painting employing molten wax and pigment, encaustic was first used (and perhaps invented<sup>89</sup>) by ancient Greek artists in the fifth century B.C.E. The word "encaustic" derives from *ἐγκαυστικός*, meaning "to burn in." It is interesting to mention at this point that a Greek krater from the fourth century B.C.E. in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York depicts an artist with his assistant painting a sculpture of Herakles

---

<sup>87</sup> Morris, "Notes on Less than," *Have I Reasons*, 203.

<sup>88</sup> Encaustic is perhaps the only paint medium whose name refers to the technique rather than the material used.

<sup>89</sup> One of the earliest mentions of encaustic painting is found in the writings of Pliny the Elder (23-79 C.E.). See *Pliny: Natural History*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), IX, 35.

with the process of encaustic.<sup>90</sup> However, the earliest surviving examples of encaustic works and certainly the best-known are the mysterious Fayum portraits, created by Roman and Greek artists residing in Egypt in the first and second centuries C.E. when Egypt was an outpost of the Roman Empire. Closer to our time, a number of artists that includes Diego Rivera, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Ryman and Robert Morris have revived and embraced encaustic painting.<sup>91</sup> And since the 1980s, when Morris returned to painting, he has produced various series of works using the technique either on aluminum or on wood panels. One of these series was exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. in a 1990 show titled *Inability to Endure or Deny the World: Representation and Text in the Work of Robert Morris*. For his 1996 exhibition *Horizons Cut: Between Clio and Mnemosyne*, he made a series of paintings in encaustic that suggests the interface between memory and history (discussed in chapter four). And finally two large wall-size paintings depicting World War II recruiting/propaganda posters, which were among the elements of his installation *The Rationed Years* in 1998, were made with encaustic. In both cases, for the series of works shown in *Horizons Cut: Between Clio and Mnemosyne* and the installation *The Rationed Years*, the encaustic was applied on smaller square wood panels which were then assembled; it was the aggregate of these that made up the image in its entirety.

---

<sup>90</sup> One can recognize the small vessel held in the artist's left hand where wax and pigments have been mixed, as well as the brazier, where the tools are maintained warm.

<sup>91</sup> See also works by contemporary artists Julian Schnabel and Mimmo Paladino. For more on encaustic technique in American art, see Gail Stavitsky, *Waxing Poetic: Encaustic Art in America* exh. cat. (Montclair, New Jersey: The Montclair Art Museum, 1999).



In 2005 Morris exhibited at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York a series of his most recent encaustic paintings entitled *Small Fires and Mnemonic Nights*. The works in this series are, in a way, figurative paintings permeated by an atmosphere reminiscent of the art of Edward Hopper, the genius of realist painting in America between the wars. Morris's *Indiana Street* (2001) depicting a neighborhood with row houses silhouetted against a setting sun, or *Double Fire* (2004) [Fig. 130], where one sees fires and explosions in the distance through an open window of an empty room, are paintings which evoke Hopper's domestic, ordinary, and psychological subject matters as in *Early Sunday Morning* (1930) and *Nighthawks* (1941), perhaps two of his most celebrated paintings. And certainly the interior space and lighting of *Double Fire* has been even borrowed directly from Hopper's *Sunlight in a Cafeteria* (1958) [Fig. 131]. There is a haunted quality in Morris's paintings. And as in Hopper's images of "melancholy space,"<sup>92</sup> it is the light that plays the central role in Morris's encaustic works. Light fills these paintings with a lingering presence, contrasted light and shadow being strongly emphasized.<sup>93</sup> Hopper once stated that his aim was to make the most exact transcription possible of his most intimate impressions of nature.<sup>94</sup> For Hopper this "nature" was what he, writing of another artist but describing his own art equally well, characterized as "all the sweltering, tawdry life of the American small town, and behind all the sad desolation of our suburban landscapes."<sup>95</sup> Both artists are painting their familiar everyday world. And like Hopper, Morris expresses his individual vision of the world he lives in while at the

---

<sup>92</sup> Morris, "The Labyrinth and the Urinal," 88.

<sup>93</sup> This disquieting feeling further recalls paintings of interiors by Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916). Interestingly enough Morris made an encaustic painting titled *After Hammershøi* in 2008.

<sup>94</sup> Edward Hopper, quoted in James Malpas, *Realism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 47.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

same time transforming the personal into the universal. However, many of Morris's paintings in this series (several set at nighttime) suggest a somewhat "nightmarish" existence—one seemingly evocative of our world today—as it either relates to or suggests war. One observes a shower of bombs falling onto a small house in *House and Bombs* (2004) [Fig. 132]; a tank threatening the interior of a room in *War News* (2001); and fires burning outside open windows in *Green Fire* (2004). Even *Sliding Lights* (2004)<sup>96</sup> seems nightmarish, though one sees neither fire raging nor bombs falling [Fig. 133]. But the dramatically oblique angles of the shining beams from some undefined source leave the viewer with an anxious unsettling perception.

And what about that black pigment we observe seeping from the window frames and walls of the home depicted in *Weeping House* (2004) [Fig. 134]? Has our unyielding quest for oil somehow become entangled with wartime ambitions and turned on us to haunt and permeate even this most sacred symbol of the American Dream? What about the locomotive seen through the window as if about to enter a living room in *The Red Chair* (2001) [Fig. 135]? The appearance is certainly charged with no small amount of menace. But on the other hand trains have always been an important motif in Morris's oeuvre, closely associated with his childhood and youthful memories:

From 1935 to 1947 we lived in a small white bungalow on the southeast side of Kansas City, Missouri. On those 1930s un-air-conditioned summer nights, with just a small green fan in the windowsill rotating the humid air, I heard the midnight whistle of the Kansas City Southern as it made the crossing at Swope Park some ten miles to the east. Two long, mournful blasts evoking far away places drifted above my small, sweaty dreams in that hot bedroom. Those whistles stirred half-awake longings for some

---

<sup>96</sup> Although *Sliding Lights* belongs to the same series of encaustic paintings in the 2005 Castelli exhibition, it was not in the show. I saw the piece in Morris's studio.

unimaginable elsewhere. I had seen the Southern's thundering steam locomotives at close range on the odd Sunday afternoons out at Swope Park. At five or six my sister and I would put our ears to the rails and if we felt the telltale vibration, we would put two pennies on the track and retreat behind the great, white, smooth glacial boulders beside the tracks. Soon the locomotive would thunder by, shrieking the two-blast whistle for the park crossing. We crouched and watched transfixed, feeling the ground shake, feeling the whoosh and vibrations from the massive black engine in our small bodies. We screamed with terror and delight, and then stood numb as the 100-car freight rattled by. We waved to the brakeman sitting in the cupola of the caboose as the noise was sucked down the track, disappearing into the shrinking perspective of that last red car. Our pennies had been converted to tiny copper pancakes on the hot rail.<sup>97</sup>

This is the beginning of Morris's text "Trains," where the artist narrates in a vivid way his close association with these massive vehicles. He talks about his trip from Kansas City in the caboose of a cattle train when, at the young age of fifteen, he was responsible for the delivery of a horse at Anaheim, a suburb of Los Angeles; about working icing trains for the Kansas City Southern Railroad at twenty; and finally about his time as a car knocker or switchman in 1957 when he was eighteen years old. He further narrates the end of his services for the Southern Pacific Railroad:

It was a night late in August when we went south with a drag of cars and stopped at a distillery to set out two boxcars of corn. The spur track veered off sharply to the northeast from the main line into the dock of the brewery. The night was dense with fog and I was not fully awake when I uncoupled the grain cars. As I backed the two boxcars into the spur track, giving the signal to the brakeman (I was on his side of the engine), I heard a scraping sound. Thinking this was just malfunctioning airbrakes, I spun my lantern for more back up from the locomotive, but the sound got worse. Three-quarters of the way into the spur the engine stopped and the engineer, fireman and foreman climbed down and walked around to the other side of the boxcars. I had not left sufficient clearance between the main line and the spur track, and the scraping I was hearing was the shearing off of the sides of the grain cars as they contacted the metal corner of a gondola of coal. There were already two large pyramids of corn covering the ground, but it would be five working days before I

---

<sup>97</sup> Morris, "Trains," 1.

received the letter terminating my services as switchman for the Southern Pacific Railroad.<sup>98</sup>

An additional excerpt in this unpublished essay that Morris wrote in 2006 beautifully illustrates his extremely vivid descriptive style and visual detail which practically transports the reader in both time and space to the actual scene he describes. While listening to the faint lonely whistle of a receding train, readers can almost “shiver” and witness their own frosted breaths as they read this text describing the freezing winter evenings in the Midwest and the young Morris squinting into the distance at the fading switchman’s lamp:

Today, on those rare occasions when I hear a night train whistle in a strange town, I am still delivered back to those Indiana Street longings. But the nostalgia is not unmixed with a certain chill, which arrives like the taste of cold, rusty iron. My railroad nights were blind times when there was never enough light—not from the distant point of a switchman’s lamp, or from those two dim red car knocker’s lanterns, or from the burning coals dropping from a locomotive’s fire box in the freezing midnights. Memories of those long-ago railroad nights are by now faded and almost dreamlike. But there is one image from the dimness of those years that occasionally returns to haunt me. It can appear at the edges of my mind like a half-seen movement, a blurred silhouette in the peripheral vision. It is not so much a visual image as a kind of shadow felt across the body—a dark, cold, looming, metallic presence gliding silently from the shadows to brush against fragile flesh.<sup>99</sup>

As in the past then, Morris is associating his work with social concerns, history and of course memory since these encaustic paintings also reflect Morris’s recollections, some of the images being from the past, the 1930s and the ‘40s, and consist of actual places and objects from the artist’s childhood memories. Filled with autobiographical references, the works depict both domestic and public spaces, i.e., interiors of houses, a gymnasium, a train station, a café,

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 24.

landscapes, stockyards. One refers to art, a canvas leaning face to the wall in an empty room (fire can be seen through the window) in *Canvas Back/Fire* (2003-04) [Fig. 136]; another to the American flag in *Flag* (2004), evoking Jasper Johns.

Jasper Johns was certainly an important early influence for Morris. In fact, in 2005 Morris was asked by Jeffrey Weiss, then curator of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., to contribute an essay regarding Johns's early works for the 2007 exhibition catalogue *Jasper Johns: An Allegory of Painting, 1955-1965*. Morris's essay "Jasper Johns: The First Decade," while presenting new and important material for a better understanding of Johns's art, also reveals Morris's appreciation of this great artist. "Half a century ago a recently discharged, young army veteran began his cultural assaults. In a decade-long campaign he raised the *Flag*, dared them to fire at his *Target*, *Numbered* the prisoners taken *0 through 9*, *Mapped* out a strategy, and *Dived* from a height heretofore not attempted," writes Morris at the beginning of his text.<sup>100</sup> We soon realize though that his writing is about not only Johns's work but also recent troubling societal developments in the United States:

Much has changed since Johns produced these works just after mid-century. America was then not only a guaranteed safe place with a middle class, but was lender to the world. Recently we have become unsafe, debt-ridden, and absent a middle class. Since 9/11 we have become an unapologetically imperialistic and militaristic nation squandering its treasure on war while waiting for the next disaster to be played and re-played as the spectacle of entertainment on TV. America is anxious, insecure, self-righteous, dangerous, and with an ever shorter fuse and attention span.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> Morris, "Jasper Johns: The First Decade" in *Jasper Johns: An Allegory of Painting, 1955-1965*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2007), 208; rpt. in *Have I Reasons*, 225.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Here we are once again experiencing and revisiting that side of Morris, the political artist as introduced earlier (chapter four). Throughout his career Morris has never abandon this facet either completely or for any prolonged period. From his performances *War* (1963) and *Site* (1965), his *Firestorm* and *Psychomachia* series (1982), to *The Rationed Years* (1998), to the *Terror Drawings* series (2001), and the *Blind Time VII (Grief)* (2009) drawings, Morris's art also reveals the artist's continual concern about war and social ills, ranging from the mass carnage and destruction of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the lower intensity but equally devastating conflicts of Cambodia and Vietnam, along with other such engagements as in Kuwait. In his essay "From a Chomskian Couch: The Imperialistic Unconscious" (2003) Morris specifically refers to these events:

Unlike some groups. From World War II to 2001 America engaged in military adventurism in China (1945-46, 1950-1953), Korea (1950-1953), Guatemala (1954, 1957-1969), Indonesia (1958), Cuba (1959-1960), the Belgian Congo (1964), Peru (1965), Laos (1964-1973), Vietnam (1961-1973), Cambodia (1969-1970), Grenada (1983), Libya (1986), El Salvador (1980s), Nicaragua (1980s), Panama (1989), Iraq (1991-2001), Bosnia (1995), Yugoslavia (1999).<sup>102</sup>

### Normal Terror

As yet even more disturbing political events unfold, Morris continues to incorporate social commentary into his work. Never ceasing to focus attention on government-induced "terror by fear," or excesses of human injustice, or denial of basic human rights as in some of his most recent works. By 2000-01 we find him making drawings with graphite on paper, or with encaustic, including notations with the word "terror," which is fixed to the paper before the action, in his *Terror*

---

<sup>102</sup> List compiled by Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2001), 128; quoted in Morris, "From a Chomskian Couch: The Imperialistic Unconscious," *Have I Reasons*, 185.

*Drawings* [Figs. 137-138]. The text is often difficult to read as it is intertwined with the image. Some of the notations are: Morning Terror, Extra Terror, Normal Terror, Techno Terror, and Standard Terror. Recently, we find Morris preparing new works, including another series of *Blind Time* drawings and sculptures referencing questionable government activity vis-à-vis of human torture, the war in Afghanistan, the economy and related class disparity. The allusions reveal an overall cultural pessimism. In an unpublished essay written in 2009 Morris makes this clear:

They are going to fix it. Everybody borrowing again. The engines of industry throbbing again. The fat hogs and the drones happy again. But isn't the idea of fixing capitalism some kind of oxymoron? Haven't they all known since forever that what is called "working capitalism" is just another criminal activity? Well, what's wrong with that? Who said we evolved to be equitable? Who said it was wrong for a few to get it all? Marx wasn't Darwin. Get reproduced any way you can, and lots of it. It's still the same old story a fight for love and glory. The rich get laid more. Status is what it's all about. Sex and status. You can have what you can steal and in war they never make you eat what you kill.<sup>103</sup>

And one continues to sense this cultural pessimism in the texts included in his most recent *Blind Time VII* series, subtitled *Grief* (2009):

Given: the page, the black, the red, the gray, the secure blindfold, and the three classes involved in America's perpetual foreign wars: (1) the profiting overclass, (2) the underclass who absorb the wounds, and (3) the dead.

Let the sky box above represent the safe, untouchable zone of the overclass for whom war is patriotism, glory and profit. Let the zone immediately below the sky box be reserved for the maimed underclass who have fought, and let the lower ground box, the inverse of the upper one, be regarded as a kind of collective zone of forgotten war dead.

---

<sup>103</sup> Morris, "Stations," 9.

Working blindfolded with graphite in the upper area the fingers seek to touch out the safe limits of their zone and then, with blackened hands, pass a one-hundred dollar bill back and forth within the estimated safe zone, the one hand pulling the bill from the other. Then working in the estimated mid area with burnt sienna, the first three fingers of the left hand those

of the right rotate together from right to left across the page. Finally in the lowest area, closed fists hammer across the page with mars black, each blow on top of the previous one with the intention of obliterating any possibility of a later total count.

This dark sentiment also pervades his recent installation *Morning Star Evening Star*, exhibited in the Sprüth Magers Gallery in London in 2008. In it Morris, though he continues his formal explorations and historical references, seems to “state” his political position, his ideology, more overtly and categorically. He further clarifies this position on the rather tenuous relationship between art and politics when he states that art cannot really be separated from the political:

The notion that art is separate from politics is belied by the politics of the art world. The claim that art is what one does and politics is what is done to that art is both passive and contradictory. Every artist takes extra-esthetic political actions beyond his art. The initial act being the decision to show the work. The sequences of decisions and actions by which he introduces that work into society, how he allows it to be used, what he says yes and no to are political actions whether he admits it or not.

Art is always suffused with political meanings. One such meaning has to do with the class interests any particular art serves. Art serves some class interest since such interests provide the very ground upon which the art is sustained.<sup>104</sup>

The powerful *Morning Star Evening Star*, consisted of four wall-mounted panels reading *Evening Terror*, *Morning Terror*, *Normal Terror* and *Standard Terror*

---

<sup>104</sup> Unpublished text, undated (1970s), (Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York), 1.



[Figs. 139-140]. The installation employed cast fiberglass, felt, encaustic on wood, four buckets made from rubber covered with a piece of lead, two children's wooden desk chairs draped with a sheet of black lead, and an oak bench. It is also interesting to note that this 2008 series of work incorporates elements that Morris did previously in the 1980s: the frame of *Standard Terror* was made in 1987; the flag of *Standard Terror* and *Evening Terror* in 1981; and the two chairs of *Morning Terror* in 2000. Unique as it is, this installation has its germinal origin in Morris's earlier works.

Morris is not the only contemporary artist who recycles earlier pieces in his installations. Concerned with the past and memory, Jannis Kounellis, for instance, in his labyrinthine site-specific installation in the New National Gallery in Berlin in 2007, combined earlier works<sup>105</sup> such as his iron scales with ground coffee; an iron structure with coal; burlap sacks with beans, rice, coffee, lentils, peas; and chalk on an iron panel with a shelf occupied by a burning candle, etc.<sup>106</sup> And certainly this is not the first time that Morris incorporated earlier works in his installations, witness his Lyon trilogy (1998-2000) discussed above. However, by staging them in ever changing ways, the artist seems to subject his works to a continuous process of metamorphosis.

In *Evening Terror* [Fig. 141] we see a panel divided in two equal parts. The upper section, in colored silver, is a relief made from cast fiberglass that is filled with body parts, bones and skulls intertwined with machinery parts and weapons.

---

<sup>105</sup> All the works are *Untitled*.

<sup>106</sup> It was one of the most impressive Kounellis exhibitions I have ever seen, truly complementing the spaciouly and grand open 1960s Mies van der Rohe "temple of light and glass" that houses the New National Gallery in Berlin.

The lower part consists of an American flag made of thick black felt. But this flag is rigid and unable to flap in the breeze, as would an actual flag, and certainly bears no relationship to the majesty and reverence normally associated with depictions of a national flag.<sup>107</sup> The wings of the U.S. Air Force pilot insignia, symbolizing those of an eagle, the national emblem of the United States of America of course, are spread atop and over the entire width of the sculpture. Two small buckets each covered with a piece of cloth rag cast in lead stand in front of the base of the sculpture on either side of the flag.

*Morning Terror* [Fig. 142] likewise shows body and skeleton parts, and masklike faces of adults and children. However, as the title indicates, it is about morning so the color is bright—as the rising sun—and they are all emerging from a white background. Children's clothing, made from muslin, is suspended on a white steel rod stretching across the upper panel. But the initial suggestion of innocence evoked by the girl's dress soon disappears as the viewer gradually realizes that one of the suspended pieces of clothing on the rod resembles a hood, certainly recalling the familiar and iconic photographs of torture victims in Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq. The words *Morning Terror* appear in the lower part of the panel, which is framed by two children's chairs.

*Normal Terror* reveals a silver-and-gold dress draped over the top of the frame covering part of the relief. The words *Normal Terror* appear in the lower part of

---

<sup>107</sup> Here one might recall another artist, the photographer Robert Frank, who also dared to show the American flag without any reverence whatsoever in *Parade: Hoboken, New Jersey*, from the series *The Americans*, 1953-57. In this photograph we see an American flag hung from the brick wall of a building between two windows. The top part of the flag is not visible, however, because it has been cut off from the frame. Two female figures seen behind the windows, as if standing to

the panel. Made from lead, this dress is not soft or pliable, as is the muslin clothing in *Morning Terror*.<sup>108</sup>

In *Standard Terror* [Fig. 143] a traditional image/symbol of hope—an American flag—becomes hopeless. The flag is surrounded by a seemingly broken frame on the lower portion of which appear skeletal outstretched arms with clenched fists among various body and machinery parts. Spanning the upper parts of the frame and overlapping the top of the flag is the emblem of an eagle, also with outstretched wings which parallel the outstretched arms of the lower portion. However, this eagle (though the swastika sign has been deleted from the wreath upon which the bird is perched) clearly evokes the eagle used by the Nazi Third Reich. Two cloth-draped buckets cast in lead, standing on either side of the bottom part of the frame, and a bench positioned a short distance in front of *Standard Terror*, complete the piece. At first glance it seems that viewer participation is encouraged by the implied invitation to sit on the installation bench located directly in front of the work—much as one could sit in the old children’s school desks (that figure in the 1998 installation *The Rationed Years*). But why not this time, on this particular bench? Indeed why is this bench there at all if not to be sat on? In fact, upon closer inspection, one discovers a much darker, more sinister purpose for the bench. We now see that it is so steeply tilted that there is no way to sit down on it without sliding off. And this is a familiar feeling one often

---

watch the parade, are not fully visible either: the face of one is half shaded half obscured by a window blind, and the other’s is covered completely by the flag.

<sup>108</sup> The incorporation of clothing reminds me of a number of pieces by Anselm Kiefer in which the artist also works garments into his paintings and installations, including *Lilith’s Daughters* (1990), *Adelaide—Ashes of my Heart* (1990), and *Lilith at the Red Sea* (1990). In his recent installation *Personnes* for Monumenta 2010 at The Grand Palais in Paris, Christian Boltanski used thousand of people’s clothes lying on the ground in sixty-nine “camps.”

experiences with Morris's art. We need only think of his *Labyrinth* (1982) in Villa Celle in Pistoia, built on a slope that makes the pathway considerably inclined with respect to the horizontal and resulting in a sense of instability; or his *Melencolia II* installation (2002) nearby, also situated on steeply sloping terrain, making progress awkward and difficult.

Why a sliding bench and two buckets? Why buckets on either side of the flag? The installation's mise en scène unmistakably points to waterboarding, the form of torture that was sadly in the news a few years ago. Does Morris therefore, comment here on this method of torture? The centuries-old practice known as waterboarding became headline news during the Bush administration.

It is no surprise then that *Standard Terror* suggests division and fragmentation. The frame surrounding the flag is fractured leaving the viewer with a sense of uneasiness and doubt yet never explicitly stating the connection. A bench, which at first glance appears innocuous, is in reality the required accessory for an—a torture session—that bears with it a serious threat. Morris's visual language once again traps the viewer, imprisoning his mind in a lingering contemplation of something grave and foreboding. The frame in *Standard Terror*, was done in 1987; the flag in *Standard Terror* and *Evening Terror*, in 1981. Earlier dates of these installation components have significance inasmuch as they convey both visually and metaphorically the continual and repetitive nature of such brutal and questionable practices by a "civilized" society.

Morris's installation *Morning Star Evening Star* is made with seemingly disconnected elements which the artist employs like collage structures. The viewer is in turn made to participate, summoned to put together the fragments and use his own imagination to complete the narration. Morris confronts us with the realities of our world. He is certainly not the only artist to do so. In the more recent works of artists such as Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer, we also see a social critique and questions about politics and the individual's manipulation in the West by government forces. In response to the events and uncertainties of the post-September 11, 2001 era, many artists have infused their work with social and political content criticizing the establishment and challenging the status quo. A Holzer installation in 2008 at the Sprüth Magers Gallery in London, for instance, consisted of a series of paintings based on handprints of American soldiers accused of crimes in Iraq. That same year she used formerly classified U.S. Government documents recently made public through the Freedom of Information Act in her series of enlarged "map" paintings in her exhibition *Projections* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Massachusetts. What do these "maps" illustrate? Various planning scenarios proposed prior to the invasion of Iraq. Holzer also reproduced documents pertaining to interrogation methods in *Wish List/ Gloves Off*.<sup>109</sup>

Certainly one might also see some kind of reference to the work of Johns in Morris's use of the American flag<sup>110</sup> in both *Standard Terror* and *Evening Terror*.

---

<sup>109</sup> For more on Jenny Holzer, see Elizabeth A.T. Smith et al. *Jenny Holzer*, exh. cat. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2008).

<sup>110</sup> Jasper Johns made his breakthrough painting *Flag* in 1954-55 (dated on reverse 1954), presenting the "image" of flag as "object," thus upsetting accepted notions at the time about illusion versus reality. For more on Johns, see Kirk Varnedoe, *Jasper Johns: A Retrospective*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1996).

He has often enlisted the flag image in his effort to remind the observer of those glossed over more sinister sides of American history which “Old Glory” necessarily represents, as opposed to only the usual patriotic fervor it commonly instills. This is an appropriate point then to read what Morris himself had to say recently, albeit in a somewhat whimsical manner, about Johns’s *White Flag* (1955):

Why so large? Almost 7X10 ft. The size of the Old Glories I remember tacked up in the mess halls. A ballsy, intimidating military size and “bigger than you, soldier.” It was up there watching you and demanded a salute. But cut one in two places and let the blood colors of red and blue drain out. Make it a big cut. Not exactly that “Y” cut of the autopsy. Not exactly. Dead flag. Cut and drained and stuck back together with the scar showing. A big, anemic, dead sign. A bloodless sign. Yet a sign resurrected as flesh. Dead flesh perhaps. An embalmed flesh of the sign. A white, waxy necrophilia for the autopsied remains. A murderous aesthetic act and a caressing mummification of the corpse wrapped in white, waxed strips, or stripes. Revenge taken. Resurrection delivered. The redeemed corpse as a trinity of dissected and reassembled parts. Transfiguration of the oppressive, dominating sign by transgressive encaustic bleaching. Encaustic, the medium of second-century tomb décor. Nothing but the finest funerary accouterments for that patriotic shroud which has wrapped so many public scoundrels. The large *White Flag*, ghost banner of countless, officially sanctioned criminal acts. But flattened, bled white by Johns and filed away as flat forensic evidence. No wonder Johns kept this work so long for himself.<sup>111</sup>

We recognized that Morris associated his work with social concerns, history and memory. His interest in collective and personal memory has extended throughout his entire oeuvre. We saw that his use of linguistics, along with sound and image, continued in some works, and were often related to political and moral concerns, war and social ills. Morris’s political position and ideology

---

<sup>111</sup> Morris, “Jasper Johns: The First Decade,” *Jasper Johns: An Allegory of Painting, 1955-1965*, 214.

became more overtly and categorically pessimistic over the last two decades, particularly regarding the relationship between art and politics.

### Conclusion

*When I see an object I see only one profile of it—one that changes if I move, if the light changes, and so forth. As I change my position, so does this “local” effect. Yet all the time I am seeing the same object. Invariance therefore involves understanding unity as it shows itself in changing appearances. Philosophers call this the noetic-noematic correlation; physicists call it invariance under transformation, or covariance. Covariance is simply part of the definition of objectivity; to say that something is a real part of the world is to say that it looks different from different perspectives, though the descriptions flow together in an orderly way when described by the right set of transformations.*

Robert P. Crease<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen, it is possible to detect a series of underlying themes tying together the many disparate works of Robert Morris. And as I have suggested at various points throughout this study, there are structural insights into his art that are to be gained through a discussion of these themes as well as his stylistic shifts.

During the examination of Morris’s ideas on process and time and his tendency to work with industrial materials, we observed that his works involve the viewer directly, forcing this interaction through the incorporation of audience participation into the sculpture, which results in a sense of its “activation.” The role of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert P. Crease, *The Great Equations* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 159.



spectator, his experience and the relevance of the works to his own body were discussed in detail. One of the primary reasons I believe that the spectator can sense that relevance is Morris's avoidance of "Wagner-effect art," or monumental scale, and his limiting the size of his works to that of the human body.

Morris's concept of space was pointed out along with his investigation into the horizontal as a spatial vector. Along these same lines further examination of his interest in structural continuity revealed how the viewer becomes intimately involved with both the object and the space. His interest in structural continuity also led us naturally to his investigation of "how to make a mark," including his use of the electroencephalogram recording needle, body-part imprints, work on horseback, the natural world, and *Blind Time* drawings. Concerning materiality and process Morris literally made prints of his own hands and similar body parts. The time span of these works extends all the way from the 1960s right up to the present day. Turning to Morris's interest in working in series, we also saw that while recognizing the completeness of each group of works, it became clear how one series evolved or transformed into the next.

Morris's philosophical investigations and studies of language are evident throughout his complete body of work, particularly pertaining to the struggle between words and images for dominance within the history of culture. His interest in collective and personal memory also pervades his oeuvre, but even more so over recent years. Presently, we find Morris confronting the viewer with the stark realities of today's world. He expresses increasing concern with contemporary attitudes and morality. His tendency towards cultural pessimism is

revealed in works of various media; as to the relationship between art and politics, his political position and ideology have become more overtly and categorically pessimistic. I find this attitude to be one that is difficult to ignore as we witness an escalation of the political, financial, and ecological turmoil around us.

Based on the direction of the observations and conclusions presented here, I would suggest that a modified approach to the study of Morris's art be pursued next, perhaps one keying in on his more recent works, as they become increasingly available to the public in future exhibitions and retrospectives. Such a pursuit would be one that reveals refreshing turns in his work and carries us beyond the present misconception of his so-called stylistic inconsistencies. This would further reinforce our awareness of the continuities that exist within his oeuvre and would better assess the considerably wider contributions to the history of art this very important artist has actually made. Such a study would further dispel the widely, but mistakenly, held view in which Morris is still often appreciated only within the narrow confines of his early fundamental contribution to such movements as Minimalism and Conceptualism. Too many still fail to grasp his much wider relevance to today's art in general.

And it is exactly this relevance and diversity that drew me to study Morris and the intellectual and visual challenges that his art provokes in the spectator. I find it very rewarding that his work engages our intellect in a thought-provoking way without tending toward the didactic. It stimulates us, as well as being visually striking and beautiful, yet it is never designed to entertain the viewer, leaving that

chore to less serious artists. On the contrary, as a viewer I find myself left to ponder works posing serious questions about the perils and trials of our contemporary human existence. And in spite of the pessimistic tendency running through his art, this spectator still desires to return for more, for the next evolving work.

We shall now conclude with a detailed consideration of the context and significance of just one of the works from his most recent series; one which might serve to sum up the investigation of some of these unifying themes in Morris's oeuvre that have been addressed in this study.

During a recent visit I made to Morris's studio the artist presented me with a series of eight drawings titled *1934 and Before* (2010). Singling out that specific year, the title of the works plays a central role in the meaning of the drawings; given the content of the images, this title appears to refer to the mounting turmoil surrounding key events which took place at that time in Europe and the United States.<sup>2</sup> All are based on original photographs which captured these events. However, they have been reworked in such a way that a complex fusion of the painterly and the personal within the photographs is given new permanence and substance.

In one of them, *1934 Mid-West Dust Storm*, a 2.44 X 3.66 m (8 X 12 ft) drawing on an epoxy-covered aluminum sheet [Fig.144], the artist refers to the

---

<sup>2</sup> *Nuremberg*, *Strike* and *Bread Line* are three of the drawings in this 2010 series, referring to the Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg, the Minneapolis Teamsters strike, and the long lines of people waiting for food during the Great Depression respectively.

catastrophic drought of the 1930s<sup>3</sup> that struck a great number of the Southern Plains states, particularly New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas, as well as Kansas. And it was not until after 1939, when the rains returned, that the Dust Bowl, as it was eventually called, finally came to an end. Assumed to have been a natural disaster, the Dust Bowl, however, was in fact man-made. The onset of World War I brought a tremendously increased demand for wheat and corn in America (and other nations abroad). This pent-up demand encouraged farmers to bring “every inch” of the Southern Plains under cultivation in order to squeeze out more and more profit. Not only had they overworked the land, but this continued abuse eventually led to the transformation of the entire ecology of the area. Native plants and animals were destroyed in the process while the farming techniques employed not only did little to conserve the soil (through deep plowing and planting), but also rendered the once fertile and productive land vulnerable to the droughts of the 1930s.<sup>4</sup> And even in spite of the beginning of this drought—when rainfall was inadequate—farmers continued plowing and planting, leading to even more devastating results once the rainfall ceased altogether. The environmental historian Donald Worster, in his book *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, accurately argues that the story of the drought in the Midwest represents one of the worst ecological blunders in history:

The Dust Bowl was the darkest moment in the twentieth-century life of the southern plains. The name suggests a place—a region whose borders are as inexact and shifting as a sand dune. But it was also an event of national, even planetary significance... the inevitable outcome of a culture

---

<sup>3</sup> The 1930s were also the age of the Great Depression. And this agricultural devastation naturally contributed to prolonging the economic woes of the time.

<sup>4</sup> For more on this subject, see Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1979). A new revised edition of this book was published in 2004 in which Worster links the Dust Bowl story to present day social issues of both economic and political nature, not to mention the ecological phenomenon of global desertification.

that deliberately, self-consciously, set itself a task of dominating and exploiting the land for all it was worth.<sup>5</sup>

Based on an actual photograph of the period, Morris's *1934 Mid-West Dust Storm* depicts a visually striking landscape. An outsized dust cloud, which occupies two-thirds of the overall composition, seems to be gradually overtaking a lone car that appears in the horizon as it drives down a single road. This car is the only element indicating life in this otherwise unpopulated landscape. With no other human traces, nothing else even hinting at the presence of life, the apocalyptic scene (reminiscent of his 1980s reliefs) certainly brings to mind all those people and animals that died of suffocation in such devastating storms of the 1930s. This is the way residents of the affected area described how the pervasive dust coated everything:

Blowing dirt blackened the pillow around one's head, the dinner plates on the table, the bread dough on the back of the stove. It became a steady part of one's diet and breathing... "In a rising sand storm," wrote Margaret Bourke-White, "cattle quickly become blinded. They run around in circles until they fall and breathe so much dust that they die."<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the decade a mass exodus played out as people fled to escape the dust and desert of the Midwest, moving themselves and what little possessions they had to Washington State, Oregon and California. It was the largest migration within the United States in American history. Capturing this devastation John Steinbeck writes in his socially-committed novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939):

And then the dispossessed were drawn west—from Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico; from Nevada and Arkansas, families, tribes, dusted out, tractored out. Carloads, caravans, homeless and hungry; twenty thousand and fifty thousand and a hundred thousand and two hundred

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

thousand. They streamed over the mountains, hungry and restless—restless as ants, scurrying to find work to do—to lift, to push, to pull, to pick, to cut—anything, any burden to bear, for food. The kids are hungry. We got no place to live. Like ants scurrying for work, for food, and most of all for land.<sup>7</sup>

A viewer, however, standing in front of Morris's *1934 Mid-West Dust Storm* drawing feels like not only an observer but also a participant who, while trying to make an escape down the road, turns to look back to find out just how far the dust storm is behind him, how much time remains to make a final escape. With only one-third of the composition (the foreground) apparently clear of the dust cloud, which is already obscuring the horizon line on the right side, the viewer increasingly feels trapped and soon to be engulfed and consumed by the approaching cloud. The road behind the car already appears to have been swallowed up by the dust storm, making the threat seem even closer still, thus imminent and the escape of both the car and the spectator virtually impossible.

That is to say Morris's visual language is not only powerful, but once again aggressive as well. Additionally, the work encompasses the artist's concerns regarding meaning, experience and interpretation while exploring the idea of memory, a long-standing theme throughout his work. Reality mixes with memory in *1934 Mid-West Dust Storm* and yet the world he creates seems to be standing still. Certainly the drawing is based largely on collective memory evoked by both archival photographs of the Dust Bowl and the recollections of others. Although

---

<sup>7</sup> John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath and Other Writings 1936-1941* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States Inc., The Library of America, 1996), 458.

It is also interesting to mention that the most iconic image, by the photographer Dorothea Lange (1895–1965), features a migrant woman, a refugee from the Dust Bowl. The image of a seemingly ageless seated woman, her face deeply wrinkled, is captured with her exhausted children, as she stoically stares off in the distance.

Morris was only three years old in 1934, he does however recall “the sky turning weirdly green one afternoon in the late ‘30s” and his mother “putting wet towels along the windowsills and how the dust was very fine and silky and came into the house from the tiniest crevices.”<sup>8</sup>

The photograph used in this drawing brings a form of memory as well as reality into the work that might otherwise be viewed as imaginative. In other words *1934 Mid-West Dust Storm* is not a visionary landscape and this makes the threat even more real. However, although the source of the threat in this apocalyptic scene is known, the significance of the piece is neither obvious nor clear, a typical trait in Morris’s art. What is the motive behind the drawing? Are we experiencing a message from a disaster that occurred in the past being transposed into the present? Indeed, Morris seems to be confronting us with the stark realities of our contemporary world because, although *1934 Mid-West Dust Storm* resonates with 1934 tragedies, the artist ties them to our present in uncanny ways, linking them with current political, economical and ecological issues. It is hardly surprising that we see Morris engaged with these present “disasters.” And distinctive as it is, the drawing clearly has its origin in many of Morris’s earlier works previously discussed. Although recorded in the isolation of its day, here is a specific event, nearly eighty years past, which can surely be associated with mounting global economic hardships that are increasingly seen as the consequences of financial greed and the over-exploitation of the earth’s common resources.

---

<sup>8</sup> Morris, e-mail to the author, October 31, 2010.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS BY THE ARTIST

Morris, Robert. *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008.

------. *Hurting Horses*. Brussels, Belgium: MFC - Michèle Didier, 2005.

------. *Telegram / The Rationed Years*. Geneva, Switzerland: JRP Editions, 1998.

------. *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993.

ESSAYS BY THE ARTIST (chronologically ordered, beginning with his most recent published and unpublished writing)

Morris, Robert. "Stations." Unpublished essay, 2009. Sent to the author.

------. "The Labyrinth and the Urinal." *Critical Inquiry*, 36, 1 (Autumn 2009), 76-99.

------. "Backwards." Unpublished essay, August 2008. Mailed to the author.

------. "The Fallen and the Saved." Unpublished essay, 2008. Mailed to the author.

------. "Jasper Johns: The First Decade," *Jasper Johns: An Allegory of Painting 1955-1965*. Exh. cat. Washington, D. C., National Gallery of Art, 2007, 208-233. Rpt. *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 225-256.

------. "Sessions With C." Unpublished essay, 2007. Mailed to the author.

------. "Trains." Unpublished essay, July 2006. Mailed to the author.



----- . "The Idle Idol, or Why Abstract Art Ended Up Looking Like a Chinese Room." Unpublished essay, 2006. Mailed to the author.

----- . "Notes on Less than," *Robert Morris: Less than*. Exh. cat. Prato, Italy: Gli Ori, Prato Comune di Reggio Emilia, 2005, 54-57.

----- . "The Birthday Boy," (2004), *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 205-224.

----- . "Toward an Ophthalmology of the Aesthetic and an Orthopedics of Seeing," (2004), *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 186-202.

----- . "From a Chomskian Couch: The Imperialistic Unconscious." *Critical Inquiry*, 29 (Summer 2003), 678-693. Rpt. *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 171-185.

----- . "Solecisms of Sight: Specular Speculations." *October*, 103 (Winter 2003), 31-49. Rpt. *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 148-162.

----- . "Thoughts on Hegel's Owl," (2002), *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 163-166.

----- . "Vertiginous Spaces." Unpublished essay, August 2002. Mailed to the author.

----- . "Threading the Labyrinth." *October*, 96 (Spring 2001), 61-70. Rpt. *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 137-147.

----- . "Size Matters." *Critical Inquiry*, 26 (Spring 2000), 474-487. Rpt. *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 121-136.

----- . "The Art of Donald Davidson," *The Philosophy of Donald Davidson*. Ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn, The Library of Living Philosophers Vol. XXVII. Illinois: Open Court Press, 1999. Rpt. *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 51-60.

----- . "Thinking Back About Him," (1998), *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 101-102.

- ". "Cézanne's Mountains." *Critical Inquiry*, 24 (Spring 1998), 814-829. Rpt. *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 103-120.
- ". "Tar Babies of the New World Order," *Robert Morris: Tar Babies of the New World Order*. Exh. cat. Milano, Italy: Edizioni Charta, 1997.
- ". "Professional Rules." *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (Winter 1997), 298-322. Rpt. *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 63-100.
- ". "The Beaded Knot: A Tuscan Decade," in Bruno Corà, *Robert Morris: A Path Towards the Center of the Knot*. Exh. cat. Pistoia, Italy: Fattoria di Celle, 1995, 9-15.
- ". "Five Labyrinths," in Bruno Corà, *Robert Morris: A Path Towards the Center of the Knot*. Pistoia, Italy: Fattoria di Celle, 1995, 66-73.
- ". "The Room," in Bruno Corà, *Robert Morris: A Path Towards the Center of the Knot*. Exh. cat. Pistoia, Italy: Fattoria di Celle, 1995, 51-57.
- ". "Some Notes on Brancusi's Brain Case." Unpublished manuscript, 1995. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.
- ". "Steam," (1995), *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 61-62.
- ". "Robert Morris Replies to Roger Denson (or Is That a Mouse in My Paragone?)," *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993, 287-315.
- ". "Indiana Street," (1993), *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 17-40.
- ". "Writing with Davidson: Some Afterthoughts after Doing Blind Time IV: Drawing with Davidson." *Critical Inquiry*, 19 (Summer 1993), 617-627. Rpt. *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*. Ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 41-50.
- ". "Words and Images in Modernism and Postmodernism." *Critical Inquiry*, 15 (Winter 1989), 337-347.
- ". "Three Folds in the Fabric and Four Autobiographical Asides as Allegories (or Interruptions)." *Art in America*, 77, 9 (November 1989), 143-151. Rpt. *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993, 259-286.

- ". "American Quartet." *Art in America*, 69, 19 (December 1981), 92-105. Rpt. *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993, 233-258.
- ". "Notes on Art as/and Land Reclamation." *October*, 12 (Spring 1980), 87-102. Rpt. *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993, 211-232.
- ". "Robert Morris: Keynote Address." *Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture*. Exh. cat. Seattle: The Seattle Art Museum, 1979, 11-17.
- ". "The Present Tense of Space." *Art in America*, 66, 1 (January-February 1978), 70-81. Rpt. *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993, 175-210.
- ". "Aligned with Nazca." *Artforum*, 14, 2 (October 1975), 26-39.
- ". "Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide." *Artforum*, 11, 6 (February 1973), 26-39. Rpt. *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993, 119-142.
- ". "Hearing." Unpublished manuscript, 1972. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.
- ". "The Art of Existence. Three Extra-Visual Artists: Works in Process." *Artforum*, 9, 5 (January 1971), 28-33.
- ". "Anti Form." *Artforum*, 6, 8 (April 1968), 33-35. Rpt. *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993, 41-50.
- ". "A Method for Sorting Cows." *Art and Literature*, II (Lausanne, Switzerland), (Winter 1967), 179-186. Rpt. Compton Michael and David Sylvester, *Robert Morris*. Exh. cat. London: The Tate Gallery, 1971, 8.
- ". "Notes on Sculpture, Part 3." *Artforum*, 5, 10 (June 1967), 24-29. Rpt. *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993, 23-40.
- ". "Form-Classes in the Work of Constantin Brancusi." Master's thesis, Hunter College, New York, 1966.
- ". "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2." *Artforum*, 5, 2 (October 1966), 20-23. Rpt. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Gregory Battcock. New York: Dutton, 1968, 228-235.
- ". "Notes on Sculpture." *Artforum*, 4, 6 (February 1966), 42-44. Rpt. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Gregory Battcock. New York: Dutton, 1968, 222-228.

------. "Notes on Dance." *Tulane Drama Review*, 10, 2 (Winter 1965), 179-186.

### MONOGRAPHS ON ROBERT MORRIS

Berger, Maurice. *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s*. New York: Harper and Row, 1989.

Grenier, Catherine. *Robert Morris à Saint-Pierre de Maguelone*. Paris: Editions Erme, 2003.

Schneller, Katia. *Robert Morris: sur les traces de Mnémosyne*. Paris: Éditions des archives contemporaines, 2008.

Tsouti-Schillinger, Nena. *Robert Morris and Angst*. Athens: Bastas Publications and New York: George Braziller Inc., 2001.

Winkenweder, Brian. *Reading Wittgenstein: Robert Morris's Art-as-Philosophy*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co., 2008.

### SOLO EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

Beeren, Wim, Irene Veenstra et al. *Robert Morris: Recent Felt Pieces and Drawings*. Hannover: Association L.A.C. Lieu d' Art Contemporain Sigean, 1996-1997.

Bertrand, Anne. *From Mnemosyne to Clio: The Mirror to the Labyrinth (1998-1999-2000)*. Lyon: Musée d'art contemporain, 2000.

Cherix, Christophe, Nadine Wasserman. *Robert Morris: Drawings*. New Paltz: Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, SUNY, 2001.

Cherix, Christophe. *Robert Morris: Estampes et Multiples 1952-1998*. Catalogue Raisonné. Geneva: Cabinet des estampes du Musée d'art et d'histoire et Chatou: Centre National de l'estampe et de l'art imprimé, 1999.

------. *Notes on Print: With and After Robert Morris*. Geneva: Cabinet des estampes du Musée d'art et d'histoire, 1995.

Compton, Michael and David Sylvester. *Robert Morris*. London: The Tate Gallery, 1971.

Corà, Bruno. *Robert Morris: A Path Towards the Center of the Knot*. Pistoia:

Fattoria di Celle, 1995.

Criqui, Jean-Pierre et al. *Robert Morris Blind Time Drawings, 1973-2000*. Prato: Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci, 2005.

Davidson, Donald. *The Third Man: Robert Morris and Donald Davidson*. Allentown: The Frank Martin Gallery, Muhlenberg College, 1992.

Fry, F, Edward, Donald P. Kuspit et al. *Robert Morris: Works of the Eighties*. Newport Beach: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1986.

Fry, F. Edward. *Robert Morris/Project*. Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania. 1974.

Grenier, Catherine. *Robert Morris: Less than*. Prato: Gli Ori, Comune di Reggio Emilia, 2005.

Grenier, Catherine et al. *Robert Morris: Contemporains Monographies*. Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1995.

Karmel, Pepe and Maurice Berger. *Robert Morris: The Felt Works*. New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, 1989.

Krauss, Rosalind, Maurice Berger et al. *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*. New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1994.

Krens, Thomas. *The Drawings of Robert Morris*. Williamstown: Williams College Museum of Art, 1982.

Mayo, Marti. *Robert Morris: Selected Works 1970-1980*. Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, 1981.

Michelson, Annette. *Robert Morris: An Aesthetic of Transgression*. Washington D. C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969.

Sultan, Terrie. *Robert Morris: Inability to Endure or Deny the World*. Washington D. C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1990.

Tsouti-Schillinger, Nena, and Kenneth Surin. *Robert Morris: Blind Time Drawings*. New York: Haim Chanin Fine Arts, 2003.

Tucker, Marcia. *Robert Morris*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970.

Weiss, Jeffrey. *Things Fall Apart: Untitled (Scattered Piece) 1968-69*. New York: Leo Castelli Gallery, 2010.

## ARTICLES ON MORRIS AND INTERVIEWS

Adam, Robert. "Wrecked Tate Sculpture Show Closed." *Daily Telegraph*, May 4, 1971. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

------. "Visitors Play Role in Funfair Art." *Daily Telegraph*, April 28, 1971. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Adams, Stephen. "Tate to Restage Sculpture that Sent Public 'Mad' in 1971," April 5, 2009 ([www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/howaboutthat/5109245](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/howaboutthat/5109245), accessed April 9, 2009).

Akbar, Arifa. "Tate Rebuilds Installation that Left the Biggest Impression," *The Independent*, April 6, 2009 ([www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/tate-rebuilds-installation-that-left-the-biggest-impression-1663392.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/tate-rebuilds-installation-that-left-the-biggest-impression-1663392.html), accessed April 9, 2009).

Allington, Edward. "I Have Reasons." *Art Monthly*, 320 (October 2008), 35.

Antin, David. "Have Mind, Will Travel." *The Mind/Body Problem*. New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1994, 34-49.

------. "Art & Information, 1 Grey Paint, Robert Morris." *Art News*, 65, 2 (April 1966), 22-24, 56-58.

Audette, Lawrence. "Robert Morris: Learning to See Again." *Ulster Arts* (Fall 1978), 8-10.

Baker, Kenneth. "Guggenheim Revisits Robert Morris's Mind and Body." *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 24, 1994, E 3:1.

Battcock, Gregory. "Robert Morris: New Sculptures at Castelli." *Arts Magazine*, 42, 7 (May 1968), 30-31.

Berger, Maurice. "Wayward Landscapes," *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*. New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1994, 18-33.

------. "Robert Morris: Outside Art History." *The Journal of Art* (May 1989), 42-47.

Bochner, Mel. "Primary Structure." *Arts Magazine*, 40, 8 (June 1966), 32-35.

------. "Art in Process-Structures." *Arts Magazine*, 40, 9 (September-October 1966), 38-39.

Bonito Oliva, Achille. "Robert Morris intervistato da Achille Bonito Oliva." *Domus* (Milan), 516 (November 1972), 43-44.

Branden, Joseph. "Robert Morris and John Cage: Reconstructing a Dialogue," *October* (Summer 1997), 59-69.

Buchloh, Benjamin. "Conversation with Robert Morris." *October* (December 17, 1985), 47-54.

Burnham, Jack. Unpublished Interview. November 21, 1975. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

-----". "Voices From the Gate." *Arts Magazine*, 46 (Summer 1972), 44-46. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

-----". "Robert Morris: Retrospective in Detroit." *Artforum*, 8, 7 (March 1970), 67-75.

Calas, Nicolas. "The Wit and Pedantry of Robert Morris." *Arts Magazine*, 44, 5 (March 1970), 44-47.

Chassey, Eric de. "Le Manipulateur d' Art." *Beaux-Arts Magazine* (September 1995), 52-57.

Chave, Anne. "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power." *Arts Magazine*, 64, 5 (January 1990), 44-63.

Cohen, Mark Daniel. "Robert Morris: The Rationed Years, 1998 An Installation, And Other New Work." *Review* (October 15, 1998), 7-11.

Cork, Richard. "Assault course at Tate Gallery." *Evening Standard*, April 30, 1971. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Criqui, Jean-Pierre. "On Robert Morris and the Issue of Writing: A Note Full of Holes." *The Mind/Body Problem*. New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1994, 80-87.

Cummings, Paul. Transcript of a tape-recorded interview with Robert Morris. Archives of American Art, March 10, 1968.

Dagbert, Anne. "Robert Morris: Musée d'art contemporaine de Lyon." *Artforum* (September 2000), 27. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Danto, Arthur. "Robert Morris: Body and Mind." *The Nation* (April 18, 1994), 532-536.

Drolet, Owen. "Robert Morris: Building the Entropy Machine." *Flash Art*, (May-June 1994), 1-3. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Field, Simone. "Robert Morris-Sculpturestar." *Time Out* (May 7-13, 1971). Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Fineberg, Jonathan. "Robert Morris Looking Back: An Interview." *Arts Magazine*,

55, 1 (September 1980), 110-115.

Fishbein, Jennifer. "Robert Morris at Leo Castelli." *The New York Sun*, March 20, 2003, 15.

Fry, Edward. "Robert Morris: The Dialectic." *Arts Magazine* (September 1974), 22-24. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Gibson, Eric. "Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem." *The New Criterion*, (April 1994), 1-2. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Glueck, Grace. "A Feeling for Felt." *New York Times*, April 28, 1968. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Goossen, E. C. "The Artist Speaks: Robert Morris." *Art in America*, 58, 3 (May-June 1970), 104-110.

Johnson, Jill. "Robert Morris." *Art News*, 64, 3 (May 1965), 15.

-----". "The Object." *Village Voice*, May 21, 1964, 12.

Kaprow, Allan. "The Shape of the Art Environment: How anti form is Anti Form?" *Artforum*, 6, 10 (Summer 1968), 32-33.

Karmel, Pepe. "Robert Morris: Formal Disclosures." *Art in America*, 88, 6 (June 1995), 88-95, 117-119.

Kozloff, Max. "Robert Morris: Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia." *Artforum*, 12, 10 (June 1974), 65-66.

Krauss, Rosalind. "Robert Morris: autour du problème corps/esprit/Around the Mind/Body Problem." *art press* 193 (July-August 1994), 24-32

-----". "The Mind/Body Problem: Robert Morris in Series." *The Mind/Body Problem*. New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1994, 2-17.

Michelson Annette. "Frameworks." *The Mind/Body Problem*. New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1994, 50-61.

Mitchell, W. J. T. "Golden Memories: W. J. T. Mitchell talks with Robert Morris." *Artforum*, 32 (April 1994), 86-92.

-----". "Wall Labels: Word, Image, and Object in the Work of Robert Morris." *The Mind/Body Problem*. New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1994, 62-79.

Morgan, Robert. "Structure, Repetition and The Body." *Cover* (April 1994), 1-3.

Müller, Gregoire. "Robert Morris Presents Antiform: The Castelli Warehouse Show." *Arts Magazine*, 43, 4 (February 1969), 29-30.



Norklun, Kathi. "Major Minimalist, part II." *The Woodstock Times*, 2 (April 7, 1994). Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Olkowski, Lu. Audio interview for *Wedges* at Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, February 2010 ([www.museumwithoutwallsaudio.org/vimeo.com/12321735](http://www.museumwithoutwallsaudio.org/vimeo.com/12321735)).

Quinn, Ben. "Tate Modern Perfects the Art of Living Dangerously." *The Guardian*, July 12, 2009 ([www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/jul/12/tate-modern-robert-morris-injuries](http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/jul/12/tate-modern-robert-morris-injuries), accessed July 30, 2009).

Rainer, Yvonne. "Don't Give the Game Away." *Arts Magazine*, 41, 6 (April 1967), 44-47.

Ratcliff, Carter. "Robert Morris: A Saint Jerome for Our Times." *Artforum*, 23, 8 (April 1985), 60-63.

------. "Robert Morris: Prisoner of Modernism." *Art in America*, 67, 6 (October 1979), 96-109.

Reis, Barbara. "A Tail of Two Exhibitions: The Aborted Haacke and Robert Morris Shows," *Studio International*, 182 (July 1971), 30.

Richard, Paul. "Robert Morris and the Emperor's New Clothes." *Washington Post*, February 13, 1994, G 4:1.

Riese, Hans-Peter. "Das Ich in der Kiste - Nackt, entblößt sogar." *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, March 12, 1994. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Roth, Moira. Unpublished interview. February 8, 1973. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Sharp, Willoughby. "Place and Process." *Artforum*, 8, 3 (November 1969), 46-49. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Shapiro, Stephen. Unpublished interview. October 25, 1986. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Schjeldahl, Peter. "The Smartass Problem." *Village Voice*, March 1, 1994. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

------. "Robert Morris: Maxi of the Minimals." *New York Times*, May 7, 1972. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Schneller, Katia. "De la fragilité de la mémoire: les *Memory Drawings* de Robert Morris." *Images Re-Vues*, February 2, 2006 ([imagesrevues.org/ARTICLES/10/pdf/N02ART04.pdf](http://imagesrevues.org/ARTICLES/10/pdf/N02ART04.pdf)).

Siegel, Jeanne. "Suits, Suitcases and Other Look-Alikes." *Arts Magazine*, 63 (April 1989), 70-71.

Smith, Roberta. "Robert Morris: Tour of Contemporary History." *New York Times*, February 4, 1994, C 24.

-----, "A Hypersensitive Nose for the Next New Thing." *New York Times*, January 20, 1991, 2, 33:1.

Solomon, Deborah. "More Body Than Mind." *The Wall Street Journal*, February 4, 1994, A, 8:1.

Sozanski, Edward. "A Short History of Idea Art in Robert Morris Exhibit." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 13, 1994. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Styer, Michael. Unpublished interview. February 25, 1998. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Thorson, Alice. "Problem Is More Telling of Curators' Attitudes." *Kansas City Star*, February 20, 1994. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Tisdall, Caroline. "Sculpture for Performing On." *The Guardian*, May 8, 1971. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Tourigny, Maurice. "Le Grand manitou et le grand public." *Le Devoir*, February 26 and 27, 1994.

Tsouti-Schillinger, Nena. Unpublished interview. March 14, 2001.

-----, "Η οπτική γλώσσα του Robert Morris." *Τα Νέα της Τέχνης*, 83, Ιανουάριος, 2000, 6.

Wilson, William. "Minimally a Bad Boy." *Los Angeles Times*, May, 1991, F, 8:2. Given to the author.

-----, "Hard Questions and Soft Answers." *Art News*, 68, 7 (November 1969), 26-28, 81-85. Given to the author.

Zimmer, William. "On the Lookout for Danger in the Air." *New York Times*, December 8, 2002, CT 12.

## REFERENCES

Alberro, Alexander and Patricia Norvell. Ed. *Recording Conceptual Art*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001.

Andre, Carl. *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1958-1974*. Exh. cat. Kunsthalle, Bern, 1975.

Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane. Ed. "Tribute to Martha Graham," *Isamu Noguchi: Essays and Conversations*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994, 120-123.

Aristotle. "Nicomachean Ethics," *Aristotle: On Man in the Universe*. 1943; rpt. New York: Gramercy Books, 1971, 85-243.

Ashton, Dore. *Noguchi: East and West*. Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1992, 53-61.

Bach, Friedrich Teja et al. *Brancusi*. Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1995.

Baker, Kenneth. *Minimalism*. New York: Cross River Press, 1988.

Ball, Howard. *Justice Downwind: America's Atomic Testing Program in the 1950s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Bambach, C. Carmen. Ed. *Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman*. Exh. cat. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003.

Banes, Sally. *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theatre, 1962-1964*. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 1993.

Bankowsky, Jack, Alison Gingeras et al. *Pop Life: Art in a Material World*. Exh. cat. London: Tate Publishing, 2010.

Battcock, Gregory. Ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995.

-----, Ed. *Idea Art: A Critical Anthology*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. 1973.

Baudelaire, Charles. "Richard Wagner and Tannhäuser in Paris," *Baudelaire The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*. Trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne. London and New York: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1965, 111-146.

Beardsley, John. *Earthworks and Beyond*. New York: Cross River Press Ltd., 1989.

Bennett, Bonnie A. and David G. Wilkins. *Donatello*. Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1984.

Bhabha, Homi, Nicholas Bourriaud et al. Exh. cat. *Anish Kapoor*. London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2009.

Bonito Oliva, Achille. *Minimalia: An Italian Vision in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Art*. Exh. cat. Milano: Electa 1999.

Bower, Tom. *Klaus Barbie: The Butcher of Lyon*. New York: Pantheon Books,

1984.

Buchloh, Benjamin, Rosalind Krauss et al. "Conceptual Art and the Reception of Duchamp." *October*, 70 (Fall 1994), 127-131.

Buchloh, Benjamin. "The Twilight of the Idol." *Artforum*, 18, 5 (January 1980), 35-43.

Burnham, Jack. *The Structure of Art*. New York: George Braziller Inc., 1971.

----- . "The Aesthetic of Intelligent Systems," *On the Future of Art; essays by Arnold J. Toynbee, et al.* New York: Viking Press, 1970, 95-122.

----- . *Beyond Modern Sculpture: The Effects of Science and Technology on the Sculpture of this Century*. New York: George Braziller Inc., 1967.

Butler, Connie. *Afterimage: Drawing Through Process*. Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999.

Cage, John. *Musicage: John Cage in Conversation with Joan Retallack*. Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1996.

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

Colpitt, Francis. *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990.

Commager, Henry Steele. *The American Mind*. New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1950.

Corà, Bruno, Chiara d'Afflito et al. *Forme per il David*. Exh. cat. Florence: Galleria dell'Accademia, 2004.

Cotter, Holland. "Philadelphia, Surreal to Silly Landscape of Eros, Through the Peephole." *New York Times*, August 28, 2009, C 21.

Cowling, Elizabeth et al. *Picasso: Challenging the Past*. Exh. cat. London: The National Gallery, 2009.

Crow, Thomas. *The Rise of the Sixties*. New York: Abrams, 1996.

Davidson, Donald. *Essays on Actions and Events*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1980.

----- . *Inquiries into Truth & Interpretation*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1984.

De Barañano, Kosme, Angela Vettese et al. *The Gori Collection: History and Nature*. Exh. cat. Valencia Institute of Modern Art, 2003.

D.E.P. "Gerhard Richter weist Meisners Kritik zurück." *Welt online*, August 31, 2007  
([www.welt.de/politik/article1148224/Gerhard\\_Richter\\_weist\\_Meisners\\_Kritik\\_zurueck.html](http://www.welt.de/politik/article1148224/Gerhard_Richter_weist_Meisners_Kritik_zurueck.html), accessed September 28, 2008).

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method, Optics, Geometry and Meteorology*. Trans. Paul J. Olscamp. New York: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001.

D.S.M. "Cologne Cathedral Gets New Stained-Glass Window." *Spiegel online*, August 27, 2007 ([www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,502271,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,502271,00.html), accessed September 28, 2008).

Eliade, Mircea. *A History of Religious Ideas*. Trans. Willard Trask. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978. Vol. I.

Elsen, Albert E. *Rodin*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1963, 32.

Flam, Jack. Ed. *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996.

Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real: Art and Theory at the End of the Century*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1996.

------. "The Crux of Minimalism 1986/96," *Minimalism*. Ed. James Meyer. New York: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2000, 270-275.

Fried, Michael. "Art and Objecthood." *Artforum*, 5, 10 (June 1967), 12-23. Rpt: in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkley: University of California Press, 1995), 116-147.

------. *Manet's Modernism or, The Face of Painting*. Chicago, Massachusetts and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Friedli, Bettina. "Robert Morris' Mirror Works." Master's thesis. Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, 2007. Morris Archives, Gardiner, New York.

Fry, Edward. "Sculpture of the Sixties." *Art in America*, 55, 5 (September-October 1967), 26-28.

Fuentes, Carlos. "Goya and the Spirit of Revolution." *Art News*, 88 1. January 1989, 95.

Gallagher, Carole. *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993.

Garin, Eugenio. *Astrology in the Renaissance: The Zodiac of Life*. Trans. Carolyn Jackson and June Allen. London and Boston, Mass.: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd. 1983.

Gascoigne, Laura. "Rising From the Ashes in the Hands of Anthony Caro." *The Art Newspaper*, 196 (November 2008), 42.

Gassier, Pierre and Juliet Wilson. *The Life and Complete Work of Francisco Goya*. 2d. English ed. Trans. Christine Hauch and Juliet Wilson. New York: Harrison House, 1981.

Gayford, Martin and Karen Wright. Ed. *The Grove Book of Art Writing: Brilliant Words on Art from Pliny the Elder to Damien Hirst*. New York: Grove Press, 2000.

Glueck, Grace. "Why, It's the Stuff of Minimalism: Giving the Dust Mote Its Due at the Whitney." *New York Times*, March 2, 2001, B 38.

Goldberg, Rose Lee. *Performance: Live Art since 1960*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998.

Goldstein, Ann and Lisa Gabrielle Mark. *A Minimal Future? Art as Object, 1958-1968*. Exh. cat. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004.

Gorgoni, Gianfranco. *Beyond the Canvas*. New York: Rizzoli International, Inc., 1985.

Gottlieb, Carla. *Beyond Modern Art*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976.

Graw, Isabelle. *High Price. Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*. Trans. Nicholas Grindell. Berlin and New York: Sternberg Press, 2010.

Harley, Trevor. *The Psychology of Language: From Data to Theory*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Hove, East Sussex and New York: Psychology Press, 2008.

Herbert, Martin. "With Hidden Noise: Sculpture, Video and Ventriloquism." *Art Monthly* (June 2004).

Janson, Horst. *The Sculpture of Donatello*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

Jarrell, Randall. *No Other Book: Selected Essays*. Ed. Brad Leithauser. New York: Harper Collins, 1999.

Jaskolski, Helmut. *The Labyrinth: Symbol of Fear, Rebirth, and Liberation*. Trans. M. Kohn. Boston: Shambhala, Inc., 1997. Originally published in Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag Stuttgart, 1994.

Joachimides, C. M., N. Rosenthal, and W. Schmied. *German Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Munich: Prestel - Verlag, 1985.

Johnson, Ellen. *American Artists on Art: From 1940 to 1980*. New York: Harper & Row, 1982.

Judd, Donald. "National Reports: Hartford; Black, White and Gray." *Arts Magazine*, 38, 6 (March 1964), 36-38.

Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M.T.H. Sadler. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977.

Kaprow, Allan. "The Shape of the Art Environment." *Artforum*, 6, 10 (Summer 1968), 32-33.

Karmel, Pepe. "Minimalism and Sexual Metaphor: The Sculpture of Robert Morris." Unpublished Essay, April 1986. Given to the author.

------. "The Corner as Trap, Symbol, Vanishing Point, History Lesson." *New York Times*, July 21, 1995, C 25.

Kelly, Cynthia. Ed. *The Manhattan Project: The Birth of the Atomic Bomb in the Words of Its Creators, Eyewitnesses and Historians*. New York: Black Dog and Leventhal Publishers, 2007, 304-323.

Kramer, Hilton. "The New Line: Minimalism Is Americanism." *New York Times*, March 26, 1978, D 29.

Krauss, Rosalind. *Richard Serra / Sculpture*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1986.

------. *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. Rpt. 1977. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981.

------. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1977.

------. "Sense and Sensibility." *Artforum*, 12, 3 (November 1973), 43-53.

Kubler, George. *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*. New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 1962.

Kuspit, Donald. "Joseph Beuys' Mission," *Warhol/Beuys/Polke: Three Artists of Their Time*. Exh. cat. Wisconsin: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1987.

Lebel, Robert. *Marcel Duchamp*. New York: Grove Press, 1959.

Licht, Fred. *Goya: The Origins of the Modern Temper in Art*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983.

Lippard, Lucy. *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*. New York: Praeger Inc., 1973.

------. "New York Letter." *Art International*, 9, 6 (September 1965), 58-59.

Llorente, Jean Antoine. *Histoire critique de l'Inquisition espagnole*. Trans. Alexis

Pellier. Paris: Treuttel et Würz, 1818.

Madrack, Jeffrey. "Misplaced Optimism," *The End of Affluence*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1997.

Maletic, Vera. *Body, Space, Expression: The Development of Rudolf Laban's Movement and Dance Concepts*. New York and Berlin: Walter De Gruyter Inc., 1987.

Malpas, James. *Realism*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 47.

Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. and Random House Inc., 1955.

Mauroni, Albert. *America's Struggle with Chemical-Biological Warfare*. Westport, CT.:Praeger Publishers, 2000.

May, Ernest R. and Philip D. Zelikow. Eds. *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Concise edition. Charlottesville, VA: The Miller Center of Public Affairs, 2001.

Mellor, David Alan. "Rents in the Fabric of Reality: Contexts for Sophie Ristelhueber," in Bruno Latour, David Mellor, and Thomas Schlessler, *Operations: Sophie Ristelhueber*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2009, 212-228.

------. *The Sixties: Art Scene in London*. London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1993.

Mergel Jen, Nicholas Baume and Lawrence Weschler. *Tara Donovan*. Boston: The Monacelli Press and The Institute of Contemporary Art, 2008.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962.

Meyer, Alfred Gotthold. *Donatello*. Trans. P.G. Konody. Bielefeld and Leipzig: Velhagen and Klasing, 1904.

Meyer, James. Ed. *Minimalism*. New York: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2000.

Misrach, Richard, Myriam Weisang Misrach. *Bravo 20: Bombing of the American West*. Baltimore, Maryland, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Mitchell, W. J. T. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago, Massachusetts and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Moffitt, John F. *Occultism in Avant-Garde Art: The Case of Joseph Beuys*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1988.

Néret, Gilles. *Matisse*. Trans. Lisa Davidson. New York: William S. Konecky Associates, 1993.



Newman, Amy. Ed. *Challenging Art: Art Forum 1962-1974*. New York: Soho Press, Inc., 2000.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, Inc., 1967.

Nunley, John W. "Prehistory and Origins," *Masks Faces of Culture*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999, 21-39.

Oshinsky, David. *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joseph McCarthy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Studies in Iconology*. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

Pickover, Clifford. *Archimedes to Hawking: Laws of Science and the Great Minds Behind Them*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Pincus-Witten, Robert. *Postminimalism into Maximalism: American Art, 1966-1986*. Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1987.

Plato. *Republic*, Book VII.

Pliny. *Natural History*. Trans. H. Rackham. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952, IX, 35.

Plutarch. *Lives*. Trans. John Dryden. Ed. Arthur Hugh Clough. New York: Modern Library, The Random House Inc., 2001.

Pope-Hennessy, John. *Donatello Sculptor*. New York: Abbeville Press Inc., 1993.

Potts, Alex. *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*. New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

Rainer, Yvonne. "Don't Give the Game Away." *Arts Magazine*, 41, 6 (April 1967), 44-47.

Richardson, John. *A Life of Picasso: 1907-1917*. New York: Random House, 1996.

Richter, Elinor. "Changing Relationships: Viewing Sculpture, A Historical Perspective," *Moved*. Exh. cat. New York: Hunter College of the City University of New York, 2004.

Rhodes, Richard. *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*. New York: Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, 1986.

Rosenthal, Mark. *Anselm Kiefer*. Exh. cat. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1987.

Rose, Barbara. "The Odyssey of Robert Morris," *Robert Morris: Inability to Endure or Deny the World*. Washington, D. C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1990, 6-10.

-----". "Sculpture as an Intimate Art." *New York Magazine* (April 14, 1969), 48-49.

-----". "ABC Art." *Art in America* 53, 5 (October-November, 1965), 58-64; rpt. in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Gregory Battcock. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995, 214-217.

-----". "Looking at American Sculpture." *Artforum*, 3, 5 (February 1965), 29-36.

-----". "New York Letter." *Art International*, 8, 1 (February 1964), 41.

Saint-Jean, Robert. *Languedoc Roman*. St. Leger-Vauban: Zodiaque, 1975.

Sandler, Irving. *Art of the Postmodern Era: From the Late 1960s to the Early 1990s*. New York: Harper Collins Inc., 1996.

Santos, Carlos René. "Robert Morris: Gestalt and Phenomenology." Master's thesis, Hunter College, New York, 1983.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel Barnes. 1943; rpt. London: Routledge Classics, 2003.

Schapiro, Meyer. "Style," in *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory*. Ed. A. L. Kroeber. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953, 287-311.

Shanes, Eric. *Constantin Brancusi*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1989.

Shapiro, Gary. *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art after Babel*. Berkley and London: University of California Press, 1995.

Smith, Elizabeth A. T. et al. *Jenny Holzer*. Exh. cat. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2008.

Somers Cocks, Anna. "Pope Suggests Church Should Have Closer Relationship With Contemporary Art." *Art Newspaper*, 185 (November 2007), 51.

Stachelhaus, Heiner. *Joseph Beuys*. Trans. David Britt. New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1991.

Stavitsky, Gail. *Waxing Poetic: Encaustic Art in America*. New Jersey: The Montclair Art Museum, 1999, 41-42.

Stein, Jack Madison. *Richard Wagner and the Synthesis of the Arts*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973.

Stern, Sheldon M. *The Week the World Stood Still: Inside the Secret Cuban Missile Crisis*. Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2004.

Temkin, Ann and Bernice Rose. *Thinking Is Form: The Drawings of Joseph Beuys*. New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1993.

Tillim, Sidney. "Mouth in Review." *Arts Magazine*, 37, 6 (March 1963), 61-62.

Tisdall, Caroline. *Joseph Beuys: We Go this Way*. London: Violette Limited, 1998.

Tomkins, Calvin. *Duchamp: A Biography*. New York: Henry Holt Inc., 1996.

Tomlinson, Janis. *Francisco Goya y Lucientes 1746-1828*. London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1994.

Tucker, Anne Wilkes. *Crimes and Splendors: The Desert Cantos of Richard Misrach*. Exh. cat. Boston: Bulfinch Press, in conjunction with the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, 1996.

Ursprung, Philip and Olafur Eliasson. *Studio Olafur Eliasson: An Encyclopedia*. Los Angeles: Taschen America, 2008.

Vasari, Giorgio. "Donatello," *Lives of the Artists*. Volume I. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987, 174-190.

Vaughan, David. *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*. New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc., 1997.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*. Ed. G.E.M Anscombe and G.H. von Wright. Trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Harper Torchbooks 1972.

----- . *Philosophical Investigations*. 3rd ed. Trans. G. E. Anscombe. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958.

Warhol, Andy. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*. New York: Harvest Books, 1977.

Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1979.

Zanofsky, Michael. "Cold War Chill Lingers Downwind From a Nuclear Bomb-Testing Site." *New York Times*, January 11, 1994, D 1.

Zelevansky, Lynn, Ines Katzenstein et al. *Beyond Geometry: Experiments in Form, 1940s-70s*. Exh. cat. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, 2004.

## APPENDIX

### Note about the Appendices

The documents transcribed in the Appendices are located in the Archives of Robert Morris in Gardiner, New York. They are reproductions of the originals.

## Appendix 1

Text for Arizona (1963)

Robert MORRIS  
 Born 1931, Kansas City, Missouri  
 Lives in New York

Text for Arizona 1963

## A METHOD FOR SORTING COWS

It is essential to have a long corridor or alley with a large room or pen off to one side and approximately halfway between the ends of the corridor. Naturally the more cows being sorted the longer the corridor and the larger the pen. Two men are required to sort cows in the method presented here - it can be done by one man but the effort required - the running, the stumbling, the falling, the sweating, the panic of the animals - all of these things make it impractical. Essentially, the 2-man method is as follows. The cows are driven into the corridor past the gate of the room or pen. The gate to the room or pen must swing open toward that end of the corridor where all of the cows are crowded. 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. Now imagine that the head man is down by the cows at the end of the corridor, always keeping himself between the gate man and the cows and keeping the cows crowded up against the far end of the corridor. He can do this easily by making fidgeting gestures. This keeps the necessary level of nervousness up among the cows - so long as the cows are milling around the head man can tell that he has them in the palm of his hand so to speak. When ready to sort the head man brings the cows to attention by suddenly raising both arms straight out, bending both knees slightly into a kind of ply, dropping the upper part of his body and at the same time jumping with the lower. The head man should practise this motion until it is a smooth movement, yet one which transforms his entire being into a state of absolute alertness, potentiality and authority. A good head man will transfix upwards of 30 cows with such a motion. After the ready-to-sort movement is made and the cows are stock still, nearly hypnotized, the gate man should place his feet well apart and get a good grip on his gate. He should be slightly crouched and concentrating on the head man. Slowly the head man will straighten up and walk toward the cows, keeping just to right of center, if the gate is on the left.

The cows will inch toward the left side as he inches toward the right. A crowding will occur in the left corner until one cow will bolt out and down the left side of the corridor past the head man. But this is exactly what the head man wants. He knows just what to do with this cow: as it bolts he screams "by" or "in." If it is the former the gate man flattens himself against the gate and attempts to become part of the wall; if it is the latter, he immediately springs out into the corridor pulling the gate open at about a 60-degree angle. The cow will dart into the pen and he slams the gate and freezes to immobility and intense concentration on the head man. The inching toward the right on the part of the head man, a cow bolting, the in or by scream, the immobility or action on the part of the gate man - so it goes until all the cows except the last have made their exit from the end of the corridor. The last cow is approached by the head man in a more lyrical and less tense way; usually the last cow is also somewhat more relaxed and knows what is expected of him. One might say that the last cow is "shooed" since the expert timing of the head man is now not required. This cow will usually trot rather than bolt down the corridor to its destined in or by place. The head man must then turn to his gate man and say, "That's the one we're looking for."

## Appendix 2

Leonardo text for *Waterman Switch* (1965)

## LEONARDO TEXT Balancing on Stones Section

If a drop of water falls into the sea when this is calm, it must of necessity be that the whole surface of the sea is raised imperceptibly, seeing that water cannot be compressed within itself like air.

Rushing now here now there, up and down, never resting at all in quiet either in its course or in its own nature, it has nothing of its own but seizes hold of everything, assuming as many different natures as the places are different through which it passes, acting just as the mirror does when it assumes within itself as many images as are the objects which pass before it.

Know that stones are rolled over by water because this water either surrounds or flows over them. ~~If it surrounds them it meets again beyond them and intersects, hollowing out the soil or sand beyond the stone...~~ and gnaws and tugs and drags away the stone from the opposing obstacles with the result that this also begins to roll, and so continues from place to place until it traverses the whole river.

The stone placed in the level and smooth beds of flowing rivers becomes the cause of their inequality and deterioration.

Sand and other light objects follow and obey the twists and turns of the eddies of water while the large stones move in a straight line.

If the river as it flows strikes against some rock, it will leap up, and the place that it strikes in its fall will be of the nature of a well.

If the rock in a river projects above and divides the course of the water which rejoins after this rock, the interval that is found to exist between the rock and reunion of the water will be the place where the sand becomes deposited.

If a stone is thrown into still water it will form circles equidistant from their centre; but if into a moving river the circles formed will lengthen out and be almost oval in shape, and will travel on together with their centre away from the spot where it was first made, following the course of the stream.

It is possible for water in a brief time to perforate and make a passage through a stone.

The water wears away the lofty summits of the mountains. It lays bare and carries away the great rocks... In the end the mountains will be levelled by the waters, seeing that they wash away the earth which covers them and uncover their rocks, which begin to crumble and are being continually changed into soil subdued alike by heat and frost. The waters wear away their bases and the mountains bit by bit fall in ruin into the rivers which have worn

away their bases, and by reason of this ruin the waters rise in a swirling flood and form great seas.

It is the cause at times of life or death, of increase or privation, nourishes at times and at times does the contrary, at times has a tang of salt, at times is without savor, at times submerges the wide valleys with great floods. With time everything changes.

## Appendix 3

## Proposal for a sculptural monument for the Bay Pines Veterans Administration Hospital (1978)

R. Morris  
Contract No. V101C-921

## DOCUMENTARY STATEMENT

On August 6, 1945 and August 8, 1945, atomic bombs were detonated over the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. If these two events shortened World War II they also altered the course of world history. The significance of these weapons lies not only in the fact that they put a destructive force of a heretofore unknown magnitude into man's hands; the successful detonation of an atomic weapon in 1945 also tended to confirm that matter and energy were interchangeable as Einstein had predicted.

The atomic explosions of 1945 are perhaps comparable to the introduction of Gutenberg's press. Both represent technological turning points in the world's history.

The well-known mushroom cloud has been associated with atomic explosions since 1945, but it is usually overlooked that the weapon's technology required specialized delivery systems in the form of two large bombs. Each had a unique detonation system: the "gun type" for the U-235 or "Little Boy" and the implosion type for the plutonium "Fat Man." The detonation systems dictated the resultant physical shapes of the casings (see drawing). While these two types of bombs have long been obsolete as weapons, sometime after the War the casings were set up in technical-historical halls at Los Alamos and Albuquerque. Yet the significant and powerful physical forms of these two devices which so changed the world are not well known by the public.

My proposal for the Bay Pines Veterans Administration Hospital would be to monumentalize as sculptures these two physical objects which changed the course of so much in the 20th century. Specifically, a "Little Boy" and a "Fat Man" casing would be elevated on steel pedestals. The longitudinal axes of the casings would be inclined at 45° to the ground. This spatial disposition would be suggestive of their attitude in space during the first seconds after leaving the bomb bay doors of the B-29s on those historic days in August, 1945. Both units would be placed close enough together to function as one work and still allow room to walk between the two objects. The site is quite small but adequate for such placement (see drawing). Both units would be painted the same beige color of the new building.

The physical replication of these units would not be necessary since some of these units remain in storage with the Defense Department. Release of two of these would be requested to implement this project.

R. Morris  
Contract No. V101C-921

(Documentary Statement -- continued)

I feel that the proposed sculptural monument is highly appropriate for a Veterans Hospital. If military claims and estimates were correct, the decision to drop these bombs obviated the necessity of an invasion of Japan. This considerably shortened World War II and saved a million American lives. And if such claims were correct then no doubt there are some among the patients at Bay Pines who owe their lives to these two devices.

#### IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCEDURE

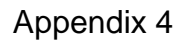
If and when the proposal is approved, the Veterans Administration would request the Defense Department to release and deliver the casings to the Tampa, Florida area where the upper section of the bases would be fitted and welded to the cases prior to installation (see drawing).

Meanwhile the footings would be designed to the necessary engineering specifications. While each of these units weighed between 9,000 and 10,000 pounds when armed, the empty weight will obviously be less. Once the empty casing weight of each is known the correct depth of the footing, type of reinforcement, etc., could be specified. The two bases and footings would then be installed together with the necessary lighting fixtures.

At installation the units would be craned from trucks on the entry road. Each would be slipped onto the lower sleeved section of its pipe base and the seam welded closed (see drawing). The units would be painted with a commercial, salt-resisting enamel. The color of the unit, and the lettering on the bases, would match the beige of the new building.

No maintenance is anticipated other than an occasional re-painting of the units.





# THEMATICS IN THE ART OF ROBERT MORRIS

Nena Tsouti-Schillinger

PhD Thesis  
University of Sussex  
November 2010

VOLUME TWO

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

3

ILLUSTRATIONS

13

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## Note to the Illustrations

All the illustrations are by Robert Morris unless stated otherwise. They appear in this thesis with the permission of the artist.

1. *Untitled (Three L-Beams)*, 1965. Painted plywood, three units, each 243.8 X 243.8 X 61 cm. Private Collection.
2. Vic Muniz, *Robert Morris, Untitled (L-Beams), 1965*, 2001. Cibachrome print, 122 X 155 cm.
3. Exhibition view at the Green Gallery, New York, December 1964 – January 1965.
4. Morris in *Untitled (Box for Standing)*, 1961. Fir, 187.9 X 63.5 X 26.7 cm. Collection of the artist.
5. *Untitled (Stadium)*, 1967. Gray fiberglass, configuration with eight units, each 120.7 X 215.9 X 120.7 cm. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Panza Collection.
6. *Floor Plan with Dates of Changes During the Exhibition*, 1967 for (*Untitled [Stadium]*). Lithograph, dimensions and location unknown.
7. *Untitled (Wedges)*, 1971, permanent outdoor installation. Steel, eight units, 1.37 X 6.71 X 6.71m overall. Fairmount Park Association, Philadelphia.
8. Robert Morris and Carolee Schneemann rehearsing in Morris's *Site*, 1965.
9. Joseph Beuys, *The Chief*, 1964.
10. *Arizona*, 1963. Morris in performance at Judson Memorial Church, New York.
11. *Waterman Switch*, 1965. Morris, Yvonne Rainer, and Lucinda Childs in performance at the Festival of the Arts Today, Buffalo.
12. *Column*, 1961. Painted plywood, two units, each 243.8 X 61 X 61 cm. Teheran Museum of Contemporary Art.
13. *Untitled (Three L-Beams)*, 1965-69. Painted plywood, three units, each 243.8 X 243.8 X 61 cm. Private Collection.

14. Robert Morris inside his *Passageway*, 1961. Painted plywood, 2.44 X 15.24 m.
15. *Untitled (Pine Portal)* and *Untitled (Pine Portal with Mirrors)*, 1993, refabrication of a 1961 original. *Pine Portal*: Laminated fir, 243.8 X 121.9 X 30.5 cm; *Pine Portal with Mirrors*: Laminated pine and mirrors, 215.2 X 114.3 X 28 cm.
16. Martha Graham as Medea in *Cave of the Heart*, with Isamu Noguchi's stage set.
17. Exhibition view of *Untitled (Participation Objects)*. Tate Gallery, London, 1971.
18. Exhibition view of *Untitled (Participation Objects)*. Tate Gallery, London, 1971.
19. Exhibition view of *Bodyspacemotionthings*. Tate Modern, London, 2009.
20. Exhibition view of *Bodyspacemotionthings*. Tate Modern, London, 2009.
21. *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, 1961. Walnut box, speaker, and three-and-one-half-hour recorded tape, 24.8 X 24.8 X 24.8 cm. Seattle Art Museum, Seattle.
22. *Untitled (Card File)*, 1962. Metal and plastic wall file mounted on wood, containing forty-four index cards, 68.6 X 26.7 X 5.1 cm. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
23. *Untitled (Pharmacy)*, 1962. Painted wood and mirrors, 45.7 X 29.2 X 91.4 cm. Collection of the artist.
24. *Untitled (Litanies)*, 1963. Lead over wood, steel key ring, twenty-seven keys, and brass lock, 30.5 X 18 X 6.4 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
25. *Statement of Esthetic Withdrawal*, 1963. Typed and notarized statement on paper and sheet of lead over wood, mounted in imitation leather mat, 44.8 X 60.4 cm overall. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
26. *Location*, 1963. Lead over composite board, aluminum letters and arrows, and metallic meters, 53.3 X 53.3 X 2.5 cm.
27. *Untitled (Mirrored Cubes)*, 1965. Plexiglass mirrors on wood, four units, each 53.3 X 53.3 X 53.3 cm.
28. *Untitled (Threadwaste)*, 1968. Threadwaste, asphalt, mirrors, copper tubing, and felt, overall dimensions variable. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

29. *Untitled (Scatter Piece)*, 1968-69. Felt, rubber, zinc, copper, brass, steel, aluminum, and lead, overall dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.
30. *Untitled (Williams Mirrors)*, 1977. Twelve mirrors, each 213.4 X 243.8 cm. Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown.
31. Anish Kapoor, *Sky Mirror*, 2006. Installation view at Rockefeller Center, New York.
32. Olafur Eliasson, *Take your Time*, 2008. Installation view at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City.
33. *Steam*, 1974 refabrication of a 1967 original. Steam, multiple steam outlets under a bed of stones, outlined with wood, overall dimensions variable. Western Washington University, Bellingham.
34. *First Study for a View from a Corner of Orion (Day)*, 1980. Steel, acrylic mirrors, aluminum tubing, and silver-leafed human skeletons, 4.57 X 9.14 X 3.96 m. Collection of the artist.
35. Lorenzo Bernini, *Tomb of Pope Alexander VII*, 1672-78. Detail. Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome.
36. *Tar Babies of the New World Order*, 1997. Clay, thread, plastic. Fifteen units (columns), each: 250.2 cm high X 20.3 cm diameter; fifteen units (baby figures), each: 120.1 cm long. Nuova Icona Gallery, Venice, Italy.
37. *Tar Babies of the New World Order*, 1997. Detail.
38. *Tar Babies of the New World Order*, 1997. Detail.
39. Donatello, *Cantoria*, 1433-1438. Marble, 347.9 X 568.9 cm. Museum of the Opera del Duomo, Florence.
40. *The Fallen and the Saved*, 1994. Fiberglass, eight units (urns), each 167.6 X 152.4 cm. Collection of Giuliano Gori, Fattoria di Celle, Santomato, Pistoia.
41. Tara Donovan, *Untitled (Plastic Cups)*, 2006. Detail.
42. *Untitled*, 1968. Felt, 183 X 274 X 2.54 cm. Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.
43. *Untitled (Tangle)*, 1970. Felt, overall dimensions variable. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.
44. *Untitled (Six Legs)*, 1969. Felt, 459 X 184 X 2.5 cm overall. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

45. *Untitled (Catenary)*, 1968. Felt, 366 X 290 X 3 cm overall. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.
46. *Untitled (House of the Vettii)*, 1983. Felt, steel bracket and metal grommets, 226 X 400 X 91.5 cm. Private Collection.
47. Georgia O'Keefe, *Black Iris*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 91.4 X 75.7 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
48. Constantin Brancusi, *Adam and Eve*, 1921. Eve (above): oak; Adam (below): chestnut, 227 X 48.2 X 44 cm. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.
49. Donatello, *David*, 1425-30. Bronze, 158.8 cm. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.
50. *Untitled (House of the Vettii)*, 1996. Felt, 199 X 400 X 124 cm. Collection of the artist.
51. *Untitled (House of the Vettii)*, 2010. Felt, 247.65 X 181.61 X 80.01 cm. Sonnabend Gallery, New York.
52. *Self-Portrait (EEG)*, 1963. Electroencephalogram and lead labels, framed with metal and glass, 179.7 X 43.2 cm. Collection of the artist.
53. *Untitled (Hand and Toe Holds)*, 1964. Lead and plaster, two units, 10.2 X 121.9 X 6.4 cm. Private Collection.
54. *Untitled (Stairs)*, 1964. Lead over wood, cast-lead footprints inside, 91.4 X 91.4 X 94 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago.
55. *Untitled (Footprints and Rulers)*, 1969. Lead over wood and two cast-lead rulers, each: 100.3 X 60.3 X 10.2 cm. Collection Anne and William J. Hokin, Chicago.
56. *Pace and Progress*, 1969. Project for the *Place and Process* exhibition, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
57. *Observatory*, 1977. Earth, wood, granite, steel, and water, 91.01 m diameter. Permanent installation, Oostelijk, Flevoland, The Netherlands.
58. *Observatory*, 1977. Aerial view.
59. *Initial Memory Drawing (9/3/63, 8:00 P.M.)*, 1963. Ink on gray paper, 52.1 X 33 cm. Collection of the artist.
60. *First Memory Drawing (9/4/63, 9:00 P.M.)*, 1963. Ink on gray paper, 52.1 X 33 cm. Collection of the artist.

61. *Second Memory Drawing (9/8/63, 12:00 P.M.)*, 1963. Ink on gray paper, 52.1 X 33 cm. Collection of the artist.
62. *Third Memory Drawing (9/16/63, 3:30 P.M.)*, 1963. Ink on gray paper, 52.1 X 33 cm. Collection of the artist.
63. *Fourth Memory Drawing (10/2/63, 9:00 P.M.)*, 1963. Ink on gray paper, 52.1 X 33 cm. Collection of the artist.
64. *Blind Time I*, 1973. Graphite on paper, 88.5 X 116.5 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
65. *Blind Time II*, 1976. Directed by R. Morris. Drawn by A. A. Graphite and plate oil on rag paper, 96 X 127 cm. Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.
66. *Blind Time III*, 1985. Iron oxide on paper, 96.5 X 127 cm. Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.
67. *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)*, 1991. Graphite on paper, 97 X 127 cm. Collection of the artist.
68. *Untitled (Crisis)*, 1962. Painted newspaper page, 38.1 X 54.6 cm. Collection of the artist.
69. *War*, 1963. Morris in costume for performance in collaboration with Robert Huot at Judson Memorial Church, New York.
70. *War Memorial: Crater with Smoke*, 1970. Lithograph, 51.5 X 102.2 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
71. *Sculpture Proposal-Veterans Administration Hospital-Bay Pines, Florida*, 1981. Ink on mylar, 96.5 X 106.7 cm. Collection of the artist.
72. *Hearing*, 1972. Three-and-one-half-hour stereo tape, stereo tape recorder, amplifier, two speakers; copper chair with water and immersion heater, 121.9 X 61 X 76.2 cm; zinc table, 91.4 X 198.1 X 91.4 cm; lead-covered bed, 61 X 192.9 X 25.4 cm; wet-cell batteries buried in sand in a bronze trough; wooden cruciform platform, 15.2 cm high, 366 cm square, with 61 cm square sections cut from each corner. Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Mass.
73. Page from typewritten script for *Hearing*, 1972.
74. *Untitled*, 1982. Cast Hydrocal with metal frame, 175.3 X 406.4 cm. Sonnabend Gallery, New York.
75. *Untitled*, 1984. Painted cast Hydrocal, pastel on paper, 161.3 X 186.7 X 38.1 cm. Sonnabend Gallery, New York.



76. *Untitled (Fist)*, 1963. Plaster cast covered with sculptmetal, wood box, and glove, 15.2 X 30.5 X 17.8 cm. Collection Leo Castelli.
77. *Untitled (Psychomachia)*, 1982. Ink, charcoal, graphite, and black pigments on paper (14 panels), 254 X 675.6 cm overall. Sonnabend Gallery and Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.
78. *Untitled (Firestorm)*, 1982. Ink, charcoal, graphite, and powdered pigments on rag paper (six panels), 289.6 X 254 cm overall. Private collection, New York.
79. *Untitled (Holocaust)*, 1987. Silkscreen and encaustic on aluminum panel, fiberglass and felt, 175.3 X 145.4 X 11.4 cm. Eli Broad Family Foundation, Santa Monica.
80. *Improvident/Decisive/Determined/Lazy...*, 1990. Encaustic on aluminum, 364 X 241 cm. Collection of the artist.
81. Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, 1533. Oil on oak, 207 X 209.5 cm. The National Gallery of Art, London.
82. *Horde/Hoard/Whored*, 1989. Encaustic on two aluminum panels, 121.6 X 194.9 cm overall. Sonnabend Gallery, New York.
83. Francisco Goya, *Great Colossus Asleep*, 1824-28. Black chalk. The Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection, Berlin. Destroyed.
84. *Memory is Hunger*, 1990. Encaustic on aluminum panel, 364 X 241 cm. Collection of the artist.
85. Francisco Goya, *The Giant*, 1818. Aquatint and burin. Museum of Modern Art, New York.
86. *Continuities (#1)*, 1988. Etching and aquatint printed in sepia, 50.8 X 38.1 cm. Collection of the artist.
87. Francisco Goya, *Duel with Cudgels*, 1820-23. Oil on canvas (transferred from wall). Prado National Museum, Madrid.
88. *Based on a Section from Mt. Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves 1904-06*, Cézanne, 1997. Encaustic on panel (112 units), 215.9 X 480 cm overall. Collection of the artist.
89. *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)*, 1991. Graphite on paper, 96.2 X 127 cm. Collection of the artist.
90. *Towers of Light*, 2003.
91. The Nuremberg Parade, 1934.

92. Exhibition view of *White Nights*, 2000. Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon.
93. *Labyrinth (Gori Labyrinth)*, 1982. Green and white marble, 12 X 12 X 2 m. Collection Giuliano Gori, Fattoria di Celle, Santomato, Pistoia.
94. *Labyrinth (Pontevedra Labyrinth)*, 2000. Gray granite with black slate, 2.44 m high X 10.67 m diameter. Plan based on the "Labyrinth of Mogol," a 3.500-year-old petroglyph located a few miles from the site in Pontevedra.
95. Wehrmacht officers, 1943. In the center, with civilian clothes, Klaus Barbie.
96. Lyon-Vaise, train station after the bombardment in May 26, 1944.
97. *Mirror Film*, 1969. Still from 16 mm black-and-white film. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
98. Stained-glass windows, 2000. Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher, Saint-Pierre de Maguelone.
99. Stained-glass windows, 2000. Close-up view.
100. Stained-glass windows, 2000. Chapel of Saint Mary, Saint-Pierre de Maguelone.
101. Stained-glass windows, 2000. Close-up view.
102. Stained-glass windows, 2000. Exterior view. Side Window (of the apse).
103. Stained-glass windows, 2000. Exterior view. Side Window (of the apse).
104. Stained-glass windows, 2000. Exterior view. Middle Window (of the apse).
105. Gerhard Richter, 2007. Stained-glass windows for the south transept, 2007. Detail. Gothic Cathedral of Cologne.
106. Henri Matisse, Chapel of the Rosary, 1949-51. Detail. Vence.
107. Presbytery in the Prato Cathedral, 2002. Altar: white marble; ambo: bronze; candelabrum: red marble with bronze base. Prato.
108. Ambo, 2002. Bronze. Prato Cathedral.
109. Donatello, *Saint Louis of Toulouse*, 1423. Gilded Bronze. Museum of the Basilica di Santa Croce, Florence.

110. *Blind Time V: Melancholia*, 1999. Ink on mylar, 76 X 69.5 cm. Private Collection, New York.
111. *Melencolia II*, 2002. Detail. Permanent site-specific installation. Collaboration with Claudio Parmiggiani. Collection Giuliano Gori, Fattoria di Celle, Santomato, Pistoia.
112. *Blind Time VI: Moral Blinds (Moral Limit)*, 2000. Mixed inks on mylar, 92.2 X 106.6 cm. Collection of the artist.
113. *Blind Time VI: Moral Blinds (Moral Search)*, 2000. Mixed inks on mylar, 91.4 X 107.5 cm. Collection of the artist.
114. *Blind Time VI: Moral Blinds (Moral Void)*, 2000. Mixed inks on mylar, 91 X 105.8 cm. Collection of the artist.
115. *Talking Splaces*, 2002. Lead, two units, 121.28 X 67.31 X 2.54 cm overall. Collection of the artist.
116. *Talking Splaces*, 2002. Detail.
117. *Five Catenaries for J.J.*, 2002. Detail. Lead, 60.96 X 50.8 X 12.7 cm. Collection of the artist.
118. *Slaves/Masters*, 2002. Lead, eight units, 30.48 X 127 X 1.27 cm. Collection of the artist.
119. *Noamian Fragments*, 2002. Lead, 41.91 X 120.65 X 27.94 cm. Collection of the artist.
120. *Squeeze*, 2002. Lead, 50.8 X 60.96 X 30.48 cm. Collection of the artist.
121. *Universals*, 2002. Lead, 57.15 X 31.75 X 10.16 cm. Collection of the artist.
122. *Western Wastes*, 2002. Lead, 27.94 X 77.47 X 2.54 cm. Collection of the artist.
123. *Swallows*, 2002. Lead, 50.16 X 38.1 X 8.89 cm. Collection of the artist.
124. *The Birthday Boy*, 2004. Two-screen video with sound installation at the Galleria del'Accademia, Florence.
125. *The Birthday Boy*, 2004. Two-screen video with sound installation at the Galleria del'Accademia, Florence.
126. *The Birthday Boy*, 2004. Two-screen video with sound installation at the Galleria del'Accademia, Florence.

127. *The Birthday Boy*, 2004. Two-screen video with sound installation at the Galleria del'Accademia, Florence.
128. 21.3, 1964. Morris in performance at Stage 73, Surplus Dance Theater, New York.
129. *Less than*, 2005. Bronze, 220 X 125 X 75 cm; audio: approximately six minutes, light-sensor activated, begins at dusk softly, builds in volume and then fades, recorded on four separate tracks quadriphonia, four amps, four speakers. Chiostro piccolo, Chiostri di San Domenico, Reggio Emilia. Musei Civici Collection, Reggio Emilia.
130. *Double Fire*, 2004. Encaustic on wood panel, 76.2 X 106.68 cm. Collection of the artist.
131. Edward Hopper, *Sunlight in a Cafeteria*, 1958. Oil on canvas, 102.23 X 152.72 cm. Yale University Art Gallery, New Heaven, Connecticut.
132. *House and Bombs*, 2004. Encaustic on wood panel, 76.2 X 106.6 cm. Collection of the artist.
133. *Sliding Lights*, 2004. Encaustic on wood panel, 76.2 X 106.6 cm. Collection of the artist.
134. *Weeping House*, 2004. Encaustic on wood panel, 76.2 X 106.6 cm. Collection of the artist.
135. *The Red Chair*, 2001. Encaustic on wood panel, 76.2 X 106.6 cm. Collection of the artist.
136. *Canvas Back/Fire*, 2003-04. Encaustic on wood panel, 76.2 X 106.6 cm. Collection of the artist.
137. *Morning Terror*, 2000. Graphite on paper, 62.3 X 96.5 cm. Collection of the artist.
138. *Normal Terror*, 2000. Graphite on paper, 77.5 X 100.3 cm. Collection of the artist.
139. Exhibition View of *Morning Star Evening Star*, at the Sprüth Magers Gallery, London, 2008.
140. Exhibition View of *Morning Star Evening Star*, at the Sprüth Magers Gallery, London, 2008.
141. *Evening Terror*, 1981-1987-2008. Wood encaustic, cast fiberglass (1987), rubber, lead, steel brackets, felt flag (1981), 243.84 X 182.88 cm. Collection of the artist.

142. *Morning Terror*, 1987-2000-2008. Wood encaustic, cast fiberglass (1987), muslin, steel rod, lead chairs (2000), aluminum brackets, 213.26 X 121.92 cm. Collection of the artist.
143. *Standard Terror*, 1981-1987-2008. Wood encaustic, felt flag (1981), four fiberglass casts (1987), oak bench, rubber buckets, lead, steel brackets, aluminum angle braces, 259.08 X 274.32 cm. Collection of the artist.
144. *1934 Mid-West Sand Storm*, 2010. Epoxy on aluminum sheets, 2.44 X 3.66 m. Collection of the artist.



Fig. 1. *Untitled (Three L-Beams)*, 1965-69.  
Painted plywood, three units, each 243.8 X 243.8 X 61 cm.  
Private Collection.

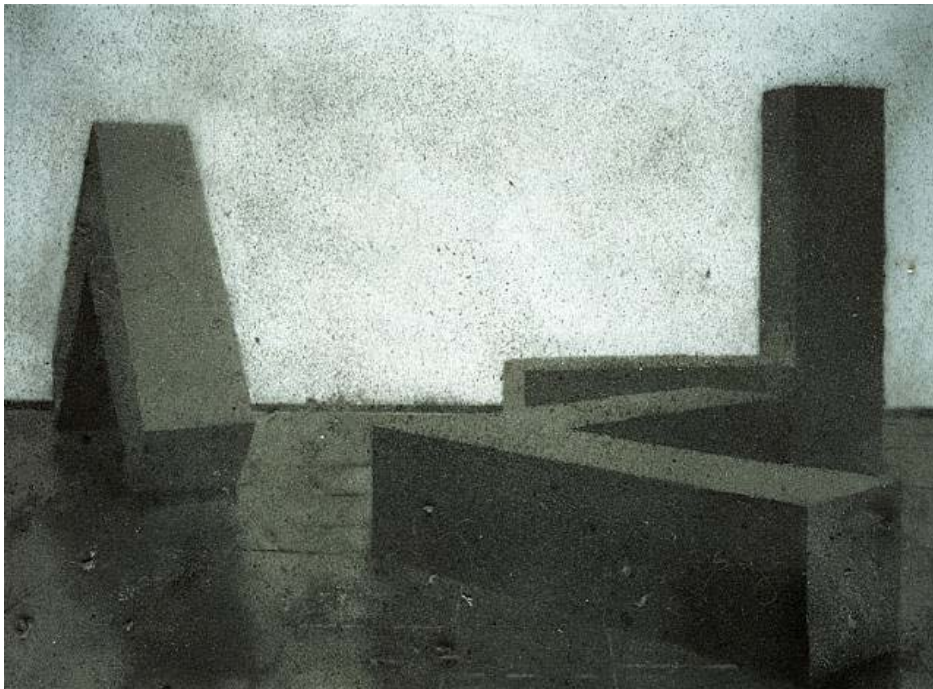


Fig. 2. Vik Muniz,  
*Robert Morris, Untitled (L-Beams)*, 1965, 2001.  
Cibachrome print, 122 X 155 cm.



Fig. 3. Exhibition view at the Green Gallery, New York, December 1964 – January 1965.



Fig. 4. Morris in *Untitled (Box for Standing)*, 1961.  
Fir, 187.9 X 63.5 X 26.7 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



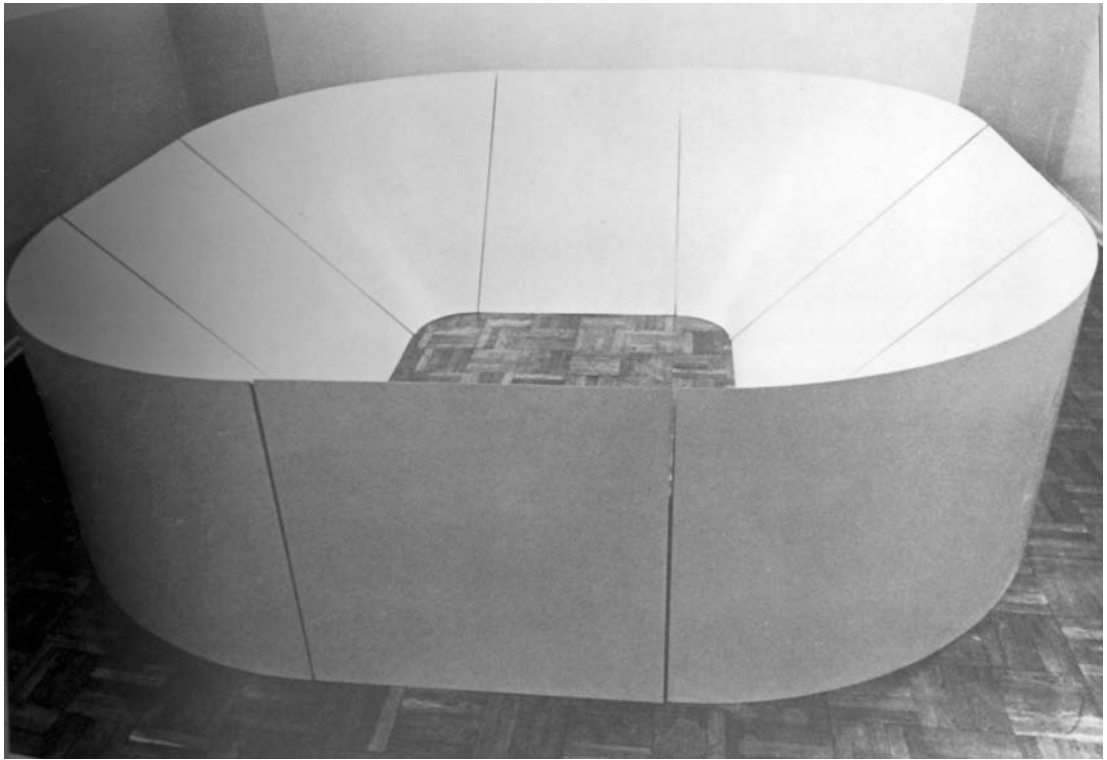


Fig. 5. *Untitled (Stadium)*, 1967. Gray fiberglass, eight units, each 120.7 X 215.9 X 120.7 cm.

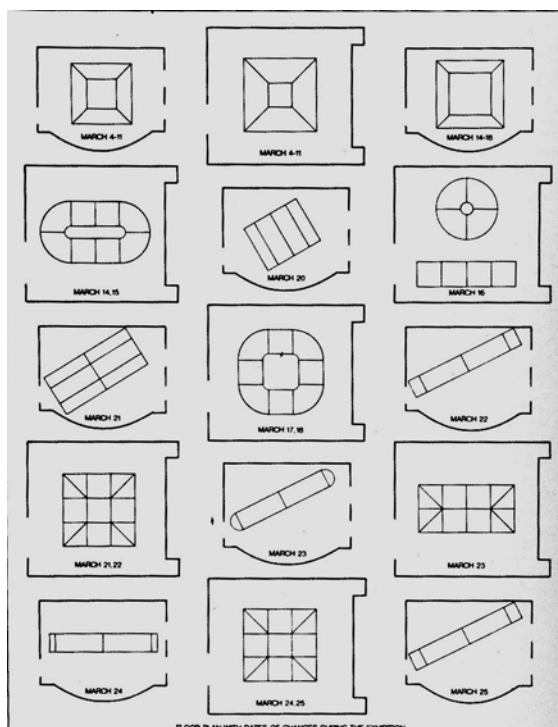


Fig. 6. *Floor Plan with Dates of Changes During the Exhibition*, 1967. Lithograph, dimensions and location unknown.



Fig. 7. *Untitled (Wedges)*, 1971, permanent outdoor installation.  
Steel, eight units, 1.37 X 6.71 X 6.71 m overall.  
Fairmount Park Association, Philadelphia.



Fig. 8. Robert Morris and Carolee Schneemann rehearsing in Morris's *Site*, 1965.

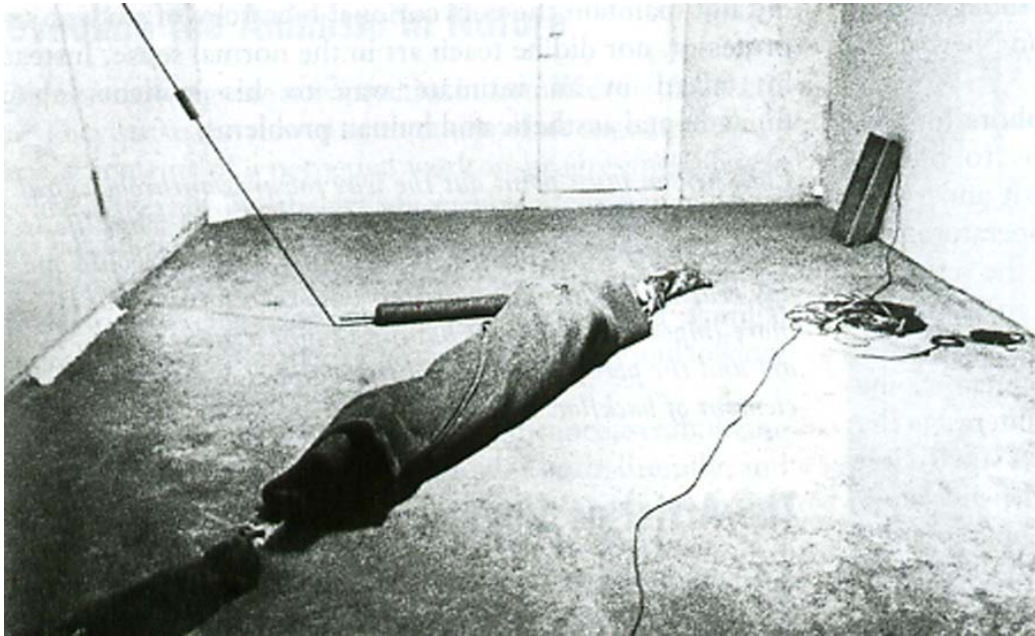


Fig. 9. Joseph Beuys, *The Chief*, 1964.



Fig. 10. *Arizona*, 1963.  
Morris in performance at Judson Memorial Church, New York.





Fig. 11. *Waterman Switch*, 1965.  
Morris, Yvonne Rainer, and Lucinda Childs in performance at the Festival of the Arts Today, Buffalo.

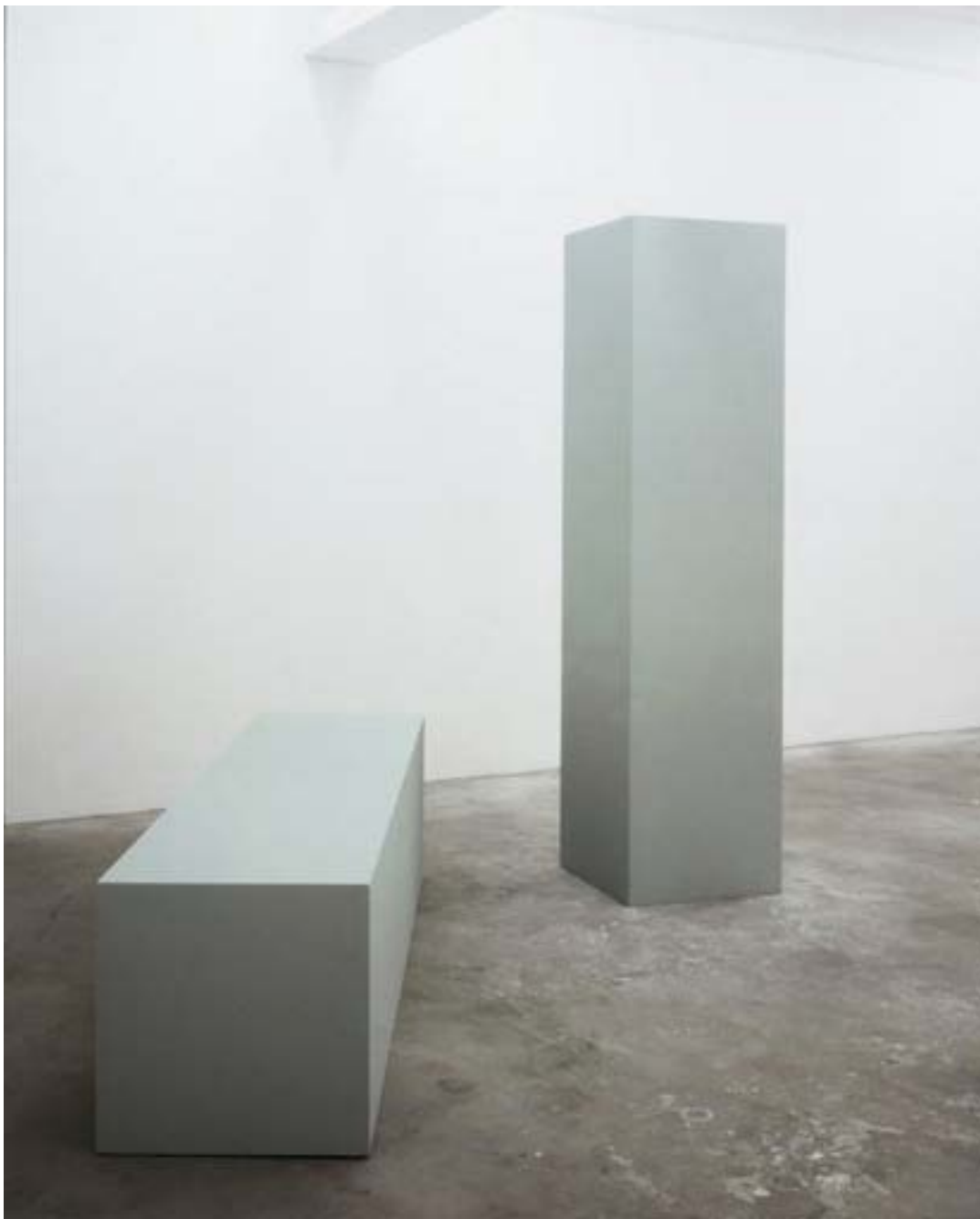


Fig. 12. *Column*, 1961.  
Painted plywood, two units, each 243.8 X 61 X 61 cm.  
Teheran Museum of Contemporary Art.



Fig. 13. *Untitled (Three L-Beams)*, 1965-69.  
Painted plywood, three units, each 243.8 X 243.8 X 61 cm.  
Private Collection.



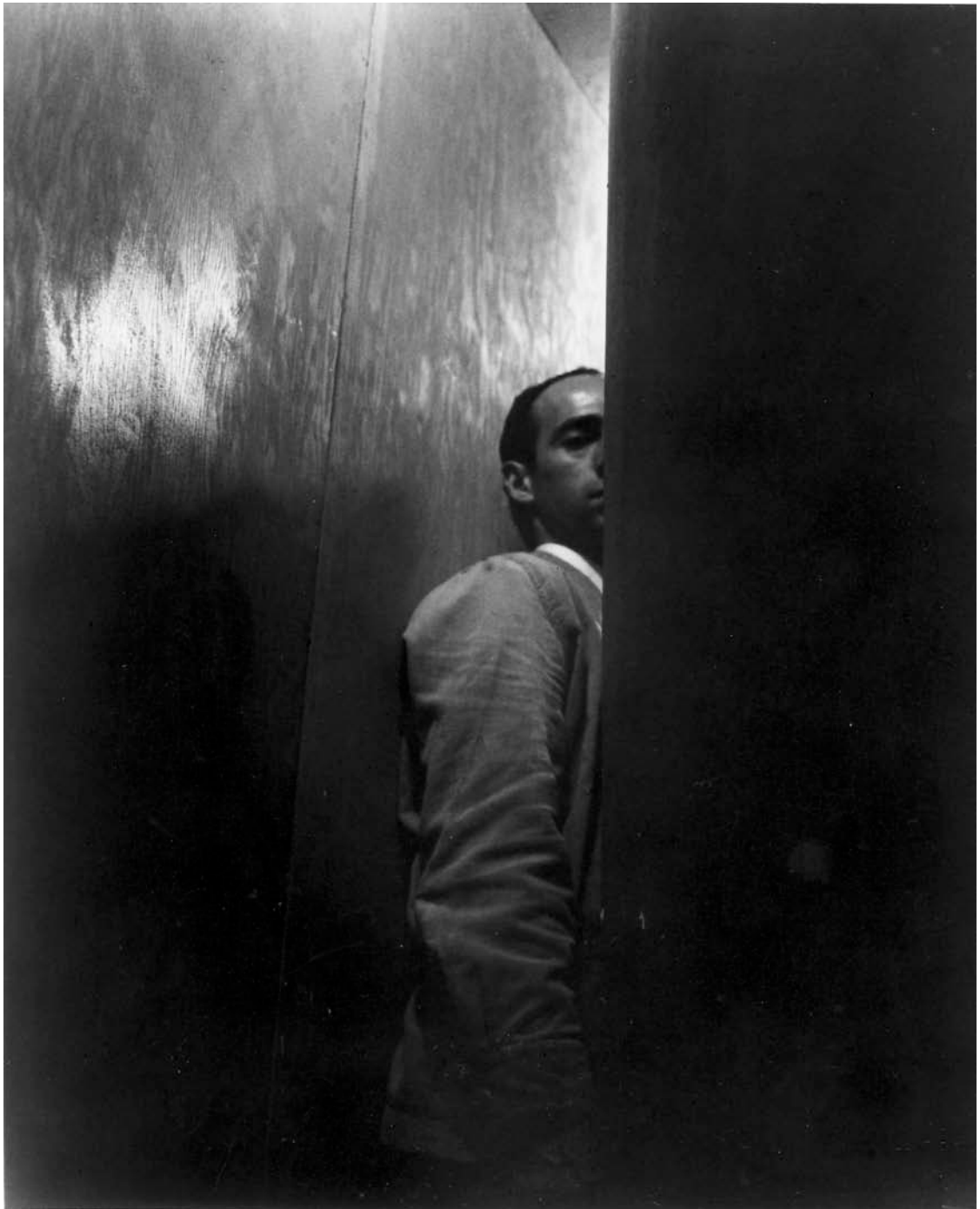


Fig. 14. Robert Morris inside his *Passageway*, 1961.  
Painted plywood, 2.44 X 15.24 m.

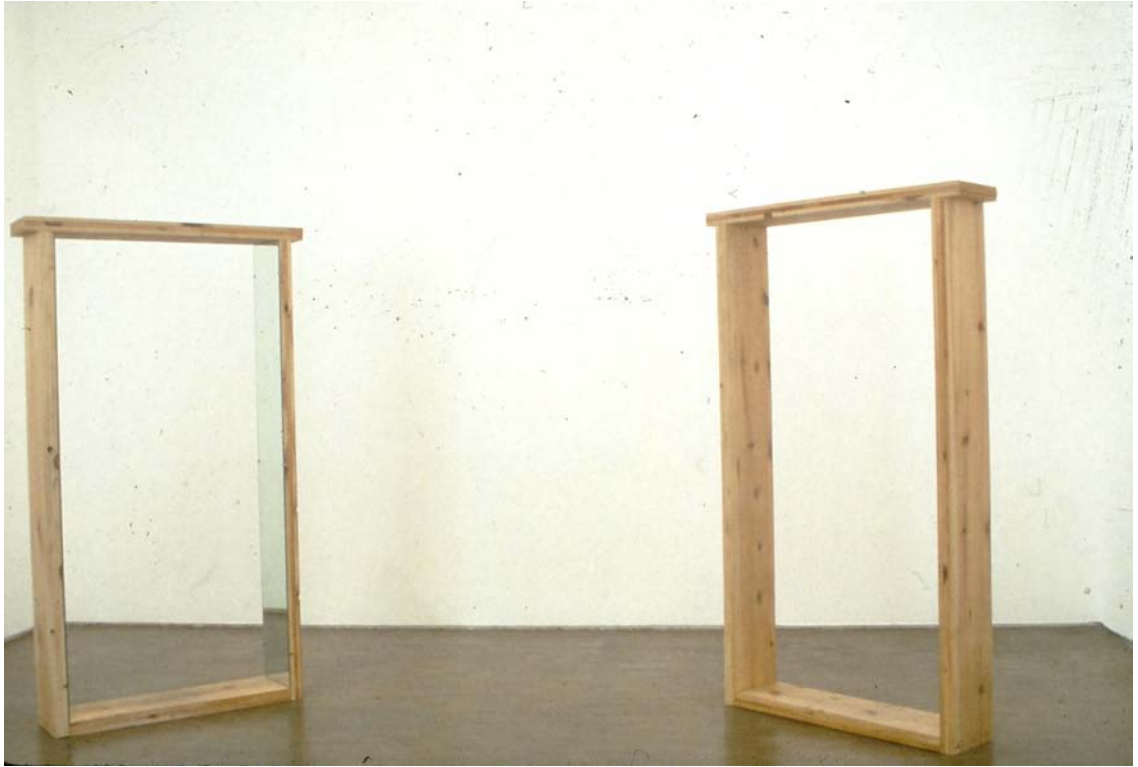


Fig. 15. Left: *Pine Portal with mirrors*, 1993 refabrication of a 1961 original. Laminated pine and mirrors, 215.2 X 114 X 28 cm.  
Right: *Pine Portal*, 1993 refabrication of a 1961 original. Laminated pine, 243.8 X 121.9 X 30.5 cm.



Fig. 16. Martha Graham as Medea in *Cave of the Heart*, with Isamu Noguchi's stage set design.



Fig. 17. Exhibition view of *Untitled (Participation Objects)*, Tate Gallery, London, 1971.



Fig. 18. Exhibition view of *Untitled (Participation Objects)*, Tate Gallery, London, 1971.



Fig. 19. Exhibition view of *Bodyspacemotionthings*, Tate Modern, London, 2009.



Fig. 20. Exhibition view of *Bodyspacemotionthings*, Tate Modern, London, 2009.

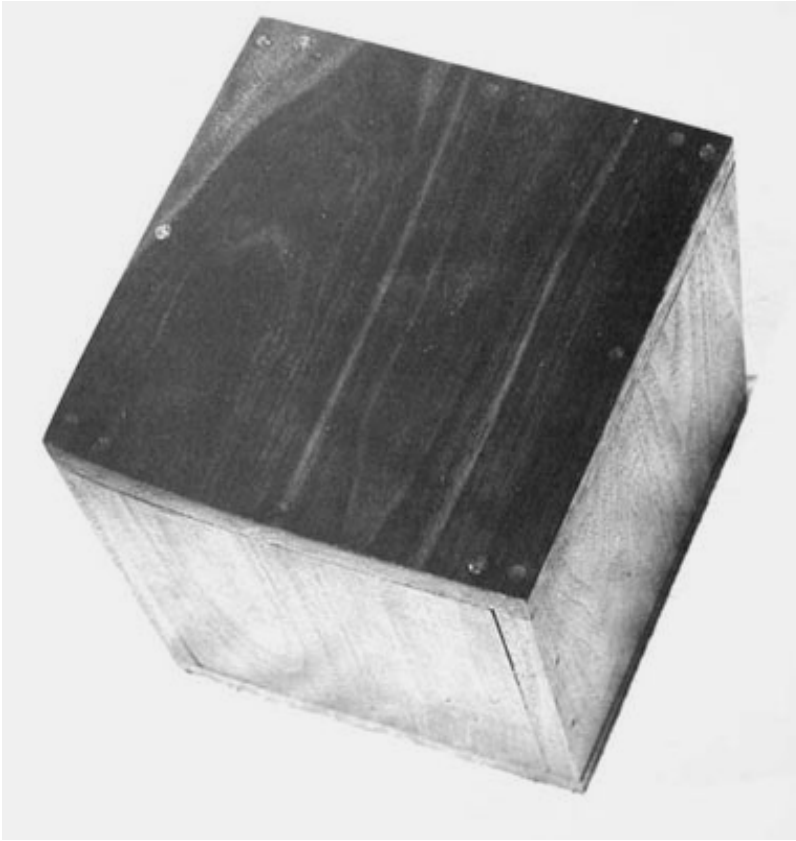


Fig. 21. *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, 1961.  
Walnut box, speaker, and three-and-one-half-hour recorded tape, 24.8 X 24.8 X 24.8 cm.  
Seattle Art Museum.



Fig. 22. *Untitled (Card File)*, 1962.  
Metal and plastic wall file mounted on wood, containing forty-four index cards, 68.6 X 26.7 X 5.1 cm.  
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

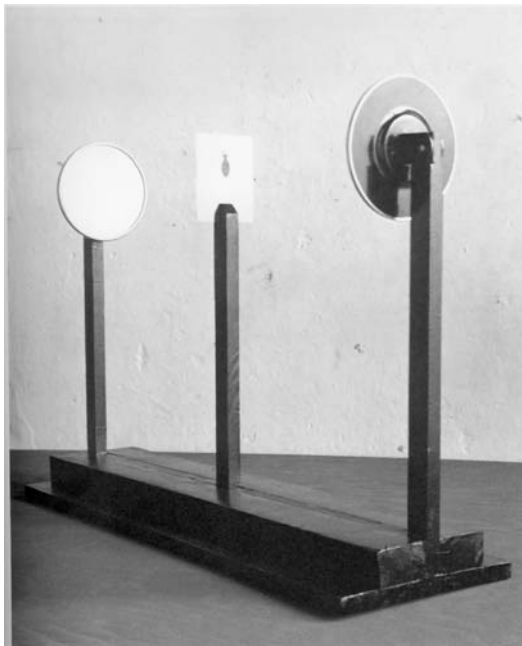


Fig. 23. *Untitled (Pharmacy)*, 1962. Painted wood and mirrors, 45.7 X 29.2 X 91.4 cm.  
Collection of the artist.





Fig. 24. *Untitled (Litanies)*, 1963.  
Lead over wood, steel key ring, twenty-seven keys, and brass lock, 30.4 x 18 x 6.3 cm.  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 25. *Statement of Esthetic Withdrawal*, 1963.  
Typed and notarized statement on paper and sheet of lead over wood, mounted in imitation leather mat,  
44.8 X 60.4 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



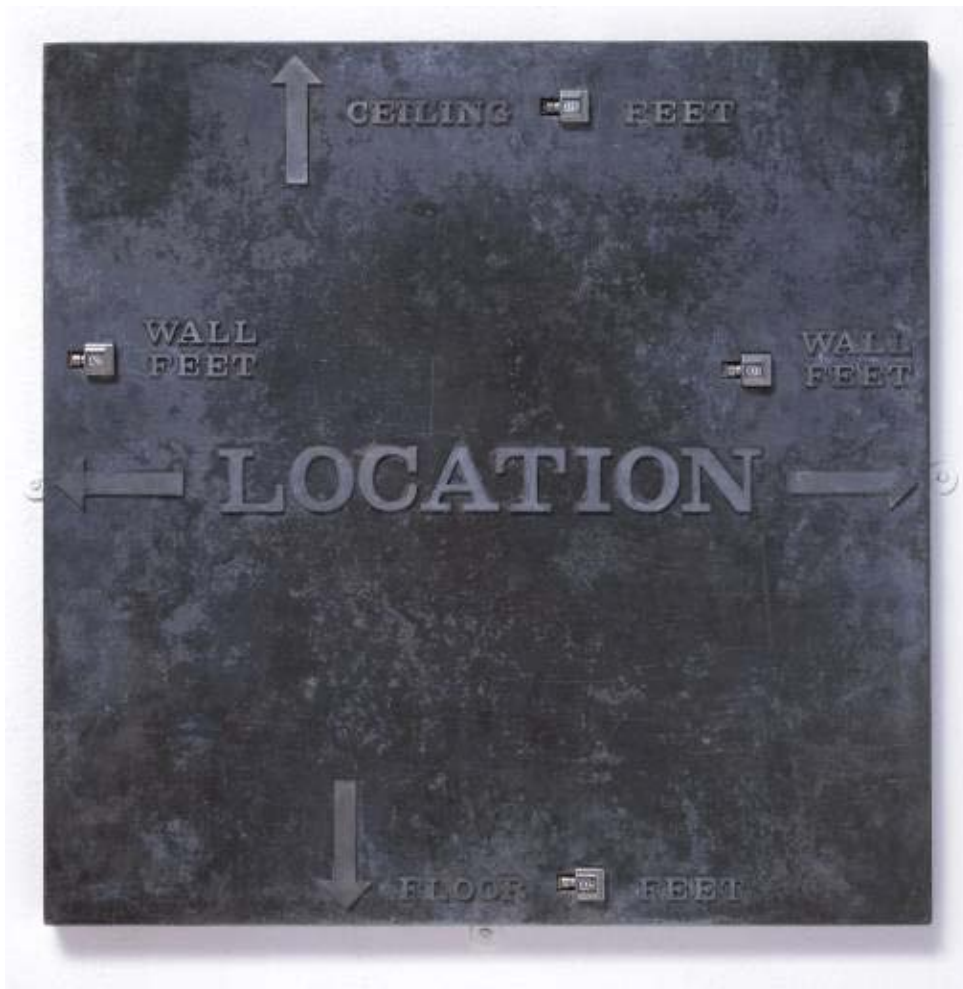


Fig. 26. *Location*, 1963.

Lead over composite board, aluminum letters and arrows, and metallic meters, 53.3 X 53.3 X 2.5 cm.



Fig. 27. *Untitled (Mirrored Cubes)*, 1965.  
Plexiglass mirrors on wood, four units, each 53.3 X 53.3 X 53.3 cm.



Fig. 28. *Untitled (Threadwaste)*, 1968.  
Threadwaste, asphalt, mirrors, copper tubing, and felt, overall dimensions variable.  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 29. *Untitled (Scatter Piece)*, 1968-1969.  
Felt, rubber, zinc, copper, brass, steel, aluminum, and lead, overall dimensions variable.  
Collection of the artist.

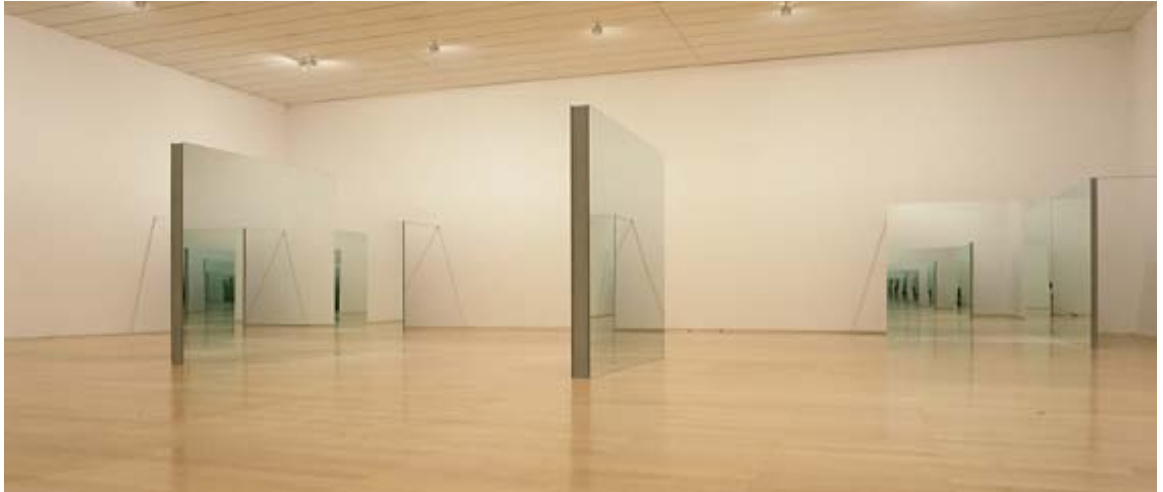


Fig. 30. *Untitled (Williams Mirrors)*, 1977.  
Twelve units, each 213,4 X 243,8 cm.  
Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown.





Fig. 31. Anish Kapoor, *Sky Mirror*, 2006.  
Installation view at Rockefeller Center, New York.



Fig. 32. Olafur Eliasson, *Take Your Time*, 2008.  
Installation view at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City.



Fig. 33. *Steam*, 1974 refabrication of a 1967 original.  
Steam, multiple steam outlets under a bed of stones, outlined with wood, overall dimensions variable.  
Western Washington University, Bellingham.



Fig. 34. *First Study for a View from a Corner of Orion (Day)*, 1980.  
Steel, acrylic mirrors, aluminum tubing, and silver-leafed human skeletons, 4.57 X 9.14 X 3.96 m.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 35. Lorenzo Bernini, *Tomb of Pope Alexander VII*, 1672-1678. Detail.  
Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome.





Fig. 36. *Tar Babies of the New World Order*, 1997.  
Clay, thread, plastic. Fifteen units (columns), each 250.2 cm high, 20.3 cm diameter;  
fifteen units (baby figures), each 120.1 cm long.  
Nuova Icona, Venice, Italy.



Fig. 37. *Tar Babies of the New World Order*, 1997. Detail.





Fig. 38. *Tar Babies of the New World Order*, 1997. Detail.

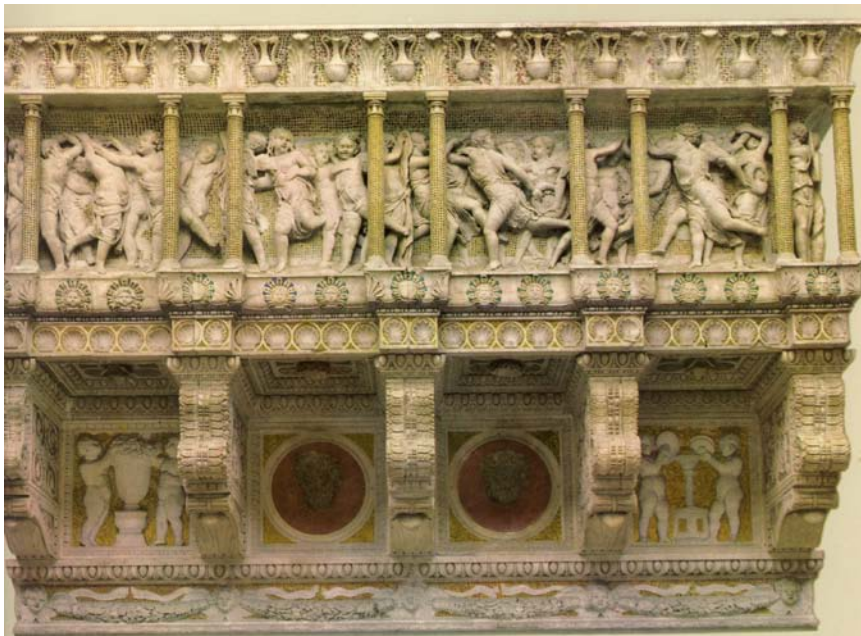


Fig. 39. Donatello, *Cantoria*, 1433-1438.  
Marble, 347.9 X 568.9 cm.  
Museum of the Opera del Duomo, Florence.

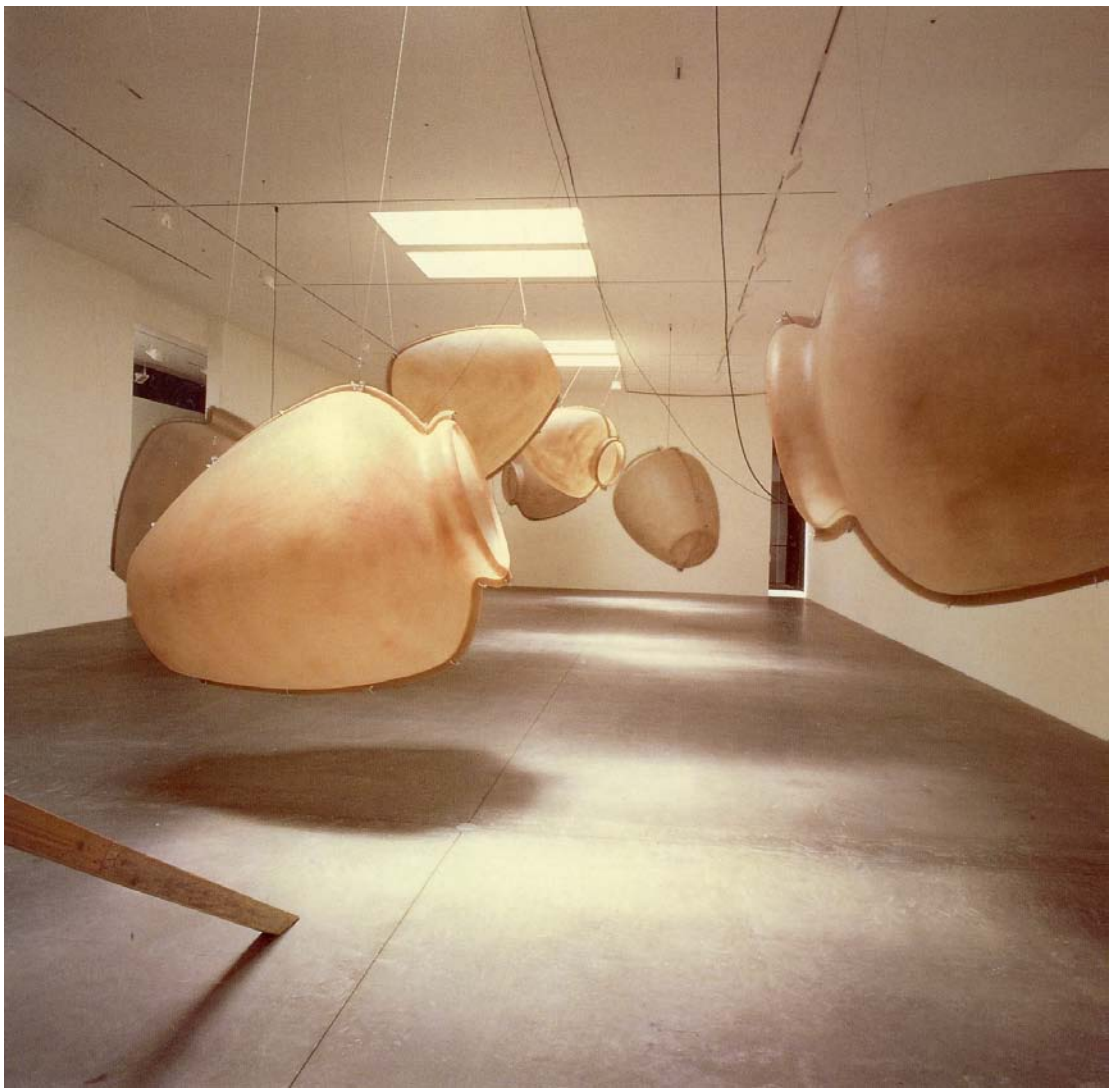


Fig. 40. *The Fallen and the Saved*, 1994.  
Fiberglass, eight units (urns), each 167.6 X 152.4 cm.  
Collection of Giuliano Gori, Fattoria di Celle, Santomato, Pistoia.



Fig. 41. Tara Donovan, *Untitled (Plastic Cups)*, 2006. Detail.

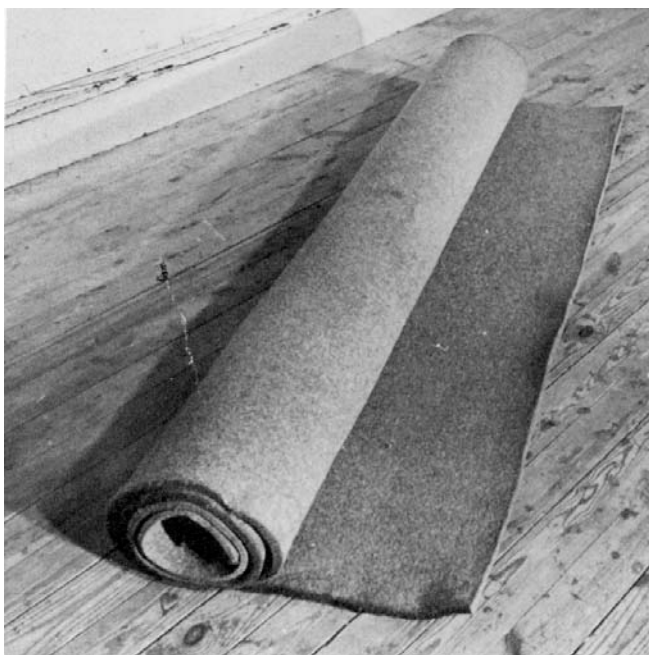


Fig. 42. *Untitled*, 1968.  
Felt, 183 X 274 X 2.54 cm.  
Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.



Fig. 43. *Untitled (Tangle)*, 1970.  
Felt, overall dimensions variable.  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Panza Collection.





Fig. 44. *Untitled (Six Legs)*, 1969.  
Felt, 459 X 184 X 2.5 cm overall.  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 45. *Untitled (Catenary)*, 1968.  
Felt, 366 X 290 X 3 cm overall.  
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

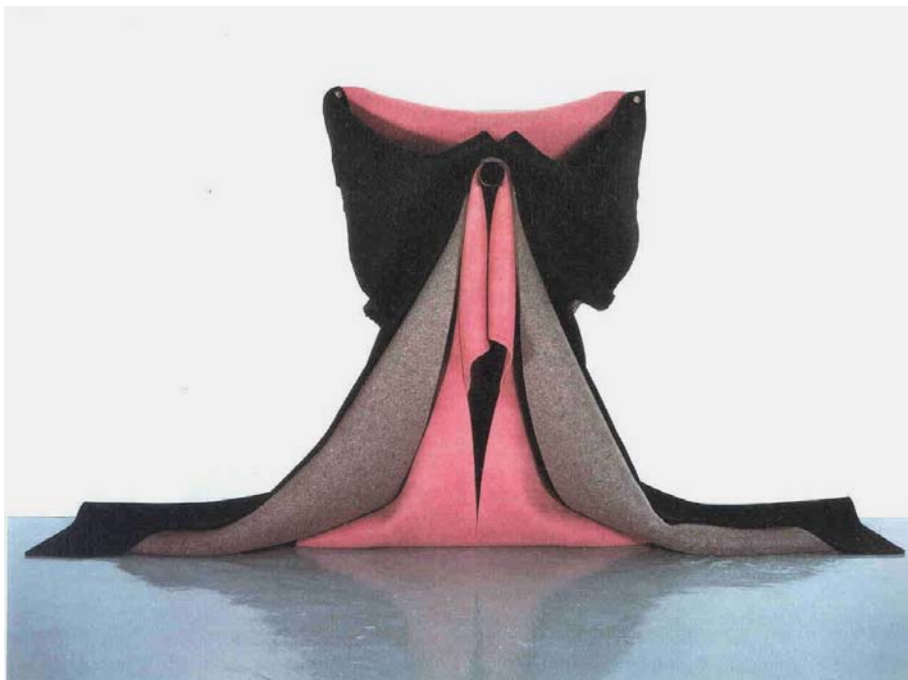


Fig. 46. *House of the Vettii II*, 1983.  
Felt, steel bracket and metal grommets, 226 X 400 X 91.5 cm.  
Private Collection.



Fig. 47. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Black Iris*, 1926.  
Oil on canvas, 91.4 X 75.7 cm.  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 48. Constantin Brancusi, *Adam and Eve*, 1921.  
*Eve* (above); oak; *Adam* (below): chestnut, 227 X 48.2 X 44 cm.  
 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.



Fig. 49. Donatello, *David*, 1425-30.  
 Bronze, 158.8 cm.  
 Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.



Fig. 50. *Untitled*, 1996.  
Felt, 199 X 400 X 124 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 51. *Untitled*, 2010.  
Felt, 247.65 X 181.61 X 80.01 cm.  
Sonnabend Gallery, New York.



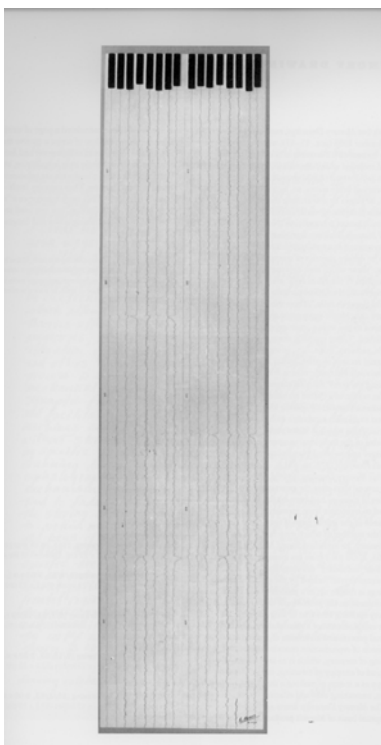


Fig. 52. *Self-Portrait (EEG)*, 1963.  
Electroencephalogram and lead labels framed with metal and glass, 179.7 X 43.2 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 53. *Hand and Toe Holds*, 1964.  
Lead and plaster, two units 10.2 X 121.9 X 6.4 cm each.  
Private collection.

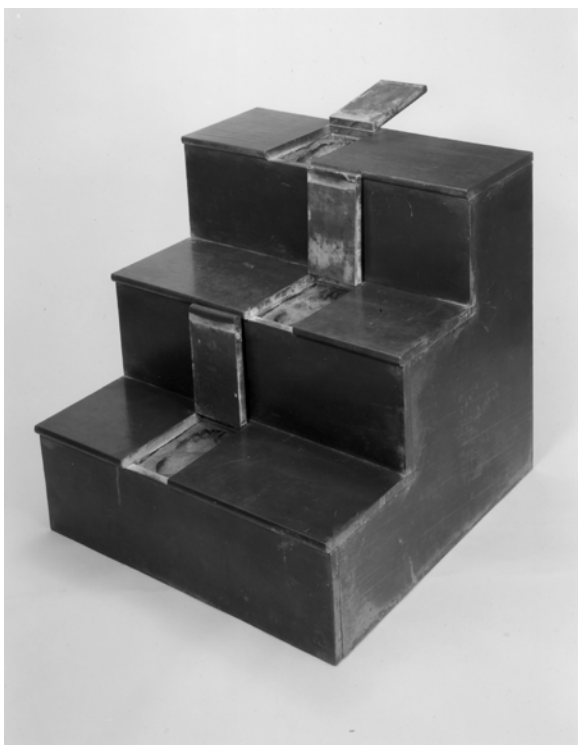


Fig. 54. *Stairs*, 1964.  
Lead over wood, cast-lead footprints inside, 91.4 X 91.4 X 94 cm.  
The Art Institute of Chicago.



Fig. 55. *Footprints and Rulers*, 1964.  
Lead over wood and two cast-lead rulers, 100.3 X 60.3 X 10.2 cm.  
Collection Anne and William J. Hokin, Chicago.



Fig. 56. Morris in *Pace and Progress*, 1969.  
Project for the *Place and Process* exhibition, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.



Fig. 57. *Observatory*, 1977.  
Earth, wood, granite, steel, and water, 91.01 m diameter.  
Permanent installation, Oostelijk, Flevoland, The Netherlands.



Fig. 58. *Observatory*, 1977. Aerial view.

The physiological basis for memory has not been determined. Theories advanced to explain memory fall mainly into two classes: (1) Those which seek explanation in changes in composition of the brain cells; and (2) Those which seek explanation in changes in patterns of electrical currents between cells. If one leaves the analogy at a crude level, comparisons can be made to the two basic ways in which man establishes a cultural memory, i.e., either spatially through preservation of models, pictures, maps, etc., or temporally through sequential records in print, audio recordings, and more recently by electronic means. Theories have also been advanced which attempt to combine these two processes. Such theories attempt to discriminate between types of memories, assigning the coding of some to physical alteration of the molecular structure of brain cells and others to reflex electrical circuits. The latter process is sometimes appended with a hypothesis of a mechanical nature, viz. through minute changes of synaptic fibers which grow larger or closer together and facilitate electrical pathways. Analog computing machines can be made to learn - a process impossible without storage of information. This storage is effected by specific variations in a time series together with a scanning device. Recent investigations in electroencephalography seem to point to such a scanning mechanism responsible for oscillating currents which tend to fade with concentration and attention. However, the storing of visual images can be more easily ascribed to protein molecule alterations. All suggestions as to the locus of memory, either in terms of composition or action agree on the point that it is not held in any specific area of the cortex. Decimations of the cortex do not cut out particular memories but the severing of neural pathways between the visual cortex and the frontal regions, while not disturbing vision, reduces to the unrecognizable that which is seen. The richness of and necessities for the interconnections of all parts of the cortex will undoubtedly be part of whatever theory is eventually established.

Drawing established and memorized 9/3/63, 8 pm.

*H. H. Morris*

Fig. 59. Initial Memory Drawing (9/3/63, 8:00 P.M.), 1963.  
Ink on gray paper, 52.1 X 33 cm.  
Collection of the artist.

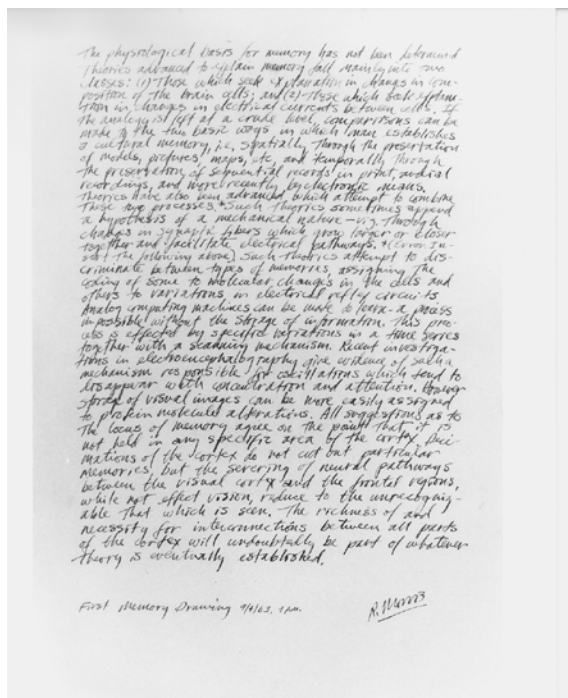


Fig. 60. First Memory Drawing (9/4/63, 9:00 P.M.), 1963.  
Ink on gray paper, 52.1 X 33 cm.  
Collection of the artist.

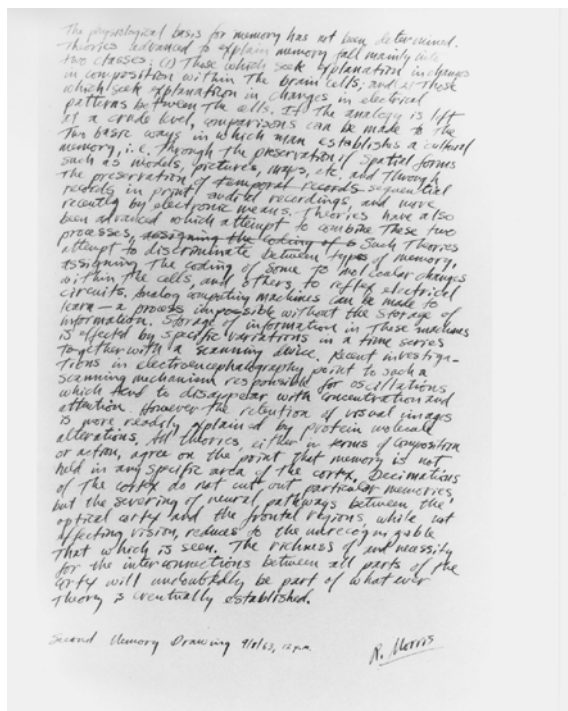


Fig. 61. Second Memory Drawing (9/8/63, 12:00 P.M.), 1963.  
Ink on gray paper, 52.1 X 33 cm.  
Collection of the artist.

The physiological basis for memory has not been established. Theories advanced to explain memory fall mainly into two classes: (1) Those which seek explanation in changes in composition within the brain cells, and (2) Those which seek explanation in changes in electrical patterns between the cells. If the analogy is left at a crude level, comparisons can be made to the two basic ways in which man has established a cultural memory, i.e. spatially through the preservation of models, pictures, maps, etc., and temporally through sequential recordings in print, radial recordings, and more recently by electronic means. Theories have also been advanced which attempt to combine these two processes. Such theories attempt to discriminate between types of memory, assigning the coding of some to molecular changes within the brain cells and others to reflex electrical circuits. Such theories usually append a hypothesis of a mechanical nature - viz. Through pinpoints changes in synaptic fibers which grow longer or closer together and facilitate electrical pathways. Such coding mechanisms can be made to form - a process impossible without the storage of information. Such storage is effected by specific variations in a time series together with a scanning mechanism. Recent investigations in electroencephalography point to such a mechanism responsible for oscillations which tend to disappear with concentration and attention. However, the recording of visual impressions can be more easily assigned to protein molecule alterations within the brain cells. All theories regarding the locus of memory, either in terms of composition or action, agree on the point that memory is not held in any specific area of the cortex. Decimations of the cortex do not cast out particular memories, but the covering of neural pathways between the optical cortex and the frontal regions, while not affecting vision, reduces to the unrecognizable that which is seen. The richness of and necessity for interconnections between all parts of the cortex will undoubtedly be part of whatever theory is eventually established.

Third Memory Drawing 9/16/63 3:30 p.m. A. Morris

Fig. 62. Third Memory Drawing (9/16/63, 3:30 P.M.), 1963. Ink on gray paper, 52.1 X 33 cm. Collection of the artist.

The physiological basis for memory has not been established. Theories advanced to explain memory fall mainly into two classes: (1) Those which seek explanation in changes in composition within the brain cells, and (2) Those which seek explanation in changes in electrical patterns between the cells. If the analogy is left at a crude level, comparisons can be made to the two basic ways in which man has established a cultural memory, i.e. spatially through the preservation of models, pictures, maps, etc., and temporally through sequential recordings in print, radial recordings, and more recently by electronic means. Theories have also been advanced which attempt to combine these two processes. Such theories attempt to discriminate between types of memory, assigning the coding of some to molecular changes within the cells and others to reflex electrical circuits. Such theories are usually appended with a hypothesis of a mechanical nature - viz. Through pinpoints changes in synaptic fibers which grow longer or closer together and facilitate electrical pathways. Such coding mechanisms can be made to form - a process impossible without the storage of information. Such storage is effected by specific changes in a time series together with a scanning mechanism. Recent investigations in electroencephalography point to such a mechanism responsible for oscillations which tend to disappear with concentration and attention. However, the recording of visual impressions can more readily be assigned protein molecule alterations within the cells. All theories concerning the locus of memory, either in terms of composition or action, agree that it is not held in a specific area of the cortex. Decimations of the cortex do not cast out particular memories; however, the covering of neural pathways between the optical cortex and the frontal regions, while not affecting vision, reduces to the unrecognizable that which is seen. The richness of and necessity for interconnections between all parts of the cortex will undoubtedly be part of whatever theory is eventually established.

Fourth Memory Drawing 10/2/63 9:00 p.m. A. Morris

Fig. 63. Fourth Memory Drawing (10/2/63, 9:00 P.M.), 1963. Ink on gray paper, 52.1 X 33 cm. Collection of the artist.



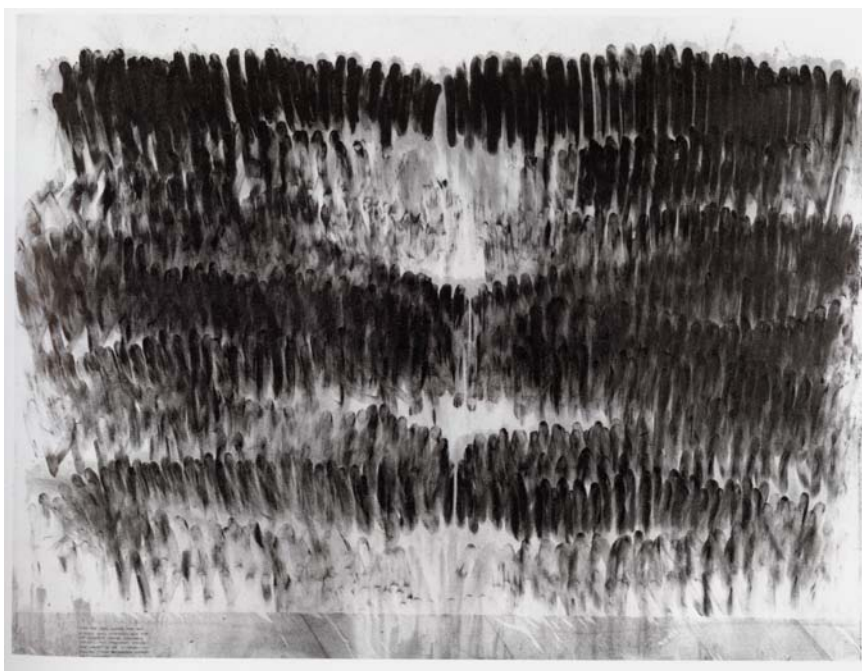


Fig. 64. *Blind Time I*, 1973.  
Graphite on paper, 88.5 X 116.5 cm.  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 65. *Blind Time II*, 1976.  
Directed by R. Morris. Drawn by A. A.  
Graphite and plate oil on rag paper, 96.5 X 127 cm.  
Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.





Fig. 66. *Blind Time III*, 1985.  
Iron oxide on paper, 96.5 X 127 cm.  
Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.

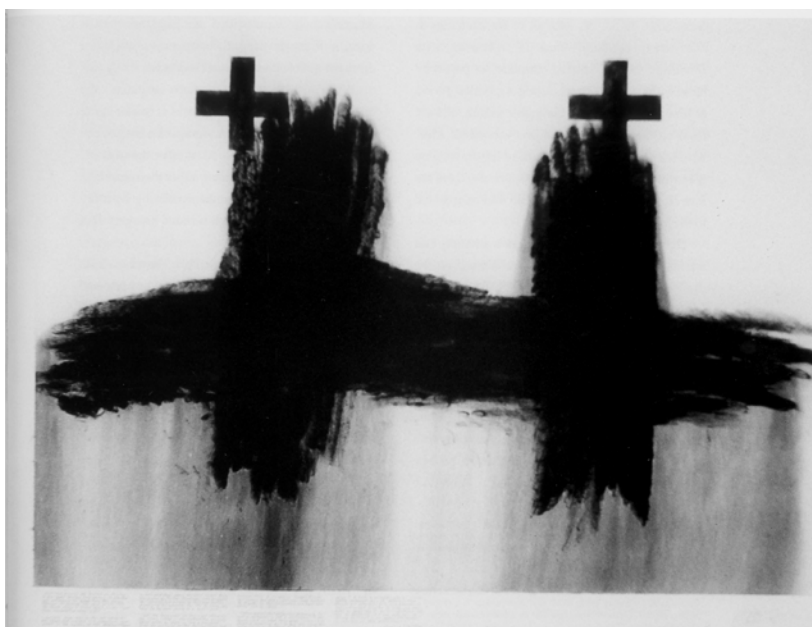


Fig. 67. *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson)*, 1991.  
Graphite on paper, 97 X 127 cm.  
Collection of the artist.

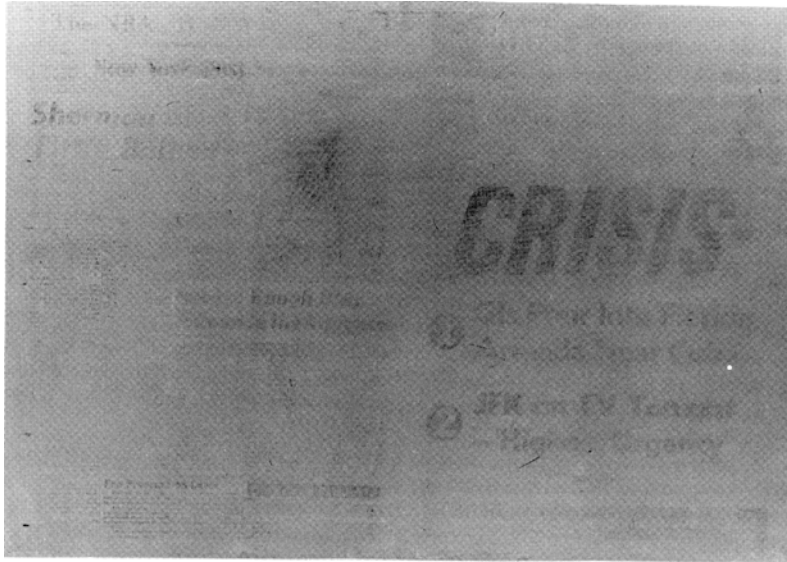


Fig. 68. *Untitled (Crisis)*, 1962.  
Painted newspaper page, 38.1 X 54.6 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 69. *War*, 1963.  
Morris in costume for his performance in collaboration with Robert Huot at Judson Memorial Church,  
New York.



Fig. 70. *War Memorial: Crater with Smoke*, 1970.  
Lithograph, 51.5 X 102.2 cm.  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

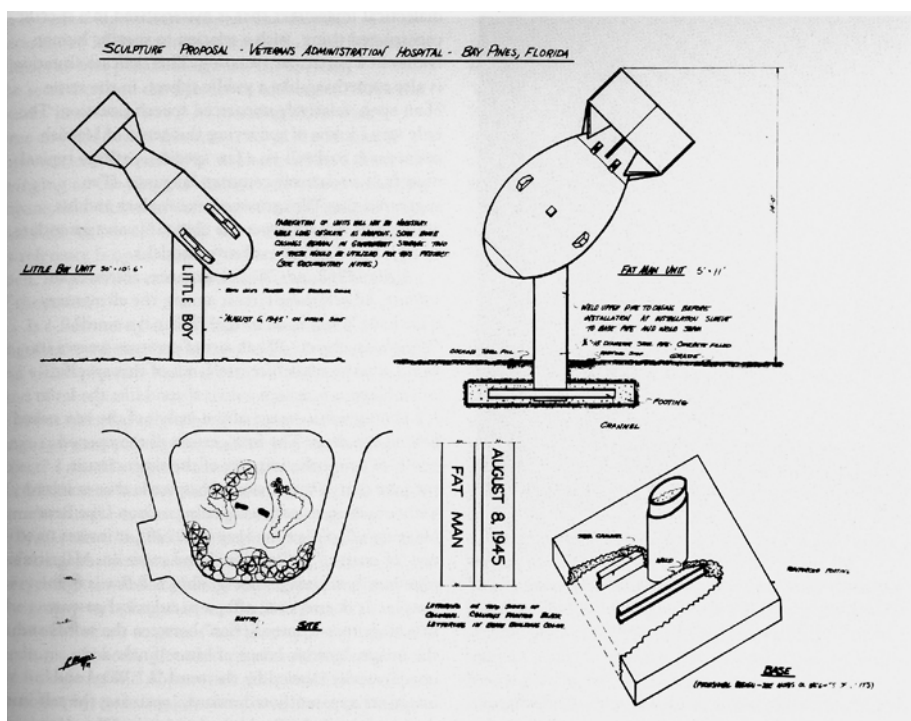


Fig. 71. *Sculpture Proposal – Veterans Administration Hospital - Bay Pines, Florida, 1981.*  
Ink on mylar, 96.5 X 106.7 cm. Collection of the artist.



Fig. 72. *Hearing*, 1972.

Three-and-one-half-hour stereo tape, stereo tape recorder, amplifier, two speakers; copper chair with water and immersion heater, 121.9 X 61 X 76.2 cm; zinc table, 91.4 X 198.1 X 91.4 cm; lead covered bed, 61 X 192.9 X 25.4 cm; wet-cell batteries buried in sand in a bronze trough; wooden cruciform platform, 15.2 cm high, 366 cm square, with 61 cm square sections cut from each corner. Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Mass.

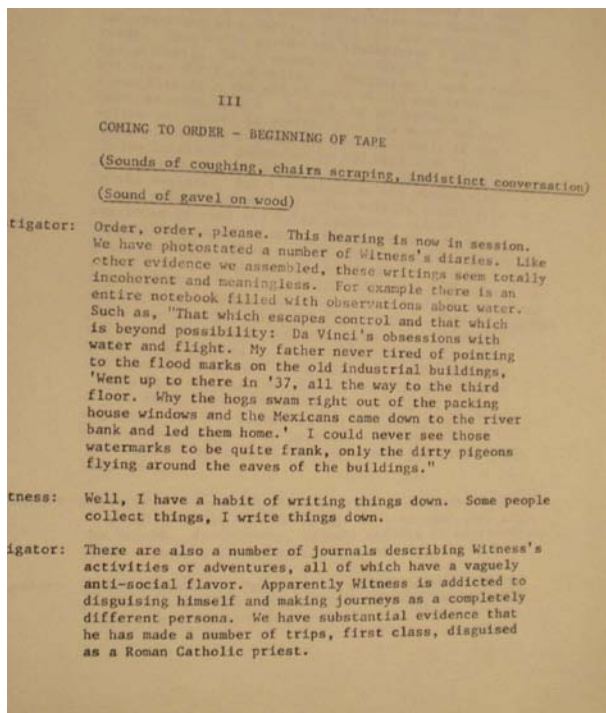


Fig. 73. Page from typewritten script for *Hearing*, 1972.



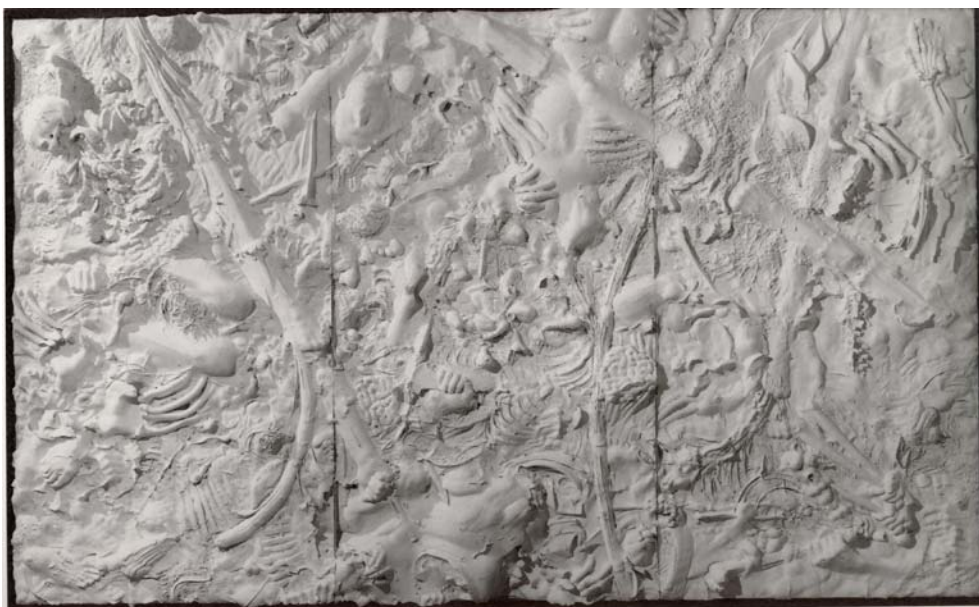


Fig. 74. *Untitled*, 1982.  
Cast Hydrocal with metal frame, 175.3 X 406.4 cm.  
Sonnabend Gallery, New York.



Fig. 75. *Untitled*, 1984.  
Painted cast Hydrocal, pastel on paper, 161.3 X 186.7 X 38.1 cm.  
Sonnabend Gallery, New York.



Fig. 76. *Untitled (Fist)*, 1963.  
Plaster cast covered with sculptmetal, wood box, and glove, 15.2 X 30.5 X 17.8 cm.  
Collection Leo Castelli.

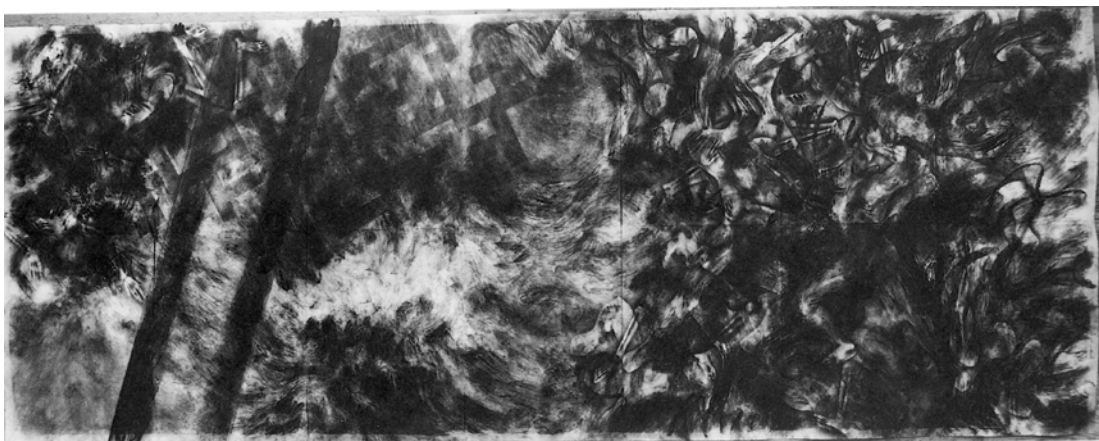


Fig. 77. *Untitled (Psychomachia)*, 1982.

Ink, charcoal, graphite, and black pigments on paper (14 panels), 254 X 675.6 cm overall.  
Sonnabend Gallery and Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.



Fig. 78. *Untitled (Firestorm)*, 1982.

Ink, charcoal, graphite, and powdered pigments on rag paper, (six panels), 289.6 X 254 cm overall.  
Private collection, New York.



Fig. 79. *Untitled (Holocaust)*, 1987.

Silkscreen and encaustic on aluminum panel, fiberglass and felt. 175.3 X 145.4 X 11.4 cm.  
Eli Broad Family Foundation, Santa Monica.





Fig. 80. *Improvident/Decisive/Determined/Lazy...*, 1990.  
Encaustic on aluminum, 364 X 241 cm.  
Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.



Fig. 81. Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, 1533.  
Oil on oak, 207 X 209.5 cm.  
The National Gallery of Art, London.



Fig. 82. *Horde/Hoard/Whored*, 1989.  
Encaustic on two aluminum panels, 121.6 X 194.9 cm overall.  
Sonabend Gallery, New York.



Fig. 83. Francisco Goya, *Great Colossus Asleep*, 1824-28.  
Black chalk.  
The Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection, Berlin. Destroyed.

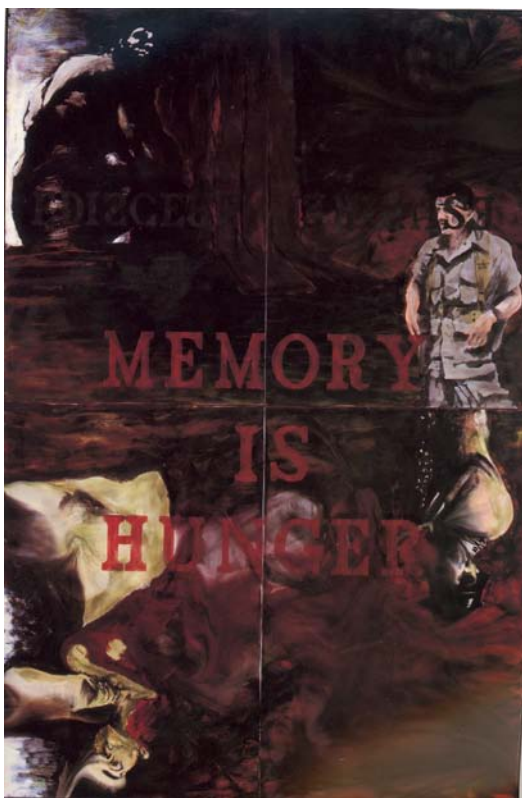


Fig. 84. *Memory Is Hunger*, 1990.  
Encaustic on aluminum panel, 364 X 241 cm.  
Collection of the artist.

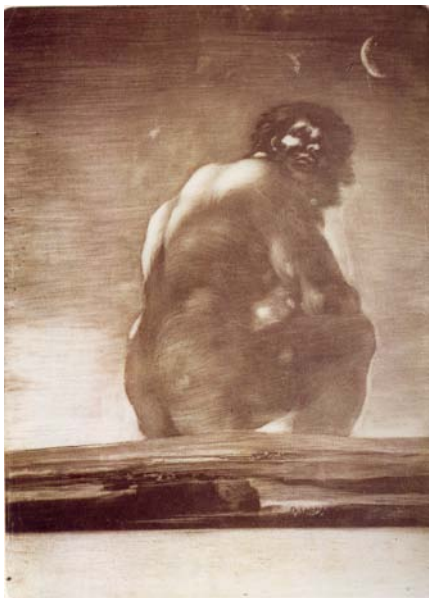


Fig. 85. Francisco Goya, *The Giant*, c. 1818.  
Aquatint and burin.  
Museum of Modern Art, New York.



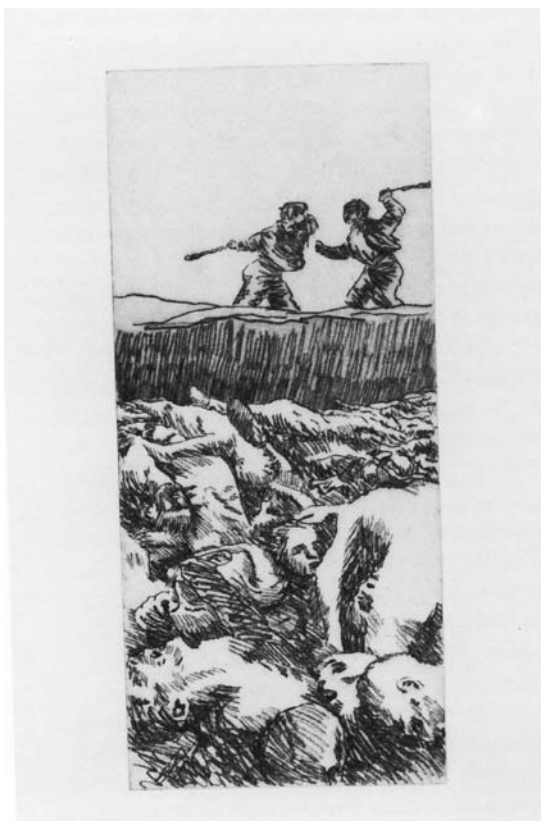


Fig. 86. *Continuities (#1)*, 1988.  
Etching and aquatint printed in sepia, 50.8 X 38.1 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 87. Francisco Goya, *Duel with Cudgels*, 1820-1823.  
Oil on canvas (transferred from wall).  
Prado National Museum, Madrid.



Fig. 88. *Based on a Section from Mt. Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves 1904-06, Cézanne, 1997.*  
Encaustic on panel (112 units), 215.9 X 480 cm overall.  
Collection of the artist.

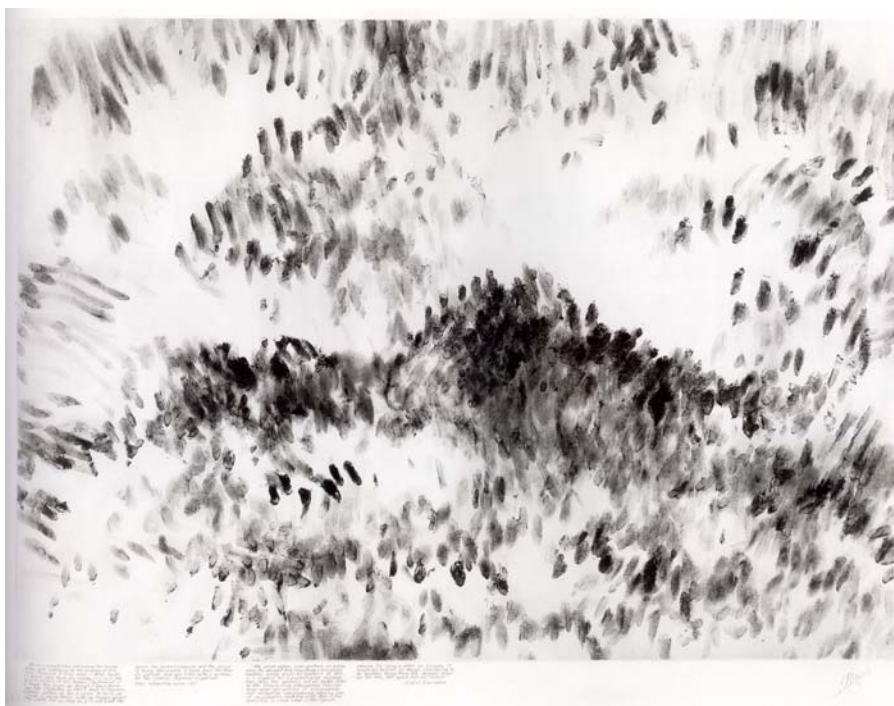


Fig. 89. *Blind Time IV (Drawing with Davidson), 1991.*  
Graphite on paper, 96.2 X 127 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 90. *Towers of Light*, 2001.



91. The Nuremberg Parade, 1934.



Fig. 92. Exhibition view of *White Nights*, 2000. Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon.



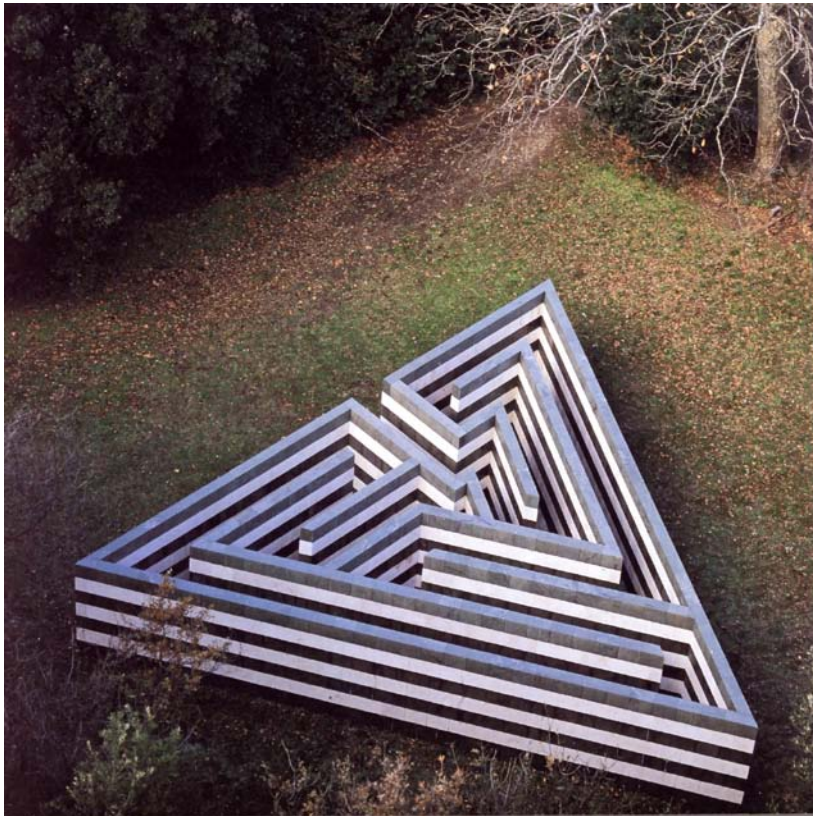


Fig. 93. *Labyrinth (Gori Labyrinth)*, 1982.  
 Green and white marble, 12 X 12 X 2 m.  
 Collection of Giuliano Gori, Fattoria di Celle, Santomato, Pistoia.



Fig. 94. *Labyrinth (Pontevedra Labyrinth)*, 2000.  
 Gray granite with black slate, 2.44 m high X 10.67 m diameter.  
 Plan based on the "Labyrinth of Mogol," a 3.500-year-old petroglyph located a few miles from the site in Pontevedra.





Fig. 95. Wehrmacht officers, 1943.  
In the center, with civilian clothes, Klaus Barbie.



Fig. 96. Lyon-Vaise, train station after the bombardment in May 26, 1944.



Fig. 97. *Mirror Film*, 1969.

Still from 16 mm black-and-white film.

Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.



Fig. 98. Stained-glass windows, 2000.  
Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher, Saint-Pierre de Maguelone.



Fig. 99. Stained-glass windows, 2000.  
Close-up view.

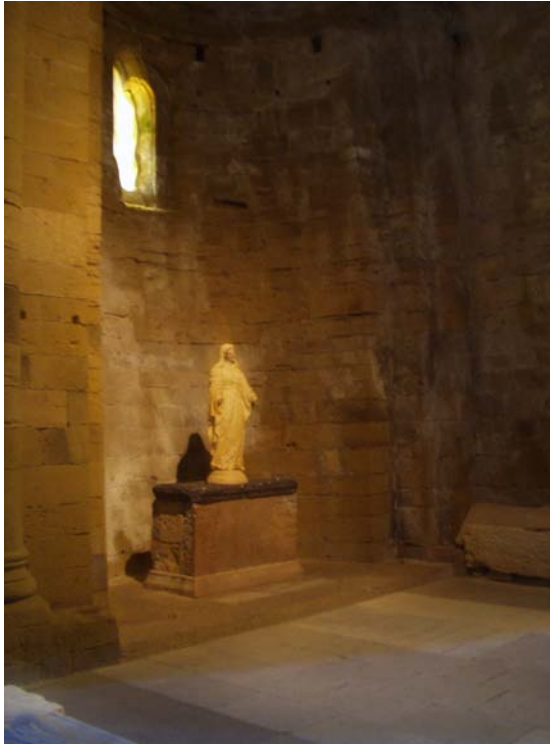


Fig. 100. Stained-glass windows, 2000.  
Chapel of Saint Mary, Saint-Pierre de Maguelone.



Fig. 101. Stained-glass windows, 2000.  
Detail.





Fig. 102. Exterior view.  
Side window (of the apse).  
Saint-Pierre de Maguelone.



Fig. 103. Exterior view.  
Side window (of the apse).



Fig. 104. Exterior view. Middle window (of the apse).

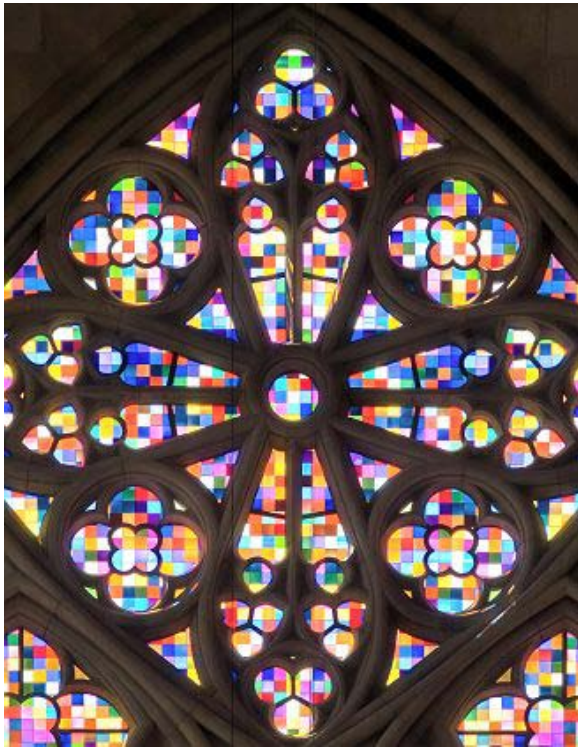


Fig. 105. Gerhard Richter, stained-glass windows for the south transept, 2007. Detail. Gothic Cathedral of Cologne.



Fig. 106. Henri Matisse, Chapel of the Rosary, 1949-1951. Detail. Vence.



Fig. 107. Presbytery in the Prato Cathedral, 2002.  
Altar: white marble; ambo: bronze; candelabrum: red marble with bronze base. Prato.





Fig. 108. Ambo, 2002.  
Bronze. Prato Cathedral, Prato.



Fig. 109. Donatello, *Saint Louis of Toulouse*, 1423.  
Gilded Bronze. Museum of the Basilica di Santa Croce. Florence.



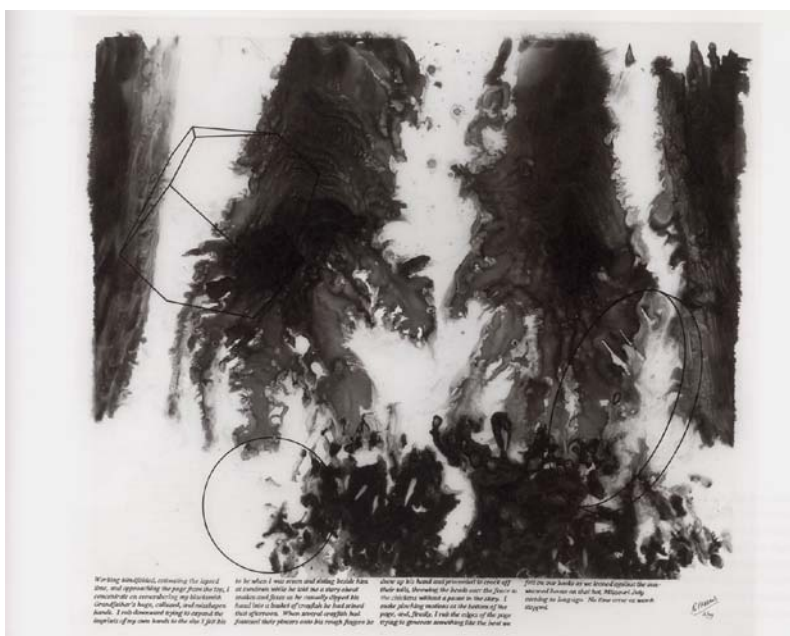


Fig. 110. *Blind Time V: Melancholia*, 1999.  
Ink on mylar, 76 X 69.5 cm.  
Private Collection, New York.



Fig. 111. *Melencolia II*, 2002. Detail.  
Permanent site-specific installation. Collaboration with Claudio Parmiggiani.  
Collection of Giuliano Gori, Fattoria di Celle, Santomato, Pistoia, Italy.

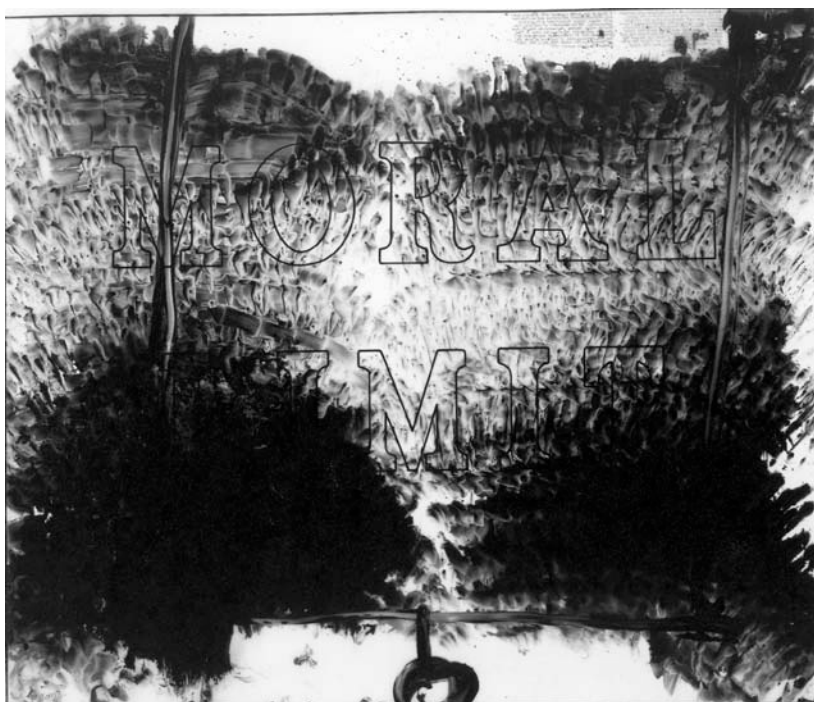


Fig. 112. *Blind Time VI: Moral Blinds (Moral Limit)*, 2000.  
Mixed inks on mylar, 92.2 X 106.6 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 113. *Blind Time VI: Moral Blinds (Moral Search)*, 2000.  
Mixed inks on mylar, 91.4 X 107.5 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 114. *Blind Time VI: Moral Blinds (Moral Void)*, 2000,.  
Mixed inks on mylar, 91 X 105.8 cm. Collection of the artist.



Fig. 115. *Talking Splaces*, 2002.  
Lead, two units, 121.28 X 67.31 X 2.54 cm.  
Collection of the artist.

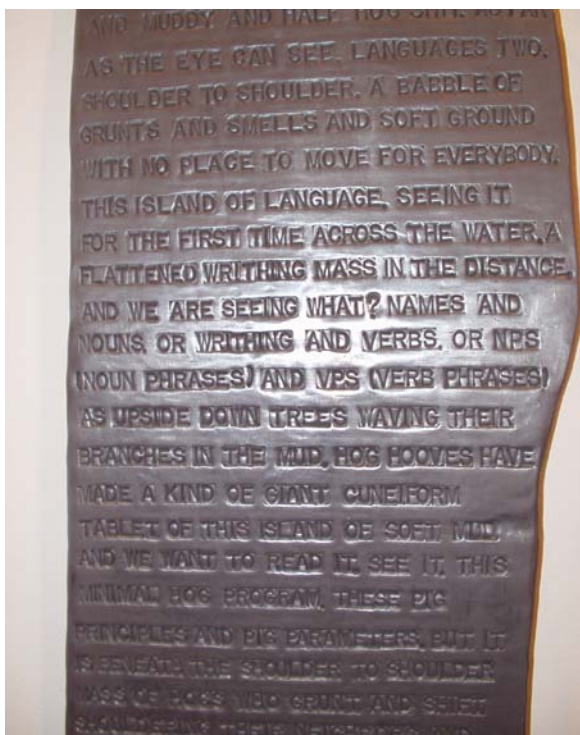


Fig. 116. *Talking Splaces*, 2002. Detail.



Fig. 117. *Five Catenaries for J.J.*, 2002. Detail.  
Lead, 60.96 X 50.8 X 12.7.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 118. *Slaves/Masters*, 2002.  
Lead, eight units, 30.48 X 127 X 1.27 cm.  
Collection of the artist.





Fig. 119. *Noamian Fragments*, 2002.  
Lead, 41.91 X 120.65 X 27.94 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 120. *Squeeze*, 2002.  
Lead, 50.8 X 60.96 X 30.48 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 121. *Universals*, 2002.  
Lead, 57.15 X 31.75 X 10.16 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 122. *Western Wastes*, 2002.  
Lead, 27.94 X 77.47 X 2.54 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 123. *Swallows*, 2002.  
Lead, 50.16 X 38.1 X 8.89 cm.  
Collection of the artist.





Fig. 124. *The Birthday Boy*, 2004.  
Two-screen video with sound installation at the Galleria del'Accademia, Florence.

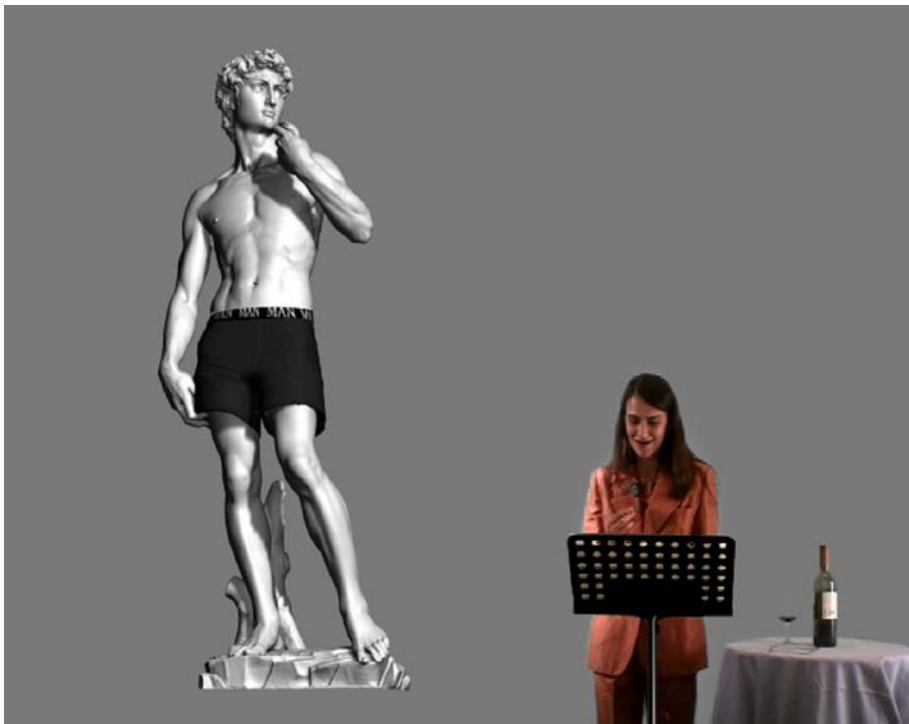


Fig. 125 *The Birthday Boy*, 2004.  
Two-screen video with sound installation at the Galleria del'Accademia, Florence.



Fig. 126. *The Birthday Boy*, 2004.  
Two-screen video with sound installation at the Galleria del'Accademia, Florence.



Fig. 127. *The Birthday Boy*, 2004.  
Two-screen video with sound installation at the Galleria del'Accademia, Florence.



Fig. 128. 21.3, 1964.  
Morris in performance at Stage 73, Surplus Dance Theater, New York.



Fig. 129. *Less than*, 2005.

Permanent site-specific installation.

Bronze, 220 X 125 X 75 cm; audio: approximately six minutes, light-sensor activated, begins at dusk softly, builds in volume and then fades, recorded on four separate tracks quadriphonia, four amps, four speakers.

Chiostrino piccolo, Chiostrini di San Domenico, Reggio Emilia.

Musei Civici Collection, Reggio Emilia.





Fig. 130. *Double Fire*, 2004.  
Encaustic on wood panel, 76.2 X 106.68 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 131. Edward Hopper, *Sunlight in a Cafeteria*, 1958.  
Oil on canvas, 102.23 X 152.72 cm.  
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.



Fig. 132. *House and Bombs*, 2004.  
Encaustic on wood panel. 76.2 X 106.6 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 133. *Sliding Lights*, 2004.  
Encaustic on wood panel, 76.2 X 106.6 cm.  
Collection of the artist.

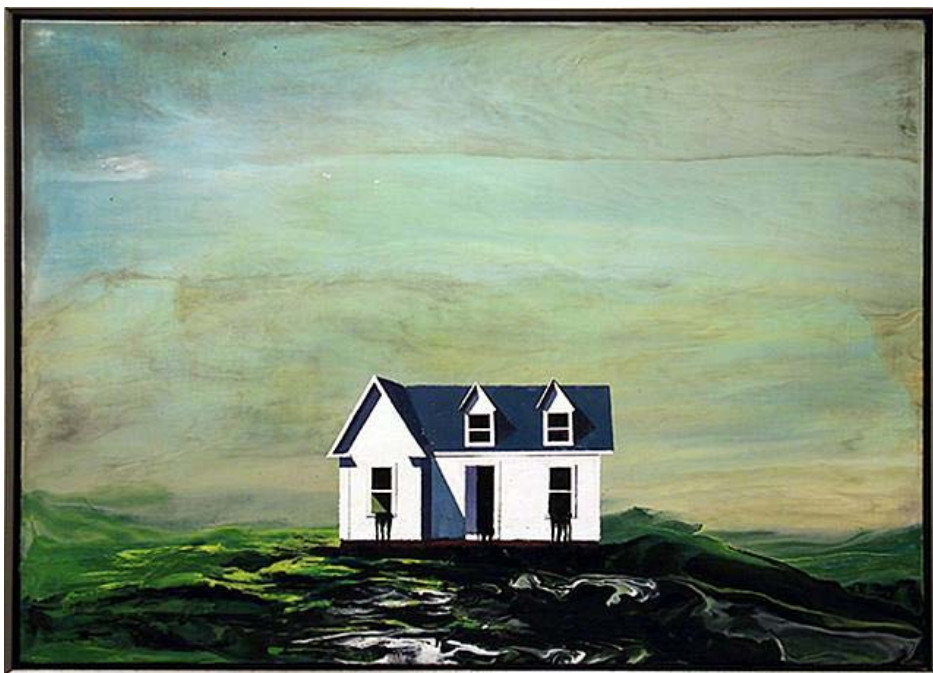


Fig. 134. *Weeping House*, 2004.  
Encaustic on wood panel. 76.2 X 106.6 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 135. *The Red Chair*, 2001.  
Encaustic on wood panel, 76.2 X 106.6 cm  
Collection of the artist.





Fig. 136. *Canvas Back/Fire*, 2003-04.  
Encaustic on wood panel. 76.2 X 106.6 cm.  
Collection of the artist.





Fig. 137. *Morning Terror*, 2000.  
Graphite on paper, 62.3 X 96.5 cm.  
Collection of the artist.

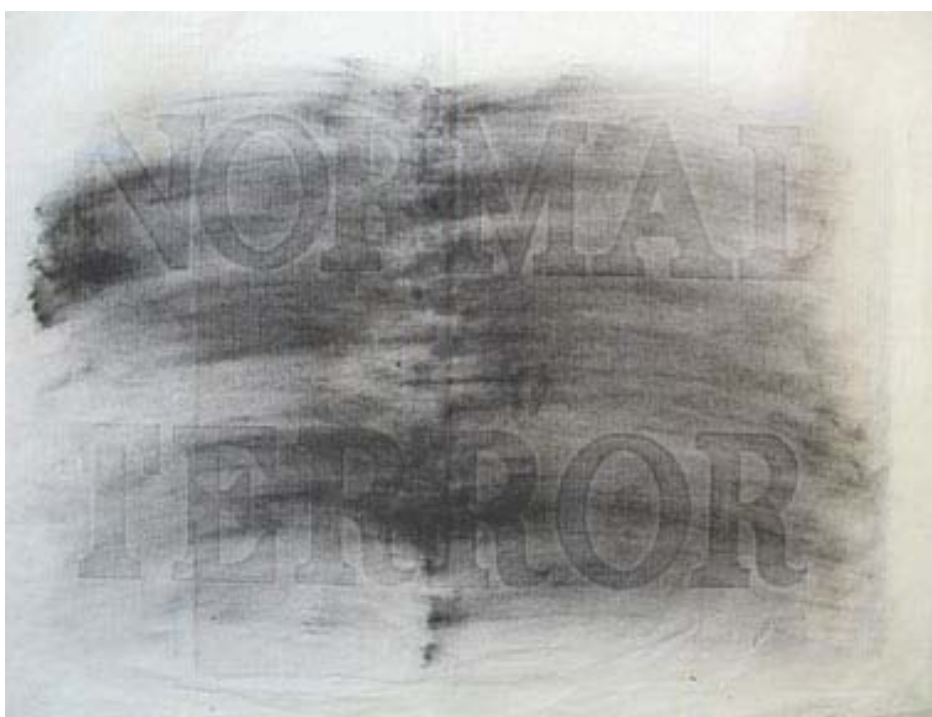


Fig. 138. *Normal Terror*, 2000.  
Graphite on paper, 77.5 X 100.3 cm.  
Collection of the artist.

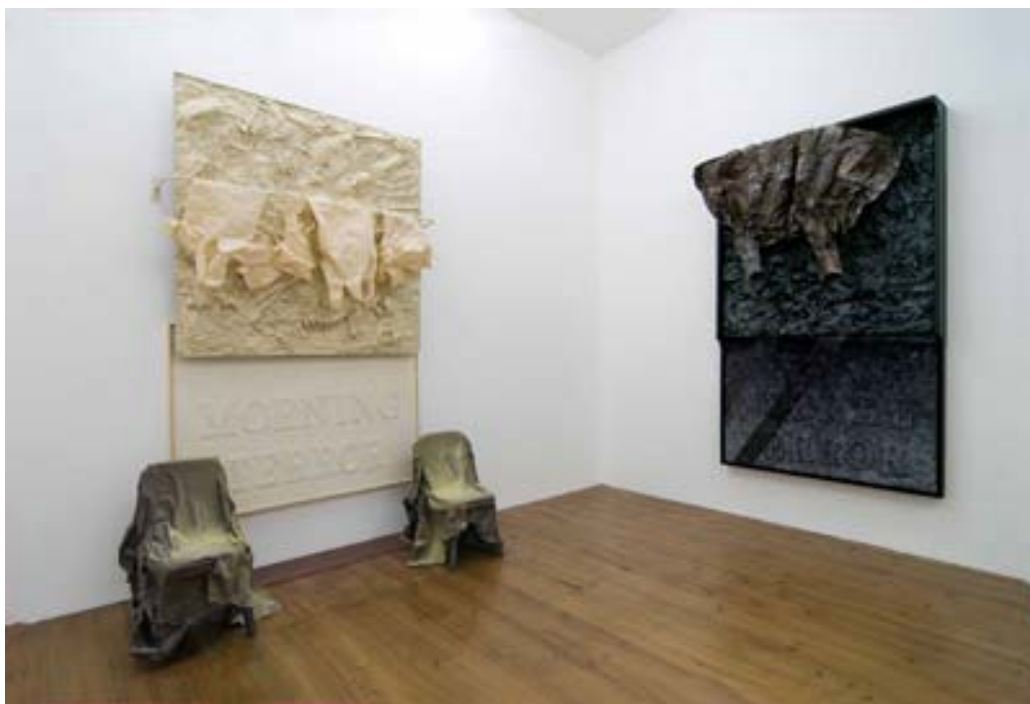


Fig. 139. Exhibition view of *Morning Star Evening Star* at the Sprüth Magers Gallery, London, 2008.



Fig. 140. Exhibition view of *Morning Star Evening Star* at the Sprüth Magers Gallery, London, 2008.

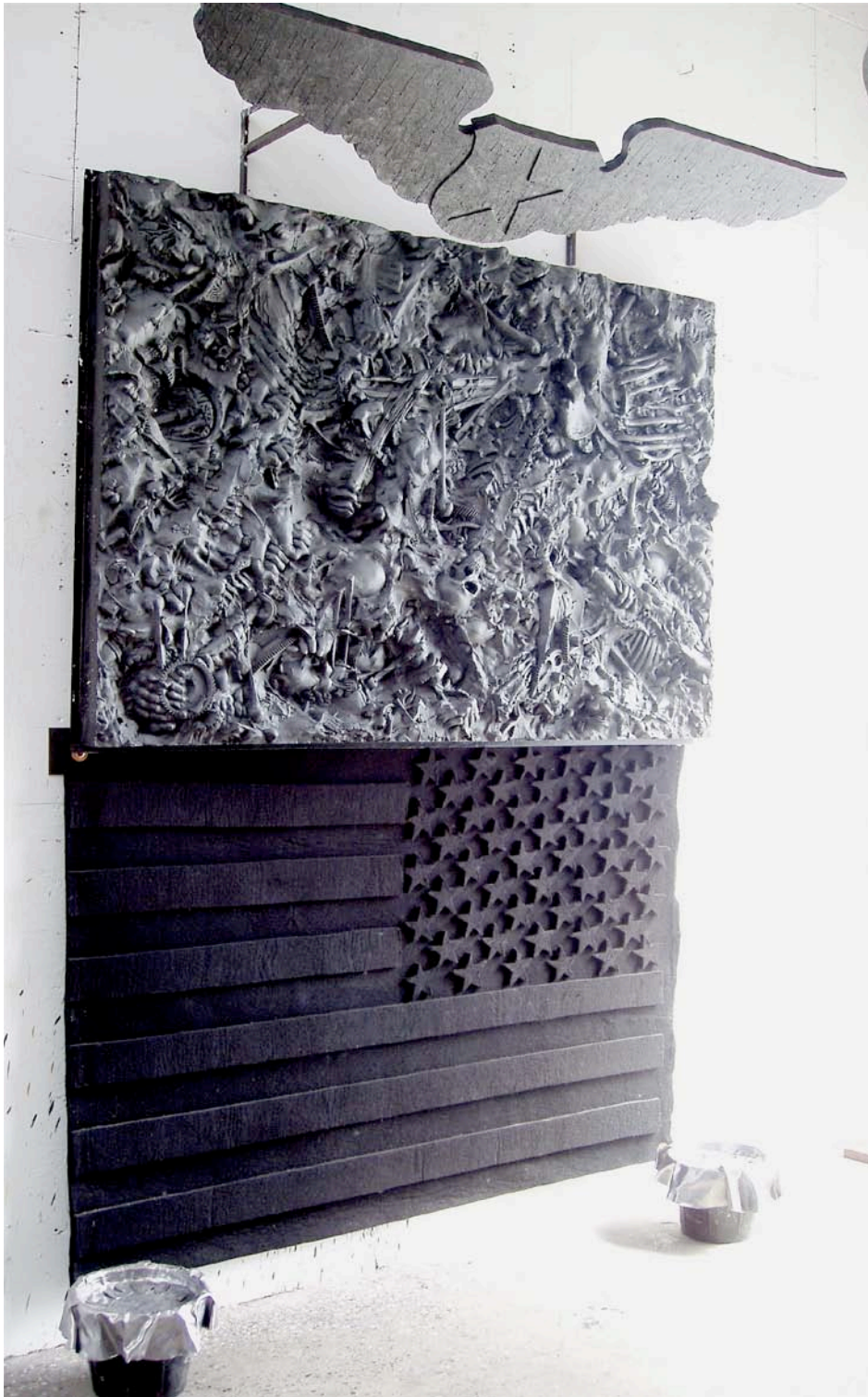


Fig. 141. *Evening Terror*, 1981-1987-2008.

Wood encaustic, cast fiberglass (1987), rubber, lead, steel brackets, felt flag (1981), 243.84 X 182.88 cm.  
Collection of the artist.





Fig. 142. *Morning Terror*, 1987-2000-2008.

Wood encaustic, cast fiberglass (1987), muslin, steel rod, lead chairs (2000), aluminum brackets,  
213.26 X 121.92 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 143. *Standard Terror*, 1981-1987-2008.

Wood encaustic, felt flag (1981), four fiberglass casts (1987), oak bench, rubber buckets, lead, steel brackets, aluminum angle braces, 259.08 X 274.32 cm.  
Collection of the artist.



Fig. 144. *1934 Mid-West Dust Storm*, 2010.  
Epoxy on aluminum sheets, 2.44 X 3.66 m.  
Collection of the artist.