

RUINS OF THE INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE IN GORDON MATTA-CLARK'S WORK: A CRITICAL ENTROPY?

Ruínas da paisagem industrial no trabalho de Gordon Matta-Clark: uma entropia crítica?

Ruinas del paisaje industrial en la obra de Gordon Matta-Clark: ¿una entropía crítica?

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Resumo

A beleza dos espaços criados por Gordon Matta-Clark não deve ofuscar a dimensão crítica de seu trabalho. Como qualificar as imagens construídas pelo artista para documentar uma obra efêmera? Na medida em que essas imagens são parte integrante de certas instalações, de que maneira documentam a investigação material de uma paisagem industrial abandonada? O filme resultante é o testemunho mais radical de sua "Anarquitectura". Ao escolher sua liberdade artística como paradigma essencial para seu gesto, ele se depara com seu próprio sistema e utiliza sua aporia como sistema crítico.

Palavras-chave: Entropia. Análise Crítica. Anarquitectura. Site-specific Art. Paisagem pós-industrial.

Abstract

The beauty of the spaces created by Gordon Matta-Clark's should not overshadow the critical dimension of his work. How to qualify the images constructed by the artist to document an ephemeral work? Insofar as these images are an integral part of certain installations, in what ways do they document the material investigation of an abandoned industrial landscape? The resulting film remains the most radical testimony of his "Anarchitecture". By choosing his artistic freedom as a paradigm essential to his gesture, he runs up against his own system and deploys his aporia as a critical system.

Keywords: Entropy. Critical analysis. Anarchitecture. Site-specific Art. Post-industrial landscape.

Resumen

La belleza de los espacios creados de Gordon Matta-Clark no debería eclipsar la dimensión crítica de su trabajo. ¿Cómo calificar las imágenes construidas por el artista para documentar una obra efímera? Como estas imágenes son una parte integral de ciertas instalaciones, ¿cómo documentan la investigación material de un paisaje industrial abandonado? La película resultante sigue siendo el testimonio más radical de su "Anarquitectura". Al elegir su libertad artística como paradigma esencial para su gesto, se enfrenta a su propio sistema y utiliza su aporía como sistema crítico.

Palabras clave: Entropía. Análisis Crítica. Anarquitectura. Site-specific Art. Paisaje pós-industrial.

Preliminary point: open frame or open space?

The son of Chilean Surrealist painter Roberto Matta and American artist Anne Clark, Gordon Matta-Clark (1943–1978) grew up in downtown New York surrounded by art and architecture as practiced by his parents and notable peers such as Philip Johnson and Marcel Duchamp. He studied architecture at Cornell University from 1962 to 1968, including a year at the Sorbonne in Paris, at the French literature department. In 1968, Matta-Clark has graduated in architecture and he began developing a series of site-specific artworks and actions in New York City, repurposing his architectural training in a radical different way. He did not practice as a conventional architect: he worked on what he referred to as “Anarchitecture”. Matta-Clark used a number of media to document his work, including film, video, and photography. His work includes performance and recycling pieces, space and texture work, and his “building cuts”. He also used other word games as a way to reconceptualize preconditioned roles and relationships from people to architecture as a social process.

The beauty of the spaces created by Matta-Clark's should not overshadow the critical dimension of his work. He proceeded from the beginning to a division and a transformation of the buildings, cutting literally in the walls, the partitions or the grounds. For example, *Splitting* (1974) which was one of his most impressive works: the cut of the American house, the modification of the suburban standard. It's a revolt against model architecture, cloned, and reproduced ad infinitum in the United States, made of wood, with two floors, a front porch and a garden behind. The house was located in Englewood, on the outskirts of New Jersey, in a neighborhood in the middle of the city. It was designed for two families, and two couples had lived there under the same roof and in the same divided space. Matta-Clark

had the subtle idea of splitting the house in half with an electric saw, by separating the walls with her own hands, without really thinking she could collapse when he would have removed the last stone at each corner (fig. 1). It was a minimal gesture, but it felt like an earthquake. The sun brought everything inside and illuminated the stairs or the living room. Bruce Jenkins wrote that day: "It was a shock, when inside, the green lawn appeared" (Jenkins, 279). This artistic and epistemic gesture reminds me Dan Graham's had series *Homes for America* (1966) which was originally published as a double-page spread in *Arts Magazine*¹



Fig. 1: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974. Crédito: Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, 2018

¹ Since 1965 Graham has shot photographs of typical one-family homes in ordinary American suburbs. “Homes for America” which addressed the issue of such row houses as a new form of urban living. In this work, designed as a magazine article, Graham examined the potential variations in style and color of serial housing. Originally the work was to be published in a major magazine like *Esquire*. At the end of 1966, a mutilated version was published in *Arts Magazine*, New-York: December-January issues 1966-1967. The accompanying text was given priority and most of the photographs cut.

This series of photographs and texts, details the physical and material properties of these habitats and the urban environment they create. By examining the typological variations of these typical dwellings flourishing in the outlying areas, Graham produces a critique of urban planning and landscape policy in American cities (fig. 2). By choosing rigorous frames reminiscent of Walker Evans' photographs, the artist insists on the serial nature (repetition, mass production, etc.) of these houses, bringing this industrial aesthetics closer to the problems of the emerging minimal art – while defending himself from attacking the latter like the German critic Benjamin Buchloh which accepts the opposite theory². In this text, I propose a corpus relating to the artist's relationship with the notion of the industrial world. It seems relevant to question the critical dimension which is at the heart of his artistic approach. It reveals a negative dialectic characterized by the permanent deconstruction of the places explored by Matta-Clark. How to qualify the images constructed by the artist to document an ephemeral work? Insofar as these images are a part of certain installations, in what ways do they document the material investigation of an abandoned industrial landscape?

Firstly, I'll start with the photographic series *Walls* (1972) and his contemporary reinterpretation at the Tate Modern (2006). This installation captures some of the abandoned buildings and move towards the cut of the Bronx Floors project (1972-73). Starting in the fall of 1972 and through the spring of 1973, Matta-Clark realized his first series of architectural cuttings in abandoned blocks of buildings in the South Bronx. A practice he later refined on a monumental scale in projects such as *Day's End* (1975), realized in an abandoned pier along the Hudson River or in *Conical Intersect* (1975), which he produced in Paris next to the soon-to-be opened Centre Georges Pompidou (fig. 3). The later one takes place during the Paris Biennale in



Fig. 2: Dan Graham, *Homes for America*, 1965.

1975 when Matta-Clark worked on two 17th century buildings century, dedicated to demolition as part of the redevelopment of Les Halles district; two buildings adjacent to the flamboyant Centre Georges Pompidou which was to be inaugurated. Without worrying about the comfortable space, he dug a large cone, suddenly of a hammer, which started from the side facade but had to deflect its course upwards: it was so a truncated cone because of the large high-tech mass of the future museum. From then, it was this art that was to be offered to the people, a “regenerated” environment in which it was to be included³. He regarded architecture as a field of action and engagement and was aware of the socioeconomic context surrounding his work.

² Concerning this question, see Benjamin Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*, October Books, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA): 2011 and “Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions”, *October*, Vol. 55, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA): Winter 1990, pp. 105-143.

³ He made a film *Conical Intersect*, inspired by a key film, *Light describing a cone* (Anthony McCall, 1973). In his project, as it appears in the credits of the film he directed during his work, he wanted to offer passers-by a happening sound and silent light, “a silent son-et-lumière” that would irradiate the cone and the building throughout the building its height. For Matta-Clark, cinema has been an important art, not only to record a ephemeral work, where we could see only a few pieces and images of walls in galleries. Only the cinema can allow us to experience “the architectural walk” that he has realized, the physical journey of a dynamic space: this is essential for transcend the architectural part of his work.



Fig. 3: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Conical Intersect*, Photography, 1975.
Crédito: Harry Gruyaert / Magnum.

Secondly, I will focus my text on *Day's End* (1975). In this project, Matta-Clark invest a post-industrial place that wants to be sustainable. But in the absence of authorization, the place is closed, and the artist forced into exile. The resulting film remains the most radical testimony of “Anarchitecture” concept from Matta-Clark’s perspective. He demonstrates that the theory of entropy applies to language as well as to the physical world, and that language is not a neutral tool but a carrier for societal values and a vehicle for ideology. Matta-Clark seems to be influenced by the French post-structuralism (Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault) and by the situationist movement (Guy Debord). By choosing his artistic freedom as a paradigm essential to his gesture, he runs up against his own system and deploys his aporia as a critical system. His approach as intractable will be, is not without risk. The premature death of the artist at the age of 35 and the abstract

intentions of his work raise a main questioning: is it the figure of the artist-author who is remembered today or the political causes that they defended through his projects?

***Walls to Walls Paper* (1972): from the street to the gallery, the migration of the artistic gesture**

Matta-Clark’s iconic deconstruction practice of directly hacking into hard walls was a sophisticated negotiation of physical boundaries. He insisted on the primacy of physical force tied to the artistic imagination. In his installation *Walls Paper* (1972), I suggest two questions, which are undoubtedly linked: how Matta-Clark turned the ruins of the 1970’s into art? And how to negotiate the transition from the specific site to the museum installation?

Walls Paper is a multi-part installation comprising photographs and newsprint, which Matta-Clark presented at the artist-run space 112 Greene Street in New York in 1972. Earlier that year, he took various black and white photographs of derelict and semi-démolished project houses in the Bronx and the Lower East Side in Manhattan. The *Walls* project captures the remains of abandoned building walls which from inside became outside due to imperfect destruction. As only the facades of the buildings had been taken down, the photographs reveal the interior walls of the houses. Some of these walls were covered in paint that was flaking away; other walls were covered in wallpaper (fig. 4). Matta-Clark used the photographs to create his installation. Then, anxious to go beyond a simple documentary work, he prints his images in offset, colors them in watercolor and converts them into a gigantic installation called *Walls Paper*. First, he heightened the colors of the photographs to abstract the images of the derelict houses. Next, he printed the photographs on long strips of newspaper and hung these strips on a large wall from ceiling to floor. The wall consequently looked as if it were “wallpapered” with images derived from walls in another part of New York City. The installation also included a stack of newspaper booklets which viewers were able to take away. These booklets were made of individual sheets of newspaper, each presenting one photograph of the Bronx walls. A number of the original black and white photographs from which the installation

derived also survive. In 1973, Matta-Clark published a small artist's book entitled *Walls Paper* in which he reproduced the colored prints that he had made from the original black and white photographs.



Fig. 4: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Walls*, 1972. Crédito: The Bronx Museum of the Arts.

The photographs were manipulated and colour-toned, then printed on newspaper sheets and hung to cover the wall of 112 Greene Street, the independent space he ran in SoHo. While raising questions about inequality in New York City and the relationship between two kinds of interiors and areas of the city, the near-abstraction of *Walls Paper* is very far from traditional documentary photography. He only presented *Walls Paper* once during his lifetime, and the long strips of newspaper hanging from the wall were destroyed sometime after the Greene Street show.

The work which was presented at the Tate Gallery in London (2006), consists of seventy-two individual sheets that had originally been in the bundles of newspapers placed in front of the wall (fig. 5). There are several different ways to display the work. One way is to pin all of the seventy-two original sheets from 1972 to the wall in a grid. A second way, is to make copies of the seventy-two sheets and pin these copies to the wall in a grid. A third way, is to make copies of the sheets, print them on long strips of newspaper and then hang them from ceiling to floor in order to replicate the 1972 installation. All of these presentations may or may not be accompanied by a stack of newspapers, derived from the seventy-two sheets, for viewers to take away. However, it's not necessary to include this stack in order to present the piece. *Walls Paper* was one of the first works in which Matta-Clark's interests in photography come together with his explorations of the built environment. For art historian Thomas Crow, the crucial significance of the work is the way in which the photographs distort the images of derelict housing, and therefore conjure a space of reverie. Crow implies that the piece produces a new means of representing dilapidated architecture, quite distinct from traditions of socially concerned documentary photography in New York City:

He hung strips of paper printed with close-up photographs of peeling and crumbling walls from derelict buildings in the Bronx and Lower East Side. With the delicacy of watercolor or Japanese prints, he subjected cropped and enlarged segments of his photographs to a newly free manipulation of colour and tone. [The work] registered a gritty streetscape while simultaneously conjuring some other, imagined space closer to a dream. While another bundle of prints lay on the floor as an object analogue, the cascade descending from the ceiling points to [Matta-Clark's] growing readiness the photographic document in the direction of suggestion and secondary Illusion (CROW, 1986)

Art historian Pamela Lee has a different approach to the work. For her, what is most interesting is the way in which Matta-Clark transposed images of one set of buildings onto the walls of another building.

Encountering the piece involved not only thinking about the buildings pictured on the newspaper strips, but the building in Greene Street where the work was presented, and the relationship between the gallery and the derelict house. Lee has written:

Picturing the exposed walls of lower income housing, the photographs present the buildings' ruinous state as a gridded, blank-faced visage. [At Greene Street] Matta-Clark registered an acute correspondence between walls and wallpaper, not unlike the floor pieces exhibited before. Its effect was to throw the still functioning site of the gallery into a certain relief, locating the outmodedness of a building by reproducing the structures of its walls on another building's surface. As such, the relationship between the respective sites was not conditioned simply by the place of art and architecture, but by the uneven temporalities of both. The timeliness of each building — one now 'alive', the other now 'dead' — spoke to the virtual 'speed' of the built environment, the endlessly fluctuating historicity of its architecture (LEE, 1981)

Much of Matta-Clark's work addresses public space and the built environment, often drawing attention to the ways in which architects failed to address the housing crisis in New York in the 1970s. But beyond his socio-political street work, Matta-Clark's site-specific, abstract geometric cut-aways evoke (and subvert) much 20th century art historical discourse. He has often been described as a destructive artist, only because he acted violently by cutting through the walls, but Matta-Clark actually built what he called "the Metaphorical emptiness", holes that light through, in abandoned rooms like as he did with *Conical Intersect*. He saved architectures that were disappearing, to give way to forms dominant. He restructured buildings that had been designed according to approaches rigid and oppressive, criteria of habitability and efficiency. It's like he wanted to give them a breath of fresh air. Usually it was a question of scale: a kind of proletarian artist, worker with a helmet, without an undershirt like a small man, hand-to-hand against large one's structures,

cutting pieces of huge facades, transforming them into spirals on the floor. A laborer that has cut, sawn, crushed which has built its own scaffolding and he did it with the strength and the vigour of youth. Matta-Clark has always been on the side of the dispossessed, the victims of renovation or rehabilitation urban; however, he did not adopt the point of view of the city dwellers, but that of the buildings. In any case, its relationship with architecture has always been a "dialogue" (Graham, 93). He never thought of making it a profession, only an area to invest in; a language in order to create a new vision of space, to send messages against the bad one's urbanization practices. Artist, but above all worker, Matta-Clark belonged to the noble species of the artisan artist, the one who rolls up his sleeves, sweats, builds, carries the pieces on his shoulders, and scavenging in the garbage... those garbage whose streets in New York were full in the 60's, which could not be ignored. Years after years, the difficulty of finding a place in the official places of art gradually brings him to a critical radicalization of his artistic practice.

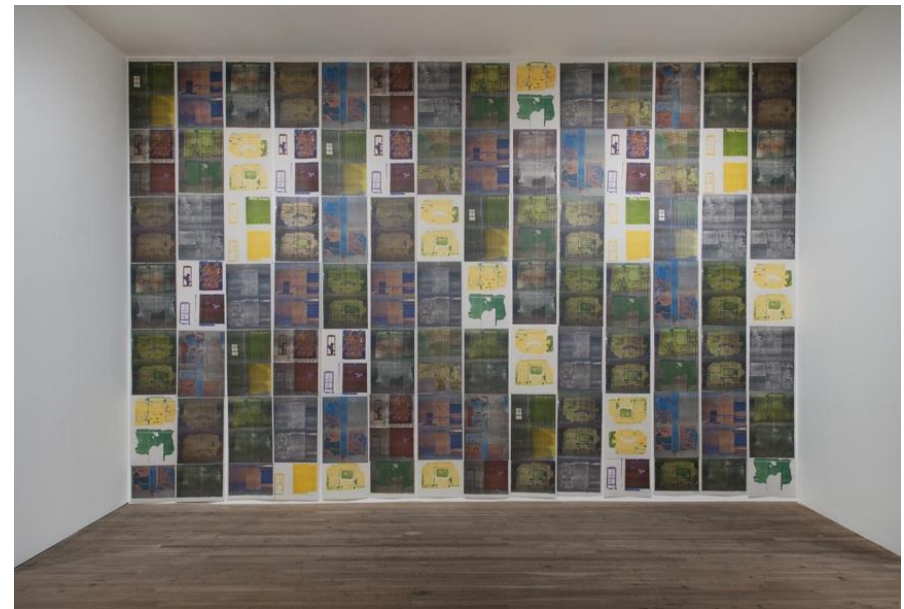


Fig. 5: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Walls Paper*, 1972, Tate Modern, Londres (2016).
Crédito: Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark.

The *Day's end* project: impossible utopia, resilience affirmed

What is today the parking lot for the Department of Sanitation, was once the site of Pier 52. In the mid-1960s, the suburbs of Manhattan were transformed into a cradle of sado-masochism. The port industries had been transferred to New Jersey and elsewhere. In the old warehouses, there had been other exchanges for a long time. The city did not want to deal with the problem and the owners of the abandoned ships were not, however, willing to make alternative use of it. That's when in the 1974, Matta-Clark, driving his van, was looking for a space in these places abandoned. In 1975, as a monument to Chelsea's long Industrial Age, Matta-Clark found a ship called Pier 52, as big as a hangar, one of the last classics 19th century steel and zinc buildings. The interior of which reflects a prosperous industrial past. steel and zinc whose interior reflected an industrial past prosperous. He went to work on it. The abandoned piers along the Hudson River were remnants of various industrial places in New York. He wanted, of course, to make a cut, to free up a captive space. So, he dug into the façade main a big cat's eye and in the ground a boat, creating a small pond, splashed by the water of the Hudson River. In his performance, filmed in 16 mm, we see the eclipse that occurs when the light of the sun passes through the eye: the effect was cosmic. Slicing channels in the pier's floors and ceiling, Matta-Clark turned the warehouse into a cathedral which he called *Day's End* because we see the path of light, of its zenith until sunset through a rose window. The work was to change over time, depending on the rotation of the earth and the seasons. The new holes acted as stained-glass windows, casting the high noon sun into the

dark waters below, and the setting sun in shapes throughout the interior of the pier. Matta-Clark hoped to have the piece open to visitors twice a week, but the police rained on that parade and arrested him for trespassing and defacing property. But the police closed the access at the ship on the day of the inauguration, and Gordon became an offender, looking for spaces and grabs; he will be out of work for a long time. Despite everything, this work, the most durable, survived for two years before the warehouse was demolished. This wasn't Matta-Clark's first piece on the Hudson pier, he'd done *Untitled Performance* in 1971 and *Pier In/Out* in 1973. Pier 52 was also famous for other reasons: when Matta-Clark entered in 1975 to make this piece, he was met with a gang of gays, as it was a popular hangout. So popular and known, that in 1979 a gay porn called "*Pier Groups*" was made about the piers.

To understand the whole process, back to the geunise of the "Anarchitecture" concept. A provocative hybrid of architecture and anarchy, the term 'Anarchitecture' seems to have first appeared in the 1970 article "Towards Anarchitecture", by British architect and theorist Robin Evans. By intentionally misreading Le Corbusier's 1923 title *Towards an architecture*, the term was intended to expose the inherent contradictions in the modernist program⁴. It's not clear whether Matta-Clark was aware of Evan's essay when he, along with Laurie Anderson, Suzanne Harris, Jene Highstein, Richard Landry and Richard Nonas, formed this collaborative group which named "Anarchitecture" in 1973. The group met regularly to discuss ideas around the subversion of conventional architecture, and their output culminated in a group exhibition presented at Greene Street in 1974. In the early 1970s as part of the "Anarchitecture group", Matta-Clark was interested in the idea of entropy, metamorphic gaps, and leftover/ambiguous space. *Fake Estates* (1973) was a project engaged with the issue of land ownership and the myth of the American dream that everyone could become landed gentry by owning property. Matta-Clark back into this dream by purchasing 15 leftover and unwanted properties in Manhattan for \$25-\$75 a plot.

⁴ Towards an architecture is a collection of essays written by Le Corbusier. These essays, which first appeared in the journal "L'Esprit Nouveau", present the theories of Le Corbusier promoting contemporary architecture. In short, he espouses the cause of an architecture seeking the truth of his time, aiming to establish an architectural production specific to his time rather than submitting to the diktats of classical and reborn obsolete styles.

So, when Matta-Clark and his team penetrated into a hangar on New York's Pier 52, the artist was to spend two months cutting shapes into the building's structure, while toying with a precarious balance, making cuts within the very inner (e) part of the framework. I will show you an excerpt of the film that he made: this film documents this undertaking, which resulted in an impressive work and Matta-Clark's indictment for trespassing and degrading public property. The first sequence shows him balancing on a rope, with a system of pulleys to reach the top of the building. He's cutting through metal sheet with a blowtorch. As in splitting, the film showcases the play of light with the exterior, created by the cuts. In a short time while the metal sheet falls, the shot is completely illuminated for several seconds due to the brightness of the sun. Each image emphasises the lights, whether it be the flame of the blowtorch, the reflections on the water or even the shadows on the building's immense wooden framework. The floor having been partially cut with a chainsaw. The water of the river is visible inside, creating a play of reflections that disrupts the perception of the space by breaking the interior/exterior separation. The film attests to this incredible light that floods the building and creates images on the walls, just like a stained-glass window (fig. 6).

Day's End was Matta-Clark's most ambitious site-specific work in New York City. At that time, Manhattan offered residents little access to the waterfront and *Day's End* was conceived as a post-industrial park that would make the natural environment accessible for people to enjoy, or, as a "sun-and-water temple" (Matta-Clark, oral expression). He hoped for the site to be experienced throughout the different seasons, the project was finally short-lived and closed to the public shortly after its unveiling. Matta-Clark undertook this project without filing for permission. Consequently, a police investigation was opened while Matta-Clark went to France for another project – *Conical Intersect* – and he stayed abroad while his lawyer tried to convince the authorities it was art, not vandalism.

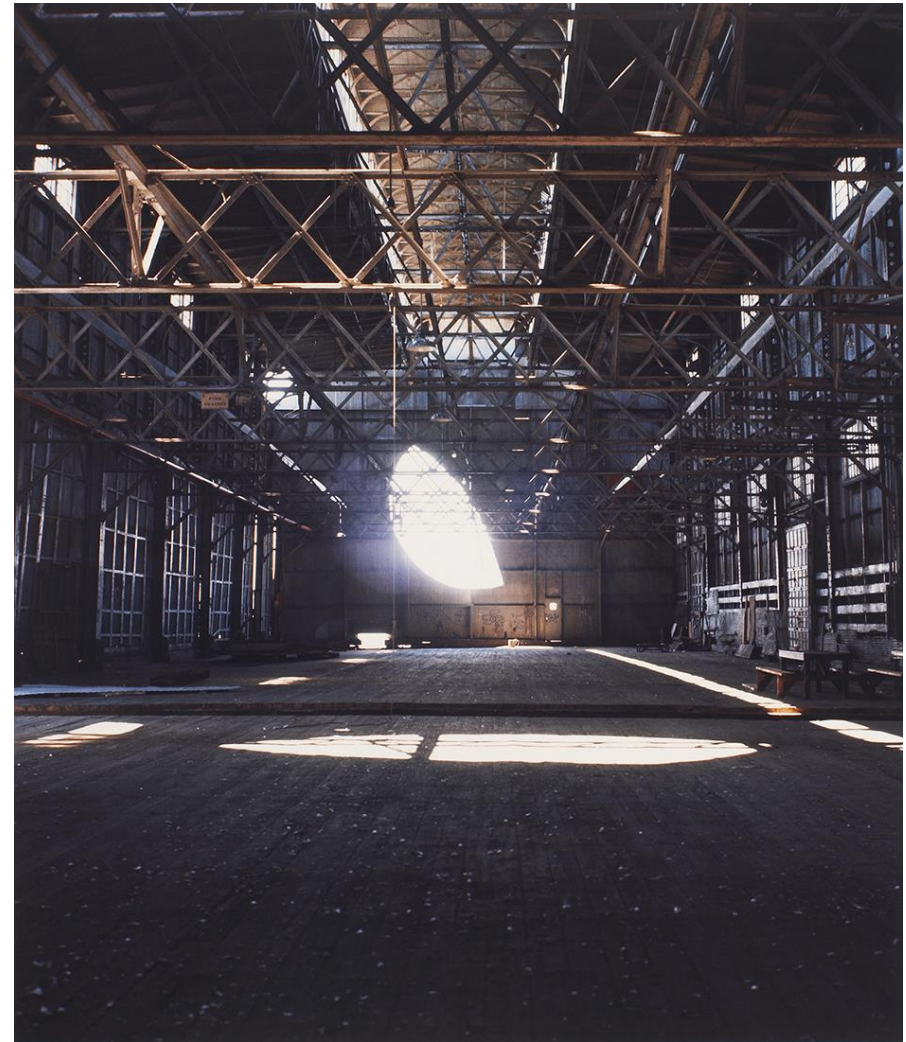


Fig. 6: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Day's End* (Pier 52), 1975. Crédito: Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark / Artists Rights Society (ARS), Nova York, 2018.

Dialectic of deconstruction

As much as in *Conical Intersect* and *Office Baroque* (1977) which was directed two years after in Antwerp, we could see that the camera plays a very important role: it allows the passage through space, what itself calls "an autobiographical section", a parallel between the different strata of the building's construction and those of the subversive memory. Based on Matta-Clark's work, Dan Graham explained that cities did not need new buildings, but only new historical times, new collective memories for existing buildings. At the beginning of the film *Office Baroque* (1977), Matta-Clark is seen climbing up the windows of a large factory wall being demolished. He brings in the light and his gesture look like the one of the last wishes of a death row inmate. He only worked on abandoned buildings or destined for demolition, because they were the only ones left to him; he told several times, that he would have preferred to work on useful and inhabited buildings (Fig. 7). Taking great risks, Matta-Clark made arabesques, spirals and by being boats suspended from improvised scaffolding, he walked nonchalantly above the ground in a redecorated apartment. His performance provided unprecedented visions of space, inside and from the street.

In his work, the logical disarticulation of his poems (games with syntax), and his performative open-air installations echoes to a physical destruction. As with language, this destruction is also a form of construction by vacuum, renovation: it's not only a criticism of the American dream and the urban and social decrepitude of city centers. It's also a sublimation of work physical or a social work, an ode to effort as opposed to the drawing table of traditional architecture, which also resonates with the values of the pioneers. Perhaps naively enough, Matta-Clark strives to involve marginalized, homeless, left-behind people in his New York projects, but few of these projects really work. Its political dimension advocated the destruction of homes to better shoot the police in case of insurrection. In fact, the political dimension of Matta-Clark was immediately erased by his presence in the world of art, by the aesthetic discourse carried on him; he's, fundamentally a radical artist, not a revolutionary or an activist in the social and political sphere. Aesthetically, his work is like a research on the urban texture: when he cuts a house, he reveals to us the beams, the inside of the walls, the faded

wallpapers, all that we do not know. Similarly, when he photographs decrepit walls, when he collects images of graffiti, when he builds a wall of waste, it's the dark side of the visible that he shows us.



Fig. 7: Gordon Matta-Clark, Study for *Office Baroque*, Contact sheet, 1977, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Nova York, 1999. Crédito: Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark / Artists Rights Society (ARS), Nova York, 2018.

Several authors agree on the assumption that Matta-Clark was marked by situationists. Although we did not have to present evidence to confirm that the artist has known Guy Debord or who was in contact with his writings during his stay in Paris, it's enough likely that the American artist was sensitive to the notions of drift or psychogeography, quite known at the time. It's also possible to distinguish in several descriptions Matta-Clark did his job "situationist". Thus, the critique of capitalist domiciliary society by market values, the search for the disruption of spatial habits, the integration of intuitive practices in the city of the city, or the critique of modern alienation, celebrated many times by modernist architects. The Debord's science of psychogeography, which conforms to a geography based on the sensorality memory and subjectivity of spatial perception, can also be easily related to the mnemonic and haptic process of Matta-Clark. The artist spoke about the interview with Donald Wall in 1976: "I concentrated on the central void exist between the individual and the American capitalist system. It was massive schizophrenia, real, carefully maintained, with which our individual perceptions are constantly corrupted by the media, the market and the interests of companies, themselves controlled by the industry" (Wall, 1974). This criticism did not occur simply by cutting the façade: it's also done in renewed practice of photography. As Alfred Stieglitz and Alexander Rodchenko did by transforming their lenses into space and then holding twisted perspectives that sought to challenge the conventional framing of the "window on a space" (Alberti), Matta-Clark also examines the question of topological position and of the psychological perception to the observatory in the space. By cutting the rigidity of the horizontal frame and the uniqueness of mono-perspectivism, it's as if there was a gluing and assembly when it cuts in a building. I like the sacred process of framing able to be violated and uses the same processes for structures in architecture that I made into my photography's process. His criticism is therefore a critique of Cartesian perspective, in order to achieve a representation more faithful to the integral perception, less reactive and more haptic architectural space. In *Conical Intersect's* film performance, the vertical panoramas produce a three-

dimensional effect on the redrawn floor, and the camera records these newly created voids, as if this strange volume had been seen at through a moving convex lens. There is a revealing moment, when Matta-Clark, on his knees, puts his head in a hole, as if he was listening to the building. It's clear that he does not want to destroy everything: he meditates before acting, he tests the infrastructure to ensure that it does not exceed the limits and complies with the necessary charges so that the construction stands upright. When he has finished cutting and removing, he throws the cuts through the window, as if the building was vomiting the overflow. It's a like a vibrant and striking effect for the spectator: if Matta-Clark opened and broke buildings, it was, among other things, to reveal intermediate spaces denied by oppressive structures. Perhaps he was seeking in these "new" spaces to overturn the dialectic of the void, which existed in modern architecture only in negative form? The opening of holes, the entry of light through cuts and slits, were Matta-Clark's great performances in creating an urban revolution, in the field of architecture, conceived not as a discipline, but as a language, invested or modified, that would launch a cry to improve citizens' lives.

Ruins of architecture into art

"More recently I have enjoyed a term used in reference to Walter Benjamin: Marxist Hermeneutics. This phrase helps me to think about my activities, which combine the inwardly removed sphere of hermeneutics and interpretation with the material dialectics of a real environment" (Matta-Clark, 182). According to Benjamin:

We know that these images arise unbidden. History in the strict sense is thus an image from involuntary memory, an image that suddenly presents itself to the subject of history at the moment of the danger. The historian's legitimacy depends on his keen consciousness of that crisis that the subject of history is encountering each time. This subject is far from being a transcendental; it is

struggling class, the oppressed class in the most exposed situation. There is historical knowledge only for it and for it only in the historical instance (BENJAMIN, 1999)

Further, the task of History consists in seizing hold of the tradition of the oppressed and Matta-Clark's cuts open up new vistas and passageways in the building's physical and metaphoric fabric (and the city itself). At the moment of cutting these structures are transformed into a constellation of the "Then" and the "Now", they are translated into a state of both being and becoming, each temporal aspect reflecting the structure of some yet-to-be-complete whole.

As far as Marxism, in its diachronic version, presents itself as a paradigm of salvation and a narrative of anticipatory emancipation, carrying the eschatological "hope principle", it gives rise to a metanarrative form of understanding, and an omniscient narrative where Reason and History unfold dialectically towards their final identity. It goes without saying that this version of Hegelian Marxism falls under the criticism of moderate historicists such as Putnam, who, in Reason, Truth and History⁵, reproaches it precisely for its double historicity that cannot be found, a point of view of nowhere (or of God) that would be both at a given moment in the development of the Spirit but would speak retrospectively since the end of History. But beyond this "double bind" of Hegelian historicism, there is always a difficulty: History has certainly a meaning, it can be told, it's vectorizable towards an end, but it's also requalified as infigurable, absent cause, transcendence (and absolute transcendental condition) against which we are confronted. Perhaps we should see in Matta-Clark's destructive act the presence of a "historical unconscious" that would make it possible to overthrow these "regenerated" spatial environments in which the people were supposed to live in the name of a certain late modernism? As we seen, Matta-Clark is an architect of the destruction: we know his rejection of Le Corbusier, we know his refusal of a domineering architecture. But the destructive aspect of his work seeks by cutting buildings to counter the diachronic effects of a teleological relationship to time. Matta-Clark cuts in the buildings as if he was cutting out

layers of discontinuous temporalities. His artistic gesture goes beyond the local sphere in which he intervenes – the in-situ object – to reach the liberating dimension of a generalized reversal of the livable (and social) space.

To conclude

First of all, we must remember how Marx historicizes his project. It's exactly the conditions of possibility that allowed the emergence of historical materialism. For the most part, it's the generalization of salaried work and the universalization of market relations. Only the capitalist mode of production makes it possible to reconstruct the sequence of previous modes of production. The rejection of teleology means that nothing is inevitable, that history is made up of discontinuities and conjunctures and above all of contingencies. It seems important to show that in Matta-Clark's work this dialectic time arrives in a delayed time due to the kinds of time they involve. The linear time of perception (logically reducible to the instant) and the non-chronological time of bodily memory or recollection. Perhaps this is one of the powers of photography and filmed performance to reify a collage work that reconsiders time as a multiple and non-linear space? I consider Matta Clark's films to be the best document of his actions and performances, despite the documentary aspect. As well as his "drawings", and more specifically his collages and photomontages, Matta-Clark's films performance attempted to enhance both perception and recollection by holding their discontinuity together. It's reasserted possibilities of a new experience of space to acknowledge that the modality of experience includes both overt and immediate, and covert some durational complexities.

⁵ Cf. Hillary Putnam. Reason, Truth and History. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1981.

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Dados biográficos

In English

Benjamin Léon holds a PhD in Cinematographic and Audiovisual Studies from the Sorbonne Nouvelle University – Paris 3. His doctoral thesis

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