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National College of Art and Design

Faculty of Fine Art Printmaking Department

Strategic Challenges to City Structures:

The work of Gordon Matta-Clark and Krzysztof Wodiczko

by

Karen Johnson

Submitted to the
Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complementary Studies
in Candidacy for the Degree of Fine Art Print

1999

Acknowledgements

Writing a thesis requires support, encouragement and constructive criticism.

In this capacity I wish to thank Sue McNab my tutor for her invaluable guidance.

To the NCAD library staff I wish to offer my thanks for all their help with aiding my research.

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Introduction

This theses illuminates the work of two artists who seek to awaken critical perception of our cities, through the use of pre-existing city structures (public, private, state buildings and monuments). It examines how well certain artists, namely Gordon Matta-Clark and Krzysztof Wodiczko can activate these symbolic sites to help them to operate as places of critical public discourse.

These two artists believe in the critical power and social function of art. Both artists have similar views and intentions and use the same sort of urban context. Their work is visually different while addressing similar societal problems. Through comparison, their individual effectiveness in creating critical public art can be examined.

Chapter 1

Why art in public space?

Art in the public sphere should strive to be art for the public; it is public by definition, not private. It can be argued that public art that refers to its place, actual geographical environment and acknowledges surrounding social problems, can better fulfil the function of art in public space. The artists' challenge is to use their diverse creativity and visual perception to produce artwork that can reach and engage the public and enhance their urban environment.

Critical public art can restore the critical power and social function of art, for it is concerned with societal problems. In order for it to successfully address public concerns it first needs to be strategically situated in a public space. Very often such art, when confined to the museum or gallery, loses its intended meaning or function. The limits of museum-bound culture and the institutional framework of art become apparent if it is recognised that the museum is psychologically persuasive. The architecture of museums and galleries is typified by contemporary spaces of white cubes and these often refer to nothing beyond themselves. The work inside these spaces often has nothing else to relate to, it does not belong to the realm of everyday life. The rules of spectator behaviour are restrictive, this stifles reaction and dialogue, thus contributing to the authoritarian reduction of viewers to passive spectators. The museum, or gallery is a place consecrated to art, cut off from the abundance of life in the street. It invites pure interest in form and tends to neutralise the possible diversity of the artists' original intentions and function for the work. The museum situation demands the pure gaze, hence deadening the critical power and social function of living art. It becomes art reduced to decoration for the architecture in some museums.

The confinement of art inside cultural institutions may reject and negate one aspect of art, which can be to rebel against the norm. Thus revolutionary art becomes subordinated to a normal administrative text and its architecture. This can be seen in the

reception of the avant-garde through the very institution it attacks as it becomes absorbed into the cycle of modernism. The effect sees the neo-avant-garde failing to transform the institution of art and instead the avant-garde is transformed into an institution. Some artists can become solely concerned with and rely on theories and debates of the artworld to give substance and meaning to their work. It could be argued that artwork today should aspire to more critical consciousness of historical and social conditions.

The city and the street are ideal places for art that is more socially and historically conscious. The city is the focal point of all social institutions. An encounter with a city is an encounter with society. The city could be described as a coded structure made up of public and private buildings, often official structures that embody representations of power and authority. These public buildings, together with our squares and monuments are signs of the dominant ideology and are charged with its connotation and values.

Buildings and monuments in our cities that are raised to leaders can often have a didactic logic. They embody signs of patriarchy and authority, their rigidity recall for some, traits associated with fascism. But the bronze general on horseback cannot be everyone's forefather in a multicultural society, and this kind of public art which represents the dominant hegemony can no longer represent today's social reality. With most traditional monuments there is a discrepancy between their symbolic value and this reality. Artists become interested in our existing monuments because of their often absurd vacancy, invisibility and loss of meaning. Imaginative use or temporary transformation of these signs could awaken memory, bring alive different, new meanings and ask questions. This could open a revised critique of these city structures and begin to activate them as places of critical discourse.

Art in the public sphere can be a purer interaction, people just come across it and meet it on their own terms. People do not need to know it is art, it has to work on its own merits, it cannot be carried or constrained by judgements made of institutionalised art.

It becomes not high art but art for everyone in everyday life. The city is a space where artists are given the opportunity to reposition art in relation to mundane space and time and also to social practice. This attitude looks for an art that is more accessible to public understanding and appreciation; one which activates critical discourse of and in everyday society. Public space should be an arena in which no single authority reigns and multiple voices can be heard. In order for art to operate successfully for multiple voices in the public sphere it must reject the inclination to refer solely to an internal professional artworld debate. It should concentrate on public debates rather than artworld debates. It would be better to develop artistic strategies and language that would be capable of inserting ideas into general public discourse. Often the problem with public art is that it is just that, *Art* in a public space, which generally isolates purified artistic practice from critical public issues. Art becomes a token of power and a symbol of capital. This art gets imposed on the public domain, the result of bureaucracies who “decorate the city with a pseudo-creativity irrelevant to urban space and experience alike”. (Wodiczko, Foster (ed) 1987, p. 41).

It is this irrelevancy of some public art together with its obtrusive and permanent nature that produces public mistrust and outrage against public art often on an extreme level. To avoid such bureaucratic, environmental pollution, artists must have some understanding of those who use public space, and have a concern for the built environment as a whole. The social setting is shaped by the interaction between the public and buildings. There is an important relationship between the social body and body of architecture.

The city architecture belongs to the realm of everyday life, like pop music and ready to wear clothing; it is more accessible than preference music and high fashion. Largely it is the facades of city architecture that the public can possess. While the facades are the faces of power and authority they cannot control and manipulate public action or art production outside or directed at their walls, unlike the power of the internal walls of the museum. Rather than stifling socially critical work, there is a possibility that

these structures in the public arena, through their recognizability as authoritative representations can inspire and incite critical art and dialogue.

Yet much contemporary public art is still propaganda for existing power structures. It will be seen to be the challenge and intention of both Gordon Matta-Clark and Krzysztof Wodiczko, to produce public art that acts against and criticises these existing city power structures, these structures being the mediums that mediate our everyday perception of the world. They intend to open social and historical consciousness rather than hide or camouflage it, to illuminate and focus on topics that authorities would rather be left in the dark, unexamined. Wodiczko describes the attack on city structures as to publicly 'unwall the walls' (Wodiczko, 1984)

These artists are aware of artistic contamination of the urban space and seek to redefine art in the public sphere. To intervene not to intrude, to acknowledge the social function, it should relate to concrete social issues. To expose spatial relationships that are historical and political, the study and appreciation of the psychology of bureaucracies is necessary. Critical public art requires an agile reading of art and life, it appeals for a serious, spirited response to often daunting complexities of contemporary issues. It enables viewers to look with renewed perspectives and a clear angle of vision. It aspires to deal with the social identities of a place, to create a connectedness between today's realities and the past. Public art should be a transient intervention, something different to disturb our passive acceptance of normality. It should revise public awareness of the surroundings, and change the way we see our urban environment. To view critical, public art work should be to enter a debate. It intends to provoke thought and discussion, but not to preach, unlike the often didactic logic of monuments and buildings. In Wodiczko's words: "The role of the critical public artist is not to espouse political positions so much as it is to illuminate and question established positions whose meaning is open to interpretation and therefore largely left up to the viewer." (Wodiczko, 1992, p.21).

Chapter 2

The origins and formulation of the intentions of both Gordon Matta-Clark and Krzysztof Wodiczko for art in the urban environment.

The personal histories and artistic backgrounds of Gordon Matta Clark and Krzysztof Wodiczko will show where their views originated. It will hopefully help to recognise the honesty of intention in their work and define how they came to have similar social views and greater perception of city structures. Also it shows why they came to be concerned with social issues involving the less fortunate than themselves and how they could shed the often egotistical stance of the modernist artist divorced from art as social function. Pierre Bourdieu believes that class and education combine to produce a person's taste. A person's taste in the arts will inevitably dictate what kind of work they do, as we will produce what we like the most. Hence a person's class, nationality, education and early experience is intrinsically important in defining what drives artists, where they formulated their ideas and where their concerns lie.

Gordon Matta-Clark, son of surrealist painter Roberto Matta grew up in New York, Chile and Paris. He rarely saw his father yet had an intensely competitive relationship with him. He studied architecture at the Cornell School in New York and the Sorbonne in Paris and he then became disillusioned with modern architecture. He believed in Leftist Reformatory ideals of architecture, that it should work as a means of improving the human condition. It was here his dissatisfaction with what he regarded as self indulgent monuments erected by modern architects began, together with his recognition of its inability to meet people's needs.

A year after he graduated, Cornell University organised an exhibition called 'Earth Art'. Here Matta-Clark began to meet other artists and he assisted Denis Oppenheim with one of his works entitled **Beebe Lake Ice Cut** 1969. Among these artists was Jeffrey Lew with whom he went on to open an alternative artists' space at and named 112 Greene Street in October 1970. Lew felt that Matta-Clark was ashamed of his

education in some ways and could see that "Gordon's reputation was partly because he was Roberto's son, but everything he did was art- he was an artist's artist." (Lew, IVAM Centre 1993.p. 403).

112 Greene Street became an open house for artists, dancers and poets. A place where basically anything goes. It opened at a time when there was no alternative spaces for artists to 'perform' in. It held none of the restrictions over the artists' work that there would be in commercial galleries and museums. It was about participation and group dynamic, where artists supported each other. It was a place for making art work, not just talking about it. Artists Gordon Matta-Clark, Jeffrey Lew, Susan Rotherberg, Richard Nonas and many others worked here creating their own arena for art. Not concerned with the commercial aspects, it was the collaborative aspect that interested Matta-Clark.

All accounts from people who knew Matta-Clark found him to be wildly energetic and talkative, he always wished to pull others into his projects. This Greene Street community began enthusiastic experimentation with an emphasis on communication. Here Matta-Clark's work's involved frying photographs **Photo Fry** 1969, and growing mushrooms from his bottle collection in the cellar in an elevator shaft, this work was entitled **Glass Plant or Winter Garden: Mushroom and Wastebottle Recycloning Cellar**. He also cut a rectangle in the floor and dug a pit. He took doors from an abandoned site and built an environment in a dumpster on Greene Street between numbers 112 and 98. Number ninety eight was where Horace and Holly Solomon had their alternative gallery space which Matta-Clark had also helped to set up. In 1971 Matta Clark with Carol Goodden opened a restaurant called "Food" which became a place for artists to meet, by employing and serving artists, it was a working social environment and successful place for interaction and support. "Food supported 300 artists during our time" (Goodden, IVAM Centre, 1993 p. 370).

Anarchitecture, an informal group, another of Matta-Clarks ideas, arose in 1973 from the 112 Greene Street community. They were anti-architecture. Architecture for them

symbolised the “hard-shelled cultural reality we meant to push against” (Nonas, IVAM Centre, 1993 p. 374). For Matta-Clark, art became a vehicle for social encounter, the group provided a playground for ideas. Generally the anarchitecture group was quite elusive but Matta Clark had a more deep rooted preoccupation with urban space, especially when in an abandoned state.

He was fascinated by the humble substance of urban waste and the state of abandonment. This possibly arose from a disorientating, elusive, mobile, childhood. He was appalled by conventional professional architectural practice. His attention to buildings disregarded through crude urban transformation grew from his distaste for the modern architectural fallacy of renewal through modernisation.

A 1976 piece, **Window Blow Out** confirms this mistrust of modern architectural institutions. He was invited to participate in a show at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies in New York. He took this opportunity to literally take aim at the institution itself. He dismissed his original proposal (to cut up one of the seminar rooms into two by two foot square pieces, to be stacked in the exhibition area) as he felt it was a compromise and basically inoffensive, it might have resembled the formal attributes of a Minimalist art work. Instead, he borrowed an air gun from Denis Oppenheim, entered the exhibition hall at night and blew out all the windows, replacing the window casements with photographs of a new housing project in the South Bronx, whose windows had been smashed by the residents. The windows were replaced before the show opened the following day, but for the short space of time the sacred exhibition space of the institute resembled a South Bronx building. This work made a strong statement, yet it was only seen or existed inside the institution.

In **Reality Properties: Fake Estates** 1973, Matta-Clark mocked the grappling for ownership of land, the acquisition of city spaces for development by the capitalist real estate market. At city auctions he bought the slivers of land between adjacent buildings, little slices of land, cracks on the sidewalk. The paperwork and tax records became a piece about ownership.

Matta-Clark recognised that to deal with issues of public space he had to work in and with real public space, make real interventions in his urban environment. He saw art museums as institutions where architects erect walls and artists simply decorate them, the architecture often being visually more prominent than the work it is supposedly exhibiting.

He was not interested in “decadent” art shut off from the real world. This real world, the city structure, was for Matta-Clark a place where the urban districts were constantly redeveloped, the cohesiveness of the city was lost, as new buildings replaced old ones. The fabric of a city is its architecture. As a result of capitalist organisation of architectural practice, buildings are neglected and demolished creating the cycle of consumption at the expense of the remembered history and public needs of the city. The opening of “Food”, involvement with anarchitecture, his preoccupation with the condemned abandoned buildings, shows his deep concern for the most primal of human needs, food and shelter. “The very real nature of my work with buildings takes issue with the functionalist attitude to the extent that this kind of self indulgent vocational responsibility has failed to question or re-examine the quality of life being served.” (Matta-Clark, Wall, 1976 p. 74-79).

Krzysztof Wodiczko received a M.F.A. in Industrial Design in Warsaw in 1968. Having been trained in the constructivist tradition he recognised the stress on the artist’s duty to society. He worked designing popular electronic products and while forever committed to the ideal of the artist working for the betterment of society, began to question this work. He began to focus on an awareness of the present rather than building toward an unreachable ideal future.

In the 1970s in Poland, proper constructivism was replaced by international constructivism, a westernised version which in effect de-politicised the constructivist tradition. Formalist western modern art became acceptable and was maintained by the 1970s Polish political authorities because it said nothing, it was devoid of any social

commentary. The Government were seen to be liberal but in actual fact were encouraging the dissolution of critical forms of art. Artists themselves had taken on this conceptual modernist art which was politically accepted. Hence art in Poland at that time became tame and deprived of analytical thought and self critical value.

Wodiczko saw this form of modernism as detrimental to the social function and oppositional power of art. This is clear from an early work of 1973 entitled **Self-Portrait** which consisted of a photographic representation of the artist as Narcissus the creator, seen gazing at his own reflection in a mirror. It was an early critique of the artist submerged in his own creation. Wodiczko acknowledged the insular, egotistical position of the western artist and began work to oppose it, work that has its creative energy focused on first analysing artistic language and then creating public dialogue.

The work of Tatlin and Rodchenko whose works were based on critical analyses of reality became interesting to him. Real interaction and intervention in public life were true characteristics of revolutionary constructivism. Through this process of historical reflection, combined with his views on contemporary Polish art in the 1970s, he began to create his own critical artworks. In his own words: "The seeds of my critical activity here in the public sphere can be found in my early works in Warsaw, especially in the two 'de-constructivists, technical inventions'" (Wodiczko, Fall, 1986, p. 37).

The first of these, **Instrument** 1971, was designed so that sounds from the environment were transmitted and controlled electronically through hand gestures to attached earphones. By turning his palms directly toward light all environmental sounds were heard, with hands closed all sound was extinguished. What this project may have achieved was ambiguous, but it offered the user, whose life may be highly organised, a chance to interrupt, contribute to or echo this organisation. This gave the individual in a totalitarian state an opportunity to exert some control over an aspect of his life. This notion of the interruption of and intervention in the organised rhythms of life became grounds for the process behind Wodiczko's work.

The second invention, **Vehicle** 1972, (Fig. 1) was operated by walking back and forth on its tilted surface. By a system of gears and cables the vehicle moved in a single direction only. It referred ironically to Tatlin's Utopian flying machine **Letatlin** and also socially useful machines produced by the Bauhaus. It was moved by movement. This alluded to notions of function and progress, the social vision of political power. These interventions were allowed as the Polish government was tolerant of avant garde art as long as it avoided unsanctioned social commentary. Both of these works although obscure and ambiguous did operate and intervene in public space. Here began Wodiczko's exploration and transformation of everyday perceptions of reality.

Andrzej Turowski, a young scholar of constructivism, became the co-director of the Falkal Gallery in Warsaw. He entered with a Marxist methodology and began a repoliticalisation of constructivism and began to do a self critique of the gallery and question the institutions of culture. Wodiczko's involvement in the Falkal Gallery and his experience with official culture, the institutional system, the changing cultural practice in changing political times was a huge part of his practice as an artist in Poland. This led him to be critical of art and cultural institutions elsewhere. He became very aware of government power in discerning what type of art is accepted and allowed success, which more often than not is that which says very little about the social times we live in. His father was the conductor and artistic director of state orchestras and was involved with cultural democracies in Poland. Through these experiences Wodiczko began to learn and hoped to cope with the restrictions of censorship and how to manipulate the system.

At Polish May Day Parades, Wodiczko saw that Polish political propaganda had an architectural quality, seen in the temporary decoration of the city. This brought about his sensitivity to the powerful relationship between architecture and image. He recognised the language of culture that apparently depicts the history of victories, but actually reveals instead the history of barbarism. His work in the 1970s and 80s would aim to disclose these underlying truths, questioning the dominant cultural ideology.



Fig. 1. Vehicle 1972.

Wodiczko left Poland in 1977. Having left he became more aware of the extent to which social questions were neglected there. He began teaching at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, Canada. It was here he began his first projections. He began working with students from the college and members of the community, his aim was to help them to "see critically their place not only within the college but within the entire cultural system" (Wodiczko, Fall, 1986, p. 43).

When he reached Canada his education continued in terms of observation of capitalist consumer culture. From there Wodiczko was invited to do a projection at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. For a time he lived close to the homeless shelter for men and quite close to one for women, in New York. It was winter, with people trying to survive on the street. He describes the experience as initially shocking to "see one of the largest buildings in the entire neighbourhood empty" (Wodiczko, Fall, 1986 p. 43).

This building was the New Museum, the site of his forthcoming projection. The space was unoccupied for 3 years after a development project for new luxury apartments failed. Wodiczko projected a padlock and chain onto the buildings facade (Fig. 2). This projection was undertaken before Wodiczko knew of the real estate development which would provide financing for the museum space. It was the basic malfunctioning of the city that caught Wodiczko's attention, a vast empty space lying unoccupied while increasing numbers of people were living on the streets of New York. The bottom padlock was added later as he learned of "the connections between the museum and this art/real estate operation." (Wodiczko, Fall, 1986 p. 43). Since 1977 Wodiczko had been a cultural refugee. His situation was that if he returned to Poland he would not have the freedom to leave. From his own status as an outsider, being a displaced person led to a close observation of the social realities in New York. Thus began his critical approach to public art; to expose faults in powerful institutions in and through their own solid representations in the public space.

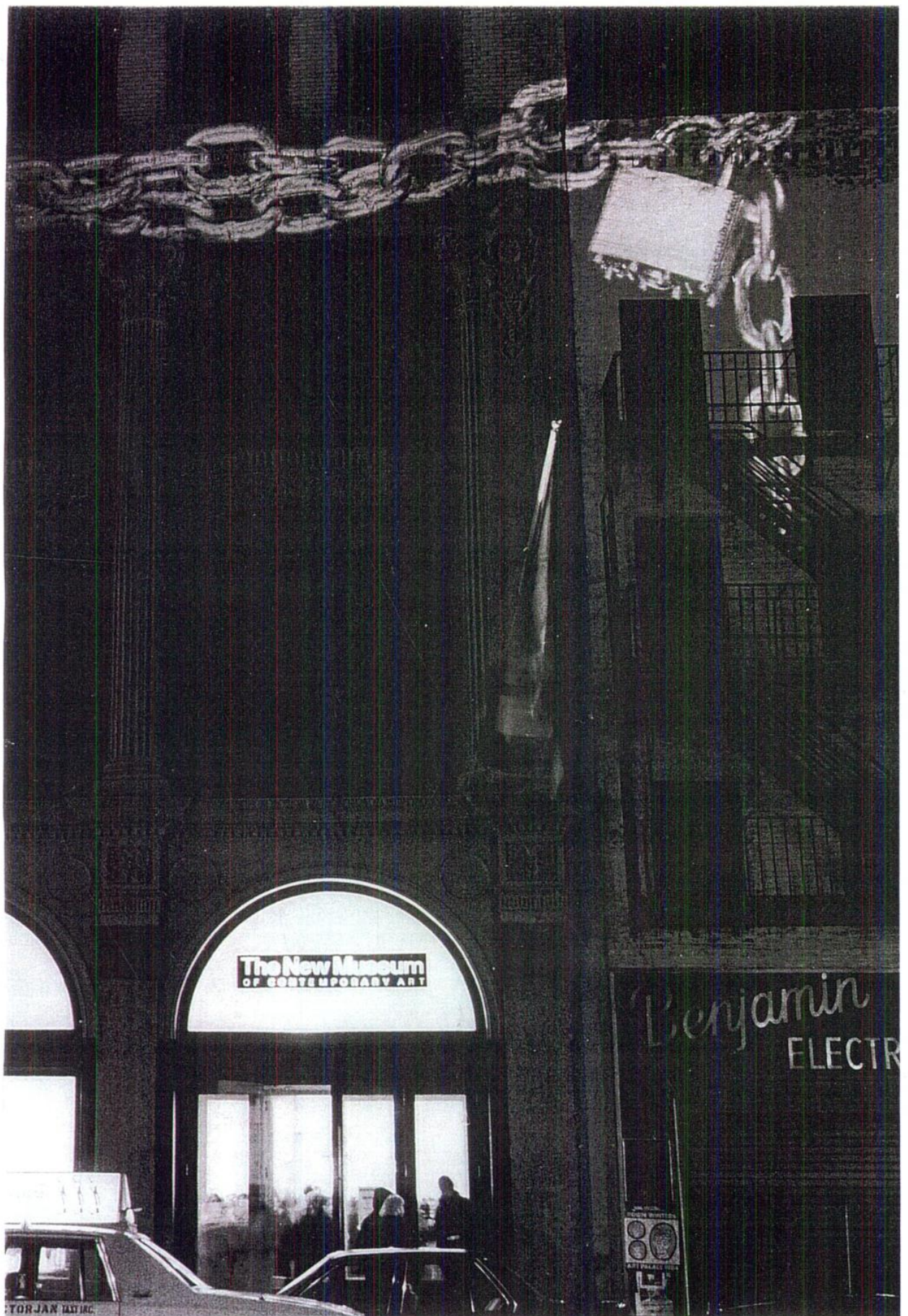


Fig. 2. Astor Building/The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1984.

"The realisation of art into everyday life", is a Situationist International refrain that Gordon Matta-Clark and Krzysztof Wodiczko evoked in their work from the beginning. The hit and run tactics, the Situationist strategy of brief provisional intrusion in the public space will be seen as the strategy employed by both Matta-Clark and Wodiczko. The Situationists thought of the built environment and of space politically, they intended action against urban and architectural spaces. Their 'unitary urbanism' expressed by Ivan Chatcheglov in a pre-situationist manifesto from 1953 "Formulary for a new urbanism" was utopian, "The architectural complex will be modifiable. Its aspects will change totally or partially in accordance with the will of its inhabitants" (Ball, January 1989, p. 66). This idealism of the early Situationists for the city's inhabitants was also held by Matta-Clark but he recognised the plight of the inhabitants at the mercy of the architecture industry. "By undoing a building [I open] a state of enclosure which, had been preconditioned not only by physical necessity, but by the industry which proliferates suburban and urban boxes as a pretext for ensuring a passive isolated consumer" (Matta-Clark, Foster (Ed). 1987, p. 90).

Matta-Clark, like the Situationists, held an openly hostile attitude towards the built environment and those who control the state of it. The concern for the effect the urban situation had on the city inhabitants points us to consider Matta-Clark's attacks on the built environment as primarily social in their conception, work in the public sphere, made to communicate to and for the public. His projects were to inject themselves into the realisation of everyday life with playfulness and freedom as had been championed by the Situationists and encouraged at 112 Greene Street.

It is interesting to note that Matta-Clark graduated at the same time as the student revolutions in Paris of May 1968 which the literature of the Situationists are said to have inspired. Graduating in New York in 1968 meant that those he studied with in the Sorbonne in Paris a few years previously would also be graduating at this time.

The Situationists, a group that was little known in North America, at the time had an iconic presence in France. It is therefore not merely speculation that if Matta-Clark

maintained links with Paris then the ideas of the Situationists were an important influence in creating his conceptions of the city and his artistic motivations.

Krzysztof Wodiczko was most certainly influenced by the Situationists. In his essay "strategies of public address", (Foster (Ed). 1987, p .41-45) he cites the Situationist urban project as unfinished business, business he wishes to continue through establishing a critical dialogue with state and real-estate architecture. His interventions will be seen to carry out this project. "The basic practice of the theory of unitary urbanism will be the transcription of the whole theoretical lie of urbanism, detoured (diverted, appropriated) for the purpose of de-alienation" (Foster (Ed).1987, p. 43). This de-alienation was intended to unify the inhabitants of the city, the passive isolated consumer Matta-Clark spoke of. The starting point for both artists' work was to attack the passive reception of the city. Wodiczko, although recognising the Situationist theory as too utopian or naive to be of use today, cites it as: "critical and self critical abandonment of art as cultural system and of avant garde art as specialised procedure"(Wodiczko, Foster (Ed), 1987, p. 42).

He compares and acknowledges its roots in the historic avant garde of 1910-1940, with Dada, Constructivism and the socially engaged avant garde (1920-1930) of Heartfield, Grosz and Tatlin who all used direct public address in critical and self critical manifestations on the cultural system of art. The critical neo-avant garde of (1960-70) such as Hans Haake or Daniel Buren continue this critical action on art institutions but make no significant attempts to enter popular culture or collaborate with mass media to communicate to a large audience. Hans Haacke acknowledged that the aesthetic language used in some of his works require the viewer to be well informed and said "they are part of an internal professional debate" (Haacke/Bourdieu 1995, p. 106). Their work is still involved with artworld theories and debates. Daniel Buren's work does become invisible outside the museum, it does not attempt to address the general public. Wodiczko recognises the necessity to enter the public domain and create accessible but critical work to take affirmative action on everyday life and its institutions.

Neither Krzysztof Wodiczko nor Gordon Matta-Clark from the onset of their careers had any interest in pursuing a working method which entailed working solely inside galleries and museums, shut off from social realities. This was possibly as a result of neither artist being directly trained as artists, but as designers and architects but with access to artists they could identify downfalls in both disciplines. Both took the starting point of concentrating on the inability of authoritative cultural powers to meet people's needs in our cities.

Both artists had a displaced background, no secure base. This sensitivity to rootlessness could have led them to perceive our cities in ways more settled people might become immune to. These artists recognised among other factors the obvious problems of homelessness resulting from inefficient urban planning.

It is this immunity that their later works aim to break. Both artists were directed through their own knowledge and critical awareness to creating a public art that opens the public's eyes to their surroundings without further contribution to urban mess but through short interventions in the public sphere. Interestingly they came to examine similar cultural problems through the direct attack on the cities' own structures. Using architectural language both used existing structures rather than creating new ones.

As determined, their social views and intentions were similar, but the visual impact and effect of their works will be seen to differ. Here differences in education, difficulties and experiences in early years, have provided them with different modes of working. Their individual methods of attack in tackling these structures will be further examined in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

The execution of work: how each artist physically tackled the structures of the built environment.

In launching their attacks on urban structures these artists each had their own specific methods seen to be constant throughout their quest to change the way we see our urban environment. Concentrating first on their challenges to existing city structures, as this forms the largest part of their overall works, other projects which address contemporary social problems will be discussed later in the chapter.

Both artists, as stated, had a common interest in exposing another set of sociological meanings through their use of monuments or buildings. Both intervened in real urban space, using the actual material, fabric of the city. Their work was not against a neutral white screen. The buildings used in both cases had colour, texture, age, a history. They already had a public image, an existing narrative or silent invisibility through familiarity. The artists sought to interrupt, unearth, comment upon and change often hidden meanings and hoped to enhance their presentation to the public.

Described in simple terms, typically Matta-Clark's works involved cutting huge volumes out of buildings and Wodiczko projects large illuminating images on to the facades of buildings. The initial decision of what type of a building to use or confront is where differences in methods first appear. Matta-Clark used the cities abandoned buildings, usually existing structures awaiting demolition in neglected areas, often purposely neglected inner city areas whose occupants were driven out to make way for real estate development.

One obvious reason for Matta-Clark's use of decaying buildings awaiting demolition was the fact that they were the only buildings he could possibly be given permission to cut into. When working without permission, using an unwanted abandoned building

meant he could avoid discovery and possible prosecution for some time. But Matta-Clark has stated that he had a deep rooted preoccupation with the state of abandonment and he recognised its predominance in the buildings that form our urban scape. In his work **Wallpaper** 1972 we see Matta-Clark's collection of numerous photographs of exposed walls of partially torn down buildings around the city of New York. He sought to bring public attention to homes in New York which were severely suffering from lack of attention. He used commonplace buildings, ordinary houses, places that didn't have a great heroic sense to them, they had a non-monumental quality. Possibly he sought to bring to them a new brilliance through his manipulation and cutting of their structure and space. Through their recycling he sought to give them a new significance. He could be criticised for further contributing to the destruction of these buildings. But the buildings in question were subject to such neglect that they were beyond safe human use and dates had been set by the authorities for their inevitable demolition.

Where Matta-Clark chose buildings that were built and demolished for commercial purposes for the real estate market, Krzysztof Wodiczko sought to disturb the facade of buildings that purport to embody public values; state architecture such as monuments, official public and governmental buildings. Wodiczko's choice uses buildings that generally have a longer history, a permanence and are not subjected to the constant redevelopment of real-estate architecture which tends to develop and destroy freely. Wodiczko challenged the existing rhetoric of the building or monument which is ordinarily accepted uncritically by the public and sought to unmask this existing image. He often succeeded in enticing a menacing human characteristic out of the structure. Using projection he does not physically alter the buildings, thus allowing him to almost use any building he sees in need of a revised public vision.

To succeed, each artist's work demanded a close, careful and considered incorporation of the relationship between image and architecture. The examination of this integration of image and architecture will hopefully signify the important and consistent methodology in their approach to their chosen urban sites. Without the use of these

buildings Wodiczko's images and Matta-Clark's drawings proposing cuts wouldn't have a reference point, to the past or contemporary issues. In challenging the body of a building the artists needed to be aware of and acknowledge that they were competing with the power of the existing image and serve to complement it visually while subverting its original meanings. By taking on such huge structures they also acquired a method of working on a huge scale.

Formal considerations, like the specific dimensions of a building are taken into account before deciding what kind of image to project or to carve into it. In the initial stages of their projects they both took photographs of the proposed building. Matta-Clark drew over his contact sheets, shapes and lines that could work with the building, shapes that technically could be cut while also making a point and be visually stimulating.

Wodiczko carefully considered the shapes of the construction whether pillar, column or flat surface and juxtaposed his photographic images with the existing built dimensions to create overall images that were visually coherent. A good example of his use of this kind of formal relationship between the image and architecture is the projection of the missile onto that of the column. The victory column in Stuttgart, a classical column was seen by Wodiczko as already being a missile, a monument of power.

Wodiczko worked by taking slide photographs in the studio with models and props while referring closely to images of the proposed building. This is important on one hand to get a visually good image that would also fit in relation to the dimensions of the structure, but there are other reasons. Consider the nature of some of his projected images like homeless people for instance. His homeless people are models or actors, where you generally don't see a face. In Boston the **Homeless Projection 2** (see Fig. 3), we see a person with head down, face covered with a hood and a plastic cup held in grasping hands to portray the homeless. In Los Angeles on the podium base of the Westin, Bonaventure Hotel 1987 he projected legs with tattered clothing with chains at shoeless feet to portray poverty and incarceration. He avoided the voyeuristic temptation of some documentary photography. He could signify the homeless without



Fig. 3. The Homeless Projection 2. The Soldiers and Sailors Civil War Memorial, Boston, 1986-1987.

using the victims as mass spectacle. He doesn't produce negative stereotypes or generalise the race of the homeless.

Matta-Clark's circular, conical and spherical shapes came from a store of drawings often cut first in stacks of paper and over, photographs of buildings. In comparing his drawings to the internal structure of the buildings his architectural education allowed him to penetrate and cut a building without weakening its structure.

Conical Intersect (Fig. 4) is a work from 1975 in which Matta Clark was given two soon to be demolished seventeenth Century townhouses in the area of Les Halles in Paris. These buildings were being destroyed and like much of the surrounding area cleared away so the site could become the city's new cultural centre. Adjacent to the houses the new Georges Pompidou Centre was nearing completion. Describing **Conical Intersect** in formal terms it consisted of a cone shaped volume cut through and twisting through to the top floors of these townhouses at a 45° angle from the street. The base of the cone was four foot in diameter and decreased as it spun toward the roof through the floors' ceilings and walls. In the words of Matta-Clark "I think of [the plans] like throwing a ball in space and being able to pass through surfaces . . . its basically mental projections or projectiles." (Matta-Clark, Russi-Kirshner, Oct.1995 p. 103).

It was as though the building was shaping itself around these conical or spherical forms and thus around his mental projectiles. He wished his works, his voids to have an internal dynamism and be spectacular for the viewer. They were intended to be moved through, to be experienced. They had multiple layers of visual depth to be read from floor to floor to get different viewpoints. He created this dynamism through the destruction of the clarity in the geometry of the original architectural plan. He distorted this geometry by pulling his own twisting cone shape through the structure. In other works spherical, moonlike or shapes resembling the base of an iron appear as voids, the latter a work in Antwerp called *Office Baroque* looks as though a huge iron was dropped through the structures' layers.

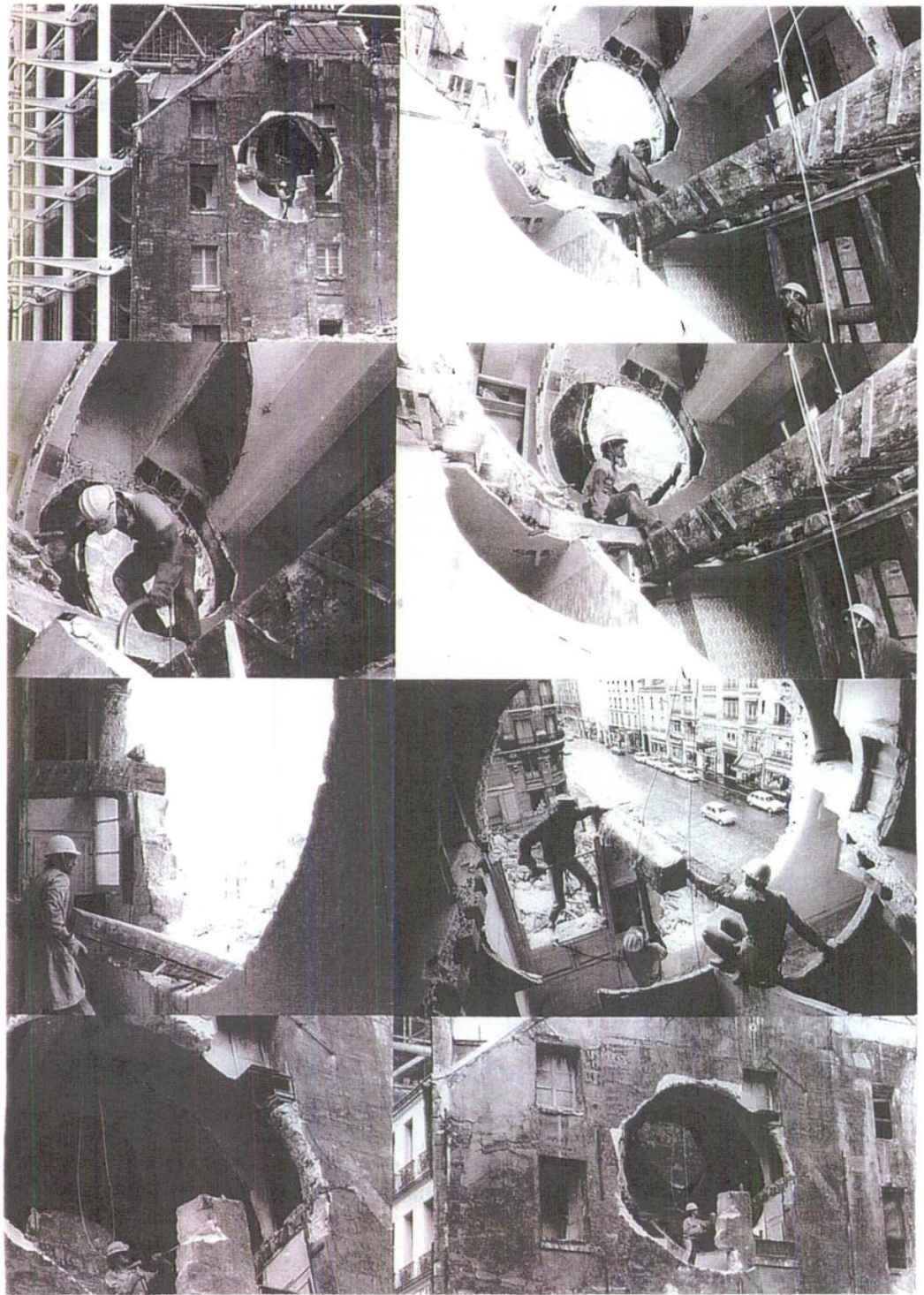


Fig. 4. Conical Intersect, Paris, 1975.

Those who worked with him were often dubious about the safety of the viewers after such destruction. Manfred Hecht while working on **Bronx floors** 1972-73 remembers trying to encourage Matta-Clark to put barriers up around the sections of the floor he had cut and removed. (IVAM Centre 1993. p. 371). Jane Crawford describes the experience of working in such activity. "You never were certain how much of Gordon's interventions a building could take but you had to have faith that he knew." (Crawford, IVAM Centre, 1993, p. 404). Despite his rather direct and energetic, immediate manner of tearing into a structure, it seemed as though he always had it worked out and planned well. He disrupted both art and architectural conventions through the imaginative disruption of the conventional concept of a building, a house as shelter. He saw this as a liberating force, bringing almost dreamlike experiences to a normally rigid structure with the interplay of illuminating light and shadow.

His work at Pier 52 in 1975 entitled **Days End** (Fig. 5) saw Matta-Clark proclaim his interest in reclaiming a run down, abandoned site. He believed that the disintegration of New York's waterfront and its river economy is a "sad digression in the character of the city that has not been met by a constructive imaginative attitude of reform" (Matta-Clark, IVAM Centre, 1993, p. 383).

He wished to transform at least one aspect of this site of derelict waste. He took over a nineteenth century steel and corrugated tin warehouse for three months and aimed to convert this dull relic into an indoor park. He made cuts in the floor, a sail shape exposing the water below and a similar shaped cut in the roof which at noon allows a patch of light to rest over the water, after moving over the floor. A vaguely moonlike shape was cut in the west wall allowing a sliver of light throughout the day but at dusk, day's end, the whole pier is fully illuminated.

Matta-Clark had organised, through the Holly Solomon gallery, to transport viewers to the site by bus. He wished to make a mark on this sad moment of history by turning this site of industrial waste into a "sun and water temple" (Matta-Clark, IVAM Centre 1993,

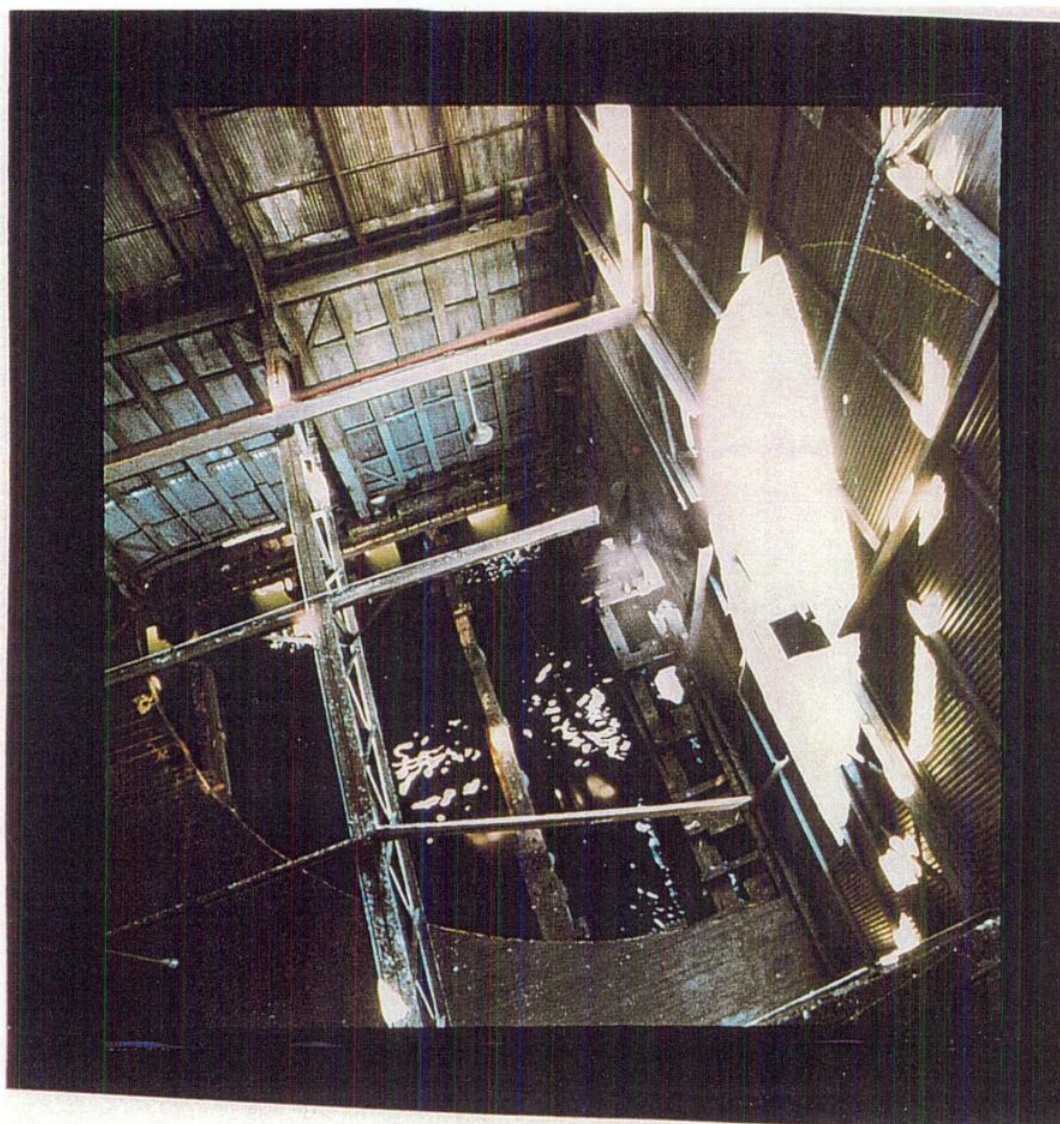


Fig. 5. Day's End, Pier 52, New York, 1975.

p. 384). Matta-Clark's disruption and intervention in the abandoned areas of New York and other cities was his way of improving them visually for the public while also drawing attention to their neglect.

Wodiczko's works also play with light. The stone surface glimmers with the colour of the projected image. They are attractive and dramatic. People are impressed by their brightness and glamour. They are for public enjoyment with generally quite glossy images which are intended to be recognised. By being initially aesthetically beautiful his projections gain attention. The relationship between the image and architecture is enhanced by the fact that it is not a moving image. It is not a slide show as people ordinarily expect but one image on a building. The public are encouraged to consider the relationship in this integration between image and architecture and not between one image and another.

In his early projections Wodiczko aimed to facilitate a reading of a building's personality, to give it human characteristics. He equated the body of a building to the body of an individual by strategically projecting a hand or hands onto a building. This was generally a male hand with smart shirt cuff and suit sleeve. These stiff images, when juxtaposed with the flat surfaces of modern buildings, accentuated the personality of the building, quite rigid and unexpressive. He could also suggest its interior activities and functions. These early projections reflected how architecture functions as an ideological medium and alludes to it being the production of the patriarchal establishment and a symbol of power. They began a discovery into a richer observation of our city structures.

His projections soon developed into a more specific critique of individual buildings and monuments, not architecture as a whole, in general, but began to refer to more prevailing and urgent contemporary issues. His concerns are broader than contemporary political situations. His nomadic way of life sees him interpreting different cities from an outsider's point of view. He takes a broader more sensitive view of different

societies. While looking at global issues he is also very aware of people he sees everyday, on the ground so to speak, the homeless, often victims of society's neglect. Since arriving in New York in 1984 he has seen a growing number of people living on the streets. The inefficient workings of our urban environment in such economic conditions can only serve, or work in the interest of people with capital. In large cities real-estate architecture often works as "a monstrous evicting agency, this architecture imposes the bodies of the homeless onto the 'bodies' – the structures and sculptures of state architecture". (Wodiczko, Foster (Ed) 1997, p. 42).

Homeless people are permanently outdoors, suffering the weather, they are on display like city monuments. They must appear in strategic places, popular sites to avail of any income or to feel safe, usually against a state building or monument. This site becomes their home. They wear the image of architecture like a cloak. Yet they are ignored, are still invisible. The projections seek to magnify the scale of the homeless to the scale of architecture, echoing and exemplifying the true huge scale of the problem. These state monuments, through the projections, are forced to wear or bear the image of homelessness, and so take some responsibility. From the original formal connections between image and architecture grew a relationship that is more subtle. It had to be worked out by the viewer. The viewer must pay an active role in discovering Wodiczko's intentions and stirring up discourse.

Both artists have been seen to produce work that aims to enhance a place visually. But what were their intentions for the place? How apt was their work in that place at a given time? For work to address the meaning of a place, and go beyond being simply visually stimulating there must be careful and subtle considerations of the site in relation to an issue and the work's relation to the surrounding environment.

Matta-Clark's work drew attention to what society no longer had use for. He brought something else to a structure so it could have meanings and functions beyond its original use and the scrap heap it had become. **Conical Intersect** can serve again as an

example of a work that commented on its surrounding environmental situation. At that time in Paris, the old district Les Halles was literally being cleared away. Profound urban transformation was taking place for the modernisation of the area into a cultural centre. The two modest seventeenth century townhouses looked quite small, insignificant and pathetic in relation to the new Georges Pompidou centre.

The Pompidou centre which at the time was an object of social discontent had risen like a huge bridge-like skeleton structure from the gradually disintegrating area where these townhouses were among the last standing. From the street, looking at Conical Intersect, a passersby could see the new centre through the large conical shape cut through the buildings and it also had a visual alignment with the Eiffel Tower. The negative conical shape alludes to the structure of the Eiffel Tower and the apparently open display of the new centre's technical functioning. The Eiffel Tower is a monument to Nineteenth century French progress and the Pompidou Centre is a representation and product of notions of French contemporary technical and cultural progress. Matta-Clark's non-monument alludes to the "destruction of any historical continuity between old and new Paris", (Matta-Clark, IVAM Centre 1993, p. 380) for those who live there. His work functioned as an intrusion, a disruption of an otherwise seamless, smooth transformation: the destruction of the Parisian inner city. He attacked and commented on this cycle of production and consumption that could result in the expense of the cohesiveness and history of the city.

It proclaims quite a negative view of progress, echoing the existing social discontent with the new centre. This work is related specifically to that time and place.

Deconstructing an existing architectural object, which was close to demolition anyway, he is reflecting the world as it actually is. He accentuates the state of rubble the historical district had become. As it was a temporary intervention it could not create public outrage, but hopefully public dialogue as it echoed on a smaller scale the destruction already taking place.

Wodiczko's projections are all concerned with the characteristics of their given site with reference to the surrounding area and impending global issues. He produces work that reacts to what is going on in the world. Many of his projections refer to international violence and foreign policies (missiles, army tank treads). In the 1980s his projections of missiles, on many war memorials throughout Europe and America forced the memorials to address contemporary concerns, issues of the arms race, and talks concerning the deploying of weapons. His projections haunt these memorials with ghost like images and force them to own up to their own message. They continually reference the memorial's own meanings embodied in its physical presence. By projecting images of the present onto those of the past, he exposes menacing qualities and forgotten meanings in these structures which we generally hardly ever see or give attention to. Their invisibility became illuminated with new spatial light and critical forms.

In his projection in Madrid in January 1991 the images involved a revolver and gas pump being held by skeletal hands, above these images was the word *Cuántos?* meaning how many? how much? While globally referring to the outbreak of the Gulf war, just 3 days previously it was also significantly projected onto a triumphal arch commemorating the ultimate victory of Generalissimo Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War. This monument which was usually dark and devoid of any relation to reality was suddenly illuminated by the projection and became a partner to contemporary events. He drew attention to these symbolic structures in relation to contemporary situations. Spanish people were reminded of their own war, own experiences. To create a critical history the past must be infused with the present. Wodiczko's work in the real urban environment shows a "heightened sensitivity to the site and historical moment of the productions" (Boswall, Wodiczko, 1992, p. 17).

Both Matta-Clark's cuts and Wodiczko's projections have a distinctly temporary nature to them. None of Matta-Clark's buildings exist today as they were set for demolition or in a state fit only for demolition at the time of his work. The destruction of

Matta-Clark's cut buildings mirrors capitalist society's cycles of destruction of our cities in the interests of real estate. His work was a short intervention in the life of a building, its last call, last opportunity to have a voice, to shed its useless status, to incite some controversy before it was ultimately destroyed. Matta-Clark did want his works to remain longer, to be seen and experienced by the public. He wished people to recognise the aesthetic of the neglected buildings and identify with it.

Wodiczko's projections were more of a brief provisional intervention. Technically his projections could only be seen at night. But he also ensured that they illuminate a building for one or two nights only and for just a few hours at a time. He wished to counter the ideas of permanence embodied in a monument, and create a tension. In a 1983 manifesto on public projection he wrote "warning, slide projections must be switched off before the image loses its impact and becomes vulnerable to the appropriation by the building as decoration". (Wodiczko, 1992, p. 20). They are there long enough to make a point but don't risk becoming invisible through familiarity. The length of time a work of either artist stands also depends occasionally on the authority's discovery of them.

These artists' visions for public art were often not in harmony with the authorities who got nervous with the blend of art and political life. Both artists at times needed to have a certain irreverence or often understandable disregard for the law to pursue their projects, which question authoritative reign and constraints. Matta-Clark fled to Europe after a warrant was issued for his arrest. He was discovered working in pier 52 by the authorities, three months after work commenced. Working without permission, he covered any entry points with barbed wire and put a new lock on the door. Himself and two friends wore overalls to look like ordinary workmen. He felt that the place was in such a state of neglect that "it would seem within the rights of an artist or any other conscientious person to enter such a premises with a desire to improve the property, to transform the structure in the midst of its ugly criminal state into a place of interest, fascination and value." (Matta-Clark, IVAM Centre, 1993, p. 382).

Especially considering the fact that there was no no-trespassing signs or public warnings, it seemed that the owner could not be still interested in the property. The city had filed a lawsuit against Matta-Clark for 1 million dollars in damages. The claim was dropped and the pier eventually demolished some years later. Confrontation with authorities was a major part of Matta-Clark's experiences while working in city structures, even though the city no longer had any use for them, they were redundant. He was also arrested in Antwerp while working on Office Baroque. Even with Conical Intersect where he had been given permission to use the two townhouses, among the last remaining in the area, the authorities hurriedly sealed up the entrance as soon as the cut was finished and prohibited public entry. This piece was controversial, intended as a comment on the modernisation of Paris through a destruction of this urban historical area. As a result French officials and Rightists got upset and prevented the public from seeing this piece fully whether they wished to or not. As soon as his work began to say something about an authoritative reign over Paris it was immediately suppressed, and in effect an aspect of his work was censored.

In a letter to Alanna Heis at the Center for Urban Resources in New York Matta-Clark describes a way he had devised to do a "rather gaping alteration so that the menacing look will not be visible until the very end" (Matta-Clark, IVAM Centre, 1993, p. 327). This was a secret proposal to cut an abandoned building on 54th Street. He described in his letter how he would remove interior walls and floors first while the last piece to be removed would be the facade which is exposed to the street and viewers, "we can remove the front fairly quickly and be finished by the time the armed forces move in" (Matta Clark IVAM Centre, 1993, p. 327).

Alanna Heis did manage to obtain permission from the city and money for the project which was to be part of a project called **Twentieth Century Ruins** which would incorporate four or five artists' works. This letter was written in May 22, 1978 and sadly Matta-Clark died of cancer in August of that year without completing that project or other proposals.

Both Matta-Clark and Wodiczko recognised that art with any political edge or even unknown methods of production could not rely on the comforts of official patronage or freedom to work without risk of arrest. Matta-Clark in most of his works had to pursue an individual guerrilla strategy. Even some leftist groups had problems with Matta-Clark's destruction of buildings that they thought could still be inhabited, used as a shelter. This was often without realising that the real destruction was already completed through the state's intended neglect and the lack of attention paid to these buildings. The nature of Matta-Clark's cuts, the physical work, required a much longer working time on site to complete before their ultimate revealing than Wodiczko's projections. Wodiczko could arrive at a site with the makings of his projections, his attack on his buildings (slides) in his pocket, after careful consideration of the site and production of images in the studio. Wodiczko recognised the necessity of taking advantage of any administrative desire for art in public places. Collaboration with administration meant better equipment was available. Also the publication of times of his projections ensured a larger audience. He can see the advantages of working with bureaucracies and authorities. He firstly gains permission for a projection, then does what he thinks would make a point. As his strategy that sees him first engage bureaucracy but then attacks unexpectedly, he believes that it is essential to "collaborate in such events and infiltrate them with an unexpected critical element" (Wodiczko, Fall 1986 , p. 24).

Having been given permission to project hands onto Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, London 1985 he seized the opportunity. He committed a first violation by not projecting hands but rather a huge intercontinental ballistic missile, wrapped in barbed wire and at the base of the lions he projected tank treads. He took advantage of the fact that "bureaucracy doesn't work at night, even if the media does" (Wodiczko, Fall, 1996, p. 24).

At that time a South African delegation had arrived in London asking for more money and Margaret Thatcher had given it to them. People were demonstrating in front of the

South African Embassy against apartheid while the projections were taking place. Wodiczko took the opportunity to respond to such a specific political event.

He used the Embassy as context, as a representation of apartheid. Changing a slide and turning one of his projectors ninety degrees, enabled him to project a swastika onto the pediment of the South African Embassy. This was not like some of the more ambiguous work involving metaphors that he usually does, but he resolved that "it's public art and one must respond to changing circumstances," he recognised that artists are often "so trapped in their own so-called histories to do this." (Wodiczko, Fall, 1986, p. 24).

Wodiczko's work is seen more immediately than Matta-Clark's whose work gradually takes form, especially in this instance as the projections were televised by the B.C.C. The authorities too had a more immediate response. The police arrived within two hours and threatened Wodiczko with arrest on grounds of being a public nuisance. Although the projection lasted only two hours it was to be remembered by those who saw it or a photographic reproduction of it, long after the event as the building is passed.

Wodiczko had consulted his lawyer and knew he risked being arrested, so he dutifully stopped the projection as the police arrived. This was a guerrilla strategy but of a quite sophisticated kind, using official patronage, media and relying on his own personal determination and courage. The beauty of these projections is that while they don't do any physical damage they can cause considerable damage in terms of reputation in the breaking down and exposure of the representations of power structures. Wodiczko reserved his right to have an opinion on these political times and express his views.

Wodiczko's **Homeless Vehicles** (Fig. 6) were another interaction in our organised daily lives. Once more he wished to change the way people perceived the homeless. Preparatory work for the vehicle involved lengthy discussions with homeless people. He took on this project from this view as a designer. As an industrial designer he initially wished to use his strengths and the skills of his profession and artistic

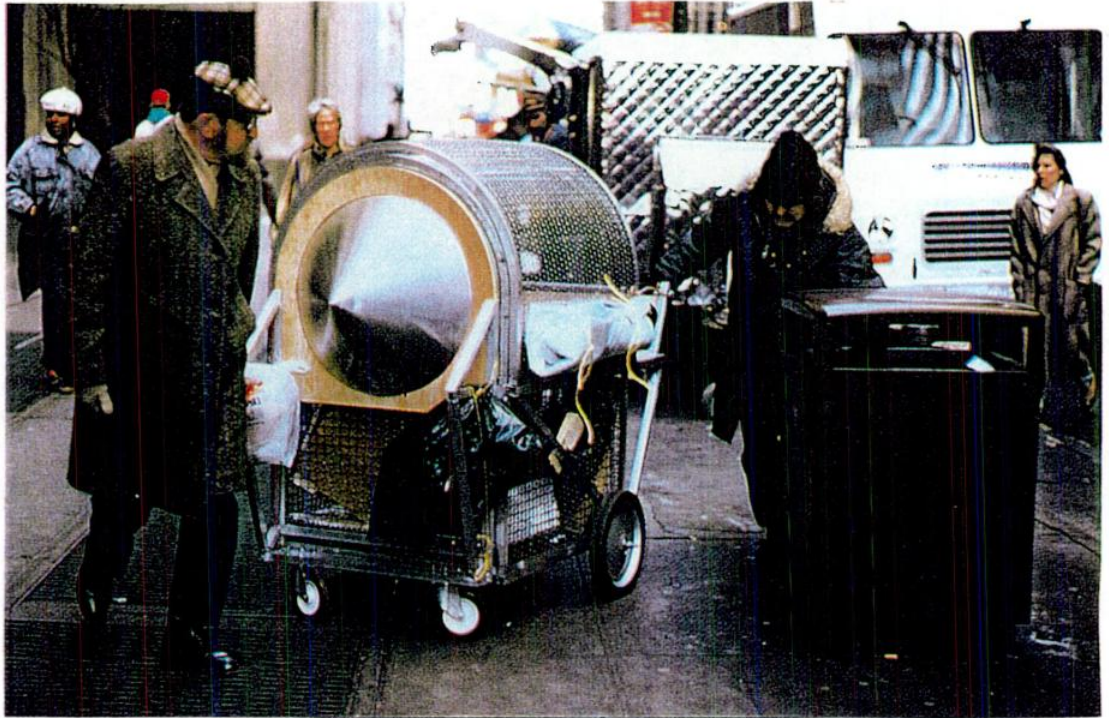


Fig. 6. Homeless Vehicle, 1988.

background to produce something that could help the situation. He acknowledged their bottle collecting and recycling work as important and it inspired him to create a functional machine that caters to the working and living needs of the homeless. It was meticulously well designed with its metal rocket shape, resembled a weapon or projectile and incited immediate engagement when pushed into the public domain. The fact that it required social engagement and created discourse helped the homeless to assert their presence, break their invisibility and hopefully emphasise their plight. Pushing this vehicle for the homeless person became a performance, an event inviting questions about technical aspects brought people together.

The horror for most people would be to envisage thousands of such vehicles around our cities. This is the intention, to exemplify the scale of the problems of homelessness. There is an element of parody in this project. The vehicle cannot be a solution, it could merely slightly improve what is an intolerable situation. There ideally should be no need for the vehicle because such situations should not exist. Wodiczko demands that they not be mass produced as it would involve an acceptance of the homeless situation but the vehicle had made the lives of some homeless people more durable for the length of time they had one. The homeless are a feature of life in today's society. For them the vehicle does make life slightly better. A New York police woman (source: video) insisted that there was a need for such a vehicle in society today, more so than we need a painting in a gallery, she said that we **want** a painting in a gallery but do we **need** it. The homeless felt that their vehicle was a good idea and gave them a more autonomous way of life. Possibly it should be mass produced rather than be seen as an art object. A homeless vehicle sold in New York's Josh Baer Gallery in 1991 for \$60,000.

Wodiczko has been making vehicles since the early 70s but it is interesting to look at Gordon Matta-Clark's **Fresh Air Cart** (Fig. 7) from 1972 which actually visually resembles one of Wodiczko's first vehicles. It consisted of two seats back to back on 4 wheels, equipped with a tank of "pure air" (79% nitrogen and 21% oxygen) which could be administered through oxygen masks to people passing by. Dealing with issues

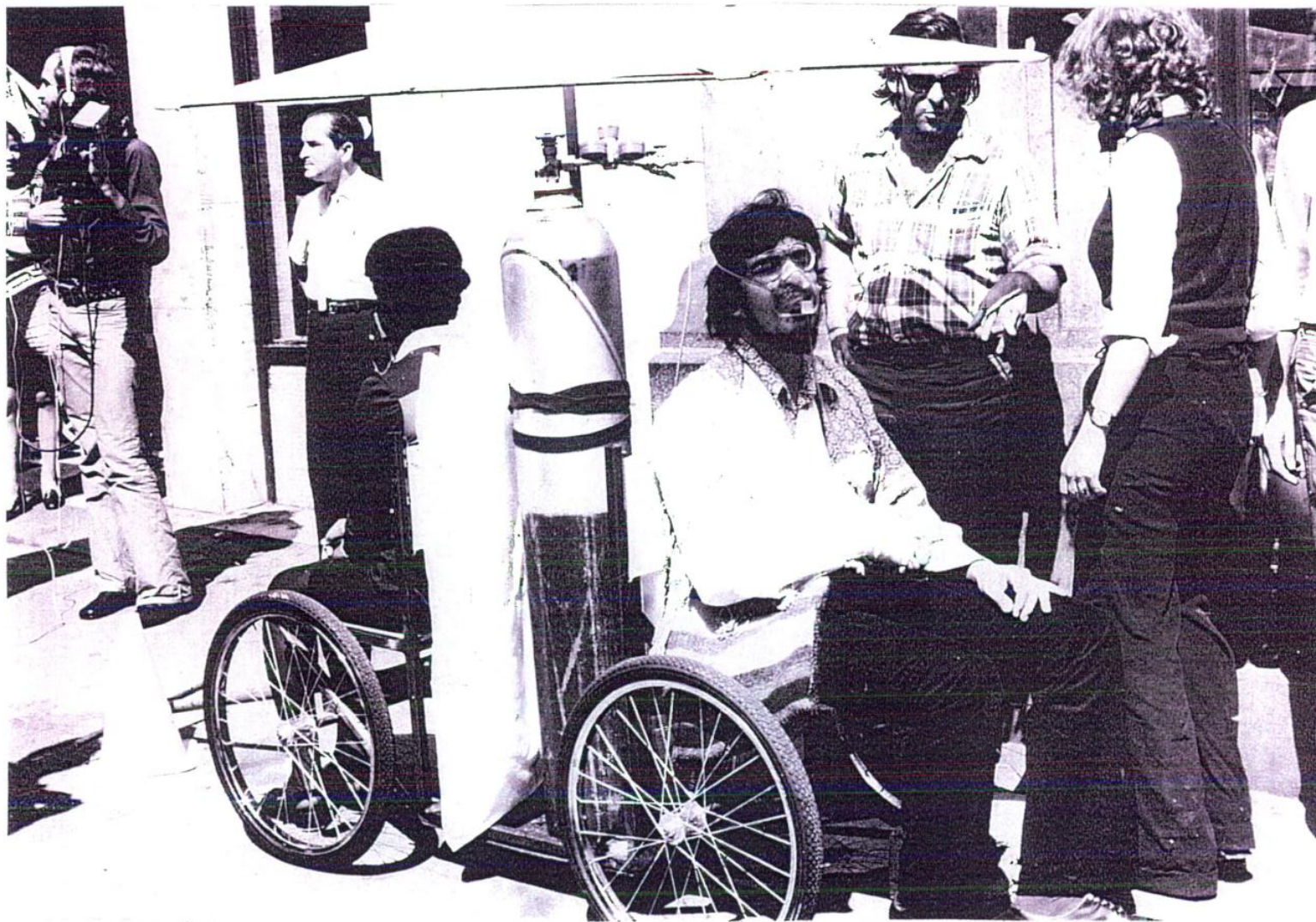


Fig. 7. Fresh Air Cart, 1972.

of urban ecology this fresh air cart was offered for use on Wall Street and 22nd Street and Vanderbilt Avenue. Obviously like the homeless vehicle the necessary use of such a cart would be very disturbing. But it is not such an irrational idea as ecological and homeless situations have got worse since 1972. These works should push us not just to consider solutions but to act.

Chapter 4

The effectiveness of the execution in fulfilling the artists intentions.

When examining how these two artists function, as communicators and through the social encounters their works engage with, it is necessary to describe how effective they were in providing a platform for critical discourse in the urban environment and in creating a renewed perception of this environment. Did the execution fulfil their intentions?

Perhaps Matta-Clark could not yet envisage a way for architecture to live up to his expectations in improving the human condition. His work identified modern architects inability to meet people's needs, he did intervene in accepted, unchallenged methods of urban planning and transformation. He hoped that his demonstrations of reshaping architecture would influence his viewer's attitudes about living conditions. His ideas went beyond either a nostalgia for older or abandoned buildings or an immediate distaste for modern steel structures for he had a broader view or vision of the city. He recognised how we all live in compartmentalised living space, "the suburban and urban boxes which helps to ensure a passive isolated consumer". (Foster (Ed) 1987, p. 90). From an aerial view of our highly developed cities we can see rows and rows of boxes within squares and rectangles squared off by motorways. This almost minimalist uniformity of the layouts of city grids ensures that everything and everyone is in its place. This regimented control could appear to signify safeness yet is it more of a confinement for the consumer? What effect could this mazelike society have on people?

Matta-Clark took the very conventional notion of living space and chose to alter it beyond use. With the circular and spherical forms that he cut through square solid buildings he began an interruption, he opened this state of enclosure. He began to open up socially hidden information. What his projects "attempted, but which is avoided by the many compositional stratagems of modern architecture, is to expose to the outside public the property lines and general containerisation of the space to which the urban

environment is subjected,” (Graham, Ivam Centre, 1993, p. 380). He symbolically broke out of or into the square. His work denied the fixity of urban structure as it opposed the clarity of architectural plans. As an alternative to what is normally considered architecture, he created visual complexities, in the simplest ways, without making or building anything. He subtracted from the ongoing cycle of the production of architecture. These cuts broke the norm, as his buildings could become unsettling, or dazzling, the internal structure could become part of the street, while the street or even the sky could become part of a room. This was not sculpture in architecture but through it. He transformed the static and mundane into an animated geometry. The cut buildings offered a chance to perceive the city in a new way: that there could be an alternative.

Maud Lavin in her essay ‘Gordon Matta-Clark and Individualism’ believes that his work embodies the “individualistic power of the artist, an affirmation that parallels rather than challenges societal conventions concerning private property and architecture” (Lavin, Jan ’84 p. 138). She describes first how his works are akin to minimalist sculptures and lack traces of abstract expressionism and the cult of personality and individualism that could have gone along with it. Yet she describes Matta-Clark as exercising individual authority by manipulating architecture and believes that his work conveyed a “display of individualistic power”, that his cut buildings were as “autocratic in their presentation as is conventional architecture” (Lavin, Jan ’84, p. 139). But the cuts were not performed by an insular self-indulgent artist for his own private gratification. It was the results of the cuts, for the viewer, that Matta-Clark was interested in; how they could communicate. He disliked the actual work involved. He does not attempt to possess the property “through a violent and private manipulation” as she described, he was making an often collaborative intervention into a brick structure which was otherwise rendered useless. He didn’t plan to take over the city with high powered chainsaws and violently possess inhabited properties. Would Lavin accuse graffiti artists of possessing and exercising their individual authority when spray painting temporary hoardings or disused trains or describe their work as autocratic? These works show that an individual can work independently of the state.

Matta-Clark's work is anti-authoritarian, it rebels against accepted ideas, but it is the individual working for society. His interest in collaboration and group projects should confirm the fact that his work was not about personal private ownership of these sites. As should his intentions for Pier 52, which he wished to become a sort of public park for aesthetic enjoyment and relaxation.

Lavin also suggests that Matta-Clark's "wounding of a house can be seen as a male violation of a domestic realm with female associations" (Lavin, Jan '84. p. 140). This could serve to be true, if it could be acknowledged that a house has only female associations; if one forgets the facts that men live in houses and are generally the builders and designers of them. It would be to suggest that society, the city itself has only female associations. His work was a challenge to architecture which is a realm of predominantly male associations. Viewing his work on one house, taking into account this single house to the scale of the city, he does not produce more building blocks or more obtrusive objects but he carefully subtracts, measured intricate parts. Seen from a broader view, his work could be described as opposite to Lavin's description of being "concerned with male virility".

"The determining factor is the degree to which my intervention can transform the structure into an act of communication" (Matta-Clark, IVAM Centre, 1993, p. 360). Each cut into a building involved an opening in the façade, to allow for a view of the work from the street. Access to most of Matta-Clark's works was more problematic than Wodiczko's works, as his projections illuminated the most well situated buildings in the most widely frequented public sites. To experience the full effect of one of Matta-Clark's cuts, wouldn't allow for a single and overall view but requires a complex reading involving movement through the structure. He wished people to experience the work in an active often exhilarating quite dangerous way. Each visitor would have to re-enact Matta-Clark's trapeze work through the structure. Some artworks force viewers out of participation, you must walk around the edges, Matta-Clark's invited physical participation.

His collaged photographs (Fig. 8) attempted to convey the sense of wholeness, full vision around the space of the work. For some these photographs were too aestheticized and were the weaker part of his work. They weren't documentation but had become something else, more painterly. They cannot recreate the sensation of actually being there, like much work of the time.

Both artists disturb the invisibility of city monuments and buildings, and address and provoke the inertness and unawareness of passersby. They attempt to transform our everyday, perceptions of reality. Matta-Clark used real urban structures and transformed them through theatrical gestures and cuts in the seamless urban fabric, Wodiczko used real solid buildings as a screen. Using unlikely contexts and materials could ensure a renewed response to work in the city. Contemporary art in the public sphere where text or images are in places where we expect messages, such as billboards, etc, can often dilute their effect, they become as easily digestible and as forgettable as the advertising slogans that are normally found there.

In choosing a site that is suitable for projection, Wodiczko considers the possibility of a large number of people, there together at one time. If this occurs they can talk to each other, exchange views and develop some social relationships initiated by the projection. Debates can occur, based on individual readings of the projected symbols and their relation to contemporary political situations and the building used. Often various readings can be simultaneously possible. Taking these grand symbolic structures and projecting evidence of world problems onto them creates a contradiction, and a road to dialogue.

These events are free, people can come and go as they please or take photographs. Wodiczko is often available to offer instruction or lend a tripod. The projectors and scaffolding supporting them are visible throughout the projection so the viewers can see that standard equipment is used, that there is no mystery and they can ask the crew questions. Wodiczko insists that viewers see that "we are still on the same side and that



Fig. 8. Collaged photographs of office baroque, 1977.

I'm not representing some kind of institutional authority, that I don't run a corporation involved in projecting images". (Gilroy, 1989, p. 31).

This work helps people retain a level of criticism and understanding of current events and awakens their perception of their environment. Would it be naive to believe that any artwork can successfully alter the way things develop? Wodiczko says that "to talk about my authority or power in relation to the power and authority addressed by the work is quite inappropriate because that would really suggest too much for the power of the artist as an interventional, temporary public speaker," (Gilroy, 1989, p. 31). The success of this work would be its power to empower its viewing public to resist the given uncritical life of these city sites and to create their own views. An active reception of this work can create a new perception for the city and can proceed through the audience to create further discussion, awareness and possibly some change.

Matta-Clark wanted his work to act as a social encounter, to involve viewers in an active way. His works throughout his short career demanded participation. This applies from his Fresh Air Cart in 1972 to 'Food', to the collaborative piece in the Dumpster. His final project could have seen Matta-Clark fulfilling his intentions for his art, to work with people to create better living conditions. This final project began as he received a Guggenheim fellowship to work with young people from the lower east side of New York. It involved organising youths in the area to work with deteriorating buildings to begin a collective rehabilitation of their area. A resource centre, a community space was available for salvaged materials and equipment. It was to save their area's housing and through trained employment provide practical experience, technical skills and organisation, environmental and ecological awareness. The youths involved would maintain the centre and undertake local improvements; a chance for the community to rehabilitate and preserve existing structures rather than allowing the city authorities to evict them, before the buildings conditions had sufficiently deteriorated for the planners. It was a real alternative to the controlled scheme of urban planners, the scheme Matta-Clark had wished to interrupt. This was his chance to work with the

neighbourhood's citizens in a more personal and less metaphoric way. It was to work with the will of the community's occupants. Matta-Clark died a year after the project began and didn't have the chance to reach his full potential with this project, it is unknown whether anybody else took up his position.

Matta-Clark and Wodiczko both expressed solidarity with the disenfranchised and dispossessed in their continued interest in public space. Their work responded to the homeless, the immigrants and the unemployed, members of the urban population who find it difficult to have a voice. Homeless people should be able to make a statement or an act of communication in this public space, as they are the people that actually inhabit it, in parks and on the steps of city buildings and monuments. With Wodiczko's projections we see someone who is usually outside the networks of communication of the city become the centre of attention, on the symbolic structure of the monuments.

The work that most aptly fulfils Wodiczko's intentions for his work to have a social encounter, be an act of communication and provide a platform for discourse in the urban context would be his **Alien Staff** (Fig. 9). The first model was built and tested on the streets of Barcelona in June 1993. This Alien Staff is shaped like a tall walking stick. It has a small video monitor at its top, which plays images and the voice of the owner or operator of the staff talking about his or her own past experiences. In the length of the staff is a series of compartments which can hold personal relics which can further contribute to their stories of the users life, relics such as identity cards, visa applications, old photos or legal documents, worn dictionaries. Thus they can perform or present their life as an immigrant or 'Alien'.

Like the homeless, immigrants can often be treated with disrespect, as though they are invisible. The small video monitor which is at eye level, draws the viewer or passerby in through curiosity, and hence they become closer to the person holding the staff whose face is also on the screen. There is a double existence of the alien, the media image on the screen and in real life. This involves an entirely new perception and



Fig. 9. Alien Staff with operator, 1992.

experience of the stranger and negates any questions of fear of the stranger. The usual gaps have decreased through this intervention, an interruption in the accepted modes of communication or miscommunication.

The staff can give its user a means of expression, a renewed strength and belief in themselves as legitimate citizens. Like the homeless vehicle, this portable staff helps its operator to assert a presence in the city, a means of speaking in public and thereby gain respect. With the Staff's method of social engagement there is even a closer interpersonal interaction.

This could be the most effective of Wodiczko's instruments which were all designed so the operator could assert some control over his or her life in a highly controlled society. To reach out of his or her assigned role. Most importantly the Alien Staff gives the operator control over his or her own representation and the opportunity to abolish stereotypes that they may have come across. The Alien Staff is believed to have a therapeutic value and was used by many immigrants in Europe, New York, and Warsaw. By using his skills as an industrial designer and using the latest media technology, Wodiczko could provide a means of better social living conditions that could enable the world's displaced and dispossessed to claim respect and self-respect through communication. Wodiczko's instruments create links of dialogue and occasions for narrative in the urban environment.

This reclamation of the space of the city for social needs and communication instead of the acceptance of this space as organised for profit and control reverberates with the ideas of the Situationists who wished to detourne (divert, appropriate) society, space and architecture in order to change life, in the urban sphere "for the purpose of de-alienation" (Foster (Ed.) 1987 p. 43). Wodiczko's instruments succeed in offering an oppositional public sphere and counter the dominant organisation of public space to break down communication borders.

The worldly interests of the city which couldn't tolerate art as rebellion, is confirmed by that fact that none of Matta-Clark's cut buildings exist today, as they duly followed the cycle of renewal of the cityscape. We are left with photographs, videos, an abundance of drawings and some removals. When these removals are situated in museums today, without the original context of immediate action and specific place and time, they become something like readymades or more disappointingly like the static, pedestal sculpture Matta-Clark was known to hate. At a retrospective such as the one in the Contemporary Museum of Art in Barcelona, spring 1998, what was striking amongst the drawings, photographs and removals was a letter, presented simply on the wall, quite similar to the one to Alanna Heis (Fig. 10). Accompanied also by a drawing of a proposal for a cut building, the letter conveyed the excitement, and determination of the artist and his intentions to change one aspect in the urban environment. It created a reason for the drawings, although aesthetically beautiful and interesting, they now had another purpose. Matta-Clark's works were unlike the conventional monument, his cut buildings were resigned to their fate, soon to be demolished, they were opposed to the permanent solid forms of traditional monuments. They reconstitute memory, provoke memories that are usually hidden behind facades which can generate a false sense of wholeness to the structure. As none of them exist today, there is a feeling of something lost, quite unattainable and a certain desire is created to have seen even one of the cut buildings. In their absence they are remembered by those who saw them at the time or those who today come across a secondary source. Matta-Clark "taught that art is ultimately your ability to remember it, that the artist does something – and then its about something in your memory." (Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1985, p. 25).

Wodiczko's projections, although they exist for a short time, the buildings or monuments used exist longer than any in our cities. Wodiczko has written "to remember something else might be the reason for public art" (Baxter, 1993, p. 32). This something else would be beyond what is so thoroughly memorialised in such monumental architecture. He could be described as a historical artist like Courbet,

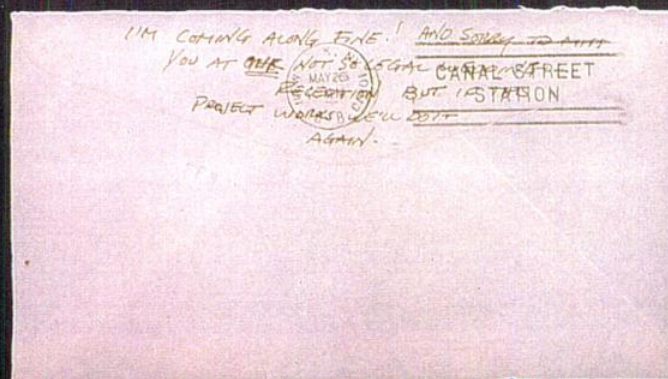
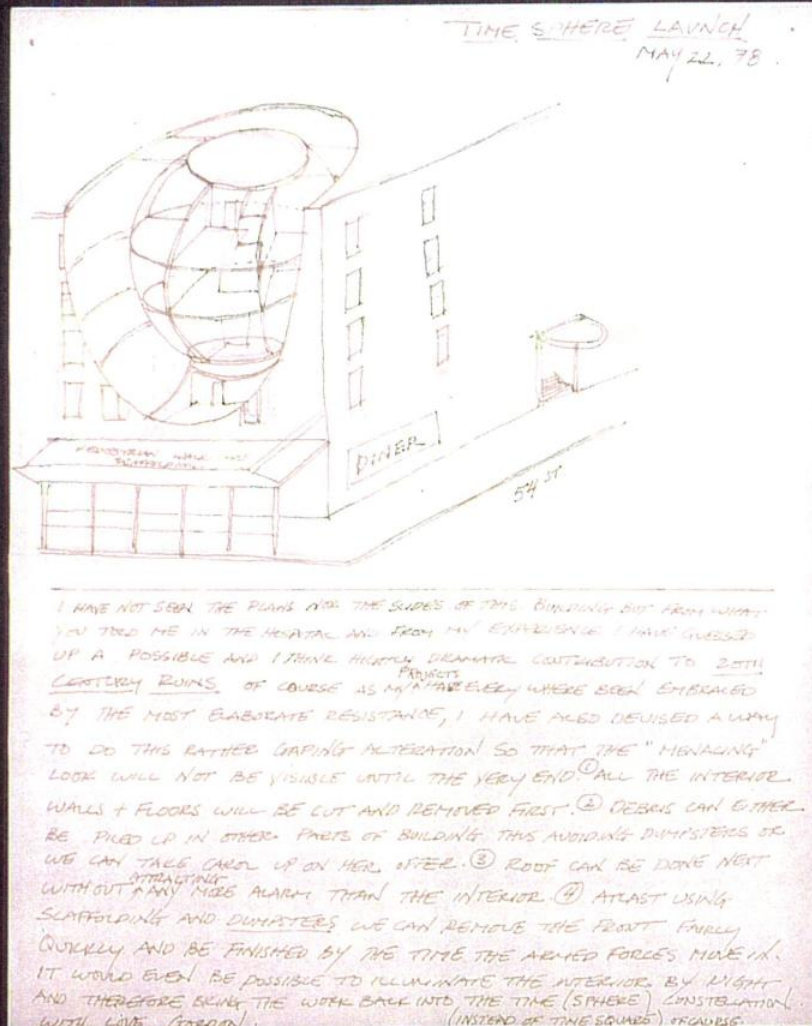
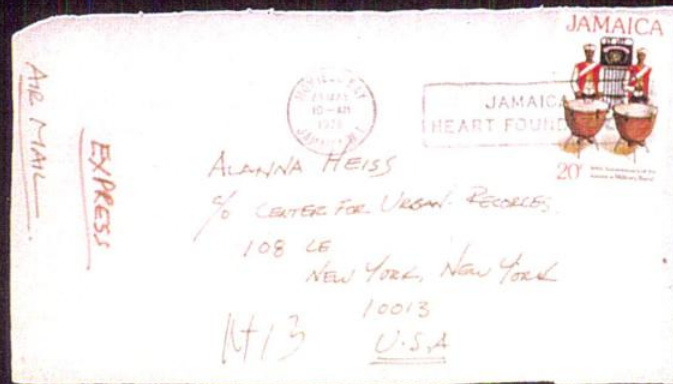


Fig. 10. Letter from Matta-Clark to Alanna Heiss.

who believed it is necessary to take the past into account as long as it still has something to do with the present. The image is remembered as the building is passed by. After the projection of a swastika on the pediment of the South African Embassy, postcards and other photographic reproductions were distributed after the event. Photographs of the projection appeared in the press the following day, with condemnations of apartheid. The South African Embassy sent a letter of protest to the Canadian Embassy who duly responded with a letter which described how the views of one Canadian citizen are not the responsibility of the Canadian government. The media coverage of this event meant that many people, although they hadn't seen the actual projection had seen a photographic image of it. The effect has been that numerous people experience that "somehow when they look at the pediment the swastika is seen as an afterimage." (Gilroy, Feb 1989, p. 30). The projection is remembered in its absence.

Considering the temporality of most public affairs, what would be compelling at one time may be irrelevant today. There is a wisdom in impermanence. Momentary insinuations created by a beam of light or a temporary cut into a building, can stimulate an awareness of the present by critically looking at the past. Temporary work ensures that it doesn't dwell on the past, it doesn't outstay its welcome but is able to move on, and look to the future.

This is the premise of critical public art, a brief intervention causing interaction with the built environment, to activate viewer's minds and then exist as memory. Memory can thus be sustained not denied by a sense of temporality. This confirms that absence can be more powerfully evocative than presence. A public artwork finds its significance in a given time and place. The success also requires a careful consideration of the place, the context.

A non-monumental quality in public art is often its success. Matta-Clark's works if they were around today might simply serve as nuisance. Like Wodiczko's projections they

meant something at the time of their conception, in a certain social environment.

Temporality makes work more exciting, enigmatic and meaningful without pretensions of greatness. Work that does not portray formal resolutions but critical forms of questioning, can become art in the interrogative rather than the declarative.

Conclusion

Krzysztof Wodiczko and Gordon Matta-Clark understood the position of art or design in society as a social, ethical and metaphysical project. They concentrated on the relationships between the people, the structures and the overall space of the city.

“We must impose on the public the spectacle of what its communality rejects, of the thing whose very exclusion seals it, generating it as a whole. A society should be exposed to the sight of its foundations” (Hollier, Spring 1993 p. 9). Hollier is referring to Wodiczko’s imposition of the homeless into the visual line of the city’s inhabitants, but he could be describing in a more literal way Matta-Clark’s work in exposing the foundations, the internal structures that appear to hold the city together. Both artists imposed on the public that which it usually neglects to observe. Neither had naive solutions for art alone to effect social change. Their work did not consist of conceptual utopian visions but spirited transient projects of immediate engagement which provided grounds for thought and discussion without dictating. They were imaginative, collective, interactive projects that through their execution could empower the participants and viewing public to consider solutions to “homelessness, miscommunication, powerlessness, the tyranny of might – economic or military” (Haus, Oct. 1993 p. 154). In this sense their works could serve as exemplary models of critical public art.

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