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Object and Image in the Work of Jack Goldstein

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

by

Fernando Esteban Ramirez

December 2013

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Elizabeth Kotz, Chairperson

Dr. Susan Laxton

Dr. Jason Weems

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The Thesis of Fernando Esteban Ramirez is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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Introduction

In 1977 Jack Goldstein exhibited a number of recent films and records in *Pictures*, a group exhibition curated by Douglas Crimp at Artists Space in New York (Figure 1). Along with Goldstein, the show included the work of Troy Brauntuch, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo, and Philip Smith. As noted by Crimp in the catalog accompanying the exhibition, the practices of these various emerging artists shared a common concern with both static and moving mass-produced images. A few of the works included in the show serve to illustrate this concern: *Metro Goldwyn Mayer*, a 1975 film by Goldstein, consists of a restaging of the film studio's famous opening sequence with its iconic roaring lion forwards and backwards for two minutes (Figure 2); two 1977 wall reliefs by Longo, *The American Soldier* and *Seven Seals for Missouri Breaks*, depict and allude to the familiar pictorial language of westerns and mob films (Figures 3 and 4); and a series of silhouetted heads by Levine, *Sons and Lovers* from 1976-77, include the recognizable profiles of some American presidents (Figure 5).

As these few pieces exemplify, the familiarity of *Pictures* subject matter was to a certain extent compromised by the manner in which it was presented. While recognizable, the central figures of these various works appeared on account of their presentation also somehow strangely foreign: Goldstein's MGM lion roared at times in reverse and in front of an uncharacteristic red background; Longo's wall reliefs oscillated between pictures and sculptural objects—Crimp notes in the catalogue text for the exhibition that “the peculiarity of Longo's pictures is that they are *things*”¹; and the silhouettes of Levine,

¹ Douglas Crimp, *Pictures*, exh. cat. (New York: Artists Space, 1977), p. 24.

minimal and vague, verged on the unrecognizable and lacked the excessive detail typical of representations of influential figures. What can be characterized as an atypical approach to otherwise familiar subject matter gave many of these works a somewhat mysterious and uncanny aspect. Crimp and others would later ascribe the work of Goldstein and Levine a “ghostly” presence,² and in a 1977 interview with Morgan Fisher Goldstein described the kinds of images used in his works as “subliminal” and “all Freudian in some sense.”³ This probing into the ways images are able to mean and signify was not only a recurrent concern of much of the work included in *Pictures*, but also central to Crimp’s theorizing of it. Early in the exhibition catalogue the critic notes that:

“While it once seemed that pictures had the function of interpreting reality, it now seems that they have usurped it. It therefore becomes imperative to understand the picture itself, not in order to uncover a lost reality, but to determine how a picture becomes a signifying structure of its own accord.”⁴

While questions of the ways in which images mean, of their signifying structure, were indeed a concern of many of the works included in *Pictures*, an argument centered solely around these very specific questions failed to acknowledge and account for other aspects of a rather diverse set of projects. In an acute reading of Longo’s pieces, Crimp described the artist’s wall reliefs them as both pictures and *things*, but he failed to pursue or problematize the *thing*-ness of these works. Similarly, the critic’s focus on questions of the image failed to account for some of the more experimental pieces included in the

² See Douglas Crimp, “The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism,” *October* 15 (Winter 1980), p. 92, and Jeanne Siegel, ed., “After Sherrie Levine (Interview)” in *Art Talk: The Early 80s* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1988), p. 247.

³ Morgan Fisher, “Talking with Jack Goldstein,” *LAICA Journal* 14 (April-May 1977), p. 42.

⁴ Crimp, *Pictures*, p. 3.

exhibition, such as Goldstein's *A Suite of Nine 7-Inch Records with Sound Effects* from 1976 (Figure 6). Including diverse sound effects ranging from the wrestling of two cats to the noise made by a tornado, the records were exhibited both as reproducible sounds and as tangible objects. While in neither form do the records concern questions of the signifying structure of pictures (Figure 1), Crimp conveniently describes them as "images ... neutralized by the distance that representation necessarily imposes."⁵ Lastly, Crimp's narrow emphasis on "pictures," both original and appropriated, failed to consider the ways in which a film such as *Metro Goldwyn Mayer* presented itself not only as readymade image (the roaring MGM lion), but also as readymade object (the 16mm projector and film roll), and even as readymade experience (the cinematic or filmic experience). Through a film such as *Metro Goldwyn Mayer* Goldstein transferred not only the subject matter, but also the very medium of film into the space of the gallery. As artist David Salle argued in a 1978 catalogue text for an exhibition of Goldstein work, "What [Goldstein's] films and records take from public media is not so much a catalog of ironic images, but the modes of presentation themselves."⁶ In this respect, it significant that all of Goldstein's 1970s work involved with moving images took the form of film and not the then more accessible format of video.

Two years after the exhibition at Artists Space, Crimp theorized his focus on questions of the image and subject matter and implied disregard for medium-specific

⁵ Crimp, *Pictures*, p. 10.

⁶ David Salle, "Jack Goldstein; Distance Equal Control" in *Jack Goldstein*, exh. cat. (Buffalo, NY: Hallwalls, 1978), p. 2.

questions in a more developed version of the *Pictures* catalogue text. Published in the journal *October* in 1979, he writes the following in the second iteration of *Pictures*:

“As is typical of what has come to be called postmodernism, this new work is not confined to any particular medium; instead, it makes use of photography, film, performance, as well as traditional modes of painting, drawing, and sculpture. Picture, used colloquially, is also nonspecific: a picture book might be a book of drawings or photographs, and in common speech a painting, drawing, or print is often called, simply, a picture.”⁷

It is important to note that Crimp’s emphasis on “pictures” here is not necessarily problematic in itself. Despite the critic’s arguably narrow reading of a series of practices dealing with pictorial, among other, concerns, it is important to acknowledge the significant role that the generalizing categories of, for instance, “minimalist,” “performance,” “conceptual,” and “pictures” art play in helping make sense and navigate what can often be heterogeneous practices addressing diverse issues. Such generalizing can, however, be problematic if it comes to define and monopolize interpretations of an artist’s oeuvre, the way it has happened with Goldstein, or with a generation of artists, the way it has happened with artists associated with *Pictures*.

The most recent evidence of all this is the 2009 exhibition *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which included work by Brauntuch, Goldstein, Levine, and Longo along with that of twenty six other artists. Borrowing Crimp’s picture-centered narrative, the show’s curator Douglas Eklund notes in its catalogue that the blockbuster exhibition attempted to examine the development of a loosely knit group of artists who “were part of the first generation to be born into the

⁷ Douglas Crimp, “Pictures,” *October* 8 (Spring 1979), p. 75.

swarm of images spawned by the rapidly expanding postwar consumer culture.”⁸ And argues that these artists were the first to fully claim to themselves “the media culture of movies and television, popular culture, and magazines.”⁹ While Eklund rests importance to the original 1977 *Pictures* exhibition at Artists Space, calling it, “but one . . . in a run of important shows and performances organized by Helene Winer during her five years at the helm of Artists Space,”¹⁰ the presence of Crimp’s *Pictures* is ubiquitous throughout the show, from its selection of artists, to its title, to its core argument: that a new generation of artists concerned with the signifying structure of images had come to replace outdated practices of the recent past, such as Minimalism and Conceptual Art.

Despite the fact that both Minimalist and Conceptual tendencies were very much present in the work of Goldstein and his peers, Eklund refers to those associated with these movements as the “previous generation of artists,” and makes a point of mentioning the untimely death of Robert Smithson in 1973—as if Smithson’s passing also marked the end of an entire project of 1960s American art.¹¹ In this respect, it is worth noting that both Crimp and Eklund conceived of *Pictures* work as the logical next step to the 1960s and 1970s American avant-garde practices of Minimalism, Conceptual and Performance Art, creating a narrative that disregarded the material, bodily and philosophical concerns of a previous generation of art in favor of questions of the mass-produced and reproducible image—arguably questions of photography. As Howard Singerman has

⁸ Douglas Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984*, exh. cat. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), pp. 16-17.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Eklund, p. 66.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 16.

argued, in Crimp's second iteration of *Pictures*, questions of representation and the phantasmagoric effects of much of *Pictures* work "were mustered against modernism and another version of historical necessity... [and] made historical, selected for the future so as to make other presents inadequate, and other possibilities disappear."¹²

And yet, despite all this, simply dismissing the argument and history of Crimp's *Pictures* and attempting to pursue these "other possibilities" might be no better than blindly subscribing to its influence, and this for a number of reasons: among them, 1) the very merits of Crimp's *Pictures*, as it has to be acknowledged that the framework remains one of the most convincing readings of mid-to-late 1970s pictorially-minded art; 2) its continued relevance and influence on interpretations of all *Pictures* work, as evidenced both by scholarly writing and recent exhibitions¹³; 3) the fact that *Pictures* and Crimp cannot be divorced from this mid-to-late 1970s moment¹⁴; and, lastly, 4) the fact that much of the renewed interest in the work of Goldstein and other pictorially-minded artists from the 1970s by various contemporary art practices has been funneled through the lens of *Pictures*.¹⁵ In summary, *Pictures* has, for better or for worse, proved to be an exemplary case of criticism turned (art) history to such an extent that it cannot be simply ignored. As Meg Cranston has aptly put it: "In 1977 Jack Goldstein was one of the five

¹² Howard Singerman, "The Myth of Criticism in the 1980s," *X-TRA* 8, no. 1 (Fall 2005), p. 7.

¹³ Some examples include Howard Singerman, "In the Text," in *A Forest of Signs: Art in the Crisis of Representation*, ed. Catherine Gudis (Los Angeles: LACMA, 1989), and Marie Shurkus, "Lessons from Post-Minimalism: Understanding Theatricality as Pictorial Value," in *It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles, 1969-1973*, eds. Glenn Phillips and Marie Shurkus (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2011), and Vera Dika, *The (Moving) Pictures Generation: The Cinematic Impulse in Downtown New York Art and Film* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012) and Eklund, *The Pictures Generation*.

¹⁴ Richard Hertz, *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia* (Ojai, CA: Minneola Press, 2003), p. 89.

¹⁵ See Tim Griffin, "Compression," *October* 135 (Winter 2011).

artists included in the exhibition *Pictures* organized by the critic Douglas Crimp. The essay for the show was printed (in a revised version) in *October* magazine in 1979. Every art student in America read it.”¹⁶

In the face of the various contentions for and against *Pictures*, the aim of the following chapters will not be to pursue an alternative history, but to contest, amend, and, when necessary, borrow from the framework of *Pictures* in order to contextualize and make sense of Goldstein’s 1970s production through selected case studies. More specifically, Chapter 1 will consider the influence of Minimalism and Pop art in Goldstein’s production of the first half of the 1970s, including his early work in sculpture, film and performance. Such an exploration will serve to challenge and expand on image-centered interpretations of Goldstein’s early-to-mid 1970s work by critics such as Crimp and Thomas Lawson. Chapter 2, on the other hand, will focus on the artist’s production of the second half of the 1970s paying particular attention to a 1979 hybrid installation Goldstein included in a sound art exhibition at P.S.1 in New York. An investigation of the piece will serve to further challenge the notion Goldstein’s mid-to-late 1970s production was mainly concerned with moving images and their reproductions, as the hybrid space made use of rather experimental elements such as prerecorded audio and the neutral space of the gallery to subject its visitors to a confounding experience. In both chapters *Pictures* will serve as a critical framework to react against and build upon, making it necessary to first outline the framework’s key arguments and the position of Goldstein’s work within it.

¹⁶ Hertz, pp. 204-205.

Crimp argues in the catalogue text for *Pictures* that the mid-1970s served as the ideal and logical backdrop for the emergence of photographically minded practices. Dismissing the possibility that a turn to recognizable imagery might be no more than yet another manifestation of the decade's pluralism, Crimp articulates in the catalogue text the significance of this emerging aesthetic around two key issues: 1) the social and cultural context of the decade and 2) the more specific situation of contemporary art in 1977. Addressing the first of these premises, Crimp contends in the catalog text that, "While it once seemed that pictures had the function of interpreting reality, it now seems that they have usurped it."¹⁷ Pictures of all kinds, in other words, came to be such an influential aspect of contemporary subjectivity that a turn to the photographic and cinematic image by a number of emerging artistic practices presented itself as the only plausible option. Furthermore, the critic contends that a renewed impulse to deal with recognizable imagery was motivated by the fact that, although ubiquitous, pictures "are extremely difficult to distinguish at the level of their content ... they are to an extraordinary degree opaque to meaning."¹⁸ Thus, the return of the representational and figurative in 1970s art arguably owed much to the simple fact that a pervasive aspect of contemporary culture remained anything but understood.

If through this argument Crimp ascribes *Pictures* aesthetic historical and cultural relevance, his second supporting premise grants the practices of Goldstein and peers added value within the narrower context of contemporary art. In the eyes of the critic,

¹⁷ Crimp, *Pictures*, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

concerns relating to representation and the image could serve as a unifying framework in light of the particularly heterogeneous nature of mid to late 1970s art. After decades of investigations into the art object, subject, and site that seemed to have left no stone unturned, contemporary art at the time was characteristically eclectic and diffuse, both in terms of medium and subject matter. Diverse mediums such as video, film, performance, photography, sound and even text publications—some nonexistent or considered alternative a few years earlier—took an increasingly central role in the practices of emerging artists of the 1970s, a turn that resulted in a more diverse but also less cohesive field. Some, as might be expected, resisted this development, including critics who felt that diversity came at the expense of the kind of social and political agency that had historically characterized the avant-garde.

Thomas Lawson, for one, championed the return of representation in the late 1970s art on account of what he argued to be its disruptive power. In his essay *Last Exit Painting* from 1981, he pushes a kind of deceptive representational painting, best exemplified by the canvases of David Salle, as a possible way out of the innocuous muddle that he believed pluralism to be. According to Lawson, existing options for emerging artists concerned with picture-making included 1) traditional painting, 2) embracing the era's pluralism—which he disdains as “that last holdout of an exhausted modernism”—or 3) a continuation of the more critical practices of Minimalist and Conceptual art. Not favoring any one over the other, he then notes that all of these

options appear “hopelessly compromised ... [and] subject to an academicism or a sentimentality every bit as regressive as that adhering to the idea of Fine Art.”¹⁹

For Crimp, the state of contemporary art in 1977 did not seem much more auspicious. Also conceiving of emerging pictorially-minded practices as, in a sense, providing a much needed stability in the midst of an increasingly heterogeneous art world, he notes early in *Pictures* that, “A renewed impulse to make pictures of recognizable things characterizes a wide range of contemporary art, constituting a line of continuity drawn through its much touted pluralism.”²⁰ Like Lawson, Crimp ascribes little significance to the pluralist framework and positions pictorially minded practices at the forefront of contemporary art. The two differ, however, in the way they conceive of the critical value of these efforts. While the author of *Last Exit Painting* departs from questions revolving around the more social and political dimension of art objects,²¹ Crimp’s argument centers on issues pertaining to representation as an artistic strategy in the context of recent art and art theory.

One of the main issues that any pictorial practice had to contend with after Minimalism, and by extension any proponent of pictured-oriented work, was its logical allegiance to illusionism, a term that had been much problematized throughout the century by proponents of the avant-garde. Conceiving of the representational and

¹⁹ Thomas Lawson, “Last Exit Painting,” in *Theories of Contemporary Art*, ed. Richard Hertz (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1985), p. 143.

²⁰ Crimp, *Pictures*, p. 1.

²¹ Lawson contends that both expressionist approaches to painting and, more broadly, theoretical approaches to art, articulate a similar message, that “there is no point in continuing to make art since it can only exist insulated from the real world or as an irresponsible bauble,” to which he responds, “This is only a partial truth.” (“Last Exit Painting,” p. 144.)

illusionistic as bearing traces of an outmoded Modernism, in the 1960s and 70s, artists, critics and art institutions alike attacked the concept: Donald Judd contended in 1965 that, “Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space ... which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art;”²² Brian O’Doherty argued a year before *Pictures* that, “Minimal art recognized the illusions inherent in the easel picture and didn't have any illusions about society;”²³ and James Monte and Marcia Tucker’s 1969 exhibition *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials* at the Whitney Museum of American Art also expressed a similar reservation about the concept in no ambiguous terms through the exhibition’s very title. Aware of these various arguments and the problematic position of illusionism in recent art practices, Crimp makes the contentious claim in the catalog text for *Pictures* that illusionism had, in fact, been an intrinsic aspect of much of 1960s and 1970s art all along:

“In the art of the past decade, many of those conventions that had always been considered as belonging to the representational image—spatial illusionism, for example—were shown to be indistinguishable from our apprehension of any object whatsoever. In the work of the Minimalists it was no longer a question of creation an illusion of something exterior to the work, as the illusion of space behind a painting’s surface; *rather illusionism was shown to inherent in the very being of an object.*”²⁴

Informed in part by the reception of French theory in the United States, Crimp’s rebuttal to the attack on illusionism was based on the contention that representation had become a prominent concern of recent art practices. As noted by Howard Singerman, Crimp

²² Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings, 1959-1975* (Halifax, Canada: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975), p. 184.

²³ Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), p. 26.

²⁴ Crimp, *Pictures*, p. 4 (my italics).

effective collapsing of Minimalism's spatial, temporal and kinesthetic qualities into the realm of the representational and psychological as exemplified by his reading of Sol LeWitt's cubes—of which he notes that, “Although we are copresent with this obdurately three-dimensional thing, we see only a lattice, a diagram, in which a maze of angles shadows, and open spaces constantly shifts as we move about it ... what we see *is* perspective”²⁵—could be read through Derrida: according to the art historian, in what Crimp would later term postmodernism, “what is added, what is layered over and strung between viewer and object, is absence, the unfolding of the object as its image. Or, to recall Derrida, it is the object as ‘it has always already begun to represent itself.’”²⁶

According to Crimp, one of the significance consequences of this shift took place at the level of audience reception. Citing the recent imaginary tableaux of the theater of Robert Wilson, he contends in *Pictures* that, “the realm of imagination has reappeared to displace the analytic and perceptual modes of our recent past.”²⁷ The analytic and perceptual exercises of Conceptual and Minimalist art, in other words, were slowly being replaced by an experience *in the present* that lent itself to be psychologized. Departing from an essay by Rosalind Krauss from 1976 titled *Objecthood*, the critic contends that the psychologization of the art experience had come to signal a larger shift in the reception of artworks by virtue of engaging with the viewer's imagination, citing specifically dreams and memory. As Krauss notes in *Objecthood*, some examples of artworks that stage such an experience include the miniature sculptures of Joel Shapiro

²⁵ Crimp, *Pictures*, p. 4.

²⁶ Singerman, “In the Text,” p. 160.

²⁷ Crimp, *Pictures*, p. 3.

from early 1970s, which “seem to be in perpetual retreat because they are simultaneously present within our space *and* infected by memory. It is this that characterizes them as psychologized objects.”²⁸ This tendency toward the psychologization of the art object, Crimp notes, occurred in tandem with a collective shift toward issues proper to representation and an acknowledgement of the inherently illusionistic aspects of even body and performance-based artworks. He cites recent performances by Joan Jonas as representative of this.

Jonas, he says, has “adopted strategies for presenting the space of performance as illusionistic,” and has also “converted event into image using the simultaneous capacity of video.”²⁹ It is through this lens that Crimp apprehends the films and performances of Goldstein and, more generally, all of *Pictures* production, as work that stages a psychologized event that, despite its temporal and spatial aspects, highlights its own illusionism in order to be apprehended as an image, in the present. Articulating such a shift was, even for Crimp, no easy task, as demonstrated by his own somewhat convoluted attempt at definition: “The shift in the conception of illusionism of something absent to the condition of our apprehension of what is present, and the psychologization of the image, were extended by a number of artists using the medium of performance.”³⁰ As further explored in Chapters 1 and 2, this alleged shift from object or event into dematerialized image needs to be reevaluated, as concerns pertaining to object, event, and image were all present throughout Goldstein’s 1970s production.

²⁸ Rosalind Krauss, “Objecthood,” in *Critical Perspectives in American Art* (Amherst, MA: Fine Arts Center Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1976), p. 27.

²⁹ Crimp, *Pictures*, p. 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

In 1978, Crimp further developed his argument of the previous year in a text titled *About Pictures*, published in *Flash Art* magazine. In this shorter essay, Crimp first introduced the term *postmodernism* as part of the *Pictures* lexicon while recapitulating much of the argument from the previous year.³¹ Although not many, some of the differences between the two texts are worth mentioning. As implied in the original *Pictures* text, one of the significant aspects of emerging picture-oriented work consisted in a disregard for modernist self-reflexivity or the inherent qualities of artistic mediums, and Crimp made sure to make explicit mention of this in *About Pictures*: “As is typical of what has come to be called postmodernism, this new work does not respect the integrity of, nor address itself to the essential properties of any particular medium.”³² It is also worth noting that of the five artists included in the 1977 exhibition, only four are discussed in the shorter text—Smith was the omission. Together, the 1977 *Pictures* and 1978 *About Pictures* served as the basis for the most developed and better-known version of *Pictures*, published in *October* in 1979.

While sharing some similarities, this second iteration of the essay differed in a number of ways from the catalog essay from two years earlier and the *Flash Art* text from the previous year. As in *About Pictures*, Crimp once again dispensed with the work of Smith, but this time he included and gave a prominent position in the text to the staged photographs of Cindy Sherman. Moreover, the critic further contextualized emerging pictorial practices within 1960s and 1970s art by specifically defining and articulating its postmodernist tendencies. This time departing from Michael Fried’s influential 1967 text

³¹ Douglas Crimp, “About Pictures,” *Flash Art* 88, (1978).

³² Crimp, “About Pictures,” p. 1.

Art and Objecthood, in which the critic attacks the anti-modernism of Minimalist art, Crimp outlined a direct genealogy from 1960s Minimalism to the emerging pictorial sensibility of the *Pictures* artists through what he termed a reinvestment of Minimalist theatricality into the pictorial image. In the words of Crimp, in the emerging work the theatrical dimensions of Minimalism “have been transformed and, quite unexpectedly, reinvested in the pictorial image ... making of the literal situation and duration of the performed event a tableau whose presence and temporality are utterly psychologized.”³³ Through this more refined version of an argument first developed two years earlier, Crimp not only creates a narrative from Minimalism to performance to *Pictures*, but he also, as Singerman notes, makes other possibilities disappear. It is both of these contentions that the chapters to follow will challenge.

³³ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 77.

The Gap Between Minimalism and Pop Art

In a 1977 interview conducted by Morgan Fisher, Jack Goldstein speaks of his 1970s production in somewhat contradictory terms. Early in the interview the artist asserts that, “I’m interested in that gap between minimalism and pop art: the objectness and autonomy of minimalism and the subject matter from our culture that’s in pop art.”³⁴ While it might be difficult to conceive of a practice that would be able to reconcile these somewhat distinct projects, one arguably concerned with phenomenological presence and the specific being of art objects and the other with mass media, popular culture, and images, Goldstein’s early experiments in sculpture, performance and film reveal a practice invested as much in the materiality of objects as in the immateriality of images. Moreover, the hybrid nature of such a practice gains particular significance given prevailing notions of the artist’s 1970s practice as one primarily concerned with images and questions of representation, claims furthered by critics such as Douglas Crimp and Thomas Lawson in the late 1970s and early 1980s—Crimp through a series of writings around the 1977 exhibition *Pictures* and Lawson through essays including *The Uses of Representation* from 1979 and *Last Exit: Painting* from 1981.

Stated more plainly, Goldstein’s statement from 1977 is at odds with the narratives constructed by Crimp and Lawson in these various texts. The artist’s pursuit of questions and concerns of both the mass-produced image and the obdurate object of Minimalism remains incompatible with a group of narratives that hinged largely on the notion that some time around the late-1970s body and object-centered art of the recent

³⁴ Morgan Fisher, “Talking with Jack Goldstein,” *LAICA Journal* 14 (April-May 1977), p. 42.

past had become outmoded and replaced by a new kind of sensibility concerned mainly with questions of the representational and reproducible image. Evidence that these narratives have continued to inform interpretations of Goldstein's 1970s production is the following passage by Richard Hertz's passage from 2003:

“The voices of two critics, Tom Lawson (also an artist) and Douglas Crimp, aptly defined the context within which Pictures art was born. In a number of seminal essays, Lawson claimed that throughout the 1960s and 1970s, art had in some ways withdrawn from the sphere of representation and had been replaced by commodity culture. In the postwar period high art had only been interested in the ontology of modernism. Postmodernism, in the form of Pictures art, was trying to escape from that position through the lightness of the commodity, through the transience of the image, and this, argued Lawson, was how representation was re-entering the realm of art.”³⁵

While Hertz is right in that questions of representation became more and more prominent in emerging artistic practices of the late-1970s, by echoing the narratives of Crimp and Lawson, the author ignores the ways in which Goldstein, then and now emblematic of the *Pictures* movement, was at this very late-1970s moment involved with questions central to artistic practices of the recent past—as demonstrated by the artist's interest in “that gap between minimalism and pop art.” As the rest of this chapter will explore, the artist's involvement with this hybrid and arguably incompatible set of interests can be traced back to his early efforts in performance, film and sculpture.

³⁵ Richard Hertz, *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia* (Ojai, CA: Minneola Press, 2003), p. 8.

Sculpture

Goldstein's first solo show took place in 1971 at the Pomona College Art Gallery and included work that could be situated within a Minimalist tradition (Figure 7). As much can be gathered from the catalog text by Helene Winer, the show's curator: "Jack Goldstein works with wood, string, paper, nails and glass, and depends upon the components to support themselves and to dictate the form of his pieces. He combines the materials to provide strong contrasts and tensions within each work and in relation to the viewer" (Figures 7-14).³⁶ Winer's acute reading of Goldstein's early sculptural practice identifies an aspect of the artist's production that would continue to be present in his mature work in other mediums: the setting up of a situation between artwork and viewer that is inherently tense and fraught with apprehension.³⁷

Exemplary in this respect are the two untitled pieces from 1970 included in the show. One of these consists of a series of stacked wooden blocks forming a 9-foot-tall column (Figure 8). At the top of the column there is a block painted black while in front of it rests a single white piece of wood. The other untitled work is comprised of several two-by-fours leaning against each other to form a complex freestanding structure (Figure 9). Through their precarious arrangement these pieces challenged gravity and threatened imminent collapse, keeping viewers alert and circumspect. The perilous aspect of these structures puts them in conversation with Richard Serra's prop pieces from the same

³⁶ Helene Winer, "Jack Goldstein," (Pomona, CA: Pomona College Art Gallery, 1971), reprinted in Yves Aupetitallot and Lionel Bovier, eds., *Jack Goldstein*, exh. cat. (Grenoble, France: Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, 2002), p. 68.

³⁷ In "Pictures," *October* 8 (Spring 1979), p. 79, Crimp argues that, "In each of Goldstein's films, performances, photographs, and phonograph records, a psychologized temporality is instituted: foreboding, premonition, suspicion, anxiety."

period. Like Goldstein's wooden arrangements, Serra's freestanding *Prop* from 1968 (Figure 15) and *One Ton Prop (House of Cards)* from 1969 (Figure 16) created situations that emphasized the presence, specificity, and autonomy of the art object through its ever-present possibility of collapse. It is worth pointing out that in the case of Goldstein's structures such a possibility was often real. As noted by Goldstein's roommate at the California Institute of the Arts, Hirokazu Kosaka, the stacked blocks fell down on an almost daily basis in the studio they shared.³⁸

The types of concerns that informed these works fit well within interpretations of minimalist and post-minimalist sculpture from the period, most notably those of Michael Fried and some of the better known exponents of the movement, including Robert Morris and Donald Judd. The prominent features of minimalism as outlined by Fried in *Art and Objecthood*, a text published three years before Goldstein's Pomona show, include theatricality, preoccupation with time—"the duration of experience,"³⁹—a certain quality of literal presence, and the art object's tendency toward *objecthood*, a term that Fried used in a pejorative manner. Many of these features are present in the freestanding structures of Goldstein as well as those of Serra. Goldstein's untitled pieces materialized and made the viewer aware of the passage of time, setting up a situation in which the artwork was apprehended primarily as a physical object and part of a situation and only secondarily as a visual, aesthetic arrangement. All of this echoes claims by Morris in his

³⁸ Hirokazu Kosaka, "Hirokazu Kosaka," in *It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles, 1969-1973*, eds. Glenn Phillips and Marie Shurkus (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2011), p. 191.

³⁹ Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 10 (June 1967), reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995) p. 145

1966 essay *Notes on Sculpture*: “The sensuous object, resplendent with compressed internal relations, has had to be replaced. ... the concerns now are for more control of and/or cooperation of the entire situation.”⁴⁰ Morris’s claim indicates a desire to move away from the object-centric visual experience of the modern artwork to an expanded situation that incorporates artwork, setting and viewer, in a way much like Goldstein’s precarious structures. The arrangement and materials of these pieces also resonate with claims made by Judd in his 1964 text *Specific Objects*. Describing the salient features of what would come to be defined as minimalism, Judd noted that, “Most sculpture is made part by part, by addition, composed. ... Wood and metal are the usual materials,” adding later that these materials, “are specific. If they are used directly, they are more specific. Also, they are usually aggressive.”⁴¹ While Judd’s qualification of the work as “aggressive” has more to do with the obdurate and object-like aspect of its materials, in Goldstein and Serra’s sculptures this aggressiveness extends to the nature of the arrangements themselves.

By 1972 Goldstein was no longer making sculptures, but the kinds of questions that informed his sculptural production continued to influence his mature practice. As he notes in 1977, at a time when his studio practice included film, performance, recorded audio and site-specific installations, “My work has always been very much involved with sculpture in the sense that it’s about defining something in space and time, very much

⁴⁰ Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2,” in *Minimal Art*, p. 234.

⁴¹ Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings, 1959-1975* (Halifax, Canada: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975), p. 187.

about our relationship to it, our distance to *that* thing.”⁴² Such a claim makes sense and fits well within the context of the artist’s performance-based efforts from the early and mid-1970s, and for a simple reason: to a certain extent both Goldstein’s sculptural and performative practices were concerned with articulating presence, in the sense that through both mediums the artist sought to engage viewers perceptually as opposed to through a priori knowledge.⁴³ Crimp argues as much in *Pictures*: “if temporality was implicit in the way minimal sculpture was experienced, then it would be made thoroughly explicit ... for much of the art that followed. The mode that was thus to become exemplary during the seventies was performance.”⁴⁴ If, as established, the transition from minimalist sculpture to performance art in the early practice of Goldstein follows a more or less logical path, the sculptural legacy of Goldstein’s early practice becomes somewhat perplexing when considering the artist’s other preferred medium of the first half of the 1970s, film—Goldstein produced almost twenty-six films and staged more than twenty performances between 1971 and 1975.

Film

Goldstein’s involvement with moving and static images and questions of representation dates back to his graduate days in the early 1970s. At CalArts, Goldstein was part of the school’s inaugural class and also a member of John Baldessari’s “Post-

⁴² Fisher, “Talking with Jack Goldstein,” p. 42.

⁴³ In regards to Serra’s *House of Cards*, Hal Foster notes in “The Crux of Minimalism,” in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), p. 40.: “Thus, far from cerebral, minimalist work corrects the ideality of conception with the contingency of perception—of the senses in the body in a particular time and space (the correction of the concept ‘cube’ by Serra’s *House of Cards*, 1969, a massively fragile structure of proper iron slabs, is a good example.”

⁴⁴ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 77.

Studio” program, in which, as the name indicates, Baldessari encouraged students to think and work outside of the context of the artist’s studio. In response to a query from Paul Brach, then dean of the school art at CalArts, about how he wanted to approach teaching at CalArts, Baldessari recalls saying, “I want to teach students who don’t paint or do sculpture or any other activity done by hand. I didn’t want to call it ‘Conceptual Art’ so I called it ‘Post-Studio Art.’”⁴⁵ Instead of spending time in the studio, Baldessari’s Post-Studio students, which included Goldstein, David Salle, Troy Brauntuch, James Welling and Matt Mullican, experimented with what were at the time non-traditional mediums, such as photography and video. As Goldstein recounts, Baldessari’s expanded approach to art teaching extended to the kinds of source materials that he encouraged his students to use:

“John would have magazines on the floor open to the ads, to the new photos. He was saying, Here, all of this stuff you can use in your art ... He plopped the materials on the floor and there they were, pictures we could use. I was subsequently heavily influenced by John’s open attitude, not knowing at the time I would be. It was around then that John began appropriating images from movies and posters and magazines.”⁴⁶

As this passage makes clear, Goldstein’s lasting engagement with images and with issues of reproducibility, appropriation and representation dates back to his student days in the early 1970s.

Having established Goldstein’s early engagement with images and questions concerning the mediated experience through his training at CalArts, as well as with

⁴⁵ Hertz, *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia*, p. 60.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

objects and the articulation of unmediated presence through his early engagement with minimalist sculpture, a number of questions logically follow. If Goldstein's practice indeed sought and was able to integrate concerns from both pop art and minimalism: How could his alleged concern with the physical object and present experience be manifested or conveyed through film, a medium that is visual, confined to the rectangle of the screen (or projection), and characterized by its illusionistic and mediated nature? Conversely, if indeed questions of representation were present in the artist's early efforts, how do these fit within his performance-based practice, one that was allegedly largely informed by values emerging from minimalism? More generally, how do we reconcile the (present) object and (absent, mediated) image in Goldstein's early (visual) film and (bodily, sculptural) performance? These questions will be addressed through an investigation of some of the artist's films and performances from the first half of the 1970s.

A Glass of Milk from 1971 is one of the artist's earliest 16mm films and remains of Goldstein's most significant early efforts, if only by virtue of integrating concerns arising out of performance, film and even sculpture. Throughout the film's duration, close to five minutes, the camera focuses on a glass full of milk resting in the center of a table. At set intervals of around ten seconds, the forearm of Goldstein's shadowy figure enters the frame of the camera and pounds the table with his fist. The repeated impact against the flat surface upsets the glass, forcing some of the milk to spill onto the table, but fails to knock it over. As more and more milk spills, the figure impacts the table with increasing force, eventually knocking the glass over and forcing its contents onto the

surface. As soon as this happens, the arm retreats and the film draws to a close. While questions arising out of Goldstein's concurrent involvement in performance art and even sculpture might offer fruitful ways of approaching this work—in terms of performance, the artist's body in action is central to the film, and as far as sculpture is concerned, the impending fall of the artist's early sculptures here is realized in the toppling over of the glass—perhaps some of the work's most interesting questions emerge from its very medium, film. While Goldstein first dismissed his use of film in the interview with Fisher as the result of not wanting to deal with an audience—"I realized that I wasn't—didn't want to be—a performer"—he then noted that, "Making films was a way of creating distance and removing the audience. ... Film is one step away from an object in real life."⁴⁷ Considering this passage in the context of *A Glass of Milk*, Goldstein seemed to have conceived of the experience or effect of the film as *analogous with* the experience of pounding the table with his fist. The ephemeral "distance to *that* thing," the gap between minimalism and pop art, of his sculpture and performances is in the film captured and materialized in the form of an image.

Another early 16mm film titled *A Door*—mentioned in the interview with Fisher, but presumably since then lost or destroyed⁴⁸—serves to further highlight this crucial point. From Fisher and Goldstein's conversation about the piece, the action of the film can be partially reconstructed: the artist walks toward a closing door and goes through it

⁴⁷ Fisher, "Talking with Jack Goldstein," p. 42.

⁴⁸ The film is neither listed in the comprehensive Chronology of Works included in the exhibition catalogue for the 2002 exhibition *Jack Goldstein* at the Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, included in any exhibitions of the artist's work since the 1970s, or mentioned anywhere else in the literature on Goldstein to the author's knowledge.

right before it shuts.⁴⁹ If in *A Glass of Milk* a distance or separation is created between acting subject (Goldstein) and passive object (glass) through an indirect interaction (pounding on table), in *A Door* this phenomenological distance is more literal: here subject and object are separated by space. As Goldstein notes, “There is always a distance—a space—between us and the world, that frustrates our attempt to get closer to that world. ... *A Door* is about itself and that relationship to me, about me overcoming my distance to it.”⁵⁰ In the present context, what remains perhaps most significant of these early efforts is the artist’s attempt at translating this “distance” into the medium of film. In this respect, it is important to recognize that Goldstein’s use of images was hardly motivated by questions of “the lightness of the commodity” as argued by Hertz⁵¹, or by the phantasmagoric or ephemeral qualities of representations, but rather primarily by anxieties about the world itself.

Having established the ways in which a film such as *A Glass of Milk* engages with the visual experience of the image, the ways it engages issues emerging out of minimalism are somewhat more evident. Through the repeated slamming of his fist, the inherent tension of the artist’s early sculptures is in the film translated into the performed event, as the viewer anticipates yet is at the same time is never quite prepared for the impacts on

⁴⁹ Here is the exchange from Fisher, “Talking with Jack Goldstein,” p. 42: “MF: The early films, for example *A Door*, contain elements of sculpture and performance, the articulation of a space and human activity. JG: Yes, and there’s also some very personal subject matter in it, that idea of having to get through a door, and having only a certain amount of time to get through that door. ... There is always a distance—a space—between us and the world, that frustrates our attempt to get closer to that world. I can only understand the world through a distance, so I can never really understand the meaning of a thing except through its use. *A Door* is about itself and that relationship to me, about me overcoming my distance to it.”

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Hertz, *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia*, p. 8.

the surface of the table. In addition, as the film unfolds, the vulnerable glass of milk becomes an increasingly charged object, and largely because the viewer, by virtue of being a witness, is made implicit in the action but at the same time unable to do anything about it—the wholesome and domestic connotations of a glass of milk only heighten this sense of anxiety. As Goldstein notes in 1977, “*A Glass of Milk* is still important for me ... just because [the glass is] filled to the brim and could spill over. It’s an emotional image.”⁵²

The film also fits well within Crimp’s late 1970s reading of Goldstein’s practice, as work that reinvests the values of minimalism in the pictorial image.⁵³ Such an argument, however, fails to acknowledge that ways in which the artist’s 1970s films aim to do more than simply replicate the effects of minimalist sculpture—using Crimp’s terms, to psychologize its perceptual experience⁵⁴. Goldstein’s concern with the inherent “distance” of the film experience reveals an engagement with questions of the very reproductive technology of films and records and also with the immanent object of film, the substrate from which its illusion is made. It is important to highlight Goldstein’s commitment to work with film at a time when video was, again, both easier to access and less expensive.⁵⁵ In this respect, Goldstein’s films operated as more than simply projected

⁵² Fisher, “Talking with Jack Goldstein,” p. 42

⁵³ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 77.

⁵⁴ This *if* the values of Minimalism could be reinvested or replicated in the visual medium of film—surely a question that deserves further exploration.

⁵⁵ As CalArts classmate and friend of Goldstein James Welling notes in Hertz, *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia*, p. 107: “At CalArts I had so little money, I hardly made anything except video—videotape was free in Baldessari’s class. ... The way Jack made films was to hire professionals and work like a director, making a completely slick and professional film.”

images, but, rather, as entire readymade experiences transferred from the space of cinema to the space of the gallery.

Performance

As in his films, Goldstein's early performances also included aspects originating from the physical presence of minimalism and the dematerialized quality of images. One of Goldstein's earliest performances, *Untitled (A Street at Night, Los Angeles)* from 1971, evidences involvement with these bifurcated sets of interests.⁵⁶ Without prior announcement or distinct audience other than passing vehicles the artist, dressed in white, walked back and forth repeatedly across a busy Los Angeles street. As has been noted by Marie Shurkus, there are a number of parallels between this risky nighttime performance and the artist's sculptural production from the same period: "As happened with the Pomona sculptures, the audience's encounter with this 'image' was fraught with apprehension, a combination of desire and dread that recognized the potentially dangerous consequences of this event."⁵⁷ As in the artist's sculptures, the staged situation articulated its presence through the anxious relationship between "audience" (passersby as well as drivers) and the inherent possibility of a disaster. At the same time, as Shurkus notes, what the audience to the performance encountered was not a performing artist, but, rather, an image—lit up by car headlights, the choice of white clothing by the artist was not arbitrary. In this respect, the image, as index and representation, produced by the

⁵⁶ Most of Goldstein's early performances were not documented, and only survive in the form of accounts by Goldstein and others present at the performances.

⁵⁷ Shurkus, "Lessons from Post-Minimalism," p. 194.

artist's body could be said to prefigure the images of his recorded performances, such as *A Glass of Milk*.

And *Burial Piece*, another early performance by the artist from 1972, also engages with questions emerging from the body in action and the representational nature of images (Figure 17). For the performance Goldstein had himself buried in a coffin by a parking lot of the Valencia campus near Interstate 5. The effacement of the artist's body was, however, not complete. Along with a breathing tube, a wire ran from a stethoscope placed next to his beating heart to a red light above ground blinking to the beat of his heart. The on and off of the light, a technological surrogate for the artist's being and a metaphor for all second-hand experience, would, in one form or another form, be present throughout much of the artist's production of the next two decades. As much as Goldstein inherited and adopted concerns of minimalist presence and temporality into his work, these were in his work the presence and temporality of an already-represented object, often in the form of an image. In a 1986 interview, Goldstein notes: "This beacon of light follows after the thing that it represents and consequently we have something called *representation*. I became this origin without any existence. That one performance defines and exemplifies my body of work up until today."⁵⁸ Goldstein's assertion about an "origin without existence" can be best understood by what Crimp called "representation as such. ... Representation freed from the tyranny of the represented."⁵⁹ At the same time, *Burial Piece* also incorporated the anxiety and immanent danger of his sculptural practice, linking once again concerns emerging from Minimalism and questions of representation.

⁵⁸ Interview with Jack Goldstein, *Jack Goldstein*, p. 68.

⁵⁹ Crimp, *Pictures*, p. 5.

It is worth noting that the issues addressed by Goldstein in these early film and performance-based efforts were common to a number of avant-garde practices emerging from California in the early 1970s, from Hiro Kosaka, Goldstein's roommate at CalArts, to Bas Jan Ader and Chris Burden.

Body, Object and Image in Southern California

Part of a series of performances organized by Winer at Pomona College Art Gallery, in a 1972 piece Kosaka lay underneath a hot electric blanket and about two hundred pounds of dirt for roughly 40 minutes, before moving to a different part of the gallery and being covered with the same dirt for another 10 minutes (Figure 18).⁶⁰ Upon getting up, Kosaka's body left an indexical imprint on the floor of the gallery. Thus, the initial absent presence of the artist's body gave way to its index and representation. As in Goldstein's early performances, Kosaka's piece brought together two seemingly disparate sets of concerns, as are the articulation of presence (through the artist's performing body) and an engagement with the representational and indexical (through the imprint of his body), which are by nature inflicted by the past and dependent on memory.

Similarly, a piece by another artist working in Southern California addresses similar concerns. Consisting of 18 photographs documenting a nighttime walk by the artist from Hollywood Hills to the ocean, Ader's 1973 *In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles)* problematizes what Goldstein referred to as the inherent "distance" of representation (Figure 19). As noted by Alexander Dumbadze, "Ader ... was

⁶⁰ Hirokazu Kosaka, *It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles, 1969-1973*, p. 201.

suspicious of the way representations obscure philosophical truths”⁶¹—the ways in which photographs, while indexical records of a real, lived event, cannot, by nature, replicate such experiences. As much is made evident by the artist’s treatment of the photographs documenting his nighttime walk, which he captioned with lyrics to the popular 1965 song *Searchin’* by The Coasters. In the representational medium of photography, the artist’s charged experience of traversing the sublime landscape of Los Angeles on foot is devalued and commodified. The way in which Ader’s project traverses the sublime and quotidian can be grasped through one of the series’s iconic images. Appropriating the pictorial language of Caspar David Friedrich’s sublime paintings, the artist’s shadowy figure is seen in one of the photographs facing against the imposing manmade landscape of a Los Angeles freeway (Figure 19). While for Goldstein the *distance* of images paralleled some kind of phenomenological distance inherent to being in the world, for Ader this same *distance* belonged to the sphere of representations and not to that of the lived experienced, which is in *In Search of the Miraculous* devalued by its mass-produced presentation in the form of photography and popular song lyrics.

Lastly, questions of the authentic and mediated, second-hand experience also informed a number of pieces by Chris Burden, who working in Southern California staged a number of risky performances in the early 1970s. Exemplary among these is *Shoot* from 1971, in which the artist had himself shot in the arm by a friend with a .22 rifle (Figure 20). One of the more interesting aspects of this early effort by Burden is the way the artist introduced real danger into a situation that was more or less under control.

⁶¹ Alexander Dumbadze, “Of Passivity and Agency: Jack Goldstein,” in *Jack Goldstein x 10,000*, exh. cat., ed. Philipp Kaiser (Newport Beach, CA: Orange County Museum of Art, 2012), p.14.

In this regard, the performance implied a critique of the second-hand experience. As noted by Constance Lewalllen with regard to *Shoot*, Burden “had been thinking about what it would be like to be like to be shot ever since the Kent State University shootings in 1970.”⁶² And as expressed by Burden himself, “Vietnam had a lot to do with *Shoot*. It was about the difference between how people reacted to soldiers being shot in Vietnam and how they reacted to fictional people being shot in commercial TV.”⁶³ Echoing Ader’s ambivalence in regards to the ability of images to function as appropriate substitutes for first-hand experiences, Burden’s performance highlighted the extent to which the *distance* separating image from experience might be larger than one might think. In this respect, it is worth noting at least one aspect in which the late-1970s turn toward “pictures” as articulated by the likes of Crimp and Lawson might have lacked critical inquiry.⁶⁴ The concerns of Goldstein and other *Pictures* artists’s images were not led by a desire to embrace “the lightness of the commodity,”⁶⁵ but rather by a need to put pictures on trial at a time when they were beginning to permeate more and more aspects of contemporary experience.

⁶² Constance Lewalllen, *State of mind: new California art circa 1970*, exh. cat., eds. Constance M. Lewalllen and Karen Moss (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Art Museum, 2011), p. 158.

⁶³ Chris Burden quoted in Doug Aitken, *Broken Screen: 26 Conversations with Doug Aitken* (New York: D.A.P., 2006), p. 76.

⁶⁴ As Howard Singerman notes in Howard Singerman, “The Myth of Criticism in the 1980s,” *X-TRA* 8, no. 1 (Fall 2005), p. 7, while in the 1977 version of *Pictures* Crimp attends closely to “questions of representation, to ‘the structure of signification’,” in the 1979 *October* version of the text these questions were “made historical, selected for the future so as to make other presents inadequate, and other possibilities disappear.” By 1979, the ubiquity of the image in contemporary art practices and the lure of the new, postmodern, dematerialized, of representation-as-such, made critical questions concerning the relationship between image and its referent—a Modernist, object-centered critique of postmodernism—irrelevant. Of the questions of Crimp’s 1979 text, Singerman convincingly argues in “The Myth of Criticism in the 1980s,” p. 7, that they “might not be questions at all.”

⁶⁵ Hertz, *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia*, p. 8.

As Goldstein remarked in 2003 of the generation of artists that came to prominence in the 1970s, “We were the first generation of ‘raised on TV’ artists.”⁶⁶ And David Salle, one of the Goldstein’s classmates at CalArts, made a similar recognition in a 1978 catalog essay for a Goldstein solo show at Hallwalls in Buffalo, New York. Salle noted that Goldstein’s “pictorial presentation” emerged as much from an involvement in minimalist aesthetics as with “the way television directs and structures our attention to something in order to render than thing unreal exemplary and possessable in fantasy.”⁶⁷ Once again, we find here the recognition of two seemingly disparate concerns, one involved with questions passed down from minimalist sculpture and the other with issues emerging from the ubiquitous presence of images in contemporary culture. These concerns have even permeated Salle’s own pictorial practice, a practice that has been primarily, if not only, associated with large-scale painting and championed by Lawson in 1981 as signaling the “the last exit for the radical artist” for its critical engagement with questions of representation⁶⁸. Salle’s *Bearding the Lion in His Den*, a 1977 installation at The Kitchen in New York, exemplifies the latent presence of minimalist values in the work of one of the most emblematic artists of the *Pictures* generation (Figure 21). Incorporating appropriated photographs and programmed lights and music, in the space of the installation the viewer is involved in a situation whose terms are set by the language of representation. The sounds and images that are part of it are intentionally familiar, if not kitschy—the photographs are of a racecar and of a group of children

⁶⁶ Hertz, *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia*, p. 90.

⁶⁷ Salle, “Jack Goldstein; Distance Equal Control,” pp. 5-6.

⁶⁸ Thomas Lawson, “Last Exit Painting,” in *Theories of Contemporary Art*, ed. Richard Hertz (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1985), p. 150.

holding hands, and the music is Tim Buckley's 1970 *Song of the Siren*. These elements hint at the comfortable and enjoyable experience that characterizes the consumption of popular culture, but in the charged space of the installation the familiar becomes foreign. The situation presupposed by the images and sounds fail to cohere into a satisfying narrative. As Douglas Eklund contends, "the tenuous narrative that the viewer seeks to attach to the proceedings only takes the viewer so far ..."⁶⁹

As these efforts by Goldstein, Kosaka, Ader, Burden and Salle attest, California artists were already exploring the questions that came to inform theorizing of image-oriented work in the late 1970s. Moreover, contrary to contentions furthered by the likes of Crimp and Lawson—that minimalist values were reinvested in the pictorial space or that the question of representation was the main concern of late 1970s image-driven work—mid and late-1970s efforts by Goldstein demonstrate that his early investment in both the perceptual, real time and space of minimalism and the psychologized space of mediated technology, such as television and film, continued to influence his practice throughout the rest of the decade. Contrary to Crimp's dematerialized, postmodern reading of Goldstein's films and performances, the minimalist emphasis on the object itself, however dematerialized, continued to be a concern central to Goldstein's practice. Marie Shurkus has furthered such a contention in regards to Crimp's reading of Goldstein's 1970s films and records. Concerning the Goldstein's assertion in the interview with Fisher that, "Film is one step away from an object in real life, and one step

⁶⁹ Douglas Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984*, exh. cat. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), p. 119.

beyond that would be a record, because the sounds are very real, and that *thing* is very real, except that a distance is created” between audience and work, she notes⁷⁰:

“Crimp interprets Goldstein’s [statement] as saying that the meaning of representation is the absence of the referent and the distance that this absence creates, which allows for a more symbolic and culturally informed experience of the world. Yet, Goldstein is also referring to representation as a phenomenon. Thus, [Goldstein] describes how images—both audio and visual—function as ‘real’ elements that not only exist separately from the ‘things’ they reference but also from the material substrate (the vinyl of the records or the celluloid of film) that present them and allow them to appear as representations.”⁷¹

As Shurkus points out, Goldstein’s films and records do not merely transform the values of minimalism into the pictorial space of the image, as Crimp contends, but they also engage with the phenomenon of representation in itself, as an object in real space and time. In this respect, Goldstein’s film practice of the 1970s fits within what Anne Wagner has described as a common project furthered by a number of artists working in this decade: “Video and performance artists ... have courted the effects of presence, in the endless present ... that their medium so ably supplies. They do their utmost to invoke

⁷⁰ Fisher, “Talking with Jack Goldstein,” p. 42.

⁷¹ Goldstein’s statement in its entirety from Fisher, “Talking with Jack Goldstein,” p. 42: “Making films instead was a way of creating a distance and removing the audience. The phonograph records are one more step to create more distance, getting more abstract. Film is one step away from an object in real life, and one step beyond that would be a record, because the sounds are very real, and that *thing* is very real, except that a distance is created.” And Crimp’s interpretation of Goldstein’s passage from Crimp, “*Pictures*,” p. 3, is the following: “In making [*The Jump*], Goldstein is performing a series of operations that isolate, distil, alter, and augment the filmed recording of an actual event. He does this in order to impose a distance between the event and its viewer because, according to Goldstein, it is only through a distance that we can understand the world. Which is to say that we can only experience reality through the pictures we make of it.”

settings and artifacts and experiences that connote the problematic real of technologically mediated experience.”⁷² In this regard, the film *The Jump* from 1975 is exemplary.

The Jump, a thirty-second film completed a year after *Pictures* in 1978, depicts a series of dives taken by one or more anonymous figures (Figure 22).⁷³ In an effort to dispense of any and all incidental information that might provide some context for the film, Goldstein replaced the scene’s background with a black backdrop and applied a technique called rotoscoping to the divers, effectively turning them into ghostly, shimmering shapes. Although in 1977 Goldstein had not yet completed this film, Crimp opens the catalogue text for *Pictures* with a discussion of the work. As the critic writes, by getting rid of all information that might provide some context for the film or scene, other than that alluded by its title, Goldstein attempted to, “impose a distance between the event and its viewers, because, according to Goldstein, it is only through a distance that we can understand the world. Which is to say that we can only experience reality through the pictures we make of it.”⁷⁴ As demonstrated by the fact that Crimp opened his essay with a discussion of this yet-unfinished work and by the language he used to describe it—it is “pictures” that have come to define our experience of the world—*The Jump* occupied a central position in Crimp’s theorizing of *Pictures*. In the second iteration of the essay the critic further developed his initial interpretation of the film:

“[In the film] time is extremely compressed (the running time is twenty-six seconds) and yet extremely distended (shown as a loop, it plays endlessly). But the film’s

⁷² Anne Wagner, “Performance, Video and The Rhetoric of Presence,” *October* 91 (Winter 2000), pp. 75-76.

⁷³ Goldstein appropriated the footage from Leni Riefenstahl’s 1938 film *Olympia*.

⁷⁴ Crimp, *Pictures*, p. 3.

temporality as experienced does not reside in its actual duration, nor of course in anything like the synthetic time of narrative. Its temporal mode is the psychological one of *anticipation*. ... The temporality of [the film] is not, then, a function of the nature of the medium as in itself temporal, but of the manner in which the pictures is presented; it can obtain in a still picture as well as a moving one.”⁷⁵

Crimp’s reading of the film follows from his contention that *Pictures* reinvested the theatrical dimension of minimalism in the flat space of the image. Thus, according to the critic, the 1978 film stages the effects of minimalism in the form of an image—the anxiety of Goldstein’s early freestanding sculptures, in them produced by a physical, bodily engagement, is here caused by an image and thus experienced psychologically. While this reading serves to further Crimp’s dematerialized reading of *Pictures* work, it obviates a number of issues explored throughout this text.

First of all, it is worth noting that the “film” that Crimp describes was, in fact, advertised as a performance at The Kitchen—hence Crimp’s assertion that the film was shown as a loop.⁷⁶ This already complicates interpretations of the film. After all, a performance presupposes a situation in which action is not simply reproduced but takes place in the present. Goldstein hints this much in an exchange with Fisher:

Fisher: “A motion picture is a shadow on a wall, but you want to make that shadow an object?”

Goldstein: For the [1976 show at Kabinett für aktuelle Kunst in Germany] the entire wall was painted red except that a rectangle was left white where the image was going to be projected. The wall becomes an object to hold those images. The wall

⁷⁵ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 79-80.

⁷⁶ The performance took place at The Kitchen in New York in 1978 and *The Jump* was subsequently included in Goldstein’s 2001 *Portfolio of Performances*.

becomes a part of the space in the films. The images in the films become objects in that room by occupying that white rectangle.”⁷⁷

The Jump could not have been shown in this exhibition, as it was completed in 1978, but in this exchange Goldstein makes clear that he conceived of his films as more than simply moving images in which the effects of Minimalism could be restaged. The artist’s description of the performance at The Kitchen serves as further evidence of this: “Animation eliminates all anecdotal and subjective content while retaining the reality of the action. The wall, no longer a simply neutral surface, becomes spatially integrated with the figure: a stage in which movement itself, as spectacle, becomes pure image: *to jump* becomes *the jump*.”⁷⁸ The movement from verb and action to noun and object, however spectral and dematerialized, demonstrates Goldstein’s continued engagement with the questions emerging as much out of minimalism as from questions of representation and reproducibility well into the late-1970s. In this respect, *The Jump* (and, really, much of Goldstein’s mid and late 1970s production) engage with Wagner’s “problematic real” of mediated experience, with the fact that as much as the film is experienced psychologically, it remains, as the artist notes, an object.

⁷⁷ Fisher, “Talking with Jack Goldstein,” p. 44.

⁷⁸ Aupetitallot, *Jack Goldstein*, p. 163.

Object, Image and Subject in Jack Goldstein's Late-1970s Production

In the fall of 1979 Jack Goldstein exhibited *Sound Performance* as part of a group show titled *Sound* at the Institute for Art and Urban Resources Inc., P.S.1 in New York (Figure 23). The piece, a kind of hybrid sculptural installation, consisted of a small, empty white room in which four speakers, one concealed in each corner of the space, played two overlapping soundtracks.⁷⁹ Two of the speakers positioned diagonally across the space reproduced the sound of a train in the process of arriving, while the other two emitted the noise made by the passing of an airplane. In addition to the overlapping recordings, the other salient feature of the installation was the room's ceiling, which was painted a deep blue. All in all, *Sound Performance* was much more than a sound-based work. By incorporating elements from Goldstein's concurrent and past engagement in the mediums of sculpture, film and performance, the installation at P.S.1 foregrounded a number of relationships or binaries at work in the artist's production of the 1970s: 1) object and image, 2) theatricality and presentness, and 3) performing and viewing. Goldstein's critical engagement with these dialectical pairs locate *Sound Performance* alongside a number avant-garde efforts of the late-1960s and 1970s that explored questions of audience participation and engagement, including hybrid installations by Bruce Nauman, Chris Burden and Vito Acconci. A unique and underexplored work within Goldstein's 1970s catalogue, the 1979 piece remains significant, moreover, for the

⁷⁹ Yves Aupetitallot and Lionel Bovier, eds., *Jack Goldstein*, exh. cat. (Grenoble, France: Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, 2002), p. 164. The piece was reconstructed on the occasion of the exhibition *Jack Goldstein x 10,000* at the Orange County Museum of Art in 2012. Further information regarding the original dimensions of the piece could not be obtained.

ways it complicates prevailing and by now canonical interpretations of the artist's late 1970s production.

In the spring of 1979, only a few months before the exhibition at P.S.1 and the staging of *Sound Performance*, Douglas Crimp's influential *Pictures* essay was published in the journal *October*. The second iteration of a text that accompanied a 1977 exhibition of the same title at Artists Space in New York, *Pictures* codified what Crimp argued to be a "predominant sensibility" in the work of an emerging group of young artists whose work engaged with photographic and cinematic images.⁸⁰ At the core of Crimp's argument was the contention that this predominant sensibility was in particular significant for its rejection of traditional modernist values, such as self-reflexivity and will to purity, through a reinvestment of minimalist values and, more importantly, an engagement with the question of representation. Goldstein, who had been part of the original 1977 *Pictures* exhibition along with Troy Brauntuch, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo and Philip Smith, played an important role in Crimp's original version of *Pictures* and occupied once again an important position in the 1979 text.

Although still largely schematic, these few pieces of information should allow us to identify some issues and posit preliminary questions: How do we reconcile Goldstein's late-1970s concurrent involvement in two seemingly distinct projects, one engaged with 1) sound, performance, the space of the gallery and audience participation (through *Sound Performance*), while the other one dealing more specifically with 2) representation and images, both moving and static (as theorized by Crimp in *Pictures*)? To what extent

⁸⁰ Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," *October* 8 (Spring 1979), p. 75.

are these projects incompatible? To what extent are they similar? To understand how a series of seemingly incompatible concerns—some of the body, subject, and passed down from minimalist and post-minimalist practices, and others of images, representation, and arguably emerging in the 1970s—came to occupy the late 1970s practice of Goldstein and their significance in the context of *Pictures*, it is necessary to now shift our focus to the influential 1979 text by Crimp. A closer look at the text will bring to light some of ways in which the critic's argument obviates and represses minimalist and post-minimalist concerns of space, temporality, and subjectivity present in Goldstein's late-1970s practice, as exemplified by *Sound Performance*.

Pictures was the second and more developed version of the exhibition text that accompanied a group show of the same title at Artists Space in New York in 1977 (Figure 1). While there are a number of differences between the two essays, Crimp's treatment of Goldstein's work does not change significantly from one text to the other—one could in fact argue that the many of the claims that are exclusive to the later essay, such as the connection between the emerging pictorially minded aesthetic and minimalism, are latent in the 1977 text.⁸¹ Departing from *Art and Objecthood*, Michael Fried's famous 1967 articulation of the anti-modernist features of minimalist sculpture, Crimp argues in *Pictures* that Goldstein and company adopted some of the most significant aspects of the minimalist rejection of modernism, including “the literal temporality and presence of theater.”⁸² However, the nature of this appropriation was, according to Crimp, of a rather specific kind, as he contends that these artists reinvested

⁸¹ The differences between the two texts are covered in the introduction.

⁸² Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 77.

the theatrical features of minimalism into the representational image: “The extent to which [the experience of theater] fully pervades their work is not, however, immediately apparent, for its theatrical dimensions have been transformed and, quite unexpectedly, reinvested in the pictorial image.”⁸³ For Crimp this reinvestment of minimalist values into the pictorial image had a number of significant consequences, among which was the way the emerging work was experienced. In regards to some of Goldstein’s recent performances he notes that their “presence and temporality are utterly psychologized; performance becomes just one of a number of ways of ‘staging’ a picture,” one that is, moreover, “apprehended as representation.”⁸⁴ One of the performances by Goldstein that Crimp refers to here is *Two Fencers* from 1977, in which two professional fencers engage in duel while bathed in red light and as a record plays “music that is normally used in films to create a sense of action, drama and tension”⁸⁵ (Figure 24). The audience in this performance was located fifty feet away from the action, causing the two athletes to appear, at a distance, “virtual, dematerialized, like the vivid but nebulous images of holograms,” according by Crimp.⁸⁶

While the critic is right in reading *Two Fencers* and other performances by Goldstein (and later Longo⁸⁷) as works that stage a situation that is apprehended as a picture, Crimp’s reinvestment of minimalist values to into the realm of photographic and cinematic images needs to be reexamined. After all, it would not be wholly

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 77.

⁸⁵ Aupetitallot, *Jack Goldstein*, p. 162.

⁸⁶ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 78.

⁸⁷ See Douglas Crimp, “The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism,” *October* 15 (Winter 1980), p. 92.

unconceivable to question the extent to which minimalism, which has been conventionally associated with a kind of phenomenological and bodily “present presence,” could be reinvested into artworks that are arguably apprehended psychologically and informed by memory (and not perceptually, without a priori knowledge) and that, despite their temporal nature, are allegedly intended to be absorbed through vision (and not experienced with the body). To sort out this muddle, we will now turn to a series of texts by Crimp, Rosalind Krauss, Goldstein and other relevant commentators.

In *Pictures*, Crimp argues for a kind of transition from minimalist presence to the kind of presence that characterizes the emerging pictorial aesthetic of Goldstein and other *Pictures* artists. He associates the former with the 1970s video and sound installations of artists such as Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman and Laurie Anderson, which, he notes “not only required the presence of the spectator to become activated, but were fundamentally concerned with that registration of presence as a means toward establishing meaning.”⁸⁸ In contrast to this quality of presence, one conditioned by the necessity of being physically in the presence of something, Crimp ascribes the work of Goldstein and *Pictures* artists a different type of presence, one that is paradoxically best described by a quality of *absence*. Lacking the precise language to verbalize this quality of absence, in the 1979 text the critic transitions from his introductory section to a proper discussion of *Pictures* work, from one kind of presence to the other, by way of a quote by Henry James, which reads, “The presence before him was a presence.”⁸⁹ For lack of a more precise definition, the somewhat eerie expression captures well the ghostly aspect shared by

⁸⁸ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 77.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

much of *Pictures* work. A year later in *The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism*, also published in *October*, Crimp more explicitly defines this presence as, “the presence which is a ghost and therefore really an absence, the presence which is not there.”⁹⁰ In this 1980 text, Crimp also posits a third kind of presence, one that, he argues, is “a kind of increment to being there, a ghostly aspect of presence that is its excess, its supplement,” and ascribes this more refined definition of the term to the performances of Goldstein and also Longo.⁹¹

Crimp’s discussion of presence remains of particular significance here, as it is precisely this somewhat elusive term that, along with temporality, remains the constant in the alleged reinvestment of minimalist values into representation-centered practices of *Pictures* artists. Only this quality of presence takes on a different guise in the work of Goldstein and his peers. As the critic argues, the temporality and presence of *Pictures* are “utterly psychologized,” while the temporality and presence of minimalism and 1970s work of Graham, Nauman and Anderson, are, on the other hand, literal, experience in the present. This distinction between a literal and present pre-*Pictures* and psychologized, postmodern, and dematerialized *Pictures* is, I would argue, illusory, as the psychologized and ghostly experience of representation was as much part of minimalism as the literal dimension of minimalism was a part of *Pictures*—only it remains somewhat repressed in Crimp’s reading.

The tendency toward the literal object and situation by minimalist practices is well known as one of the work’s distinctive features. Both proponents and critics of it

⁹⁰ Crimp, “The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism,” p. 92.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

identified this aspect early on. In *Art and Objecthood* Fried states that he would prefer to call Minimal Art *literalist* art, and ends the text with the contention that, “We are literalists most or all of our lives. Presentness is grace.”⁹² Moreover, such a reading is also at the core of a quasi-manifesto of minimalist aesthetic, Donald Judd’s 1964 *Specific Objects*. Although Judd resisted qualifying minimalist art as literal, in this text he strives to articulate the potentialities of real space (and time): “Three dimension are real space. ... The several limits of painting are no longer present. A work can be as powerful as it can be thought to be. Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface.”⁹³ Robert Morris makes an analogous claim in his *Notes on Sculpture* from 1966: “The better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer’s field of vision.”⁹⁴ He also notes in the same text that, “The experience of the work necessarily exists in time.”⁹⁵

Conversely, a postmodernist reading of minimalism—as work that articulates a psychologized experience and engages with questions of representation and language—has also been furthered since the work’s emergence in the mid-1960s. Krauss contends in *Objecthood* from 1976, a text that underlies a number of Crimp’s arguments from the original *Pictures*⁹⁶, that despite the tendency of Judd’s sculptures toward the concrete

⁹² Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” *Artforum* 10 (June 1967), reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995 pp. 117 and 147.

⁹³ Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings, 1959-1975* (Halifax, Canada: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975), p. 184.

⁹⁴ Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2,” in *Minimal Art*, p. 232.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 234.

⁹⁶ In Rosalind Krauss, “Objecthood,” in *Critical Perspectives in American Art* (Amherst, MA: Fine Arts Center Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1976), Krauss introduces concepts that would be central to Crimp’s text, such as the notion of “psychologized space.”

object, many of his geometrical cubes and repeating “boxes” point “to a species of illusion—to a tension set up between physical facts and appearance.”⁹⁷ Moreover, Howard Singerman suggests that Fried’s canonical *Art and Objecthood* already had read minimalism in terms of representation and psychologized objects by 1967. The art historian argues that “Fried suggested that theater is not only the condition of minimalism but, reading minimalism’s object as though representations, its subject matter as well,” as exemplified by Judd’s repeating boxes. And he later proceeds to read Tony Smith’s Turnpike experience included in Fried’s text through the lens of Crimp’s *Pictures*:

“... in a longish reading of Tony Smith’s narrative of a revelatory nighttime drive on the not-yet-completed New Jersey Turnpike, Fried located the psychologization of presence at the core of minimalism, and he located as well at that core ‘that absence we know to be a condition of representation’ and its enfolding into a field of continuous repetitions.”⁹⁸

In addition, Morris’s use of mirrors, in works such as in *Untitled (Mirrored Cubes)* from 1965, also problematizes readings of minimalism as tending either toward a specific object or situation, or toward the present-absent object of representation (Figure 25). Of this work, Anne Wagner has noted that, “Installed in the gallery, the four cubes map a square, its dimensions determined by those of the space in which they sit. But they also exchange an endless volley of reflections.”⁹⁹ In this respect, the use of mirrored surfaces

⁹⁷ Krauss, “Objecthood,” p. 26.

⁹⁸ Howard Singerman, “In the Text,” in *A Forest of Signs: Art in the Crisis of Representation*, ed. Catherine Gudis (Los Angeles: LACMA, 1989), p. 160.

⁹⁹ Wagner, “Performance, Video and The Rhetoric of Presence,” p. 93.

by Morris and other 1960s and 1970s artists from Jonas to Graham to Smithson can be interpreted in part as an effort to engage with questions of representation and presence.¹⁰⁰

All of this problematizes Crimp's simplistic reading of minimalism as confined to a more or less literal experience of an event or artwork—the generalized notion that 1970s performative practices “were fundamentally concerned with [a] registration of presence as a means of establishing meaning.”¹⁰¹ As it has been established, the postmodernist, image-centered reading—which interprets the object neither as an original nor as a thing-in-itself, but as one from a series of endless reproductions and as composed of signs pointing outside of itself—was already at work and a concern of minimalism in the 1960s and performance art in the following decade. As Singerman points out, Hal Foster postulated this dual reading of minimalist art in a footnote in his 1982 text *Re. Post*: “That [minimalism] should enfold such a contradiction—the modernist impulse to the thing-itself and the postmodernist impulse toward ‘theatricality’ or ‘perversity’—might in fact make minimalism the scene of a shift in sensibility, the very *brisure* of (post)modernism.”¹⁰² And as early as 1965 Barbara Rose read minimalism in terms of the overt *presence* of Malevich's “void” and the endless *reproducibility* of Duchamp's readymade; she notes that Judd, Morris, Carl Andre and Dan Flavin, “occupy in my eye some kind of intermediate position” between these two tendencies.¹⁰³ While some *Pictures* work, especially Goldstein's, can be said to occupy a similar dual position—

¹⁰⁰ See Wagner, “Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence” for a thorough discussion of these issues.

¹⁰¹ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 77.

¹⁰² Footnote n. 11 in Hal Foster, “Re: Post,” in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, exh. cat., ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), p. 193.

¹⁰³ Barbara Rose, “ABC Art,” in *Minimal Art*, p. 278.

combining concerns proper to minimalist and post-minimalism as well as concerns of the signifying structure of representation and the endless reproducibility of images—Crimp’s postmodernist, image-centered interpretation of this work has neglected a number of late 1970s artists’s concern with “the thing-itself,” with the literal presence of objects as well as images.

As noted earlier, Crimp’s interpretation of Goldstein’s mid-to-late 1970s production hinges on the assumption that the artist’s performances are apprehended as representations and that they engage the audience’s imagination, in particular with their memories. To recall a passage alluded to earlier, Crimp argues that Goldstein’s performances make “the literal situation and duration of the performed event a tableau whose presence and temporality are utterly psychologized,” and that they involve, “the presentation of an event in such a manner and at such a distance that it is apprehended as representation—representation not, however, conceived as the *re*-presentation of that which is prior, but as the unavoidable condition of intelligibility of even that which is present.”¹⁰⁴ This latter passage is arguably as close as Crimp gets to articulating the ambiguous quality that permeates much of Goldstein’s late 1970s work—borrowing Foster’s terms, the work’s tendency or impulse toward both the thing-itself and “perversity” at the same time.

Despite this, Crimp’s reading in *Pictures* of two of Goldstein’s better-known late 1970s pieces, the 1977 performance *Two Fencers* and the 1978 film *The Jump*, in which shimmering figures perform a series of acrobatic jumps, obviates these works’

¹⁰⁴ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 77.

“unavoidable condition” of presence in favor of an image-centered reading—the image/*imago* of imagination and representation. Regarding the performance, Crimp notes that the fencers appeared “as if déjà vu, remote, spectral, yet just as present ... they were there, performing in the space of the spectators, but they nevertheless looked virtual, dematerialized, like vivid but nebulous images of holograms.”¹⁰⁵ Here Crimp highlights the work’s inherent contradiction and ambiguity—“they were there ... but nevertheless looked virtual”—but instead of pursuing this seeming paradox, his reading of the piece ultimately focuses on its lasting impression on the viewer’s mind. As part of the performance, following the apparent defeat of one of the athletes, the lights are turned off, but the dramatic background music continues playing, a gesture that Crimp interprets as an opportunity for the audience to “attempt to remember that image of fencing that had already appeared as if in memory.”¹⁰⁶ Such a reading of the piece obviates the overtly ambiguous nature of the action. As made clear by Goldstein’s own description of the work, what the audience is left to ponder is whether what they witnessed was real or staged, origin or representation, lived experience or memory: “Because of what the music connotes, an ambiguity is set up by the combination of theatrical sound and formal image: whether or not it is an athletic exercise or a staged dual [sic] (theater), a competition for points, or for life and death.”¹⁰⁷

Crimp’s repeats his image-centered reading of *Two Fencers* in a discussion of the film *The Jump*. Less than a minute in length, the film depicts a series of acrobatic dives

¹⁰⁵ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 78.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Aupetitallot, *Jack Goldstein*, p. 162.

taken by one or more anonymous figures (Figure 22). In an effort to dispense of any and all incidental information that might provide some context for the action, Goldstein replaced the scene's background with black backdrop and applied a technique called rotoscoping to the figures, effectively turning them into floating, shimmering silhouettes. In regards to the duration of the work, Crimp notes that:

“the film's temporality as experience does not reside in its actual duration, nor of course in anything like the synthetic time of narrative. Its temporal mode is the psychological one of *anticipation*. ... In each of Goldstein's films, performances, photographs, and phonograph records, a psychologized temporality is instituted: foreboding, premonition, suspicion, anxiety.”¹⁰⁸

Crimp interprets the film's temporality in terms of a psychologized experience, one that, as he later argues, can be the product of “a still picture as well as a moving one.”¹⁰⁹ This effective collapsing of the work's actual duration into a psychologized temporality and of its action into the effect of an image can be contested on two fronts. On the one hand, the artist's removal of the film's incidental information could be read as an effort to eliminate its narrative temporality and content, as read by Crimp, in favor of one that is rather literal and present: by eliminating content and information, the narrative aspect of the film is depleted, and all that is left are shimmering lights, pure indexes. As Singerman has argued, in his reading of *The Jump*, Crimp associated narrative and representation: “Crimp recast temporality in the language of representation, in the terms and promises of narrative. As ‘foreboding, premonition, suspicion, anxiety,’ it exceeds itself; it is not this

¹⁰⁸ Crimp, “Pictures,” p. 79.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 80.

time but this time as it forecasts, yet cannot be closed by, something else.”¹¹⁰ Once again, we recognize here the tendency toward representation, the psychologized experience, and the textual and linguistic on the one hand, and an opposite impulse toward a more literal experience of the object, “the-thing-itself.”

This latter impulse, repressed in *Pictures*, is supported by the fact that when *The Jump* was presented at Goldstein’s solo show at The Kitchen in New York in 1978, it was advertised as a performance, and not a film¹¹¹. In the words of Goldstein: “Animation eliminates all anecdotal and subjective content while retaining the reality of the action. The wall, no longer simply a neutral surface, becomes spatially integrated with the figure: a stage in which movement itself, as spectacle, becomes pure image: *to jump* becomes *the jump*.”¹¹² As evidenced by this statement, Goldstein himself furthers the ambiguous nature of *Two Fencers* and *The Jump*, as there are references here to the specific space of the gallery and a tendency from action to object, from verb to noun, just as there are references to spectacle and image. This ambivalent approach to the artwork as *here-and-present* and *there-and-absent* prevails throughout a 1977 interview with Goldstein conducted by Morgan Fisher. In response to Fisher’s first question and only a few sentences apart, Goldstein claims both that, “My work has always been very much involved with sculpture in the sense that it’s about defining something in space and time, our distance to that thing,” and “it’s more about the content than the form, that it’s the same whether it’s performance, films, records, etc., and that a lot of the experiences take

¹¹⁰ Singerman, “In the Text,” p. 160.

¹¹¹ See Chapter 1, p. 36.

¹¹² Aupetitallot, *Jack Goldstein*, p. 163.

place in your head. Real time and real space don't matter."¹¹³ Other instances of similarly paradoxical and contradictory statements can be found not only throughout the rest of the interview, but also in Goldstein's work of the period. A work such as *Sound Performance*, for instance, engages with both concerns of "defining something in space and time," and with an experience that takes "place in your head." In this respect, the 1979 installation remains significant for the ways it challenges image-centered readings of Goldstein's late-1970s practice, while complicating it at the same time.

Sound Performance can be best described as, above all, paradoxical, aporetic. Starting with its title, the performative aspect of the piece is not immediately evident: Is the viewer the performer or the audience? If the latter, how do we reconcile this "performance" with Goldstein's other performative works of the 1970s, most of which included acting performers?¹¹⁴ Even in the more expanded understanding of performance as developed by avant-garde performance art practices of the previous decades, the absence of a defined performer-audience relationship here challenges even experimental definitions and understandings of the practice. All of this calls for an atypical and somewhat paradoxical reading of the event: in the space of the room the perceiving subject is both audience and performer, in the presence of an event and also part of it. In order to clarify this claim, it would be useful to turn to Marcia Tucker's writing on Bruce Nauman's late-1960s and 1970s installations and hybrid environments, some of which

¹¹³ Fisher, "Talking with Jack Goldstein," p. 42.

¹¹⁴ Goldstein produced over twenty performances in the 1970s, all of which included some kind of performing subject—either Goldstein himself or hired performers—with the exception of the installations/performances *Burning Window* (1977), *The Jump* (1978) and *Sound Performance* (1979).

share a number of similarities with Goldstein's *Sound Performance*. Of pieces such as Nauman's *Performance Corridor* from 1969—consisting of two large, parallel pieces of wallboard positioned twenty inches apart and inviting viewers to experience a space that is more oppressive than interactive (Figure 26)—and of the rest of the artist's early body-centered work, Tucker notes in *PheNAUMANology* from 1970 that:

[Nauman's] concern with physical self is not simple artistic egocentrism, but use of the body to transform intimate subjectivity into objective demonstration. Man is the perceiver and the perceived; he acts and is acted upon; he is the sensor and the sensed. His behavior constitutes a dialectical interchange with the world he occupies. ... Nauman has used himself in this way as a prototypical subject for the pieces. These works are meant, essentially, to be encountered privately by one person at a time. Where earlier the artist was the subject and object of recorded situations, now it is the spectator who becomes both the actor and observer of his own activity.¹¹⁵

As in Nauman's early environments, *Sound Performance* could be said to stage in a similar manner a situation in which viewer is split into perceiver and the perceived, actor and observer. Though it should be noted that the body-centered late-1960s concerns of Nauman's environments differed greatly from those furthered by Goldstein a decade later through *Sound Performance*: if in Nauman's late-1960s post-minimalist installations meaning is created through *immediate and present* perceptual and physical interaction, in Goldstein's 1979 piece, mental, mnemonic and visual engagement with the room's recordings and monochrome ceiling is added to the physical experience of occupying its space. In this respect, *Sound Performance* could be said to engage its audience with two distinct modes of experience: while the specific space of the room and the tangible

¹¹⁵ Marcia Tucker, "PheNAUMANology," in *Bruce Nauman*, ed. Robert C. Morgan (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 23.

quality of the sounds define a situation that is experienced physically and in the present, the representational and theatrical aspects of the colliding soundtracks point to events beyond the here-and-now of the room that engage the viewer psychologically. At the intersection of these two spaces, one real and the other imaginary, the perceiving subject is at once absorbed and distanced, immersed and disoriented, present and absent, audience and performer, viewer and listener. As will be seen, Goldstein further highlights and problematizes these antithetical modes of experience through other aspects of the installation, the soundtracks and the painted ceiling.

In somewhat recursive fashion, the initial problematic between physical room space and psychological sound space is also played out at the level of the colliding soundtracks. Though both of the recordings engage psychologically with the perceiving subject, the sound of the arriving train invokes a feeling of physical grounding and awareness of the *present* while the noise of the passing plane alludes to an out-of-body, either *future* or *past* psychological experience. In Goldstein's 2001 description of the piece, he notes that:

“The sound images invoke a common psychological relation to these two forms of travel; trains arrive into the present while planes soar into the future. The effect of these two simultaneous contradictory metal pictures dislocates the listener's sense of space, time and motion: is one ‘coming’ to rest at a destination, or ‘going’ elsewhere; is one grounded in physicality or lifted into a disembodied space?”¹¹⁶

Echoing the initial space/sound, mind/body problematic of the installation, the overlapping soundtracks further complicate the interaction between perceiving subject

¹¹⁶ Aupetitallot, *Jack Goldstein*, p. 164.

and installation. And a similar claim can be made about the room's painted ceiling, which, according to Goldstein, "functions both as a visual anchor that spatially unifies the two sound images, and as a reference to the theatricality of the event."¹¹⁷ Operating at once as a metaphor for the sky and as a conspicuous theatrical device, much like the soundtracks and the installation as a whole, the blue ceiling oscillates between illusion (as stand-in for the sky) and reality (as blue, monochrome painted ceiling).

Like much of Goldstein's late 1970s production, *Sound Performance* problematizes the perceiving subject's relationship to an ambiguous experience bordering between the real and the staged. As Crimp rightly asserts but falls short of exploring, Goldstein's late 1970s project emerges from the intersection of two kinds of presences, one present and real and the other absent and technologically mediated. Moreover, the fact that various ambiguities and contradictions became part of a number of 1970s performative practices reveals a certain anxiety about not only the art object, but also about its space and audience. The origin and nature of this anxiety can be traced back to the emergence of the postmodern moment in the mid-1970s, when questions of discourse and text displaced questions of originality (as myth) and redefined the very experience of art. Discussing the 1970s performance-based of Vito Acconci, Anderson and other artists from the 1970s, Wagner contends that the following were some of the questions that informed their work: "How can a work make itself public? Can object and viewer still continue to be efficiently *present* to each other, so mutually absorbed? ... Does

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

confidence in the directness of vision really survive translation and reproduction by technological media?”

Sound Performance emerges from similar questions, as present, direct engagement with the work is upset by the intrusion of technological reproduction, while “absent” engagement with the recorded audio is upset by the viewer’s freedom to move about the space and engage perceptually with it. A problematic similar to this one seemed to have informed a number of installations from the late 1960s and 1970s that share with Goldstein’s P.S.1 installation more than just formal concerns. Bruce Nauman’s *Get Out of My Mind Get Out of This Room* from 1968 is a case in point. Consisting of square room measuring ten-by-ten feet and a looping tape recording in which the artist’s voice orders the viewer to “get out of my mind, get out of this room,” the piece complicates bodily and psychological engagement with the space. In it, the perceiving subject finds herself split into body and mind. Janet Kraynak argues that the Nauman’s hybrid environments from the late 1960s and early 1970s:

“consistently figure spectatorial participation as a strange, even alienating, encounter. The viewer is assaulted with sound, frightened with foreboding narrow space, and cornered by video cameras recording her every move. ... Physically and psychologically, the viewer continually confronts a collapse of identification between her experience as a body/subject and her image as representation.”¹¹⁸

As in Goldstein’s hybrid installation, the perceiving subject in Nauman’s room has to contend with two modes of experience, each thwarting and getting in the way of the other while also articulating distinct kinds of presence. The physical presence of the room is

¹¹⁸ Janet Kraynak, “Dependent Participation: Bruce Nauman’s Environments,” *Grey Room* 10 (Winter 2003), p. 24.

contrasted by the ephemeral, ghostly presence, which is really an absence. It is also quite telling that Nauman does not order the viewer to get out of his space or body, but out of his mind, ascribing the space of the room a psychological charge.

Similar psychologically charged spaces from the early-1970s include hybrid performances and installations by Vito Acconci and Chris Burden. Acconci's 1972 *Seedbed* and Burden's *White Light/White Heat* from 1975 both included the implied and hidden presence of the artist. In *Seedbed*, Acconci laid underneath a ramp built in an otherwise empty Sonnabend Gallery in New York while masturbating and murmuring his fantasies into a microphone connected to a series of speakers installed in the corners of the gallery (Figure 27). As in the installation by Nauman and *Sound Performance*, this work confronted its viewers physically and mentally, as the space of the gallery was at once architecturally sparse and yet psychologically charged. Somewhat similar in form and intent was Burden's *White Light/White Heat* performance at Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York, in which the artist laid atop a triangular platform installed in one of the corners of the gallery two feet away from the ceiling (Figure 28). The height and size of the platform—it measured eighteen feet across—were determined by Burden's requirement that he, "be able to lie flat without being visible from any point in the gallery."¹¹⁹ The artist lay on the platform for the duration of the show, making his absent presence the meaning of the work.

Once again, as with the other empty rooms, the work confronts the viewer both physically and psychologically, with the difference that Burden along with Acconci align

¹¹⁹ "White Light/White Heat Press Release," *Ronald Feldman Fine Arts* (January 1975), http://www.feldmangallery.com/media/pdfs/exhbur75_press.pdf (accessed July 20, 2013).

vision with truth and presence, and its deferral or suppression with lack of truth and absence, what Foster calls postmodernism's "perversity."¹²⁰ In this respect, one of the merits of Goldstein's work can be said to be its ability to articulate at the same time presence and absence, truth and doubt in performances and films where access to vision is neither deferred nor frustrated. Of *Burning Window*, a 1977 installation/performance by Goldstein consisting of a window behind which there appears to be a fire, Goldstein asks, "This spectacle, which may be felt ambiguously both as 'real' and as 'cinematic' illusion, calls into question the 'truth' of visual experience" (Figure ¹²¹ Such a statement encapsulates well the best aspects of Goldstein's practice as well as of much of *Pictures* work: its overt ambiguity, which opens up the work to questions of audience engagement, technological reproducibility, vision, and truth. These questions gain particular significance as questions of representation and reproduction, of "copies, and copies of copies," though hardly irrelevant, seem to have been exhausted.

¹²⁰ It could be argued that many of these works share this perverse aspect. In regards to the fact that *Corridor Installation (Nick Wilder Installation)*, a 1970 installation by Nauman that includes recording cameras and video monitors, makes it difficult for viewers to display themselves easily, Willoughby Sharp asks the artist, "Isn't that rather perverse?" (Kraynak, "Dependent Participation, p. 25).

¹²¹ Aupetitallot, *Jack Goldstein*, p. 161.

Conclusion

Among signs and advertisements for brands like McDonald's and Disney, a digitally remastered version of Jack Goldstein's 1978 16mm film *The Jump* played on several of Times Square's countless electronic billboards every night from 11:57PM to midnight during the month August 2013 (Figure 30). Part of *Midnight Moment*, an initiative of Times Square Advertising Coalition in partnership with Times Square Arts and The Jewish Museum, which housed Jack Goldstein's recent retrospective exhibition titled *Jack Goldstein x 10,000* from May through September of the same year, the staging of Goldstein's iconic film is representative of prevailing picture-centered interpretations of the artist's work as articulated by the critics Douglas Crimp and Thomas Lawson in the late-1970s and early-1980s.¹²² Informed by questions of appropriation, reproducibility, and the signifying structure of images, these critics positioned Goldstein and his work at the center of an emerging aesthetic that was concerned above all with pictures. This narrative, by now familiar and associated with *postmodernism*, has informed not only the recent staging of *The Jump* at Times Square—the event's press release notes: "In the 1970s, a group of young artists began appropriating images from mass media to explore and critique popular culture. Works like Jack Goldstein's brief 1978 film *The Jump* introduced a new language of picture making"¹²³—but also a series of recent critical texts and exhibitions on the work of the artist, including the blockbuster 2009 exhibition *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹²² "Midnight Moment: Jack Goldstein," *Times Square Alliance* (July 2013), <http://www.timessquarenyc.org/times-square-arts/moment/archive/jack-goldstein/index.aspx> (accessed August 12, 2013).

¹²³ *Ibid.*

As the this thesis has argued, such a reading, by now as familiar as it is simplistic, misses much of what of what is interesting of Goldstein's 1970s production. A recent post on the site twitter.com by Los Angeles Times art critic Christopher Knight acutely identifies much of what conventional interpretations of Goldstein's work have missed; in regards to the digital restaging of *The Jump*, he notes: "Yes, but the clattering movie projector, important to Goldstein's Hollywood idea of art, will be missing-in-action."¹²⁴ Indeed, and so were the wall and space of the gallery, both of which Goldstein considered integral parts of *The Jump*. In a 1978 interview with Morgan Fisher the artist argued that:

"The wall [where the film is projected] becomes an object to hold those images. The wall becomes a part of the space in the films. The images in the films become objects in that room by occupying that white rectangle. It's like hanging a painting on a wall, saying, 'It goes there.' Well, my films go there, not just on a screen that you unfold and set up somewhere."¹²⁵

Surely, one has to wonder whether Goldstein would have allowed for *The Jump* to be presented the way it was in Times Square. And while some might contend that the argument here is nothing more than a matter of interpretation—that the real issue here is relative, the view of critics vs. the view of Goldstein, and that too much importance is being given to the word of Goldstein—I would retort by arguing that without the clattering movie projector, without the gallery and wall space "hold those images," much of the point of Goldstein's work is lost, its "critique of popular culture"—by now almost

¹²⁴ Christopher Knight, *Twitter* (July 2013), <https://twitter.com/KnightLAT/statuses/362601635635138561> (accessed September 15, 2013).

¹²⁵ Morgan Fisher, "Talking with Jack Goldstein," *LAICA Journal* 14 (April-May 1977), p. 44.

a catchphrase description of *Pictures* work—is made innocuous. Among signs and billboards for clothing retailers, fast-food restaurants, Broadway plays, and, well, films, the shimmering diver of Goldstein’s *The Jump* blends right in. Without an origin (the projector and film) and without a container to hold the image (the wall), Goldstein’s film becomes pure spectacle, undifferentiated from the object of its critique. If Times Square is any indication, and as demonstrated by the various images, signs and billboards that Goldstein’s lone diver found itself among in its recent restaging, this critique remains as relevant today as ever.

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Illustrations



Figure 1. *Pictures* (exhibition photographs), 1977

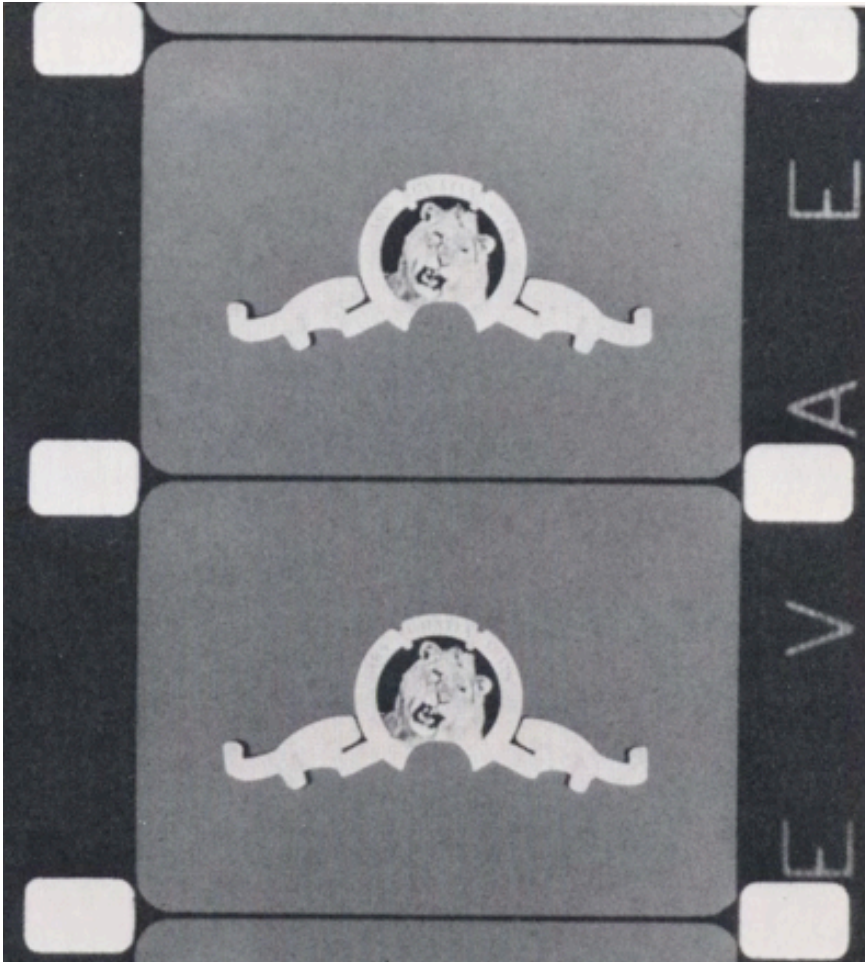


Figure 2. Jack Goldstein, *Metro Goldwyn Mayer*, 1975



Figure 3. Robert Longo, *The American Soldier*, 1977



Figure 4. Robert Longo, *Seven Seals for Missouri Breaks*, 1976

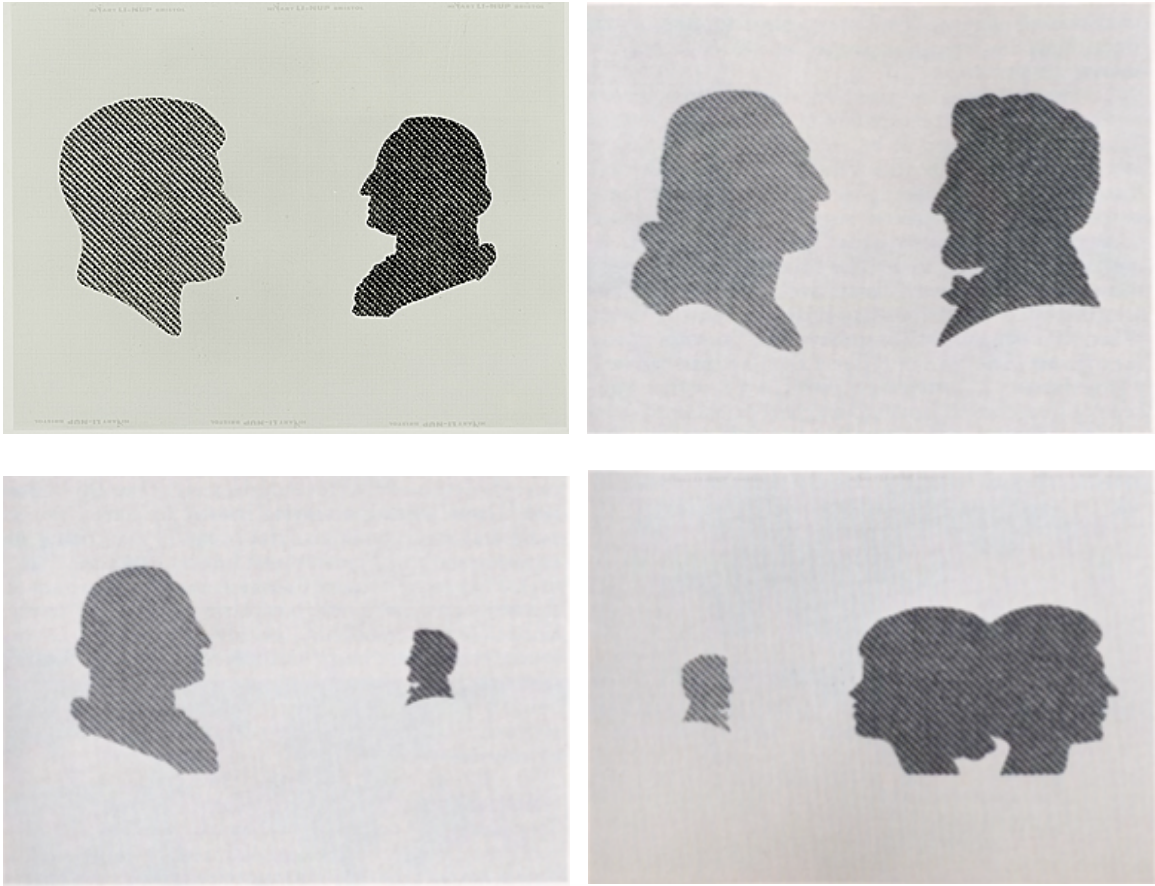


Figure 5. Sherrie Levine, from the series *Sons and Lovers*, 1976



Figure 6. Jack Goldstein, *A Suite of Nine 7-Inch Records with Sound Effects*, 1976

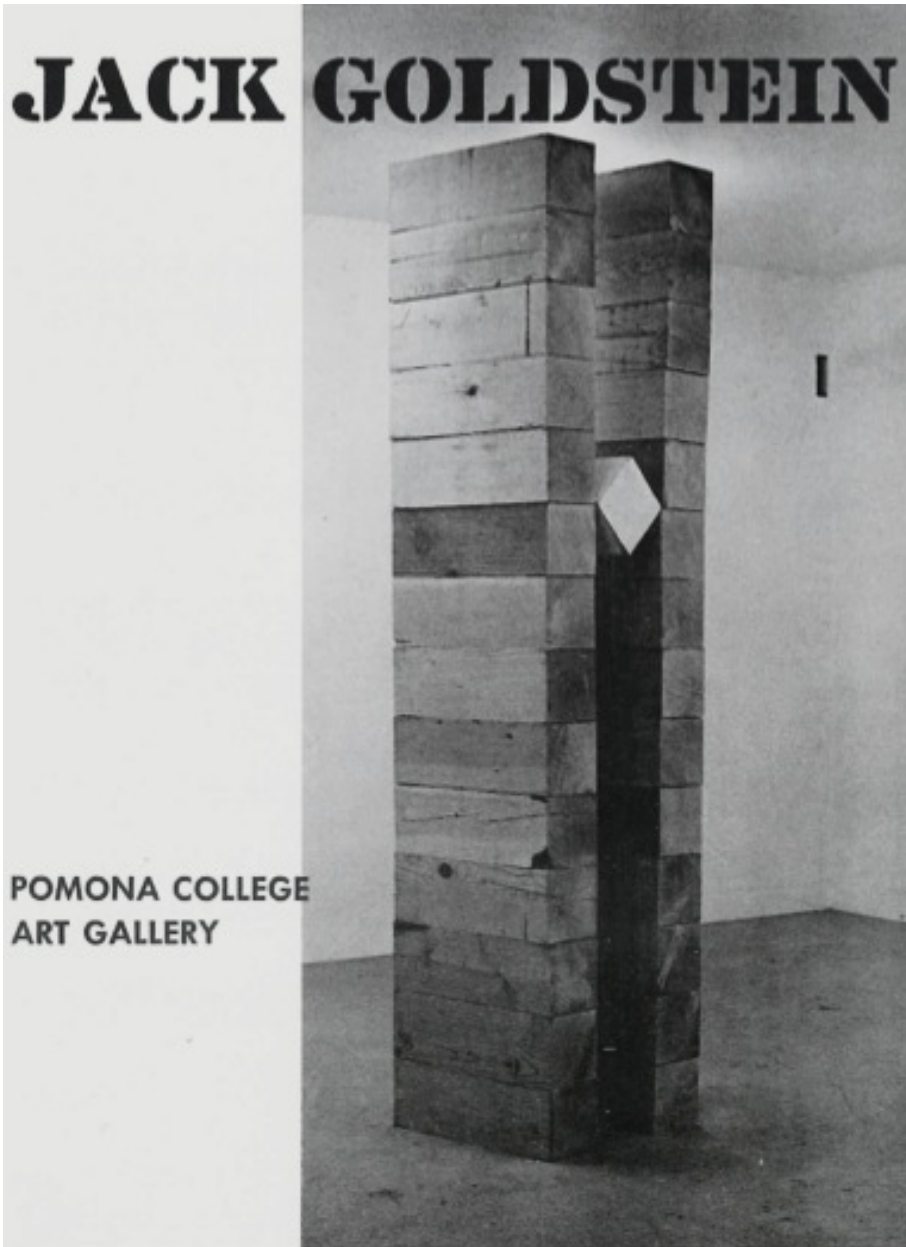


Figure 7. *Jack Goldstein* (exhibition catalogue), 1971



Figure 8. Jack Goldstein, *Untitled (1)*, 1970

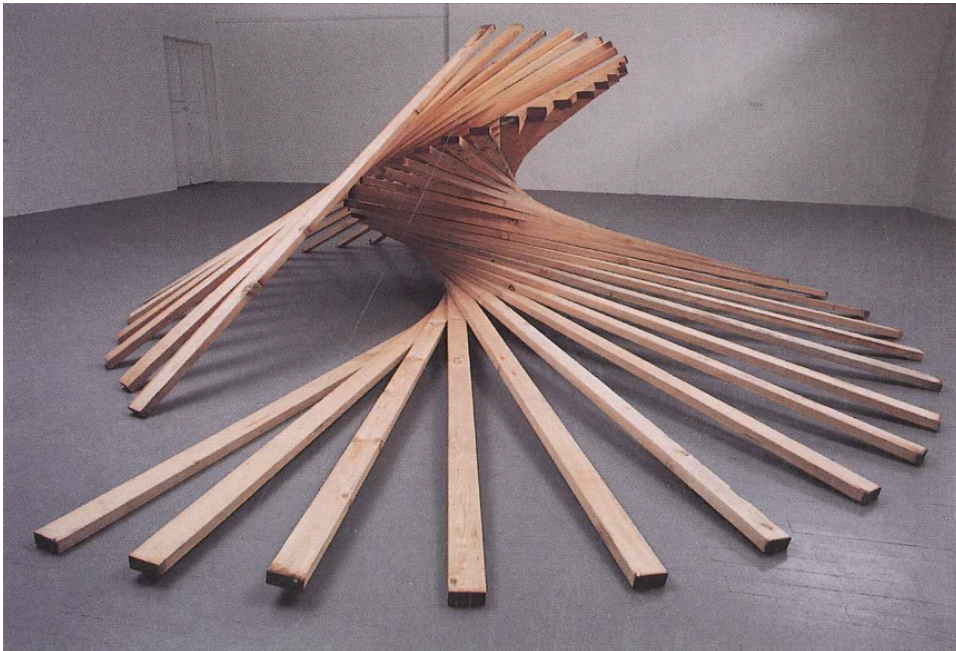


Figure 9. Jack Goldstein, *Untitled (2)*, 1970

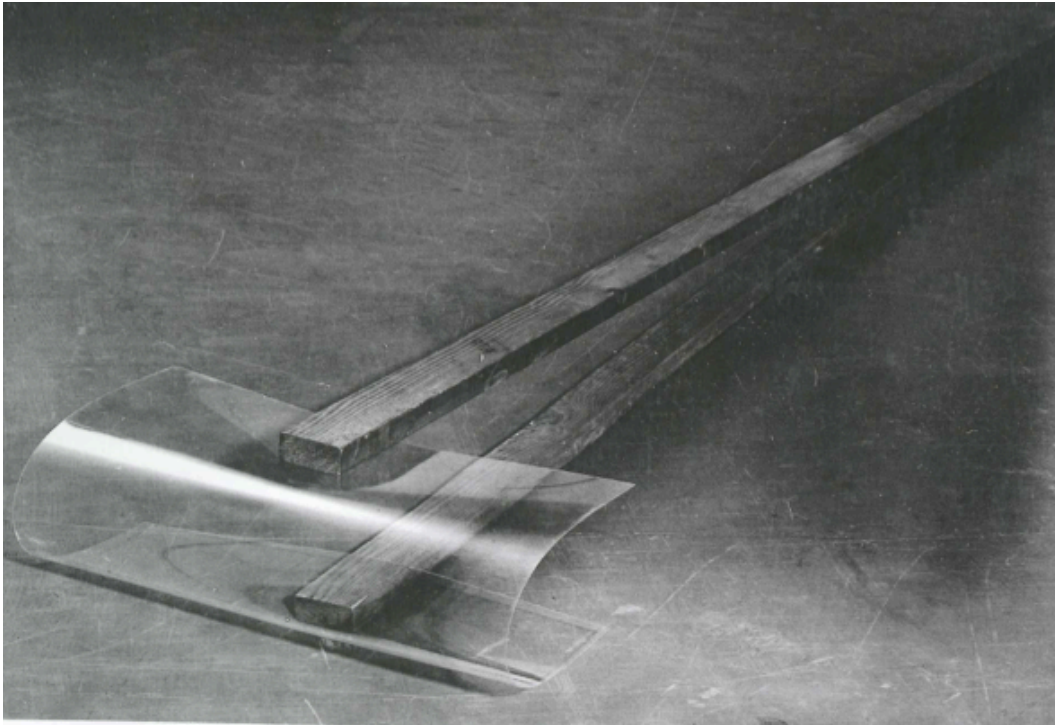


Figure 10. Jack Goldstein, *Untitled (3)*, 1969-1971

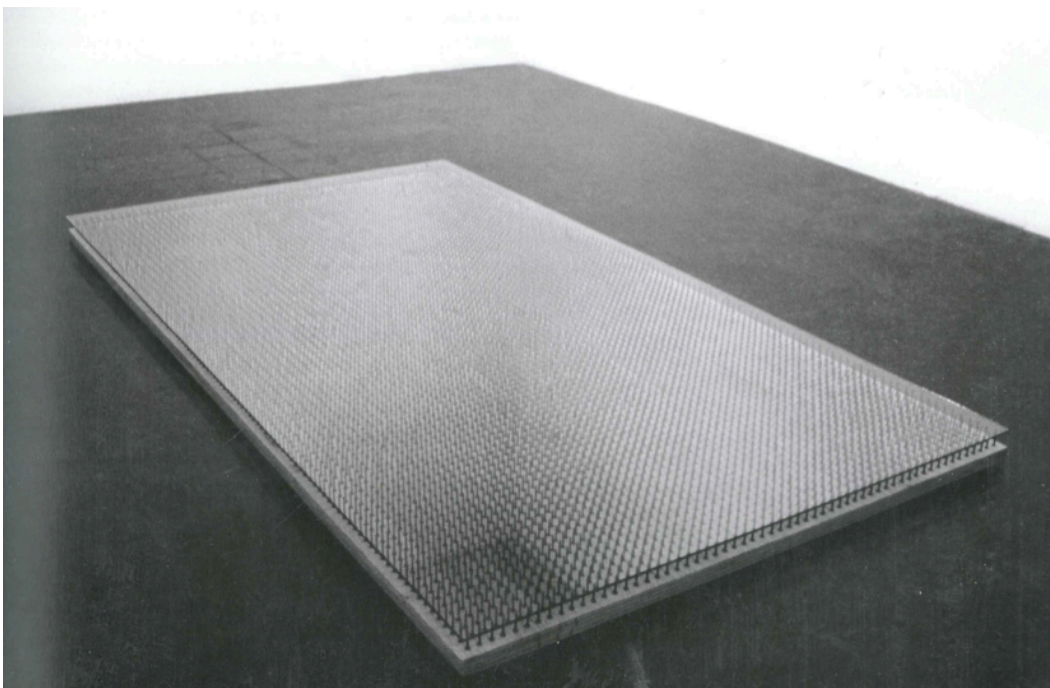


Figure 11. Jack Goldstein, *Untitled (4)*, 1969-1971

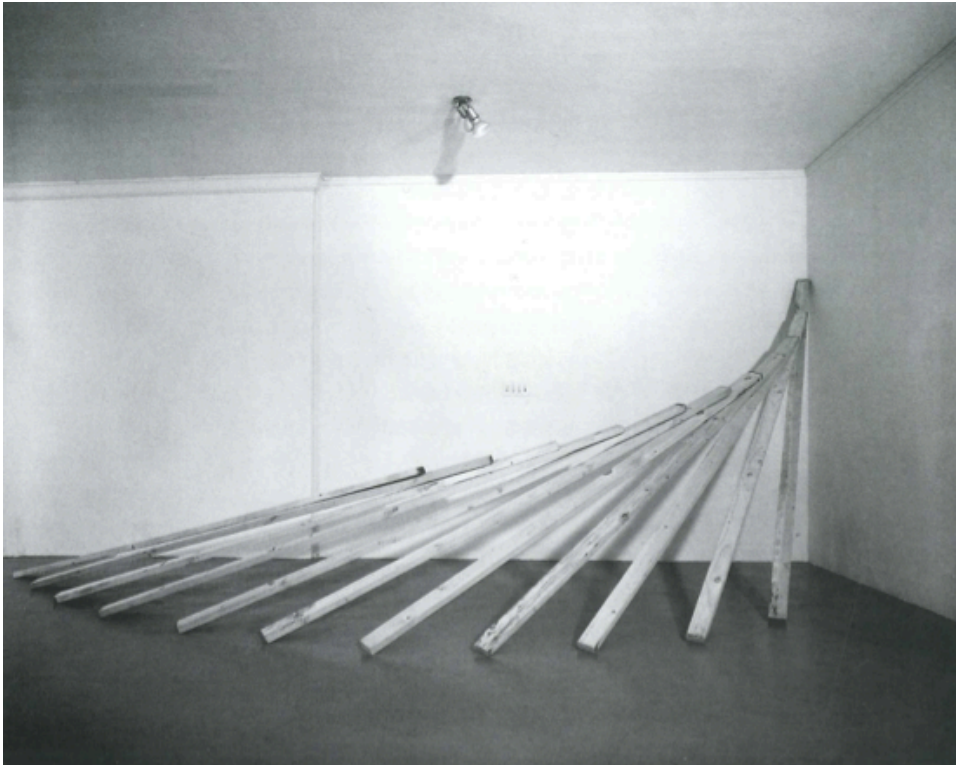


Figure 12. Jack Goldstein, *Untitled (5)*, 1970

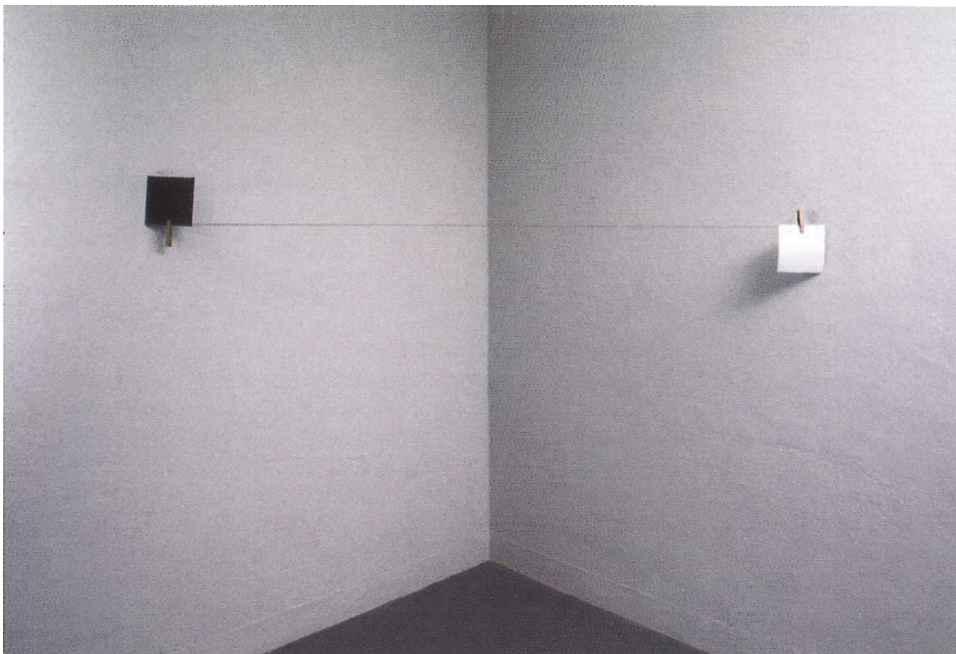


Figure 13. Jack Goldstein, *Untitled (6)*, 1970

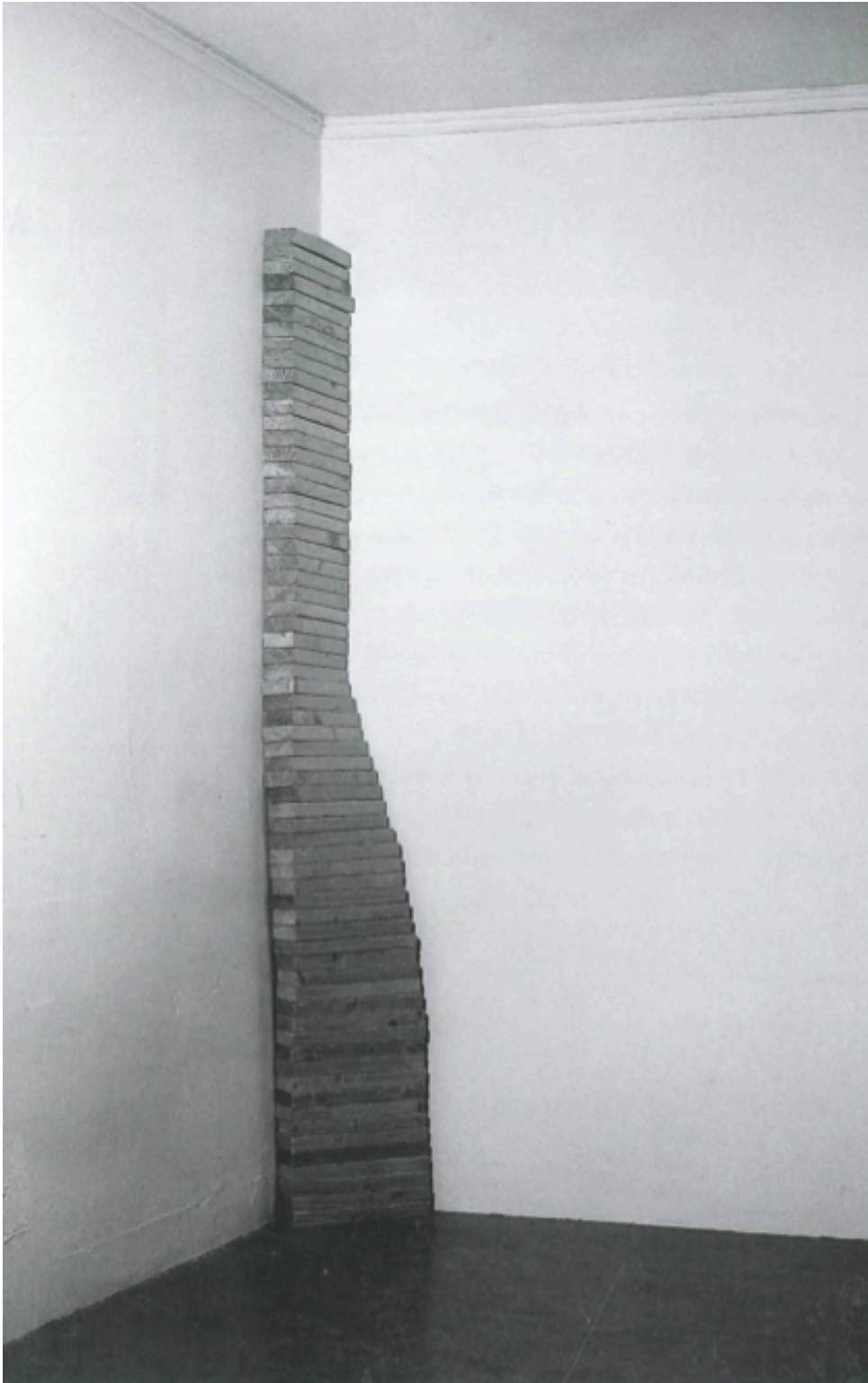


Figure 14. Jack Goldstein, *Untitled (7)*, 1970



Figure 15. Richard Serra, *Prop*, 1968



Figure 16. Richard Serra, *House of Cards*, 1969

JACK GOLDSTEIN PERFORMANCE JUNE 9 8 PM

GALLERY A-402
HOURS 12-5 PM TUES-FRI
California Institute of the Arts
24700 McBean Parkway
Valencia California 91355

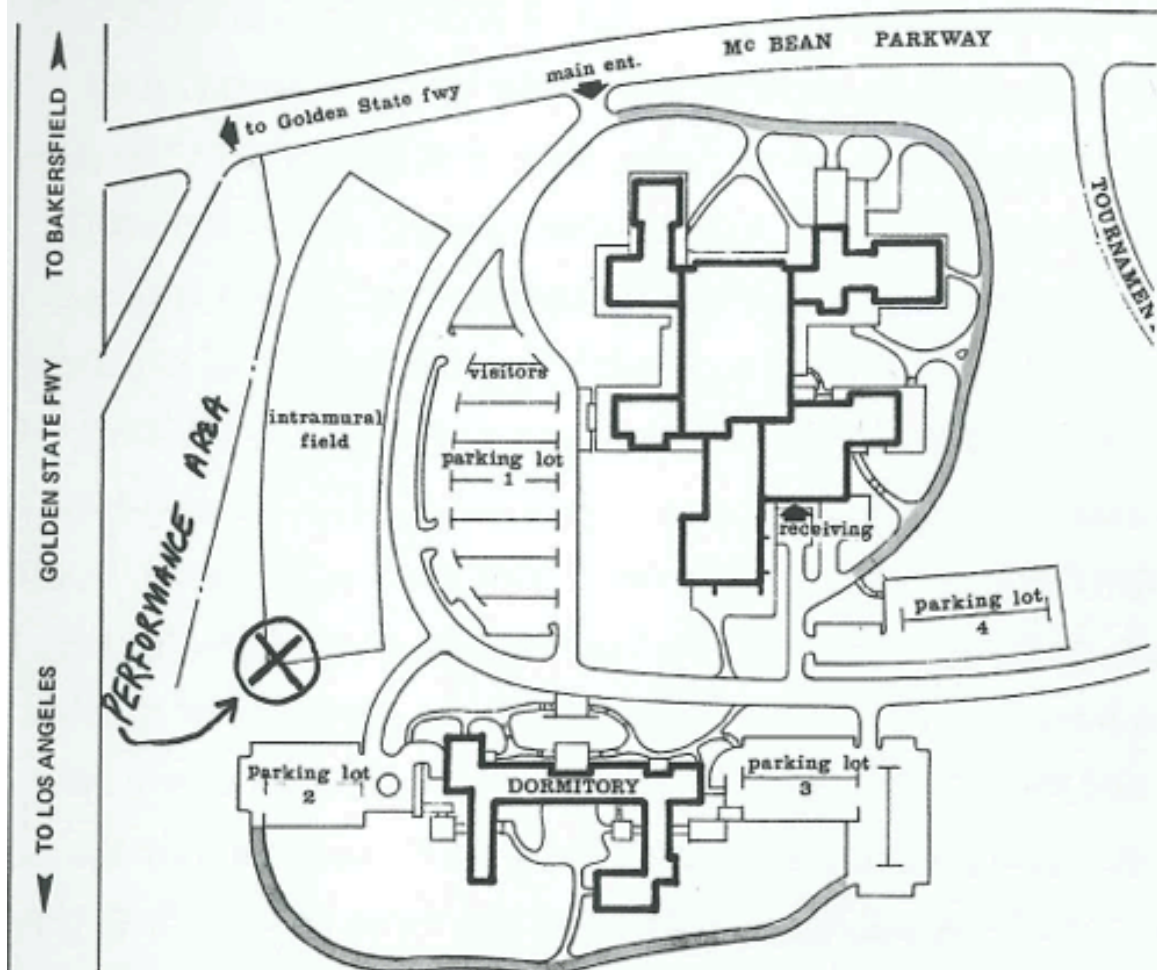




Figure 17. Jack Goldstein, *Untitled (Burial Piece)*, 1972




HIRO KOSAKA
Monday, March 6, 8 PM



WOLFGANG STOERCHLE
Monday, March 13, 8 PM



CHRIS BURDEN
Monday, March 20, 8 PM



ARTIST'S FILMS
Thursday, March 2, 7 PM

ARTIST'S PERFORMANCES
POMONA COLLEGE ART GALLERY

Figure 18. Hiro Kosaka, *Untitled Performance* and Poster, 1972



Figure 19. Bas Jan Ader, *In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles)*, 1973

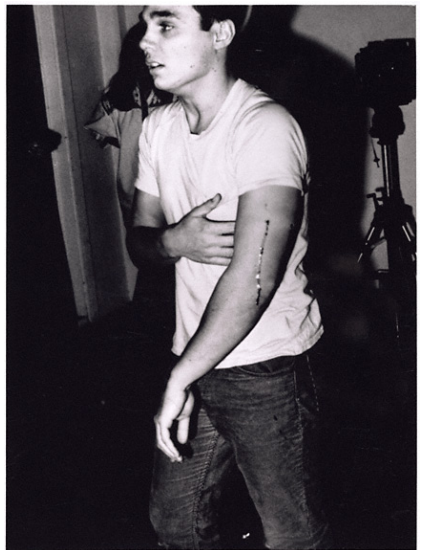


Figure 20. Chris Burden, *Shoot*, 1971



Figure 21. David Salle, *Bearding the Lion in His Den* (installation), 1977/2007

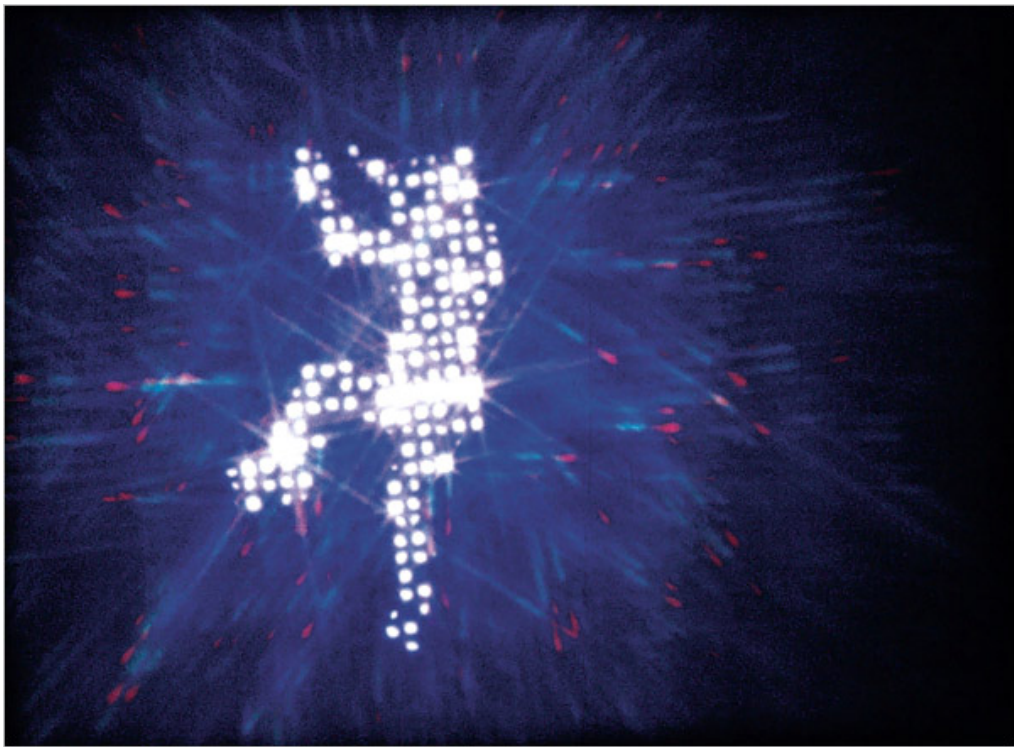
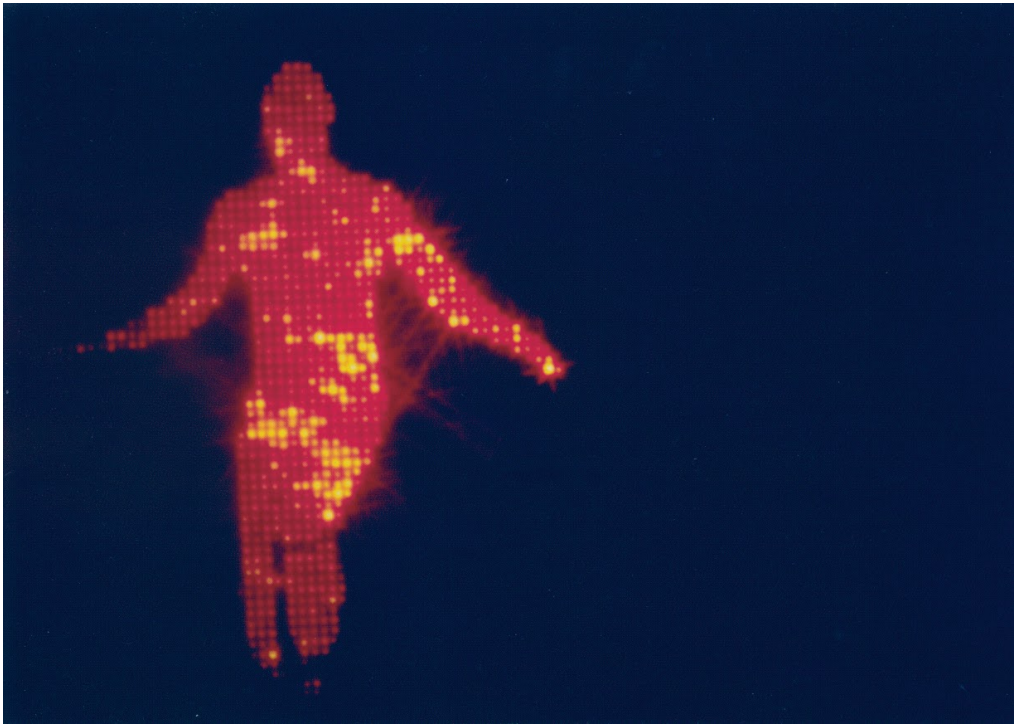


Figure 22. Jack Goldstein, *The Jump*, 1978



Figure 23. Jack Goldstein, *Sound Performance*, 1979/2012



Figure 24. Jack Goldstein, *Two Fencers*, 1977



Figure 25. Robert Morris, *Untitled (Mirrored Cubes)*, 1965

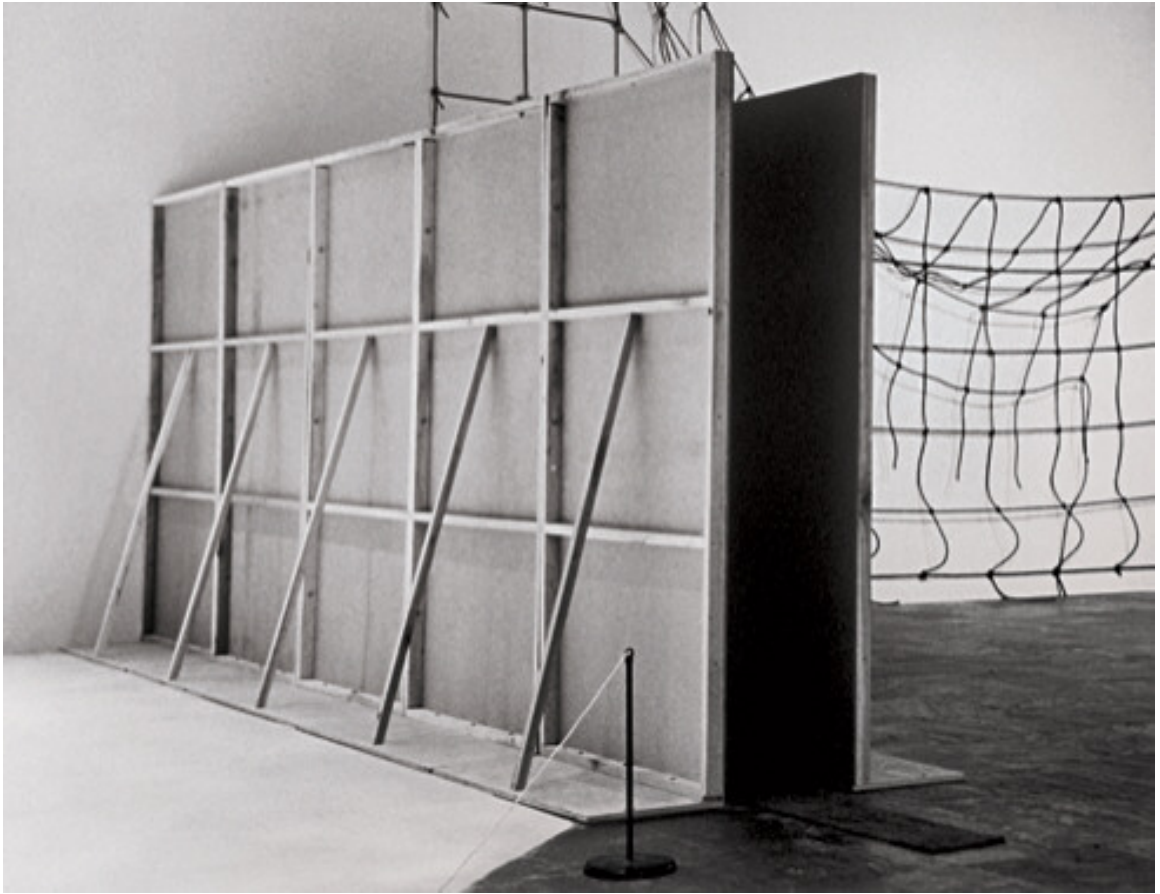


Figure 26. Bruce Nauman, *Performance Corridor*, 1969

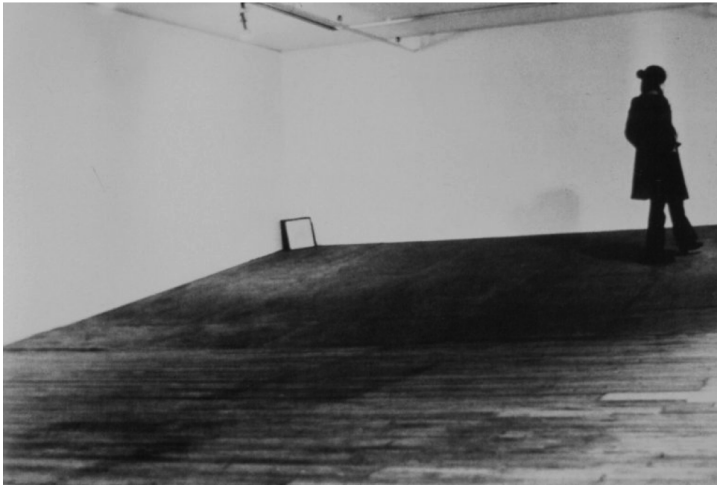


Figure 27. Vito Acconci, *Seedbed*, 1972

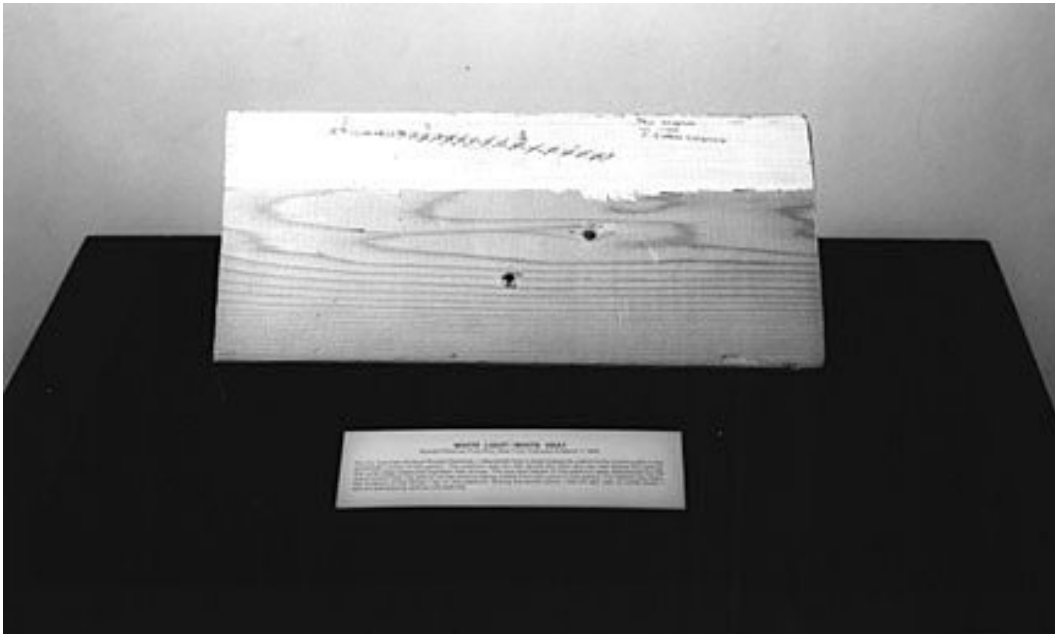
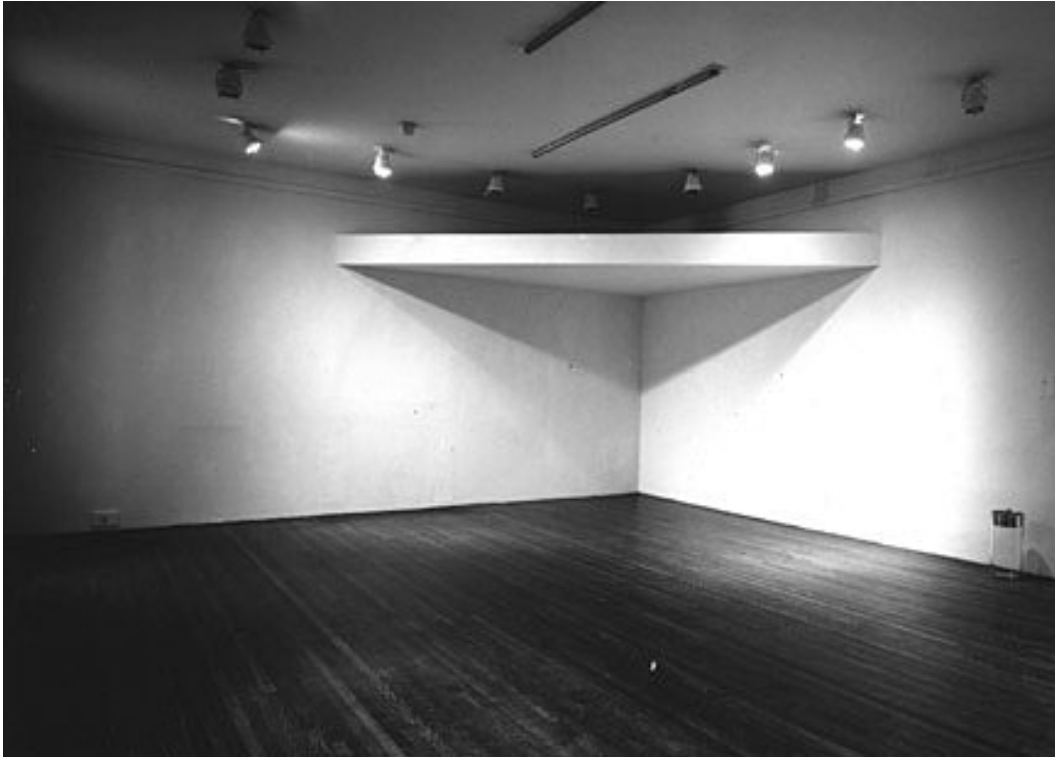


Figure 28. Chris Burden, Installation shot and relic from *White Light/White Heat*, 1975

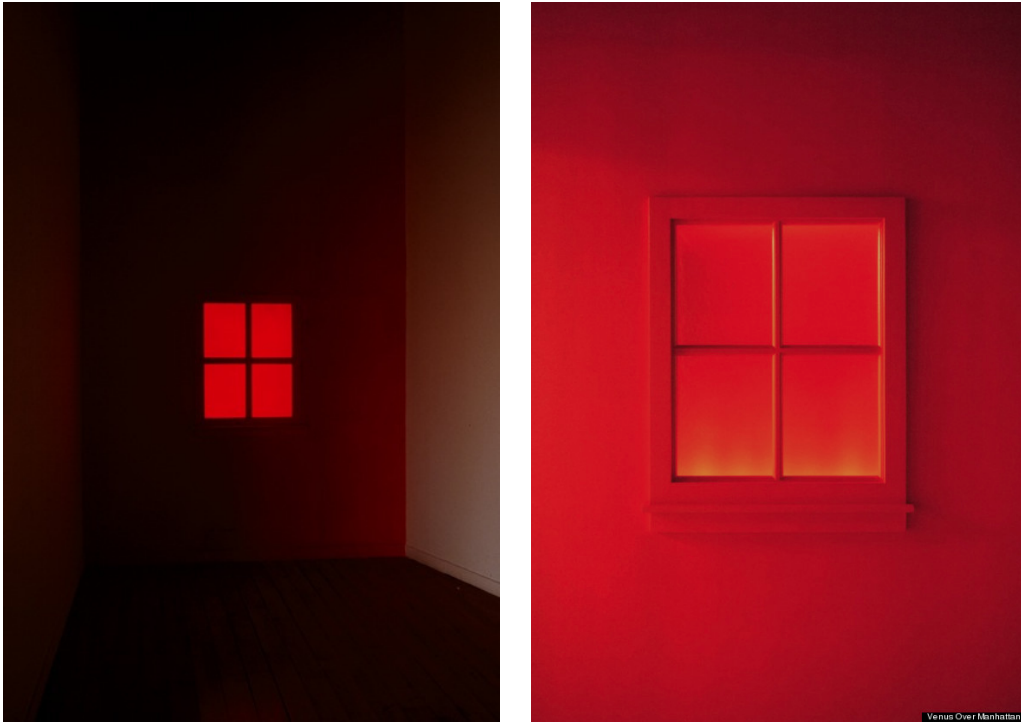


Figure 29. Jack Goldstein, *Burning Window*, 1977





Figure 30. Jack Goldstein, Digitally remastered version of *The Jump*, 1975/2013