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Performing the Museum: Displaying Gender and Archiving Labor, from Performance Art to
Theater

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of
Philosophy in Theater and Performance Studies

by

Gwyneth Jane Shanks

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Theater and Performance Studies

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Professor Sean Aaron Metzger, Chair

In recent decades, art museums' definition of art has expanded to include not only inanimate objects but also live performers. This shift represents a transformation in museum culture and an increase in curated live performance. *Performing the Museum: Displaying Gender and Archiving Labor, from Performance Art to Theater* contributes to emerging debates in performance studies that seek to understand how performance is impacted by museums. This project, however, does not look solely at performance in museum spaces. Rather, it is one of the first to align contemporary museum performance with theatrical works that dramatize the creation and subsequent museum exhibition of visual art. The project examines work by Marina Abramović, Asco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Maria Hassabi, and the musical *Sunday in the Park*

with George. Moving between the museum gallery and the proscenium stage, I examine how performers' labor and certain gendered stereotypes are revealed in the act of being on display.

My analysis focuses on material documents that support or augment a performance, such as photographs, performer contracts, and costumes, as a means to analyze how performers' labor and considerations of gender are rendered legible through what I term "performance remainder." Performance remainder is an analytic strategy that draws together the material objects that support or augment a performance, a performance event, and, finally, a broader landscape of visual cultures. The analytic extends the temporal and material life of a performance, challenging discourses of disappearance or ephemerality that predominate in performance studies. The project reveals how certain types of cultural workers are under or de-valued in relationship to ideas of display, exhibition, and curation. I ultimately argue that the way performance intersects with the strategies and histories of museal display, whether visible in museums or theater spaces, reproduces certain gendered narratives about how women have historically been rendered visible in relationship to museums, exhibition, and the display of visual art. Performance remainder strategically aligns live performance and material objects to foreground the ways in which gender, agency, and labor intersect in the interface between live performance and the art world.

The dissertation of Gwyneth Jane Shanks is approved.

Sue-Ellen Case

Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns

Eleanor Kaufman

Miwon Kwon

Sean Aaron Metzger, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

In memory of my grandparents Ana Pat and Gramps,
and to my family, Hannah, Lori, Alan, and Andrew.

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Preface

This project is theoretical in scope and focuses on how live performance is transformed in relationship to the act of being on display, whether in a museum gallery or on stage. I wish to begin, however, not with my key terms or chapter breakdown, but rather with events that happened in November of 2015, and that, in ways quite distinct from my case studies, foreground the tense interface among performance, bodies, and museum spaces.

It was Friday the thirteenth. I had flown out of Los Angeles International Airport the evening before, and some fifteen hours later, my mother and I were finally in Paris and through customs at Charles de Gaulle Airport. It was still early in the afternoon and, as we waited for the RER B train to arrive, I shifted my heavy backpack on my shoulders, straining to stretch a back and neck sore from hours spent sitting upright in an overcrowded plane. It was my first visit to the city; I was there for a conference focused on performance in museums that was to begin the following week. On our long train ride into the center of Paris and to the apartment my mother and I would be staying at for the next week, we traveled south the city's surrounding suburbs. First created in the nineteenth century in the wake of the Haussmannization —Paris's poor pushed out of the city center as boulevards were expanded and crowded tenements razed to signal the city's modern aspirations—the suburbs are still largely populated by lower income communities and increasing communities of color and first and second generation immigrants to France. A news story I had heard only a few days before leaving for Paris about France's increasingly tense and troubled relationship with its more recent immigrant population re-played in my head as our train traveled past the shells of burned out cars and large, multiunit public housing complexes.

Later that evening, settled in our apartment, I awoke from a long nap to the sounds of sirens. It was after ten PM. I shuffled out to the living room and found my mother sitting tense and still on the couch. In a strangled, yet oddly calm voice, she said, “Something terrible has happened.” The *something terrible* were the attacks carried out by young men radicalized by ISIS. For the next five hours, we sat on the couch, drinking tea, then coffee, then overly sweet wine, watching the events happening in the city unfold before us on the small screen of my computer. We did not sleep well that night.

For the next week, the city was caught in a suspended state of mourning and apprehension. Streets and cafés were largely empty. State operated museums, cultural institutions, and historic sites closed for three days, the effects of the official state of mourning declared by President François Hollande. Piles of wilting red carnations filled the sidewalk in front of the Bataclan theater, the site of so much carnage; they spilled out into the barricaded street and mingled with the electric cords and chairs and lighting instruments of the hundreds of news crews that lined the street. We visited the following week, and the small crowd gathered to pay their respects was largely quiet; only a few days earlier, though, mass panic had erupted in front of the theater, the crowd of mourners convinced they had heard a gunshot. For several days it was unclear whether the conference would go forward; it was co-hosted by the Louvre and the Musée d'Orsay and all the panels and roundtables were to be held between the two museums. In the end, the conference was held, if short some half a dozen participants who decided not to fly to the city.

The first day of the conference was held in the Louvre's theater, located off the museum's sprawling lobby. There was hardly any line to get in, an almost unheard of event, fellow conference-goers assured me. Our bags were searched upon entering the museum, and,

while somewhat perfunctory, it was a safety precaution that was to be implemented at every museum, cathedral, or historic site across the city. Members of the French military armed with automatic weapons patrolled the museum's grounds and were posted at gallery entrances throughout the museum. Walking past armed military personnel into the conference auditorium to then spend many hours in the dark watching videos of performers' bodies animate gallery spaces, I was struck by what exactly my project meant by "museum performance." As I reflect now, having completed my dissertation, on the events of that week, and most particularly on the embodied presence of those young men in uniform, it seems clear that they rendered legible one iteration of the cultural and socio-political stakes of investigating the interface between museums and performance.

While the re-performances of performance artist Marina Abramović's pieces in the galleries of the Museum of Modern Art in New York or the satirical send-up of museum networking in Stephen Sondheim's musical *Sunday in the Park with George* represent versions of how we might imagine the intersection of museums and performance, here I wish to acknowledge the presence of the French military as part of the expanding landscape of museum performance. If their armed presence has drifted far afield from aesthetic performance practices, their bodies and the larger socio-political landscape they rendered legible are, nevertheless, implicated within performance studies and its insistence upon understanding non-performance events *as* the performance. While the spectacle of young men—so very young—with automatic weapons is not new (for many in New York City it was an all too common sight in the wake of 9/11) their presence, interpolated through the lens of state mourning, fear, and acts of terror, gestured at a long history of geopolitical and aesthetic tensions that have scripted the interplay between technologies of display and strategies of performance. My aim here in this short preface

is not to engage the contentious and violent extremism of ISIS or the West's various geopolitical responses towards the threat of the group's aggressive actions, but rather to reflect upon what museums mean and how performance and embodiment function within such institutions. The events in Paris, their aftermath, and my experience attending the conference are thoroughly linked and gesture at museums' imbrication within legacies of nationalism and cultural belonging (and exclusion).

* * *

This project has been the culmination of some six years of graduate school and, most particularly, the past three years. There have been many people who helped me imagine in overt and subtler ways the scope and potential of this research. Most especially I wish to thank Sean Metzger. He has been an unflagging mentor, advisor, and editor, challenging me to deepen my thinking and conclude my paragraphs. Numerous three-hour long meetings over coffee spent discussing the usefulness of Sondheim or what exactly I meant by the phrase “performance remainder” were invaluable. If Sean has had a hand in shaping the direction of my dissertation, I must thank Sue Ellen Case for helping to shape my time in graduate school. She has left an indelible mark upon my scholarship and, of course, upon performance studies. I also wish to thank the other members of my committee: most particularly Eleanor Kaufman and also Miwon Kwon and Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns.

This project has been supported by research funding from the American Society for Theater Research and the Urban Humanities Initiative. I am grateful for their financial support, as it made possible numerous trips to New York to visit archives at the Museum of Modern Art, the Performing Art Library, and the Sean Kelly Gallery. A group of colleagues and friends have provided much needed academic and emotional support: Jamin An, Ellen Gerdes, Areum Jeong,

Sheila Malone, Kelly McCormick, Brynn Shiovitz, and Lisa Sloan. I must also acknowledge the stalwart companionship of my dog Bix; he has been the most constant of writing buddies.

Finally, I wish to thank my family; this project is dedicated to them. Thank you Hannah, Alan, Lori, and Andrew.

Biographical Sketch

Gwyneth Jane Shanks holds a B.A. in Theater, magna cum laude, from Macalester College and a M.A. in Performance Studies from New York University. Her research focuses on the relationship among theater and performance studies, contemporary art, and visual cultures. She is the recipient of fellowships from the American Society of Theater Research, the Asian American Studies Center, and the Urban Humanities Initiative. Additionally, Shanks was awarded the UCLA Chancellor's Prize. Her work has been published in *Third Text*, the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, and *Theater/Performance Historiography: Time, Space, Matter*. As a performer, Shanks has performed with, amongst others, The Trisha Brown Dance Company, Marina Abramović, Jérôme Bel, Maria Hassabi, Sarah Leddy, Meredith Monk, and Alexx Shilling. Shanks worked for three years in the Academic Programs Department at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles.

Introduction

In recent decades, art museums' definition of art has expanded to include not only inanimate objects but also live performers. This shift represents a transformation in museum culture and an increase in curated live performance. *Performing the Museum: Displaying Gender and Archiving Labor, from Performance Art to Theater* contributes to emerging debates in performance studies that seek to understand how performance is impacted by museums. This project, however, does not look solely at performance in museum spaces. Rather, it aligns contemporary museum performance with theatrical works that dramatize the creation and subsequent museum exhibition of visual art. The project examines work by Marina Abramović, Asco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Maria Hassabi, and the musical *Sunday in the Park with George*. Moving between the museum gallery and the proscenium stage, I examine how performers' labor and certain gendered stereotypes are revealed in the act of being on display.

My analysis focuses on material documents that support or augment a performance, such as photographs, performer contracts, and costumes, as a means to analyze how performers' labor and considerations of gender are rendered legible through what I term "performance remainder." Performance remainder is an analytic strategy that draws together the material objects that support or augment a performance, a performance event, and, finally, a broader landscape of visual cultures. It offers a framework for understanding the shifted way in which temporality and embodiment function in performance as it intersects with museal display. This term indicates not simply display in museum spaces, but also performances that, through their structure or content, engage the histories and logics that inform the display of visual art in museums. The analytic extends the temporal and material life of a performance, challenging discourses of disappearance

and ephemerality that predominate in performance studies.¹ Expanding performance's temporal possibility through performance remainder resists ontological arguments, which seek to define *what* performance is. Rather, by framing the interface between performance and museal display through performers' gendered labor the stakes of arguing for an expanded understanding of performance's temporal efficacy become clear. The project reveals how certain types of cultural workers are under or de-valued in relationship to ideas of display, exhibition, and curation. I ultimately argue that the way performance intersects with the strategies and histories of museal display, whether visible in museums or theater spaces, reproduces certain gendered narratives about how women have historically been rendered visible in relationship to museums, exhibition, and the display of visual art. Performance remainder strategically aligns live performance and material objects to foreground the ways in which gender, agency, and labor intersect in the interface between live performance and the art world.

My case studies do not attempt to create a canon of performance works that remain. Nor do they re-narrate performance practices through remains, documentation, or ephemera. Rather, each illustrates a distinct set of concerns, which emerge from linking performance to a constellation of material objects and to visual cultures. My cases studies include different genres of performance being curated in museum spaces and a theatrical production that dramatizes the creation of visual art objects and their subsequent exhibition at a museum. Exhibition venues for the visual arts like museums are attentive to archival processes and thus re-frame performance's temporality, foregrounding the past as opposed to the present-ness so often equated with live performance. Performance further renders legible the importance of corporeality and

¹ See: Herbert Blau, *Take up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Gabriele Brandstetter, "Choreography as a Cenotaph: The Memory of Movement," *ReMembering the Body*, eds. Gabriele Brandstetter and Hortensia Völckers (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz; New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2000) 102-134; Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

embodiment within the contexts of the visual arts. Thus, while the sites of analysis shift (museum gallery to stage) between my case studies, each, nevertheless, can be contextualized through the phrase ‘museal display.’ The description acknowledges the way in which each case study engages the range of connotations associated with the term museal: cultural value, preservation, exhibition, but also the authorial structures of museums themselves, usually invested in producing linear chronologies and histories of aesthetic movements and artists.

Each chapter theorizes performances’ temporality through considerations of performers’ labor and gender as a means to articulate the way in which certain cultural producers and workers are compensated and valued. In each chapter, performance remainder is focalized through different material forms: photographs, dancers’ bodies, performers’ contracts, and costumes and set. Performance remainder, in other words, is theorized across my case studies in relation to different material remainders and to different performance contexts. My first chapter focuses on Chicano art group Asco and Mexican performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña. They began creating work in Los Angeles in the 1970s, exploring how municipal and cultural institutions and economic opportunities conspired to exclude artists of color from mainstream visibility. This chapter aligns: a performance intervention the artists each carried out in Los Angeles, the photographs that document their actions exhibited in museum galleries, and the racialized politics of exclusion that defined the city’s “sanctioned” artistic production. The second chapter focuses on Maria Hassabi’s dance piece PLASTIC, performed at three different art museums in 2015-16. The chapter draws together the live performances of the piece, the archive of pictures of women Hassabi used to create PLASTIC’s movement vocabulary, and the persisting legacy of how female performers’ bodies have been displayed and received in museal contexts. Chapter Three links live re-performances of performance artist Marina Abramović’s work at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 2010 and the Museum of Contemporary Art

(MOCA) in 2011, performers' employment contracts, and both museums' history of presenting women artists. The final chapter focuses on the musical *Sunday in the Park with George*, by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine, which dramatizes the creation of Georges Seurat's painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* and its subsequent exhibition at an unnamed art museum. The chapter frames the 2008 Broadway production alongside certain costume and set elements and a feminist analysis of nineteenth-century French visual cultures. Taken together these four chapters articulate a framework for understanding how time and embodiment function in performance as it intersects with museal display.

Performance remainder pushes against scholarship that has framed performance as “becom[ing] itself through disappearance,” complicating narratives that imagines a linear progression from the start of a performance to its conclusion.² Performance is often understood as “composed in a linear temporality that moves from past through a present to a future.”³ Performance remainder reveals how live performance is concomitant with the material objects that support a performance, placing both in dialogue with visual culture. Such an assertion engages a body of performance studies scholarship that imagines the form as resistant to documentation, reproduction, or preservation. Chapter Three, for instance, draws together Abramović's performances with performers' contracts and the scores of her performances. Reading the live performance through the textual stipulations of the contracts and the scores reveals how the two are not separate, but rather how the textual documents condition the scope of the embodied acts. Performance remainder refutes discourses of ephemerality or disappearance by linking the time of performance to material remainders. By expanding the way

² Phelan 146.

³ Rebecca Schneider, “Still Living: Performance, Photography, and Tableaux Vivants,” *Point & Shoot: Performance and Photography*, eds. France Choinière and Michèle Thériault (Montréal: Dazibao, 2005) 61.

in which performance's temporality is understood, performance remainder necessitates a re-theorization of labor in performance.

Scholars like Danielle Goldman and Randy Martin, drawing upon literature on immaterial labor, have theorized performers' labor through sweat and breath, linking the physical exertion required of performance to a broader economic landscape.⁴ Dance scholar Priya Srinivasan positions the sweat stains that spread across dancers' saris throughout a performance and remain as stains on the garment as the center of a matrix that articulates the ways in which Bharata Natyam circulates globally.⁵ Srinivasan's analysis renders labor legible through performance remainder; put otherwise, performers' labor becomes visible within the performance event and its engagement with material objects. To return to Chapter Three, the contracts and scores of Abramović's performances reveal the ways in which performers became legible in relationship to practices of display. Such documents ensure that the gendered labor of performing is not erased but rather foregrounded.

Scholars like Amelia Jones caution that the interface between performance and museal display objectifies performance by transforming it into objects. She writes, "What are we to do with the fact, that, when the art world and its corollary discourses...embrace performance they seem inevitably to turn live acts into objects?"⁶ Her question engages a wider body of scholarship focused on gender, agency, and objectification.⁷ The way performance intersects

⁴ Danielle Goldman, *I want to Be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010); Randy Martin, "A Precarious Dance, a Derivative Sociality," *TDR: The Drama Review* 56.4 (2012): 62-77.

⁵ Priya Srinivasan, "A 'Material'-ist Reading of the Bharata Natyam Dancing Body: The Possibility of the 'Unruly Spectator,'" *Worlding Dance*, Susan Leigh Foster, ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 53-75; Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

⁶ Amelia Jones, "Temporal Anxiety/'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," in *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance, and the Persistence of Being*, ed. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012) 198.

⁷ See: Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Amelia Jones, *Body Art/ Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

with the strategies and histories of museal display, whether visible in museum contexts or in theater spaces, continually iterates and reproduces certain gendered narratives about how women have historically been rendered visible in relationship to the contexts and discourses of the visual arts. Performance remainder, then, expands upon Jones's concern not by decrying the relationship between performance and material objects, but rather by strategically aligning them to foreground the ways in which gender, agency, and labor intersect in the interface between live performance and the art world. In the final chapter, for example, I focus on the bustled skirt that Dot, the musical's female lead, wears throughout the show. The bustle, in relationship to the character's songs and a history of French visual culture, reveals how desire and consumption circulate in *Sunday*. The bustle centralizes Dot within the musical's dramaturgy, re-framing Seurat and his painting through the lens of commodification. Performance remainder demonstrates persisting legacies of how bodies, in particular women's bodies, have labored and how, within museal display, such labor often goes unmarked.

This project does not attempt a chronology of artists who work between visual art and performance. Nor does it chart a history of performance in museum spaces.⁸ In the past decade,

Press, 1998) Abigail Levine, "Being a Thing: the Work of Performing in the Museum." *Women & Performance: a Journal of Feminist Theory* (2013): 1-13.

⁸ Throughout the nineteenth and into the first half of the twentieth century, performers circulated in exhibition settings like World's Fairs and expositions. Such venues became important pre-cursors to the emergence of contemporary art, natural history, and ethnographic museums. Often described as human zoos, these exhibits displayed people deemed to somehow deviate from the emerging norms of Anglo, Euro-American, middle class respectability. People of color, colonized subjects, differently abled people, or queer folks all were considered not 'normal.' The racist, sexist, colonial, and imperialist legacies of these practices have been taken up by a variety of artists and scholars. Lucian Gomoll's current book project, for example, reads this history onto and through current practices of display performers, troubling contemporary museum performance while also framing nineteenth century subjects as performers and artists rather than victims. Coco Fusco and Gómez-Peña's 1992 performance art piece *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* likewise takes up this history, while, far more controversially, white South African artist Brett Bailey re-imagined the legacies of human zoos in his recent art installation/performance work, *Exhibit B*.

As museums particularly devoted to acquiring and displaying modern art emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, institutions like the Museum of Modern Art, the Walker Art Center, and the Whitney Museum of American Art developed relationships with performing artists. Part of a pre-war

interest in thinking across artistic disciplines, these museums represent an early wave of curating modern art broadly construed. Alfred Barr's initial mission for MoMA embraced not only painting and sculptural objects, but also performance, music, design, and architecture. In 1939, Lincoln Kirstein donated what came to be known as the Dance Archives to MoMA. Comprised of a variety of photographs, prints, slides, films, and books on dance, the archive became its own curatorial department in 1944. Throughout the '40s, the department organized several exhibitions on figures like Isadora Duncan and Anna Pavlova. In 1948, however, it dissolved, the result of years of infighting as to the role of dance and theater within the museum's larger mission. (Reverted back to its original title, Kirstein's materials were bequeathed to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, before returning to MoMA in 1990.) Similarly, the Walker's history with performance reaches back to the 1930s, when the Walker reimaged itself as an arts center inclusive of performance, film, and educational programming. Founded in 1931, the Whitney's initial focus on performance was through their *Composer's Showcase* series that supported the work of avant-garde composers and hosted concerts by artists like Igor Stravinsky and Henry Cowell.

Throughout the 1960s and '70s MoMA and the Whitney continued their interest in performance, and the Tate Modern in London also played host to authorized and unauthorized performance events. At MoMA, the majority of these performances, by choreographers like Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, and Simone Forti, took place in the museum's garden as part of their *Summergarden* series begun in 1971. Still other events were unauthorized protest events that took over galleries or the garden. Most of these events, whether sanctioned by MoMA or not, are poorly documented if at all. As part of the Whitney's *Composer's Showcase*, Rainer presented *Continuous Project—Altered Daily* in 1970 and Trisha Brown presented *Walking on the Wall* in '71. Between '69 and '73 choreographers like Deborah Hay, Meredith Monk, Paxton, Alex Hay, and Lucinda Childs all presented works at the Whitney. MoMA, the Whitney, and the Walker (which, unlike MoMA or the Whitney had dedicated theater spaces for performance) are most associated with performance in the '60s and '70s, in part because they still maintain or have recently increased the amount of performance they have on offer. However, the Seattle Art Pavilion and Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, amongst others, were also a part of what art historian Claire Bishop refers to as the "second wave of dance programing," in museum spaces. Catherine Wood, a performance curator at the Tate, is currently working on an archival research project that seeks to chronicle the Tate's early history with performance, which is primarily a series of protest performance actions from the 1970

While Bishop, amongst others, has laid out a clear genealogy for dance in the museum, performance art practices remain less accounted for. Andrea Fraser's *Museum Highlights: a Gallery Talk* from '89 and Fusco and Gómez-Peña's piece, mentioned earlier, from '92 represent two important works within a genealogy of museum performance. Certainly Fraser's work, and to a lesser extent Fusco and Gómez-Peña's piece, were part of a broader landscape of conceptual art practices that sought to critique the museum as institution. Following these pieces, however, performance art did not reenter the museum with some force until the early '00s with widely publicized events like *Seven Easy Pieces* at the Guggenheim Museum and *The Artist is Present* at MoMA. While these two exhibits, featuring Marina Abramović and re-performance, generated extensive press coverage, performance art from the '60s and '70s is more generally being curated in museum shows, including through photographs and film. *Off the Wall: Part 1—Thirty Performative Actions* (as well as *Part 2*, which re-staged Brown's equipment pieces from the '70s) at the Whitney in 2010 focused on actions using the body across "live performance, in front of the camera, or in relation to a photographic... surface, or drawing." Likewise, survey shows like *Under the Big Black Sun*, which Chapter One looks at, or the *Pacific Standard Time Festival* in 2012 engaged a trajectory of California performance art practices (like Suzanne Lacy, Chris Burden, and Gómez-Peña), placing such works in conversation with a broader landscape of art practices. This recuperation of performance (and dance) from earlier decades has raised curatorial questions about how best to re-present such works. Through live performances? Photographs? Films (if they exist)? This project engages these debates, framing the political and economic stakes of certain curatorial choices.

Most recently, museums like MoMA and the Tate are re-imagining themselves as venues within which dance artists can develop and present new works, a trend, which connects to earlier waves of dance in museums. MoMA and the Tate both have artist-in-residency programs specifically designed for

performance has gained an unprecedented visibility in museums, as institutions like the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Tate Modern in London, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris increasingly curate live performance and re-imagine their role in acquiring, archiving, and presenting time-based art. Projects like Boris Charmatz's Musée de la Danse, Mark Franko and André Lepecki's co-edited edition of *Dance Research Journal* on dance in the museum, and forthcoming books by Shannon Jackson, Ramón Rivera-Servera, and Lucian Gomoll attest to the prominence and traction of 'museum performance.'⁹ As museums, like MoMA or the Tate, shift their institutional infrastructures and embark on concerted efforts to integrate live works into their exhibition and archival missions, performance-based artists are likewise imagining museum spaces as new venues within which to present their work.¹⁰ In light of these shifts, there are

choreographers. They are also, following the Walker, constructing spaces (stages, black box theaters, studio space, dressing rooms) specifically designed to accommodate performing artists. Choreographers like Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker and Xavier Le Roy, in particular, have developed dance works for museum spaces that conceptualize their choreographic practices through the exhibitionary logics of the museum. Le Roy's *Retrospective* is an exhibition composed of choreographed actions carried out by performers who interact with visitors. The actions create situations among performers, the space, and visitors that foreground how time is used, consumed, and produced. As much as dance might be said to be enjoying a particular resurgence in museum spaces, it is worth noting that it is a relatively narrow understanding of dance: conceptual, contemporary, and post-modern.

See: Claire Bishop, "The Perils and Possibilities of Dance in the Museum: Tate, MoMA, and Whitney," *Dance Research Journal* 46. 3 (2014): 62-76; *Another Modern Art: Dance and Theater*, organized by MoMA archivist Michelle Elligott in 2009; Serge Laurent, Catherine Wood, and Ana Janevski, *De la Performance au Spectacle Vivant*, Le Musée par la Scène, Le Spectacle Vivant au Musée: Pratiques, Publics, Médiations, Paris, 18-20 Nov. 2015. Unpublished conference roundtable.

⁹ See: Mark Franko and André Lepecki, "Editor's Note: Dance in the Museum," *Dance Research Journal* 46. 3 (2014): 1-4.

Shannon Jackson's forthcoming book is entitled *The Way We Perform Now*, taking its title from a short essay also published in Franko and Lepecki's volume of DRJ. Ramón Rivera-Servera's forthcoming book is entitled *Exhibiting Performance: Race, Museum Cultures, and the Live Event*, and Lucian Gomoll's manuscript is titled *Performativity and Difference in Museums*.

See also: Under the Radar's symposium entitled *The Black Box and the White Cube* in January of 2012; the Walker Art Center's conference on curating performance titled *New Circuits: Curating Contemporary Performance* in September of 2015; and the conference, *Le Musée par la Scène*, held in Paris in November of 2015 on museum performance.

¹⁰ In turn, performance-based artists are increasingly viewing museum spaces as viable venues within which to present their work, and are creating pieces specifically designed to accommodate the shifted conditions of viewership and attention in such spaces. See Le Roy's *Retrospective*, de Keersmaeker's *Work/Travail/Arbeid*, and Tino Sehgal's practice of selling his dance scores as art objects. Toni Pape,

numerous projects, emanating out of museums' own archives and academia focused on generating histories of museum performance.¹¹ While this project engages this shift, (and indeed was conceptualized alongside a series of personal experiences performing in museum spaces), my aim is to use the current popularity of museum performance to show the necessity of understanding performance as expanding beyond concerns of liveness, co-presence, and ephemerality.

Performance

The term 'performance,' as Diana Taylor reminds us, is not easy to pin down.¹² It can denote a diversity of embodied practices, from performance art, to dance, to theater; the word is perhaps overly expansive in terms of its definitions. However, for this project, which looks across performance act, performative actions, contemporary dance, and the musical, that kind of expansiveness is useful. Performance here does not refer to a specific genre of performance. Instead, my case studies each articulate a link between performance's temporality, performers' labor, and considerations of gender. The project looks across these performances as a means to frame the expansiveness of the interface among performance, museums, and art markets in order to articulate how performers and performance is valued.

The increasing visibility of time-based and embodied art in visual art contexts and the dramatization of the art world in theater pieces reveal a need to think across disciplines. Even as scholars, artists, and curators might find common-cause discussing hybridized art making and the

Noémie Solomon, and Alanna Thain, "Welcome to this Situation: Tino Sehgal's Impersonal Ethics," *Dance Research Journal* 46.3 (2014): 89-100.

¹¹ Wood is part of a research team, funded through the Arts and Humanities Research Council, focused on researching and preserving the history of performance at the Tate. The research project is carried out in partnership with Exeter University and Gabriella Giannachi. "Performance at Tate: Collecting, Archiving and Sharing Performance and the Performative," *Tate*, Oct. 2014, 2 April 2016 <<http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/performance-tate-collecting-archiving-and-sharing-performance-and-performative>>.

¹² Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) 11-15.

potential for presenting performance in museum spaces, Shannon Jackson cautions “the forms...we have experienced will affect how we gauge the innovation of a cross-arts experiment.” She continues that these disciplinary histories “affect what reference points and vocabularies we use,” to discuss performance practices.¹³ One result of this type of cross-disciplinary thinking has been to erect binaries between performance, on the one hand, and visual art and museum spaces, on the other, effectively turning the heterogeneous worlds of ‘performance’ and ‘visual art’ into discrete entities.¹⁴

This binary is often short handed through the terms ‘white cube’ and ‘black box.’ While the linguistic parallelism between the phrases establishes an entry point for discussing museum or gallery performance, seemingly engaging a spatial history of visual art and performance, the terms, nevertheless, reify certain genealogies of exhibition and theatrical presentation. The white cube invites an attention to current exhibitionary logics of modern and contemporary art exhibition spaces, while obscuring genealogies of display that reach back to the nineteenth century. This lineage, not captured by the term ‘white cube,’ would engage venues like World’s Fairs and international expositions, invested in displaying art and culture—and people. Similarly, ‘black box’ notes a very specific trajectory of performance practice, marking a break with the proscenium stage and with popular forms of performance entertainment that circulated in the early half of the twentieth century, often intersecting with World’s Fairs and expositions. The white cube/black box binary obfuscates important moments of overlap between performance and visual art contexts. However, this history is key for my project, which invests not only in performances in museum spaces, but in understanding the intersection between performance and visual art through theater as well. Thus, while the white cube/black box binary might serve as a useful place to begin to note the dissonances between the two, the discussion cannot end there.

¹³ Shannon Jackson, “The Way We Perform Now,” *Dance Research Journal* 46. 3 (2014): 56.

¹⁴ Jackson 56.

Rather, it is imperative to engage histories of display and performance that reach beyond the connotations contained within either spatial demarcation.

This project questions the interpolative force the contexts and discourses of the visual arts have upon live bodies and the agency afforded them, and is attentive to the expanded genealogies that should be brought to bear upon the interface between performance and display. Here I follow performance studies scholars like Gomoll, Rivera-Servera, and Harvey Young who return to histories of embodied display as a means of contextualizing current exhibitionary formations of race, gender, disability, and sexuality.¹⁵ Scholars working in museum studies have addressed concerns of interest to performance studies through visitor experience, public programing, educational aims, and exhibit design.¹⁶ How, each chapter questions, does an understanding of the contexts and discourses of the visual arts shift by foregrounding performance and attendant concerns like time, embodiment, behavior, and experience?

Reminders

Performance remainder articulates an analytic strategy within which it is possible to imagine performance “as a medium in which disappearance...becomes materiality.”¹⁷ The quotation, from Rebecca Schneider’s 2001 article “Archives: Performance Remains,” is a

¹⁵ Gomoll and Rivera-Servera’s current book projects both address the interface among current presentations of performance in museum spaces, nineteenth century practices of display people—particularly communities of color, colonized subjects, disabled peoples, and people otherwise deemed not ‘normal’—and current ways of understanding racialization.

See: Lucian Gomoll, “Objects of Dis/Order: Articulating Curiosities and Engaging People at the Freakatorium,” *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities*, ed. Amy K. Levin (Lanham, England: Altamira Press, 2007) 201-216 and “The Performative Spirit of Amalia Mesa-Bains’ *New World Wunderkammer*,” *Cultural Dynamics* 27. 3 (2015): 357-377; Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

¹⁶ See: Rika Burnham and Elliott Kai-Kee, *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011); Terry Barrett, “Studies Invited Lecture: About Art Interpretation for Art Education,” *Studies in Art Education* 42. 1 (2000): 5-19; Bonnie Schatello-Sawyer, et al, *Adult Museum Programs: Designing Meaningful Experiences* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002); Suzanne Gaskins, “Designing Exhibitions to Support Families’ Cultural Understandings,” *Exhibitionist* 27.1 (2008): 11-19.

¹⁷ Rebecca Schneider, “Archives: Performance Remains,” *Performance Research* 6.2 (2001): 106.

seemingly paradoxical assertion that contradicts scholars like Herbert Blau or Peggy Phelan who understood performance as “always at the vanishing point” or “becom[ing] itself through disappearance.”¹⁸ What Schneider asks scholars of performance to attend to, I believe, is not so much its temporal aspect (the notion that live events unfold, linearly over time) but rather the material—palpable, concrete, fleshy—things and bodies, which challenge performance’s ephemerality. She insists on directing our attention back to the present of what remains: to the triangulation among performance, material objects, and visual culture.

In her oft-quoted sentence, Peggy Phelan wrote, “To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance’s being . . . becomes itself through disappearance.”¹⁹ She continues, “Performance’s only life is in the present,” and the form cannot be recorded or documented—cannot remain, in other words. Once performance is documented it “becomes something other than performance.”²⁰ Continually disappearing before a viewer’s eyes, for Phelan performance effectively circumvents capitalist economies of reproduction and museums’ desire to “preserve and honor objects.”²¹ More recent scholarship, however, by scholars like Schneider, Philip Auslander, and Matthew Reason has challenged the authority of Phelan and others claims.²² Arguing that there is a political imperative to theorizing performance as able to remain, scholars

¹⁸ Phelan 146.

¹⁹ Phelan 146.

Phelan establishes a definition of performance predicated upon the non-rehearsed performance event. This definition is practically indebted to certain avant-garde strategies of performance, and occludes understands of performance indebted to theatre. For instance, Richard Schechner’s definition of performance as “twice-behaved behavior” falls out of the temporal ontology Phelan establishes for performance. Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) 36.

²⁰ Phelan 146.

²¹ Phelan 165.

²² See: Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediated Age* (New York: Routledge, 1999); “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” *A Journal of Performance and Art* 28. 3 (2006): 1-10; Matthew Reason, *Documentation, Disappearance, and the Representation of Live Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

asserted that performance can effect transformation beyond the temporal scope of an ordinary live event (Phelan, for example, has contended that the potential of live performance is the “possibility of [viewers and performers] being transformed during the event’s unfolding”).²³ To resist Phelan’s ontology is to imagine what types of performances or performers are rarely seen live as well for whom being in live co-presence is not a neutral proposition.

Performance studies scholar Harvey Young, building upon Schneider and Phelan’s work, effectively outlines some of these politics in his work on the ways blackness intersects with scenes of capture, arrest, and assault. These scenes of violence play out, in his argument, as racialized performances of black experience in the US, and illustrate the embodied and political stakes of being live, as it were. Theorizing the body as a performance remain, Young writes,

It [the performance remain] brings the past into the present and, in so doing, allows its possessor to touch history...It...creates the possibility of an imagined, personal interaction with the original body, even as a construct, that exists within the present as a series of parts. In short, the value of the performance remain is in its seeming ability to reactivate the expired performance event.²⁴

Following Young, performance remainder is a means of activating a performance event alongside material objects and visual cultures and, thus, extending the transformative or experiential potential Phelan assigns to live performance. While Young frames performance remain as tied to the body of the performer, performance remainder, as an analytic strategy, expands the linear, temporal progression from past performance to performance remain Young narrates. Performance remainder does not solely seek to reactivate a past performance through a relic from that event. Rather, performance remainder allows scholars to analyze performance and object concurrently, destabilizing the linear temporality of performance embedded within Young’s notion of performance remain. While Chapter One explores this temporal advance, focused on photographs of past performance events, subsequent chapters complicate this linear

²³ Peggy Phelan, “Marina Abramovic: Witnessing Shadows,” *Theater Journal* 56 (2004): 575.

²⁴ Young 188.

move, imagining how live performance *and* performance remainders can be concomitant with each other.

The implications of this assertion are several. Firstly, it foregrounds how performance is always already constituted in relationship to an extended framework of documentation, contracts, props, costumes, and referents to other artworks or performances. Secondly, it brings, as Young writes, the past into the present but also acknowledges the way in which performance—particularly performers’ bodies—are over-determined by a set of historic formations, which persist alongside the performance event. For example, the second chapter analyzes the tense reception dancers performing PLASTIC received at the three museums at which the piece was presented. Dancers were poked by visitors, spit on, yelled at, and ignored. This chapter argues that PLASTIC produced a zone of encounter between dancers and viewers that evoked politics of embodied display and reception, which emerged in the nineteenth century. Performance remainder reveals how such histories are not forgotten but implicated within the present analysis of a performance event, producing effects that linger into the present.

Continuing the arguments made in her 2001 article, Schneider’s 2011 book *Performance Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* expands how scholars might challenge the tenacity of claims that assert performance’s inherent ephemerality. For Schneider, imagining performance as ephemeral or as becoming itself through disappearance is to produce an ontology for performance always already beholden to the logic of the archive.²⁵ It is the archive that reiterates the call for preservation and reproducibility, and the archive that disavows the potency of embodied memory.²⁶ Her work acknowledges how disappearance and remainders

²⁵ Schneider, *Performance Remains*, 99.

²⁶ Schneider’s book largely backgrounds materiality in favor of re-imagining performance’s temporality through notions of reenactment and re-performance. The ‘re’ of such phenomenon, for Schneider, presses against linear temporality and offers the suggestion, instead, of “recurrence, or return.” Her theory of reenactment mobilizes concurrent temporalities and depends upon a theoretical triptych: syncopated time,

are not antithetical. She writes, “disappearance is that which marks all documents, records, material remains...remains [not only performances] become themselves through disappearance as well.”²⁷ Schneider’s argument hinges upon the logic of poststructuralism: the document is that which does not disappear, becomes itself through its very resistance to disappearance. Macabrely playing upon the link between flesh and bone, Schneider writes that bones assert the absence of flesh as much as they also “script that flesh as disappearing.”²⁸ While Schneider asserts the imbrication between disappearance and remains, we might more materially note that all documents are slowly (or more quickly) disintegrating. Archives are inherently unstable places, the organization, and structuring logic of such sites always-inadequate buttresses against the encroachment of time, decay, and material degradation.

The first chapter in this project illustrates the political urgency of Young and Schneider’s arguments re: performance remainder. Focused on photographic remainders of performance actions undertaken by Asco and Gómez-Peña in the 1970s, this chapter notes that disappearance is not simply a neutral, temporal description of performance. To disappear is political. For Asco and Gómez-Peña, whose work was invisibilized by hegemonic structures of municipal

theatricality, and the inter(in)animate. Schneider borrows the term ‘syncopated time’ from Gertrude Stein. For Stein, syncopated time refers to the way in which times draw into one another, are never singular. Stein writes, “This that the thing seen and the thing felt about the thing seen not going on at the same tempo is what makes the being at the theatre something that makes anybody nervous.” It is a nervousness that arises most particularly while watching theatre, which, as Schneider explicates, is a “medium in the crease or fold of its own condition.” Watching a play one is never only in the now of the moment, but rather is simultaneously present in the past times of the writing of the script, the numerous productions that preceded the one being performed, not to mention the countless versions of the current production that occurred during the rehearsal process. Within the theatrical event, within the reenactment, times fold upon each other, muddling straight thinking. Performance studies scholar Richard Schechner argues theatre, akin to syncopated time, is never for the first time, is never only about the instantaneous now of co-presence, but, rather, like “all communicative behavior” is “restored” or “twice-behaved.” To give Stein the last word, though, syncopated time is time that occurs in the meantime—those times that intervene in straight time, sidle along next to the main thread of a time. The meantime of syncopated time is a project of memory. Syncopated time(s) are those past times that arise to the surface within the now, puncturing the membrane of the supposedly contained present. Schneider, *Performance Remains*, 30. Schneider, *Performance Remains*, 88, 89. Schechner 36.

²⁷ Schneider, “Archives,” 104.

²⁸ Schneider, *Performance Remains*, 103.

oppression and museal exclusion, the photographs importantly render the artists' presence legible within Los Angeles. The photographs of their work, the opening chapter argues, perform presence as much as the artists' initial performative actions called attention to the marginalization of Chicano artists within Los Angeles.

Hired early on in her career to revitalize a museum's curation of contemporary art and performance, performance programmer and the artistic director of the Center of the Art of Performance Kristy Edmunds has discussed the pragmatic concerns associated with inviting performers into museum spaces. She recalls having to re-write forms, shifting terms like "art object" to "performer," and "crate costs" to "airfare." It was, as she described, a process of literally shifting the grammar of the institution to accommodate the presence—fleshy, breathing, vulnerable—of the performer's body.²⁹ No longer an art object, the "thing" to be displayed had become the body. Such discussions invite a more critical study of how performance shifts in relationship to the contexts of the visual arts, like museum spaces, and how part of those shifts are linked to the treatment of performers. This project asserts that the interface among performers, performance, and objects can be re-framed as an analytic strategy that links performance to material object and frames how it is both impacted by and, in turn, impacts museal display.

Chapter Breakdown

The opening chapter questions how museal display frames the interface between performance events and their photographic documentation. I focus on pieces by Asco and Gómez-Peña who all began their careers in the 1970s.³⁰ Over the past ten years, their early work

²⁹ Johanna Burton, Kristy Edmunds, and Sabine Breitweiser, *Difference Institutions/Asymmetrical Economies I: Dance in Theaters, Museums, and Galleries*, Dancing with the Art World, Los Angeles, 26-27 April. 2013. Unpublished conference roundtable.

³⁰ The founding members of Asco are: Gamboa, Patssi Valdez, Willie F. Herrón III, and Guglio "Gronk" Nicandro.

has been taken up by museum curators and included in a variety of different museum exhibits through photos. This chapter explores the exhibition of photos of Asco's *Spray Paint LACMA* and Gómez-Peña's *The Loneliness of the Immigrant*, linking the artists' original performance actions to the photographs that document those actions and, finally, to a broader landscape of visual culture in Los Angeles in the '70s, which clarifies the political stakes of their work. Photos of performance events are usually understood as visually documenting that the performance in question occurred.³¹ Here, however, I nuance the documentation status of the artists' photographs. I argue that performance remainder frames live performance through photography, arguing that such images materially account for the presence of particular artists and bodies.

Drawing upon nineteenth-century histories of how people have been displayed and exhibited, Chapter Two argues such histories of museal display inform how we understand viewers' responses to current presentations of dance in museums. The phenomenon of displaying people, who somehow "failed" to comply with emerging Anglo-Saxon, Euro-American, middle class norms in exhibitionary contexts like World's Fairs, expositions, or "freakshows," has produced a genealogy of responding to bodies, marked within museal display as "other." This chapter aligns this history with PLASTIC, a dance piece by the New York-based, Cyprian-born Hassabi, who created the work by stringing together poses from bodies pictured in ads, dance stills, and canonical art historical images of women. Across all three museums at which PLASTIC was exhibited, the Hammer Museum, the Stedelijk Museum, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, dancers were subject to verbal and physical harassment by museumgoers. The chapters draws together PLASTIC's live performance, the archive of pictures Hassabi used to create PLASTIC's movement vocabulary, and the persisting legacy of how performers' bodies have been displayed and received in museal contexts, arguing that the present

³¹ Amelia Jones, "'Presence' in *Absentia*: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal* 56. 4 (1997): 13.

phenomenon of presenting dance in the museum needs to be understood through prior iterations of embodied display. The performance of PLASTIC facilitates a wormhole of sorts in which the past legacies of embodied exhibition are rendered relevant for the present by conjuring histories of bodies in museum spaces.

Chapter Three explores how museal display renders concerns of equity and parity legible through performers' immaterial labor and gender. The chapter focuses on exhibitions of Abramović's performance art at MoMA (2010) and LA MOCA (2011), and aligns these museal re-performances with earlier solos the artist performed in the 1970s. The chapter draws together performances of her work, re-performers' employment contracts at MoMA and LA MOCA and the textual scores of her performance pieces in order to offer a feminist critique of each institutions' curation of Abramović's work. To investigate Abramović's performance art through contract and score engages the oft-unacknowledged textuality of her practice. The contracts and scores rendere legible the ways in which performers' bodies were allowed to be present in performance and foreground concerns of gendered equity, consent, and parity. Performance remainder, thus, frames live performance through textual documents, which shape the contours and condition the gendered and embodied politic of a performance.

The fourth and final chapter questions how an analysis of different types of performance remainder, like sets and costumes in a theater production can offer a feminist counter-dramaturgy to a text-based narrative. Here I examine the 2008 production of the Broadway musical *Sunday in the Park with George* by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine, inspired by Georges Seurat's famous nineteenth-century painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. They created the musical in the early 1980s as the hundredth anniversary of Seurat's painting neared. Themes of artistic genius and creation unite the two acts, set a hundred years apart and each focused on an artist named George. The chapter focuses on the musical through certain costume

and set elements, like Dot's bustle, and offers a feminist analysis of nineteenth-century French visual cultures. Using performance remainder as an organizing analytic to think across the live performance, its material objects, and French visual cultures, this final chapter questions how and why art works accrue cultural capital and art historical importance. Performance remainder frames the performance of *Sunday* through the musical's costumes and set design, which, together, render legible the sexist logic of the show and the notions of artistic production it espouses.

* * *

Chapter Four concludes by returning to certain threads that wove their way throughout the previous chapters: still, or seemingly still, bodies and the art market. While I track questions of still bodies and the influence of the art market, such concerns are in service to understanding how temporality and gendered labor are revealed in the interface between performance and museal display. Museal display stills things: acquiring, archiving, displaying, and finally capturing an object for close inspection. In Chapter One I focus on the still photographic image; in Chapter Two I examine a dance work composed of a string of prolonged held poses. Likewise, the performance pieces in Chapter Three each involved performers largely holding still for hours on end. The tableaux vivants, which punctuate *Sunday in the Park with George* are always already on the verge of being broken, returning the actors on stage back into active animation and song. *Sunday in the Park with George* allows me to return to the photographs in Chapter One, and imagine them as sites of suspended animation, caught between movement and capture, liveness and documentation. The question of stillness vis-à-vis the photographs, in other words, reveals the shifted temporality of performance—frozen in the still image—that performance remainder facilitates. The musical's tableaux also call back to the still postures in PLASTIC; the poses actors hold—or try to hold—in *Sunday in the Park with George* are framed as the

gendered labor of the artist's model. To remember, then, PLASTIC's still poses is to retroactively acknowledge the gendered labor ghosting Hassabi's choreography. *Sunday in the Park with George*'s tableaux vivants, which focalize concerns of labor, gender, and control, question what stillness represents in the interface between performance and visual art. If still bodies align performance with museal processes and expand performance's temporality, stillness also renders legible performer's gender labor. Still or seemingly still bodies are linked to how this project perceives performance remainder.

The project also tracks notions of the art market, a concern that emerges most clearly in the final two chapters. Linked to considerations of the market are narratives of individual artistic genius, the financial value of art and the notion of the genius of the artist predicated upon each other. In Chapter Three, Abramović's re-performers were framed as embodied illustrations of her past work, and the chapter reveals how museums collapse an artist and her work into a singular narrative of creativity and genius. The musical, however, pries apart this relationship by dramatizing the extended network of people upon whom artistic production is predicated. *Sunday in the Park with George* foregrounds the contingent relationship among art object, exhibition, and the construction of the artist as genius. The final chapter, in other words, articulates the interventions of this project, tied to gender and the way in which performance remains. Framing the interface between performance and the museum through the stage, clarifies how women and performance are poised and posed to intersect with the contexts and discourses of the visual arts in distinct ways.

The word "remain" indicates that which survives and also that which remains to be done (OED). There is a futurity to the assertion that something remains, still to be done, a ghosting assertion that to remain is to enact change or transformation. *Performing the Museum: Displaying Gender and Archiving Labor, from Performance Art to Theater* draws together live

performance, material objects, and visual cultures as a means of reimagining performance's temporality and the way in which gendered labor becomes legible.

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Chapter One

The Afterimage of Performance: Chicano Performance and Museum Display

Across performance studies and art history the intersection between live performance and photographic documentation has been well theorized.³² Expanding upon this body of scholarship, this chapter theorizes the intersection between the two mediums through the larger framework of museum performance and spatial context of the museum gallery. In what ways, this chapter questions, does a photograph take on a life of its own, and how might an image's continuing efficacy lead scholars back to questions of performance and performativity? What afterimages, in other words, do performers purposefully leave behind?

This chapter considers the interface between a photograph and a past performance piece, attuned to the stakes of theorizing that relationship through the work of artists invested in the politics of the Chicano movement and urban spaces of LA. I focus on early work by the Los Angeles-based group Asco (Harry Gamboa, Jr., Patssi Valdez, Willie F. Herrón III, and Guglio "Gronk" Nicandro) and performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña.³³ While I address their larger bodies of work, this chapter focuses on Asco's *Spray Paint LACMA* and Gómez-Peña's *The Loneliness of the Immigrant*. Asco and Gómez-Peña sited their work within LA, engaging the city's urban fabric, as well as the racial and ethnic segregation that marked the city. Although they began their careers in the 1970s, over the past ten years art museums have exhibited both Asco and Gómez-Peña's early work. In particular, their work was included in survey shows

³² See: Philip Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," *A Journal of Performance and Art* 28. 3 (2006): 1-10; Tirza Latimer, "Acting Out: Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore," *Don't Kiss Me: the Art of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore*, ed. Louise Downie (London: Tate Publishing, 2006) 56-71; Kathy O'Dell, "Displacing the Haptic: Performance Art, the Photographic Document, and the 1970s," *Performance Research* 2.1 (1997): 73-81; Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

³³ Humberto Sandoval was also one of the key members of Asco, even in the early '70s, but is not considered a 'founding' member of the group.

Throughout the chapter, I use 'Chicano,' 'Chicana,' and 'Chicana/o.' The former term indicates the historic—and often masculinist—political movement and concurrent aesthetic practice. Chicana indicates a distinctly feminine and feminist re-imagining of the Chicano Movement, and, finally, I use Chicana/o to note the feminist political-aesthetics I read into Asco's work through Valdez's contributions.

curated by LA museums. *Spray Paint LACMA* opened the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's (LACMA) exhibit *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement*, while *Loneliness* was included in the Museum of Contemporary Art's (MOCA) 2011 show, *Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974-1981*.³⁴ Both exhibits curated their work through photographs.

The bodies of artists of color frame the stakes of understanding how performance remains through photography. Such photos are usually understood as visually documenting that the performance in question occurred. For example, Amelia Jones describes photographic or filmic documentation of performance as a vehicle through which performances “attain[ed] symbolic status within the realm of culture.”³⁵ This chapter nuances what documentation means in relationship to the artists' photographs. To document performance is not simply a question of preserving an ephemeral gesture or of creating a means through which a past live performance might circulate; it is to instantiate presence. Within performance art and performances studies, presence is often conflated with embodiment and liveness.³⁶ Asco and Gómez-Peña's photographs reveal that presence is not necessarily linked to being present. Rather, the photographic document becomes the sight through which the members of Asco or Gómez-Peña become visible or become present to an audience. Their work frames the necessity of documentation in relation to the political and material conditions of LA in the 1970s.

³⁴ Throughout this chapter, I use the abbreviation *Loneliness* to refer to *The Loneliness of the Immigrant*. *Under the Big Black Sun* and *Phantom Sightings* are not the only exhibits to include photographs of Gómez-Peña or Asco's work. In 2011, LACMA, as part of the Pacific Standard Time (PST) initiative, held a retrospective of Asco's work, *Asco: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective, 1972–1987*. This chapter focuses on *Under the Big Black Sun* and *Phantom Sightings*, however, as each proposes particular relationships between the inclusion of the artists' work and the curatorial aims of each exhibit. The PST initiative, of which *Under the Big Black Sun* was also a part, redressed the exclusion of California, and West Coast, art from larger national—and international—discussions of US art. *Phantom Sightings* similarly acknowledged the absence of Chicana/o conceptual art in the curatorial record.

³⁵ Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in *Absentia*: Experiencing Performance as Documentation,” *Art Journal* 56.4 (1997): 13.

³⁶ See: Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks, eds., *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance, and the Persistence of Being* (London: Routledge, 2012); Adrian Heathfield, ed., *Live: Art and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Performance documentation, Asco and Gómez-Peña reveal, is a political act of accounting for the presence of particularly raced bodies, long absented by LA's municipal and cultural structures. Understanding the relationship between performance and photography is not an ontological concern, but, rather, one linked to the material conditions of racial and ethnic exclusion and (state-sanctioned) violence.

Both performances force excluded or overlooked bodies into public visibility. *Spray Paint LACMA* came about in relationship to a comment a curator at LACMA made to Gamboa. After being told by the curator that Chicanos made graffiti not art, he returned to LACMA with other members of the group at night. They spray-painted their signatures across the museum's walls, claiming the entire museum as Chicano art. Photographs taken early the next morning document the action. In *Loneliness*, Gómez-Peña lay for twenty-four hours in the elevator of a downtown LA office building. A poem affixed to the wall above him described the affective loneliness of the immigrant subject. Neither piece, of course, followed the conventions of a sanctioned performance work. Asco worked fast and waited for the cover of night to accomplish their clandestine action; Gómez-Peña's piece depended upon his ability to continue to lie in the elevator for hours on end without immediate explanatory context to frame for elevator riders the presence of his body.³⁷ Both pieces, however, depended upon a set of actions accomplished in advance of each photograph.

My primary aim in this chapter is to theorize the relationship between performance and photography. Performance studies scholars theorize the interplay between the two, often situating their arguments in relationship to indexicality. "Photography's evidential efficacy," or its indexicality, initially proposed by Henry Talbot Fox and expanded upon by Charles Sanders

³⁷ Gómez-Peña described the work as experimenting with "the notion of performing for [an] 'involuntary audience.'" Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Colonial Dreams/Post-Colonial Nightmares," *The New World Border: Prophecies, Poems, & Loqueras for the End of the Century* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1996) 82.

Peirce, references the chemical process through which the photograph is a trace of its referent.³⁸ Jones draws upon theories of indexicality to complicate the *a priori* relationship between event and photo, “with the event preceding and authorizing its documentation.”³⁹ She argues “the...event [or performance] needs the photograph to confirm its having happened; the photograph needs the...event as an ontological ‘anchor’ of its indexicality.”⁴⁰ Jones’s argument elevates the idea of documentation to that of an ontological consideration, which tautologically links event to image, image to event. Her formulation complicates the ontological assumptions that continue to ground much performance studies scholarship on ephemerality.

While Jones focuses her argument on photographs that document performance events, scholars Tirza Latimer and Philip Auslander focus on what might be termed theatrical photos. Such photos require elaborate costuming, set decoration, or staging to accomplish the final still image, yet the photograph is, nevertheless, imagined as the final art object.⁴¹ Latimer, writing about Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore’s romantic and photographic practice, understands the still image as a space where agency is possible and identities are negotiated. She writes, expanding upon Roland Barthes, that viewing photography “as a dramatic art enables us to think

³⁸ Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu, eds., Introduction, *Feeling Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014) 14.

For all that the work of abstract and conceptual photographers complicated the seemingly irrefutable relationship between “referent and...represented image,” the concept still proves influential for linking the form’s materiality to a larger set of social, economic, or political concerns. Most strongly argued by Victor Burgin in his 1982 edited volume, *Thinking Photography*, this strain of scholarship imagined photography as complicit in various ideological projects, working to shape subjectivity. Victor Burgin, ed., *Thinking Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

Artists from the Pictures Generation, in particular, have challenged the indexical relationship of photography. James Crump, ed., *James Welling, Monograph* (New York: Aperture, 2013); Anne Ellegood and Johanna Burton, eds., *Take it or Leave it: Institution, Image, Ideology* (Los Angeles: Hammer Museum/Delmonico Books-Prestel, 2014).

³⁹ Auslander 1; O’Dell 73-74.

⁴⁰ Jones, “‘Presence’ in *Absentia*,” 16.

⁴¹ Auslander draws much theoretical inspiration from Yves Klein’s photo, *Leap into the Void*. The photo seems to show Klein leaping out the window of a building’s upper story into nothing. The actual event, however, was accomplished through photo manipulation. A safety net, out of frame, insured the leap was quite safe. For examples of artists who engage in this type of photography see: Matthew Barney, Stan Douglas, Yayoi Kusama, Mariko Mori, Yasumasa Morimura, and Cindy Sherman.

about the photograph as an arena in which to act rather than a stilled frame out of reality's filmic continuum."⁴² Auslander argues for "treating the [photographic] document [not] as an indexical access point to a past event but...perceiving...[it] *as a performance*...for which we are the present audience."⁴³ The viewer of an image like a live audience member is, thus, an active participant in the creation of photographic meaning.⁴⁴ Drawing upon Latimer's attention to agency and Auslander's interest in the viewer, I expand upon this body of scholarship, theorizing through my examples the act of documenting as intrinsically tied to questions of race, ethnicity, and gender.

Asco and Gómez-Peña's work render legible a secondary set of concerns associated with memory, specifically how Chicano (as opposed to Chicana) political-aesthetics are narrated. The photographs—reminders of past performances and a past decade—represent a museal re-framing of Southern California artistic production to include the contributions of artists invested in the Third World Left, urban invisibility, and cultural marginalization.⁴⁵ To return to *Spray Paint LACMA* and *Loneliness*, through LACMA and MOCA's exhibits, is to reckon with what the '70s represent at the start of the twenty-first century. What about our current moment proves useful in framing the cultural production of the '70s, or conversely, what about the '70s proves useful in understanding this post-millennial *milieu*? Concurrent with the artistic practices of artists like Asco and Gómez-Peña was the re-formation of the academy, most pointedly the creation of ethnic studies, gender studies, and by the early '80s, performance studies

⁴² Latimer 56.

⁴³ Auslander 9.

⁴⁴ Auslander's argument is not disconnected from the importance Barthes's places on the viewer in establishing photographic meaning. While Barthes privileges memory in his formulation of the punctum, Auslander re-frames one's personal connection to an image through the term 'audience,' foregrounding collectivity and spectatorship in addition to an individualized response.

⁴⁵ Pulido's book advances a comparative study that links the Black Panthers, the Asian American organization East Wind, and the Chicana/o organization CASA to question how the Third World Left engaged in cross racial coalition building and why, following the 1970s, the potency of such organizations, in her words, faltered. Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow & Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

departments.⁴⁶ The stakes of turning to the '70s as a kind of touchstone for our current moment within academia and arts institutions demands that we think critically about why and in what ways the 1970s has been narrated.

Asco and Gómez-Peña's work foregrounds ideas, which run counter to dominant narratives of the Chicano Movement that privilege collective action and solidarity. The return to their work now asks us to attend to the specificity of Chicano artistic production, the material conditions of LA in the '70s and now, and the ways in which gender importantly renders legible these counter narratives. The exclusion of female artists from, not only, visual arts spaces but also in the Chicano Movement has been a central concern in performance studies and in feminist scholarship on the Chicano Movement.⁴⁷ This chapter explores such exclusionary practices through the gender politics of the works chosen to represent Asco and Gómez-Peña in each

⁴⁶ The formation of Ethnic Studies departments in the US academy began in the late 1960s and continued into the 1970s. "Student activism," as Laura Pulido writes, "was central" to the leftist movements that formed during the '60s and '70s, and, as such, the struggle for ethnic studies departments was a logical extension of students' political activism. In '68, the first large-scale student strike, led by the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), was held at California State University, San Francisco. The strike, a coalition between the campuses' various unions for students of color, was the longest student strike in US history and led to the formation of the School of Ethnic Studies. Beyond mobilizing a coalition of progressive white and minority students, TWLF "articulated [and enacted] a vision of ethnic studies" that linked the university with the community. TWLF's efforts were augmented by rank-and-file union members, "people from Third World communities all over" California, faculty members, and, eventually, "the whole political apparatus of" the state. (While the formation of ethnic studies departments was to have profound effects on the tenure of university scholarship and teaching, destabilizing the grounding white, male perspective of much academic curricula, and attending to the narratives, perspectives, and concerns of people of color, many of the student organizations, which formed in the wake of the TWLF were "quite sexist." As one Chicana student reflected, "The Chicano issues that were addressed [by student run, campus organizations] pretty much discounted women, single-parent moms, [and women's concerns with] adequate child care, health issues, violence against women.") By '72, the National Association for Ethnic Studies formed. In '80, NYU established the first department of Performance Studies, followed some four years later by the formation of Northwestern University's department. Performance Studies was indebted to the shifting political tenor of the US academy inaugurated by the increasing presence of Ethnic Studies departments. Pulido 80-84.

⁴⁷ See: Maylei Blackwell, *Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *[Un]framing the "Bad Woman": Sor Juana, Malinche, Coyolxauhqui, and Other Rebels with a Cause* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014); Marci R. McMahan, "Self-Fashioning through Glamour and Punk in East Los Angeles: Patssi Valdez in Asco's Instant Mural and A La Mode," *Azilán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 36. 2 (2011): 21-49.

exhibit. Through the contributions of founding member Patssi Valdez, Asco's work from the '70s complicated and pressed against the prevailing patriarchal logic of the Chicano Movement. Across Asco and Gómez-Peña's work, gender intersects with the politics of immigration and marginalization as much as it is also framed through textuality and sartorial stylings, on display in *Spray Paint LACMA* and *Loneliness*.

Spray Paint LACMA: a City, a Museum, Three Signatures, and One Body

Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement focused on, as the extended title of the exhibition promised, conceptual and interventionist art practices produced chronologically after the Chicano Movement. All of the artists in the exhibit engaged a doubled politics of invisibility, in which "both the bias and the resulting exclusion [of Chicano art] are invisible."⁴⁸ The exhibit explained this paradox through *Spray Paint LACMA*, the first piece visitors saw they entered *Phantom Sightings*. While there is a triumphal irony to positioning *Spray Paint LACMA* at the start of the exhibit, the photograph also asks us to attend more broadly to the temporal gap (paralleling the medium gap between performance and photograph) between '72 and '08. The photo cited the exhibit's conceptual and political aesthetics by drawing upon the spatial and institutional history of LACMA. The photo in *Phantom Sightings* reveals the political stakes of curating Chicano art now, rendering legible the fraught interpersonal and economic dimensions of acquiring and exhibiting Asco's work. *Spray Paint LACMA* functioned as an interface between the architectural, institutional, and political projects of segregation and exclusion of Los Angeles and LACMA in '72 and '08.

Across Asco's body of work, they played with the medium boundaries of different art forms, whether it was performance, murals, photography, or film. Their "No Movies," for example, addressed the exclusion and invisibility of Chicano narratives or artists in Hollywood

⁴⁸ Rita Gonzalez, Howard N. Fox, and Chon A. Noriega, eds., Introduction, *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) 14.

by producing an archive of Chicano movie ephemera—‘film stills,’ movie posters, and publicity photos from a fake award show aping the Oscars—for never created films.⁴⁹ While *No Movies* took aim at the marginalization of artists of color within LA’s film industry, the group also critiqued the identity-based politics of Chicano muralism. In *Instant Mural*, Valdez and Humberto Sandoval posed against a liquor store on Whittier Boulevard as Gronk crisscrossed their bodies with tape, in effect ‘affixing’ them to the wall.⁵⁰ *No Movies* and *Instant Mural* represent the group’s interest in confounding and playing with the expectations of a form: there were, after all, no films made, nor did their mural last (a key element of the politics of the muralism movement). Asco’s work troubled medium boundaries as a means of troubling established judgments about Chicano artistic production, whether emanating out of Hollywood or the Chicano Movement.

Spray Paint LACMA came about after Gamboa attended an exhibition at LACMA. As Gamboa describes the event, he was on a date, and failing to find any Chicano artists in the museum’s galleries he, full of a kind of youthful bravado, charged into the museum’s offices in search of a curator. Walking deeper into LACMA’s hallways, he finally encountered a partially open office door. Inside, a well-dressed male curator was preparing himself a drink. The moment, as Gamboa narrates it, is cinematic in its specificity, evocative of the seductive allure of mid-century aesthetics (and certainly demonstrative of the era’s sexist and racist politics). From the hallway, Gamboa glibly asked why were there no Chicano artists in the galleries. Breezily the man quipped back, “Chicanos...[make] graffiti, not art.”⁵¹ At times the line has been shifted to,

⁴⁹ David E. James, “No Movies: Projecting the Real by Rejecting the Reel,” *Asco: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective, 1972-1987*, eds. C. Ondine Chavoya and Rita Gonzalez (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011) 179-191.

⁵⁰ McMahan 21-22.

⁵¹ Chon A. Noriega, “Conceptual Graffiti and the Public Art Museum: *Spray Paint LACMA*,” *Asco: Elite of the Obscure: A Retrospective, 1972-1987*, eds. Ondine Chavoya and Rita Gonzalez (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011) 256.

“Chicanos are in gangs; they don’t make art.”⁵² The conflation of graffiti and gang activity is not merely a slippage in the narrative but betrays a far deeper, systematic conflation of young people of color with criminality.⁵³ The curator’s racist and off-hand comment indicated that LACMA, the city’s first and, in ’72 only, publically funded art museum, imagined an aesthetic hierarchy predicated on race and ethnicity. The public the museum aimed to serve and the artists in their collection were not Chicano.

Angered by the racist response, Gamboa, Herrón, and Gronk returned to LACMA that night and, taking the curator’s comment as their conceptual inspiration, spray painted their signatures across the museum’s outer walls in several locations. While their response was fueled by anger, their scrawled signatures imagined the curator’s comment and their action as an urban repartee of sorts, playing out across the museum’s façade and in relationship to the city’s cultural and political climate. To reiterate, Asco refused LACMA’s purported curatorial mandate; *Spray Paint LACMA* framed the entire museum, and thus all of the art it contained, as Chicano art.⁵⁴ Gamboa describes the group’s gesture as one of “urban sophistication,” the curator’s evocation of graffiti and gangs an aesthetic motif on which they could riff.⁵⁵ Their signatures-cum-graffiti instrumentalized the act of tagging through the language of conceptual art, re-framing an art historical cannon that had excluded their work as, instead, entirely predicated upon their scrawled signatures.

Spray Paint LACMA hinges upon a paradoxical politics of invisibility. Several photos document the three men’s actions. While a handful of images document their signatures at

⁵² Erin Silver and Harry Gamboa, Jr., “Performance as Documentation: Harry Gamboa, Jr., and the ‘No Movie,’” *Live Artists Live: Performance Art and the Archive*, University of Southern California, 28 Jan. 2016.

⁵³ In LA in the ‘70s, the Los Angeles Police Department and the sheriff’s department defined two or more young people as a gang. Silver and Gamboa, “Performance as Documentation.”

⁵⁴ Noriega “Conceptual Graffiti,” 256.

⁵⁵ Harry Gamboa, Jr., personal interview, 10 February 2016.

different locations in the LACMA compound, the most famous includes Valdez. The photo, taken by Gamboa at nine the following morning, features Valdez leaning on the balustrade of the museum's entrance, the signatures of the group's male members on the wall below her. The group's only woman, she was excluded from participating in the nocturnal act. She describes,

I was not allowed to go. They said, 'You cannot run fast enough. What if we get arrested and go to jail?' They were sort of protecting me, but at the same time I was pissed off. Especially since [Herrón] was my boyfriend and was trying to protect me, but I was like 'Get a life, I want to go.'⁵⁶

Valdez's exclusion by her fellow collaborators marks a gendered exclusion, while her prominence in the most famous photo of the work acknowledges her presence. The piece played upon that condition of invisibility by visibly tagging the museum's façade, and yet, the act of tagging was carried out under cover of darkness and the signatures themselves quickly whitewashed over. The piece made visible the condition of exclusion and marginalization faced by Chicano artists precisely through a performance of invisibility: the cover of night or Valdez's absent signature.⁵⁷

As Gamboa, Herrón, and Gronk drove back to East LA from LACMA following their tagging, deputies from the LA Sheriff's department stopped the three. The deputies urged them out of their car and, as Gamboa recalls, "roughed them up."⁵⁸ The harassment only stopped after the deputies were called away to an actual crime. While the stop affirms the widespread police harassment communities of color experienced (and experience), as the group drove east their actions and bodies were re-interpolated. Their action shifted from a witty, aesthetic reimagining of the curator's comment to a felony act linked to gang activity. The three were re-interpolated from conceptual artist to brown bodies always already marked as criminal and as gang members. The stop was the last act, as it were, of *Spray Paint LACMA*, rendering legible the material

⁵⁶ Noriega, "Conceptual Graffiti" 260.

⁵⁷ Gonzalez, et al, *Phantom Sightings*, 14.

⁵⁸ Gamboa, personal interview.

conditions underpinning the curator's off-hand comment.⁵⁹ By eleven AM, the museum had whitewashed over all of the group's signatures.

Asco, the Spanish word for disgust, formed while Gamboa, Valdez, and Herrón were in high school. They met Gronk, then a student at East LA College, when he cast Valdez in a performance he was directing. The group officially formed after Gamboa took over the editorship of the Chicano publication *Regeneración* and convinced the other three to join the publication's staff. Through the process of working together on *Regeneración*, the four formulated the particular aesthetic that was to define Asco: a mix of Dada and Surrealist graphic strategies, Fluxus mail art and games, performance art, and a political critique of mainstream (white) art and the identity-based aesthetics of the Chicano muralist movement.⁶⁰

The radicalism of the Chicano and anti-war movements was key to Asco's work and the members' young adulthood.⁶¹ By '72, all four had participated in the '68 student protests against the LA Unified School District and been impacted by the 1970 killing of journalist Ruben Salazar by a LA Sheriff's deputy during the Chicano Moratorium. The Moratorium was the largest anti-war demonstration organized by a community of color in the US.⁶² While young people, like the members of Asco, mobilized en masse against the neglect they were receiving

⁵⁹ Gamboa, personal interview.

⁶⁰ McMahan 30.

⁶¹ Valdez introduced Gamboa and Herrón, with whom she went to high school, to Gronk.

⁶² The '68 protests were a series of walkouts by high school students protesting the quality of their public education and the mounting death toll of soldiers of color in Vietnam. The Chicano Moratorium, like the '68 student walkouts, protested the disproportionate number of young men of color dying in Vietnam. It included twenty to thirty thousand participants. While the demonstration started peacefully, it escalated due to the violent response of law enforcement. A LA sheriff's deputy killed Salazar, who was covering the demonstration. Salazar, who retreated from the escalating violent suppression of the demonstration in a bar, was killed by the impact of a tear-gas canister. The canister, designed to penetrate barricades, was aimed by the deputy into crowds of protestors and broke through the wall of the bar in which Salazar was sheltering. Evidence now suggests that the FBI worked in tandem with LA law enforcement to curb the demonstration. The day ended with three dead, including Salazar, and hundreds wounded. The anti-war activism emanating out of predominately Latino communities was also fueled by the federal de-funding, due to the war's escalating cost, of programs that had made up Johnson's War on Poverty legislation. Pulido argues that Mexican American communities imagined these programs as their reward for not resorting to urban uprisings (in LA the '65 Watts Rebellion). Pulido 75-76.

from their municipal, state, and federal governments, East LA was simultaneously undergoing extensive transformations. The generation of Angeleños who came of age in the '70s is described as the “expressway generation,” named for the interchanges and expressways that were constructed throughout the '60s and into the '70s.⁶³ East LA’s economic agency and autonomy as well as spatial cohesion and cultural vibrancy was “eradicated or radically reconstructed by the imposition of five distinct freeway routes.”⁶⁴ The city and state governments were able to approve such construction because East LA is unincorporated, and, thus, residents lack the ability to advocate on its behalf.⁶⁵ “Without representation,” writes scholar David Diaz, “barrios were effectively attacked by state transportation departments, who had support from the federal highway administration.”⁶⁶ *Spray Paint LACMA*, one of the group’s earliest pieces together, refused the logic of these various modes of institutional, municipal, and state sanctioned violence that marginalized Latino communities.

Despite all the writings that describe the group as a collective, Asco imagined themselves more along the lines of a rock group.⁶⁷ The comparison makes clear the member’s distinct artistic practices and individual aims as well as acknowledging the competing personalities and internal dramas that characterized their work together. The implications of this comparison shift an understanding of Asco’s work away from notions of leftist solidarity and towards the far more contentious connotations of rock and roll. The metaphor of the rock group also foregrounds gender and sexuality, concerns perhaps more easily obscured when considering the term

⁶³ Chavoya and Gonzalez, *Asco: Elite of the Obscure*, 46.

⁶⁴ Chavoya and Gonzalez, *Asco: Elite of the Obscure*, 46; David R. Diaz, *Barrio Urbanism: Chicanos, Planning, and American Cities* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 52-53.

⁶⁵ Municipal incorporation, following the Great Depression and into the 1960s, became code for the spatial reproduction and maintenance of white economic privilege, predicated, in Los Angeles, on a community’s ability to effectively distance itself “from...[the city’s] poor and people of color.” East LA remains unincorporated as do parts of Compton, Rowland Heights, and Hacienda Heights, all neighborhoods with a majority Latina/o population. East LA was the focal point, both in the city and across the Southwest US, of this type of “bureaucratic logic.” Pulido 38; Diaz 53.

⁶⁶ Diaz 52.

⁶⁷ Gamboa, personal interview.

‘collective.’ Of course, the model of the ‘70s rock group is one steeped in masculinist notions of virility, dominance, and sexual conquest. Valdez has often been reduced to a kind of glamour pin-up for the group.⁶⁸ As scholar Marci McMahon describes, “[Valdez] is frequently perceived as the object of the gaze and not as an active participant in the construction of Asco images.”⁶⁹ Her presence has been marginalized both by Chicana feminists who argue her image affirmed female objectification and by art critics who note her contributions to Asco almost as an aside.⁷⁰

Valdez’s presence in *Spray Paint LACMA* reveals her absence from the night’s events, yet her figure also renders urban and cultural marginalization legible as a gendered interface between Asco and LACMA, East LA and the city’s white imaginary. Art historian Mario Ontiveros argues that Valdez’s exclusion from spray painting her name “enacted the very gender politics that [Asco] criticized in the [Chicano] movement.”⁷¹ Ontiveros’s reading of the photograph’s ‘semiotics,’ however, is predicated on a hierarchy of signs, in which the (male) signatures hold greater conceptual and artistic potency than the (Valdez’s) body. Expanding Ontiveros’s important feminist critique of Asco, however, I want to assert the potency of Valdez’s body in the photograph. Looking away from the camera Gamboa had trained on her,

⁶⁸ Initially brought together by their shared fashion tastes—Gamboa, Herrón, and Valdez were ‘jettlers,’ an East LA subculture defined by their Mod meets punk aesthetic. Much of Asco’s oeuvre foregrounds costuming as pivotal to the conceptual politics of their work. Gronk, in particular, described Valdez’s allure as her uncanny resemblance physically but more importantly stylistically, to Sophia Loren. McMahon 30.

⁶⁹ McMahon 24.

⁷⁰ Judith Baca refused to participate in the 1990 traveling exhibition *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation* if the work *Instant Mural*, a photographic piece that features Valdez being taped to the wall of a building by Gronk, was included. Daniel Hernández, “The Art Outlaws of East Los Angeles,” *LA Weekly* 6 June 2007, 7 May 2015 < <http://www.laweekly.com/news/the-art-outlaws-of-east-la-2149157>>. McMahon 23.

⁷¹ Chicano arts collectives and political organizations routinely excluded or marginalized their female members. The Brown Berets largely relegated their female members to the private sphere, assigning them tasks like “secretarial or domestic work.” This continued affirmation of traditional gender roles and civic and political marginalization led many women to leave the Berets altogether. For all that women were routinely excluded from the Chicano Movement, women artists strove to find ways to place themselves within the Movement’s discourse. Valdez, Judith Hernández of Los Four, the muralist Judith F. Baca in LA, and the San Francisco collective Mujeres Muralistas, were all vocal advocates of Chicana art and activism within the Chicano Movement. McMahon 23; Noriega, “Conceptual Graffiti,” 261.

she gives the camera her profile; a swing of dark hair partially masks her face. She wears tight jeans, embellished with constellations of silver jewels on the pockets, and a red shirt, its hue sartorially linking her to the red of Gronk's signature. Her face is made-up, her lips a deep burgundy and her eyes heavily rimmed with black eyeliner. She carries a small purse and a large white bangle adorns her wrist. Valdez merged a Pachuca aesthetic and 1940s Hollywood glamour. Scholars of textiles argue that the outer qualities of clothing bring "the past and the present into interesting juxtapositions and confrontations," and Valdez's fashion is no exception, collapsing the golden age of Hollywood onto the politicized aesthetics of the Zootsuiters, re-fashioning the industry as specifically Chicana.⁷² Likewise, her jeans and heavy makeup proclaim a feminine fashioning distinct from the normative expectations of Chicana femininity, which imagined women as modest and contained within the home.⁷³ While less overt than the three spray painted signatures, Valdez instrumentalized her fashion choices to press against the racist assumptions epitomized by the curator's comment and the sexist premise of her exclusion from the night's activities. Valdez's clothing is a surface across which histories—of ethnic solidarities and feminized expectations—are both documented and interwoven.

Clothing reveals not only questions of gender or sexuality, but as Sean Metzger argues, also processes of racialization, practices of geopolitical belonging, and economic circulations.⁷⁴ For Valdez, and Asco more broadly, clothing was a means of performing self and documenting identity. It functioned not dissimilarly to how I argue the photograph of *Spray Paint LACMA* functions: a means of documenting presence. An anecdote from Gamboa's childhood reveals how the group came to understand the relationship among fashion, identity, performance, and

⁷² Catherine Harper, Introduction, *Textiles: Primary and Critical Sources, volume 4: Identity*, ed. Catherine Harper (London: Berg, 2012) x.

⁷³ McMahon 22.

⁷⁴ Sean Metzger, *Chinese Looks: Fashion, Performance, Race* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2008) 5-6.

photography. He remembers one of his uncles getting carefully dressed: a three-piece suit, tie, pocket square, hat, and leather shoes. The reason for the elegant outfit was because the local liquor store had just installed a close-circuit TV, making it possible to see oneself on screen. To be caught on TV, or, indeed, film more broadly, was not to have one's presence diminished but rather affirmed. The screen was a space to perform one's self-imagining, or fashioning. The screen, for Asco, was an arena within which one could perform a distinctly Chicana/o self. In a city immersed in the production of (white) filmic fantasies, *Spray Paint LACMA* and the group's photographs more broadly visibilize Chicana/o bodies, their presence captured by the city's available light.

Valdez's self-fashioning frames not only her own mode of identification but links her clothing to the larger discourses of urban and artistic marginalization Asco's work questioned. Posing in the white and exclusionary LACMA compound, she renders the curator's racist comment legible through her body. Valdez's clothing serves as an interface between her figure and her politics, framing *Spray Paint LACMA* through a sartorial occupation: a claiming of space articulated as doubly unavailable to her. Hers is a rebellious Chicana body that takes up space, takes up the photographic frame, indexing a larger Chicana politics of claiming LA space and asserting the presence of communities of color within the city and within its publically funded institutions.

The piece was later referred to as *Project Pie in de/Face*. If its original and more common title directly names what Asco did, *Project Pie in de/Face* aligns the piece's political critique with the humorous and shaming antics of the clown. While the secondary title positions Asco as a trickster, it also interpolates LACMA's facade as the spatialized public 'face' of LA art. What, after all, is the county museum but an infrastructural iteration of the cultural 'face' of Los Angeles Face, in English, means "the surface of an object...[as well as] the front of the

head.”⁷⁵ Beyond indicating a part of one’s body or the direction in which one positions oneself, though, the term contains a range of metaphoric allusions. Face refers to the surface layer of a person, not their ‘true’ self but merely their outward presentation. It implies “a surface that covers and hides an underlying reality...[and which] prevents an otherwise penetrating social gaze from perceiving...[that] hidden reality.”⁷⁶ The term is tied to “social appearances”; one can lose face, an idiom that evokes a loss of social standing or public shame and embarrassment.⁷⁷ While the term in Spanish—*cara*—functions much the same, it carries the additional meaning of a shameless person; *ser un cara* is to be without shame. In English, the various associations with face emerged, most particularly, within colonial contexts. The word’s elasticity became a way for colonial administrators, bureaucrats, or missionaries to link phenotype to national or racial character through the use of stereotyping.⁷⁸ Most usually such stereotypes described colonized subjects who were in some way resistant. “Chicanos make graffiti,” exemplifies this linguistic history. The meaning of face and cara are constructed in the interface of social interactions, and tied to presentation and visibility as much as they are also linked to individual agency and social accountability.

If one can lose face, what might it mean, the group’s actions proposed, to actively locate one’s ‘face’ in public discourse? How might one *take face*? *Claim face*? And in the process, *deface* a sanctioned site of LA culture? As their nighttime actions and the photograph reveal, to claim face was to claim space, marking one’s signature across the museum’s wall or leaning on its balustrade. Asco claimed tagging as a conceptual practice of resistance against a site of

⁷⁵ *Cara*, face in Spanish, carries the same dual connotations as the English word. Andrew Kipnis, “‘Face’: An Adaptable Discourse of Social Surfaces,” *Positions* 3.1 (1995): 122.

⁷⁶ Kipnis 124.

⁷⁷ Kipnis 122.

⁷⁸ Kipnis 120.

publically sanctioned (and funded) authority.⁷⁹ The three's signatures were predicated upon a paradoxical politics: claiming face through an act of defacement and sighting ones presence by asserting one's absence. J.L. Austin contends that the signature reveals presence, rendering incontrovertible the link between the written mark and the marker.⁸⁰ Countering Austin, Jacques Derrida argues, "a written signature implies the actual or empirical *nonpresence* of the signer...it...marks and retains his having-been-present in a past now."⁸¹ For Derrida, the signature is not a mark of presence or of the present, but, rather, of the absent signer. The signature marks the trace of the elsewhere body, the looped and curved lines of the name a material residue of a past presence. Akin to the implications of the signature, Lev Manovich writes that photography "[is the] attempt to make art out of a footprint."⁸² Manovich's metaphor notes the indexical quality of photography, using the footprint as signifier of absence and presence: both at once. To shift (and literalize) Manovich's metaphor, *Spray Paint LACMA* was the attempt to make art out of the signature. The signature or the tag—to return to the language of Asco's gesture—marks the absence of the Chicana/o body. It is the absence, not simply, of Gronk, Herrón, and Gamboa when the photograph was taken, but more potently the institutional absence of Chicano artists within LACMA's exhibitions in '72 most overtly.

If the three signatures mark an absence, they are specific in the absence they mark. The signatures are the (spray painted) residue of the "I," intimating the singular pronoun without naming it as such. Attempting to explain the index's referential but not symbolic or iconic nature,

⁷⁹ Street art, or graffiti writing, is an act of "rebellion and protest against...modes of oppression," such as, Chicano street artist Jorge Garcia explains, museum directors and curators who polices the boundaries of what is constituted as art. BEAR_TCK, "The Street as Art," *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Latino Art*, eds. Ilan Stavans and Jorge J. E. Gracia (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014) 109.

⁸⁰ Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 106; J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, eds. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisá (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) 60-61.

⁸¹ Derrida 107.

⁸² Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001) 295.

Charles Peirce creates an imperfect parallel between the photographic index and the pronoun. The comparison emerges precisely because indices are denotative and singular; they point to exactly the thing itself. These characteristics, for Peirce, are akin to the linguistic role of the pronoun. “The index,” he writes, “asserts nothing; it only says ‘There!’”⁸³ Demonstrative pronouns like ‘this’ or ‘that’ are, for Peirce, “nearly pure indices.”⁸⁴ Pronouns, like the photographic index, “have a directness and immediacy that all nouns lack.”⁸⁵ The signatures, akin to the interface between performance and photography, are caught between the pronoun and the noun. To see the scrawled name *Gronkie* or *Herrón* is to be placed within a specific singularity and context. Gronk would soon drop the ‘ie’ from his name, the suffix a marking of the diminutive and one the artist thought too juvenile. Likewise the tilde over the ‘o’ in Herrón’s signature indicates that the accent is on the second syllable in his surname, asserting an ethno-linguistic specificity. The tags mark the individuals in Asco (Gronk’s ‘ie’ or Herrón’s tilde), framing graffiti as a linguistic interface between belonging and exclusion. If the curator’s comment attempted to exclude Chicanos from LACMA, their tags interpolated the museum as outside of Asco’s linguistic and aesthetic sign system. LACMA was precluded from the ethno-linguistic specificity of Gronkie and Herrón’s names and the sign system of tagging. The black slash of the accent indexes Herrón’s action and the spray of paint, symbolizing *Spray Paint LACMA*’s linguistic and visual violence against the white washed (walls of the) museum.

Spray Paint LACMA aligns the reproducibility upon which photography is predicated with the iterability of the signature; this parallelism between different registers of repetition renders iterability legible as a political project. The signatures have “a repeatable, iterable,

⁸³ Charles Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, eds. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1992) 226.

⁸⁴ Peirce 226.

⁸⁵ Mary Ann Doane, “The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18.1 (2006): 134.

imitable form.”⁸⁶ One signs one’s name over and over again; one tags multiple locations, leaving one’s mark across an urban landscape. Photography, similarly, is predicated upon its reproducibility. The utility of repeating a signature exactly over and over again is to ensure and assert one’s identity, whether in relationship to the authorial address of the state or a community of taggers. Iterability, as Derrida argues, is about an ability to communicate with “any possible user,” and *Spray Paint LACMA* illustrates that communication is marked by networks of power.⁸⁷

Following Derrida, signatures mark a paradox; an invisible subject is conjured through the textual marking of presence.⁸⁸ *Spray Paint LACMA* revealed how we understand an embodied action through its documentation. Documentation is not a marking of the event—a keeping of a record to indicate a thing occurred—but rather the occurrence itself. The image is the act. The act marks the absence of certain presences: at once, Valdez and Chicano artists. While this assertion is theoretical, linking the group’s nocturnal actions in ’72 (the performance) to their documentation of said actions (the photograph), the implications of my assertion is temporally contingent. To assert the ‘image is the act’ in regards to the group’s artistic production in ’72 means something quite different from what that assertion means now.

Gamboa produced tens of postcards featuring his photo of *Spray Paint LACMA* and circulated them to galleries in the hopes of sparking interest in the group’s work. His practice of photographing and then circulating images of Asco’s pieces slowly generated mounting national awareness of the group and, in relationship to fellow Chicano artists, Chicano art more broadly. In ’74, LACMA became the first major art museum to present the work of Chicana/o artists,

⁸⁶ Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 107.

⁸⁷ Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 91.

⁸⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 9-10.

exhibiting the LA art collective Los Four.⁸⁹ A year later, the exhibition *Chicanismo en el Arte* brought the work of a diverse array of young Chicana/o artists (including members of Asco) to mainstream attention.⁹⁰ While this history seemingly asserts a triumphant narrative of progress—the Chicano artist entering into art historical and cultural visibility—the economic reality is more complex.

Over the years, many of the negatives and slides that Gamboa took were destroyed or lost. Some of the hundreds of postcards he sent out in the '70s and into the '80s, however, survived, and photographs reproduced from these surviving postcards found their way into museum collections. Because the museum in question may have acquired the postcard as part of a larger archive of ephemera from a gallerist or curator, the necessity of financially remunerating Gamboa or Asco for the work was short-circuited.⁹¹ The photographic document, then, troubles a facile argument re: Chicano visibility or presence. While Asco's photographic works reveal the group's relationship to systemic racism or cultural stereotypes, ghosting the current museal circulation of their work is a continued institutional disavowal of the artists' work in terms of labor for which one has to pay.

In *Spray Paint LACMA*, the museum stands in for the city. The city's first publically funded arts museum, and, in '72, the city's "only major art museum," LACMA followed an

⁸⁹ The choice of Los Four was not without controversy. Imagined by Asco as representative of an aesthetically conservative, recognizable, and university-sanctioned iteration of Chicano art, the group crashed the exhibit's opening dressed outlandishly. Herrón explained, "We had all these different layers of feathers and we painted our faces. Gronk was wearing leopard, like a leopard shirt. We all wore platforms. I think Gronk had a pair of satin bell bottom pants." Some ten years older than the members of Asco and all college educated, Los Four's practice was invested in muralism, expanding the genre to incorporate emerging trends in installation art as well as their conscious desire to forge Chicano icons. Los Four and Asco were the only two Chicana/o art collectives from the '70s and '80s that included female members. Judithe Hernández, Los Four's fifth member, joined after their LACMA exhibit. Thomas Crow, "The Art of the Fugitive in 1970s Los Angeles: Runaway Self-Consciousness," *Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974-1981*, eds. Lisa Gabrielle Mark and Paul Schimmel (Munich, London, New York: DelMonico Books Prestel, 2011) 51.

⁹⁰ Gonzalez, et al, *Phantom Sightings*, 14.

⁹¹ Gamboa, personal interview.

institutional mission to serve the public. The museum's original complex was designed by the Los Angeles-based firm William L. Pereira and Associates.⁹² Renowned architecture critic Ada Huxtable praised the museum as championing a new age in museum architecture and management.⁹³ Its three-pavilion structure defined the modern art museum as one "no longer [composed of] passive picture galleries," but one, which, as a visitor moved between each building, spatially and kinesthetically mirrored the new museum's desire to actively engage its public.⁹⁴ Such praise aligned with Pereira's writing on his design. "The visitor feels," he wrote, "he has arrived at a different and distinctive place; a place where ordinary daily concerns fade and one has time for reflection and aesthetic enjoyment."⁹⁵ The museum was imagined as an oasis from the city's 'concerns' in which art and aesthetics could somehow be bracketed out from the rest of the urban landscape. Ghosting Pereira's evocation of an oasis, however, is an exclusionary rhetoric predicated upon a privileged relationship to the city and its communities. His desire to create an oasis from the city and Asco's desire to assert their mark upon the museum are flip sides of the same coin, each viewing the museum not as an isolated space but always already referring back to the city and its publics.⁹⁶

⁹² Thomas Lawson, "The Museum of the Future: LACMA in 1965," *East of Borneo* 7 June 2013, 8 May 2015 <<http://www.eastofborneo.org/archives/the-museum-of-the-future-lacma-in-1965>>.

⁹³ The seeming harmonious design, however, was a function of infighting between LACMA's three largest donors, Howard Ahmanson, Anna Bing Arnold, and Bart Lytton, who each required their own building. Each had a distinct function, an architectural and institutional solution to the animosity between the donors and their inability to rescind their particular right to the museum. The Lytton (now Hammer) Gallery housed temporary exhibits, the Bing Center housed the theater, library, and education spaces, and the Ahmanson Gallery of Art contained the museum's permanent collections.

⁹⁴ For Huxtable, LACMA represented the ways in which the architecture of a space could facilitate the active participation of its users, a shift, which implied the new prominence of the visitor in museum spaces as opposed to the previous elevation of master works over and against a museumgoer's enjoyment. Ada Louise Huxtable, *On Architecture: Collected Reflections on a Century of Change* (New York: Walker, 2008) 94.

⁹⁵ Lawson "The Museum of the Future."

⁹⁶ Pereira's pools, however, were paved over shortly after the museum opened in '65. They were filled over because tar from the nearby La Brea Tar Pits was seeping into their 'crystalline' waters. Rather than clear waters—imagined by Pereira as affectively elevating a visitor out of the squalor of the city—Valdez would have looked down to concrete. The seepage of the tar into the serene reflecting pools seems an

Funded by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the five-member governing body of LA County, LACMA's mission was and is to serve the public through the representation of the city's "uniquely diverse population."⁹⁷ "The public museum," Giuliani Bruno writes, "should be considered not as an isolated space but rather as a connective architecture," linking the institution back to its city.⁹⁸ The museum not only represents LA, but rather the city and the museum are constitutive of each other. *Spray Paint LACMA* renders legible the racially and economically discriminatory policies of the city, serving some publics and not others, "discerning" rather than "serving" the public good.⁹⁹ Asco framed the museum's exterior walls as the site/sight of a contested public, rendering legible who is allowed to occupy public spaces and claim representation within public institutions.

Phantom Sightings, housed in LACMA's Art of the Americas building, opened with *Spray Paint LACMA*. The unframed photograph, 30 x 40 inches, hung on the wall opposite the doorway, directly centered in its arch. The placement of *Spray Paint LACMA* was an ironically triumphant staging of the very politics of invisibility and disavowal that propelled its creation. Its prominent placement clearly proclaimed the distance between the LACMA of '72 and of '08. If, for Latimer, the photograph is arena in which to act, then LACMA's installation seemed an attempt to architecturally support her argument.¹⁰⁰ The doorway through which *Spray Paint LACMA* hung resembled nothing so much as the frame of a proscenium arch. In concert with the

almost too perfect metaphor for the contentious history LACMA has had towards the city and its own architectural self-fashioning. The museum, celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2015, is embarking on a new architectural re-fashioning. The museum's re-build, designed by architect Peter Zumthor is meant to visually mimic the nearby La Brea Tar Pits. (One can only speculate at the ironic undercurrent of Zumthor's proposal or the perhaps perverse desire of LACMA's board to finally overcome the tar pits in this latest iteration of the museum.) Christopher Hawthorne, "LACMA redesign avoids tar pits, creates challenges," *The Los Angeles Times* 24 June 2014, 16 Feb. 2015

<<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-lacma-zumthor-design-20140625-column.html>>.

⁹⁷ "Mission Statement," *LACMA 50* 16 June 2015 < <http://www.lacma.org/overview>>.

⁹⁸ Giuliana Bruno, *Surfaces: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014) 143.

⁹⁹ Noriega, "Conceptual Graffiti," 257.

¹⁰⁰ Latimer 56.

gallery's architecture and exhibit installation, the photograph implicated a museumgoer in its arena of action. A visitor, after all, could get close or stand back, taking in the scope of the piece. To view the photo was to witness an on-going performance, which implicated LACMA in a decades-long narrative of artistic marginalization and curatorial redress.

The photo of *Spray Paint LACMA* functions as a discursive site, complicit in shaping a Chicana/o subjectivity distinct to LA. The image highlights Walter Benjamin's conception that photography "underscores the sense that we inhabit a world only ever partially perceived."¹⁰¹ He writes that photographs make visible the "optical unconscious," "a visual dynamic the eye cannot see," which the camera's lens unconsciously records.¹⁰² Siegfried Kracauer, expanding upon Benjamin's assertion, argues that the visual world photography renders legible through this optical unconscious is not simply the details of the world, "big and small," but also the "blind spots in the mind."¹⁰³ The blind spots to which Kracauer refers are those culturally and historically specific ways of looking that continually renders things, spaces, or subjects invisible. *Spray Paint LACMA* contextualizes Benjamin and Kracauer's assertions vis-à-vis visibility and visibility through the politics of marginalization that Chicana/o artists experienced and continue to experience in relationship to a larger arts landscape, including museums' archives, exhibitions, and the art market. Asco's work aimed to shift one's gaze, rendering legible the cultural, racial, and gendered 'blind spots' in the city and its artistic imaginaries.

Their work was a type of distraction, a decoy of sorts, a means of rendering legible the city's blind spots. Also included in *Phantom Sightings* were several other pieces by Asco,

¹⁰¹ Burgin, *Thinking Photography*.

¹⁰² Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," trans. Harry Zohn, *Illumination*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969) 217-251.

¹⁰³ Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 46; Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: photography and the unseen* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013) 6-7.

including *Decoy Gang War Victim* (1974).¹⁰⁴ Hanging on the wall across from *Spray Paint LACMA*, *Decoy* shows what appears to be the body of a young man splayed on a street in East LA. The photograph is almost entirely blue, an effect achieved through the use of mercury vapor lamps.¹⁰⁵ Surrounding the young man are a ring of bright red road flares. Asco sent the 35-mm color slide to local TV stations with the accompanying caption that the ‘last gang member’ had been killed, effectively ending “violence in the barrio.” At least two TV stations ran the image, imagining the photograph was a ‘real’ document of a murder not a piece of conceptual photography.¹⁰⁶ Gamboa described the aim of *Decoy* as generating “a pause in the violence [in East LA] in order to rob the newspapers of their daily list of victims.”¹⁰⁷ Like *Decoy Gang War Victim*, *Spray Paint LACMA* does not depict what it purports to represent; it functions as a decoy, always already tacitly obscuring and obfuscating the event of live performance.

The decoy is a trick, a distraction, a blind, a means of drawing ones attention away from a situation. The photo-decoy does not point back to the event—the indexical argument; rather, *Spray Paint LACMA*, and the group’s other photos in *Phantom Sightings*, are sites/sights of visual enticement that offer the allure of a redressive politics. The photo in *Phantom Sightings* does not simply document the night’s events in 1972, Valdez and Gamboa’s return the following morning, nor the racist comment of the museum curator. Rather, the photo functions as a blind, distracting from the interpersonal and economic politics that determine and dictate the circulation of Asco’s work now. The thirty some years between the piece’s creation and its exhibition at LACMA do not represent a triumphal narrative of progress. The progressive movements that

¹⁰⁴ The pieces included: *Instant Mural*, *Decoy Gang War Victim*, *First Supper (After a Major Riot)*, *Gores*, and *Asshole Mural*.

¹⁰⁵ Michelle Kuo, ed., “L.A. Stories,” *Artforum International* 50.2 (2011): 5.

¹⁰⁶ As Gamboa explains in the *Artforum* roundtable, the piece was “a response to the incendiary tabloid-style journalism of the two major Los Angeles newspapers, which often listed the names, addresses, workplaces, and gang affiliations of victims or their family members in an effort to maintain high levels of reciprocal gang violence, thus selling more newspapers.” Kuo 5.

¹⁰⁷ Kuo 5.

dominated political activism in LA the early 1970s were largely gone by the end of the decade. While LACMA (and other museums) were to present Chicano art in their galleries, exhibits like *Phantom Sightings* still remain an exception to the norm. Likewise, Asco broke up in the late 1980s and members have a somewhat tense relationship with each other.¹⁰⁸ The convoluted economic and legal battles around Asco's work, discussed earlier, render legible the fiction of the Chicano collective. Asco, as they did in the 1970s, continues to refuse the narrative of Chicano aesthetics; only now it is the artists' individual lives coming into tense interface with the archival impulses of the museum as opposed to the group's aesthetics that reveal the fiction of the collective. The photo is a decoy because: Asco was never a collective, Chicano art still remains marginalized within the curatorial record, and the economic remuneration of Asco's work remains fraught.

If the stakes of labeling one of Asco's pieces a decoy now are removed from the daily violence the members of Asco experienced in the 1970s, it is worth returning to a comment Gamboa made in January of 2016. "We are all," he stated, "coming into the condition of the Chicano in the 1970s."¹⁰⁹ Which is to write, we are all coming into the condition of an ever-present threat of violence, state-sanctioned marginalization, and economic disparity. The Occupy Movement, discussed in Chapter Three, the Black Lives Matter Movement, or the (as I write now) unexpected success of Bernie Sanders's presidential bid render legible the potency of the decoy.¹¹⁰ It, in other words, is not simply a conceptual-aesthetic strategy; it is also a political

¹⁰⁸ The piece's second title, *Project Pie in de/Face*, emerged in Gronk's solo show *Gronk! A Living Survey 1973-1993* at LACMA in 1994. The exhibit re-titled the photo and attributed it to Gronk. Gamboa, who took all of Asco's photographs, maintains that he has the rights to Asco's images, a claim that at once acknowledges his role as documentarian and as an artist who works through photography but also seemingly negates the group's work together. Nevertheless, the re-naming incident reveals the extent to which Asco might circulate as a collective, but in practice the particular contributions of various members are rigidly policed. Gamboa, personal interview.

¹⁰⁹ Silver and Gamboa, "Performance as Documentation."

¹¹⁰ We might also imagine the success of Donald Trump's presidential campaign as linked to the notion of the decoy, if mobilized in the service of a quite different political ideology. His campaign is predicated

modality that, instrumentalized by activists and politicians, draws attention to the structures of institutionalized racism, classism, and the US's neoliberal democracy, which support state-sanctioned violence and economic marginalization.

The Loneliness of The Immigrant, or the Anonymity of Pluralism

MOCA's *Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974-1981* was the museum's contribution to the Getty Foundation's Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980 initiative.¹¹¹ Curated by Paul Schimmel, *Under the Big Black Sun* took its name from the LA punk band X's third album. The exhibit, which included a photograph of *Loneliness*, historicized the diversification of artistic practices that emerged in California throughout the '70s and into the early '80s. Returning again and again to the term 'pluralism' in his description of the exhibit, Schimmel framed *Under the Big Black Sun* as a celebration of the expansion of artistic form and the breakdown of a cohesive and exclusionary narrative of modernism.¹¹² The photograph of *Loneliness*, however, pointedly questioned what relationships existed within the exhibition's evocation of pluralism. Unlike *Phantom Sightings*, which so prominently displayed *Spray Paint LACMA*, *Loneliness* was almost impossible to find in The Geffen Contemporary's cavernous gallery space. Lost in the huge space and amidst some 500 odd works, the installation of Gómez-Peña's photo, only 11 x 14 inches, reiterated themes of anonymity and abandonment so viscerally evoked in the '79 performance of the piece.

upon the notion of the scapegoat (whether it be *los personas sin papeles* or the Muslim community), an iteration of the decoy. If the decoy is linked to a trickster modality, speaking back to power, the scapegoat does not press against structures of power and oppression but rather shifts focus to blame others.

¹¹¹ The inaugural PST initiative was October of 2011 to April 2012. The initiative, which actually began in 2002, culminated nearly a decade later in a seven-month series of exhibitions and events organized by over 60 different cultural centers and arts institutions across Southern California. The initiative aimed to record the art endemic to Southern California, which the initiative posited has had indelible affects on the cultural production of the region, and—as Southern California is a site of transnational circulation—globally. "Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA," *The Getty* 16 Feb. 2015, 8 May 2015 <<http://www.getty.edu/pacificstandardtime/>>.

¹¹² Paul Schimmel, "California Pluralism and the Birth of the Postmodern Era," *Under the Big Black Sun, California Art 1974-1981*, eds. Lisa Gabrielle Mark and Paul Schimmel (Munich: DelMonico Books, 2001) 16-17.

While *Spray Paint LACMA*'s curation created a politically charged interface between the photograph and the various architectural and curatorial histories of the museum, *Loneliness*'s placement within the exhibit staged a very different interface between the photograph, a museumgoer, the space, and the curators' aims. The politics of anonymity, of invisibility—so key to Gómez-Peña's piece—provide an affective entry point for questioning the continued evocation of pluralism in *Under the Big Black Sun*. Gómez-Peña's largely invisibilized contribution to the exhibit frames how one might examine the internal relationships that exist within a term like pluralism.

Gómez-Peña moved to LA in '78, some six years after Asco formed, to attend the California Institute of the Arts. He had moved from Mexico, attracted by the school's post-studio program.¹¹³ Gómez-Peña's LA, thus, unlike the members of Asco was one initially informed by the structures, such as they were, of CalArts. In the late '70s, the school was dominated by figures like John Baldessari, Douglas Huebler, and Michael Asher. Overlapping with Gómez-Peña's time at CalArts were students Mike Kelley (who graduate in '78), Stephen Prina ('80), and Jim Shaw ('78). *Loneliness* was one of his first performance works created while he was still a student at CalArts. In Gómez-Peña's narration of his artistic evolution, *Loneliness* features prominently. He describes the piece as “a metaphor for a painful birth into a new country, a new identity—Chicano—and a new language—intercultural performance.”¹¹⁴ The piece, along with

¹¹³ The program, lead by John Baldessari, was to prove hugely influential for a generation of California art-makers.

¹¹⁴ Gómez-Peña, “Colonial Dreams,” 82.

Gómez-Peña's work reveals the complexity of the term ‘Chicano.’ As much as Chicana/o registers as a particular US-centric label, most potently attached to activist organizing of the '60s and '70s, many activists who took up the term have attempted to, like Gómez-Peña's transborder identity, forge cross-border alliances in pursuit of a coalition politics. The LA-based radical activist group, CASA organized workers, with and without papers, under the slogan ‘*sin fronteras*.’ It was a rallying cry that rejected nationalist rhetoric around immigration in favor of improving the conditions of a common group of workers laboring under the same conditions. The ways in which Asco, all born and raised in the US, and Gómez-Peña have been framed as or self-identified as Chicana/o artists reveals the term's, to quote Chon Noriega quoting the *American Heritage Dictionary*, “usage problem.” Labeling both Asco and Gómez-

other early performance works, was to lay an aesthetic foundation for his most well known pieces, which he developed throughout the '80s and into the early '90s.

When Gómez-Peña staged *Loneliness* in '79 the political tenure of the city had shifted dramatically since Asco's inception in '72. The various leftist groups, which had so dominated communities in East LA—like the Brown Berets and CASA—had either disbanded or were in the decline. The Brown Berets would fold in '84, and CASA dissolved in '78. In part, such movements broke up in the wake of the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam in '73, a political victory, of sorts, for leftists activists who had organized the country's anti-war movement. Beyond the end of the anti-war movement, though, “the national labor movement was spiraling downward [throughout the '70s]... [bottoming] out when Ronald Reagan fired striking air-traffic controllers in 1980.”¹¹⁵ Reagan's tenure as California governor and his subsequent successful presidential bid were to radically reconfigure—i.e. decimate—the state and most particularly LA's leftist movements. *Loneliness*, then, emerged in a moment of transition between the Chicana/o activism that had so mobilized artists like Asco in the late '60s and early '70s and Reagan's administration.

Under the Big Black Sun imagined this political climate as the conditioning force propelling the production of the art works included in the exhibit. Projected on a large screen, visible as visitors entered the exhibit space, was Nixon's resignation speech and Gerald Ford's subsequent pardon. Playing on a loop, the news footage contextualized the exhibition. Throughout the exhibition, large hanging screens floated specter-like above the art, each

Peña as *Chicano* reveals the term's fluidity that, far from re-inscribing essentialist categories of identification, presses against them in political useful ways. Chicana/o incites “discourse about artistic production,” questioning by whom and to what aesthetic, commercial, or political ends the term attaches itself to particular artists or modes of artistic production. Chon A. Noriega, “The Orphans of Modernism,” *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement*, eds. Rita Gonzalez, Howard N. Fox, and Chon A. Noriega (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) 17.

¹¹⁵ Pulido 219.

displaying a looping array of news images and footage, informational captions running below each.¹¹⁶ The exhibit's periodization proposed a kind of progressive political nihilism, beginning as it did with Nixon's resignation and ending with Reagan's inauguration and the dawning of a decade-long fiscally and socially conservative mandate.¹¹⁷

Loneliness was part of a series of works the artist created in unlikely places over the course of '78 and '79. Scholar Meiling Cheng writes that these works blurred the boundary between performance and quotidian gestures, "immersing all present in the liminal state of the border."¹¹⁸ For example, he stood on the southern edge of Interstate 5 and screamed at cars zooming by in Spanish for their drivers to save him from "cultural shipwreck."¹¹⁹ Continuing his interest in durational works, he likewise sat, fully clothed, in a public restroom at CalArts for twenty-four hours. Throughout the piece entitled *Bathroom (Spanglish) Poetry Recital*, he read an epic poem describing his journey from Mexico to Los Angeles in Spanglish.¹²⁰ The longest of these works was *Border Walk* in which Gómez-Peña spent two and a half days walking from Tijuana back to Los Angeles. In *Mexican Homeless* from '78, which closely mirrored the score of *Loneliness*, the artist spent twelve hours lying on a downtown LA street. Gómez-Peña wrote of the piece, "*I discovered the as both a 'homeless' and as Mexican, I was invisible to the Anglo population.*"¹²¹ *Loneliness, in many ways, seems a spatial distillation of the critical questions asked in Mexican Homeless. Would the spatial intimacy of the elevator force fellow riders to notice his body? Or would he remain invisible?*

¹¹⁶ Christopher Knight, "All the Arts, All the Time," *The Los Angeles Times* 14 Oct. 2011, 8 May 2015 <<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster/2011/10/art-review-under-the-big-black-sun-at-moca.html>>.

¹¹⁷ Knight "All the Arts, All the Time."

¹¹⁸ Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "A Binational Performance Pilgrimage," *Warrior for Gringostroika: Essays, Performance Texts, and Poetry* (St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1993) 20.

¹¹⁹ Meiling Cheng, *In Other Los Angeleses: Multicentric Performance Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 175.

¹²⁰ Cheng 175.

¹²¹ "The Living Art of Gómez Peña & La Pocha Nostra," *Intercultural Poltergeist* 3 March 2016 <<http://interculturalpoltergeist.tumblr.com/page/4>>.

The photograph of *Loneliness* is framed tightly around a roughly body shaped form lying prone on the floor of the elevator. On its side, its knees are bent. The walls are a vibrant red, scuffed near the bottom from use; the floor is a dingy brown linoleum tile. The form is totally wrapped in fabric—a cream colored cloth covered with a large print of black and red flowers and leaves; lengths of twine hold the fabric in place. For twenty-four hours, Gómez-Peña lay in the elevator of an office building in downtown LA.¹²² Over the course of the day, people in the elevator reacted to his presence differently. He was kicked and fondled; a dog pissed on him. Some whispered to him, unsure of what he was or why he was in the elevator. One passenger threatened to stab him, provoking Gómez-Peña to scream back in Spanish. Posted on the wall of the elevator, although absent from the frame of the photograph, were the words, “Moving to another country hurts more than moving to another house, another face, another lover... In one way or another we all are or will be immigrants. Surely one day we will be able to crack this shell open, this unbearable loneliness, and develop a transcontinental identity.”¹²³ The performance ended when security guards, alerted to his presence, removed Gómez-Peña from the elevator and threw him into the dumpster behind the building.¹²⁴

The fabric that covered Gómez-Peña’s body sartorially staged the artist’s politicized subjectivity. His fabric wrapped body dominates the frame of the photograph, rendering the image mysterious: who are we looking at, *what* are we looking at? The length of cloth was an opaque surface, ensuring that the particularities of Gómez-Peña’s racially marked body were invisible to

¹²² In documentation of the work, the specific public elevator of *Loneliness* is unclear. MOCA’s description of the work at the 2011 exhibit merely specifies that the piece was initially performed in a public elevator in Los Angeles, while Gómez-Peña’s assistant was only able to offer the same information. Scholar Meiling Cheng, in her book *In Other Los Angeleses: Multicentric Performance Art* expands the specificity of location, writing that the public elevator was in a downtown building. Cheng 174.

¹²³ Cheng 124-125.

¹²⁴ Gómez-Peña’s own descriptions of the performance appear in: Gómez-Peña, “Colonial Dreams” 82; “A Binational Performance Pilgrimage,” 20; Guillermo Gómez-Peña, “Guillermo Gómez-Peña,” *California Performance*, vol. 2: *Los Angeles Area*, ed. Thomas Leabhart (Claremont, CA: Pomona College/Mime Journal, 1991-92) 52.

the elevator riders: his status as an immigrant or, indeed, even as a person, obscured. His wrapped body was a form of *textile address*, affirming not so much identity and presence—as was the case with Asco’s work—but rather absence. Clothes, and fabric, bear the histories of the bodies that live beneath and within them. As Joseph Roach has written, clothing or costumes come to stand in for a subject precisely because the propinquity between body and cloth connotes the intimacy of embodied knowledge.¹²⁵ *Loneliness*, of course, forestalled the intimacy of a textile address for his fellow elevator riders, completing covering as he did, his body in fabric. Yet the almost womb-like enfolding of his body in fabric was to leave a trace of his body—an index of sweat and smell. The fabric shell, as an index of his body in performance, parallels the notion of the photograph as index of the past performance. Indeed, the indexical exchange between fabric and photography is well remarked upon; the shroud of Turin, after all, remains the paradigmatic example of an embodied trace within scholarship on photography and film.¹²⁶ The inability of fellow passengers’ to *see* Gómez-Peña, and, hence mark him as a particular type of raced and gendered subject revealed the performance’s frustrating logic: it refused to reveal its intentions by refusing to reveal its performer.

“The magic of cloth,” Peter Stallybrass writes, “is that it receives us: receives our smells, our sweat, our shape even.” He continues that clothes hold our gestures, “both reassuring and terrifying, touching the living with the dead.”¹²⁷ Stallybrass grounds his argument in the poignant passing of a friend, describing the haunting quality of still smelling, sensing his friend’s presence in a jacket. Gómez-Peña’s performance, however, staged the paradoxical qualities Stallybrass

¹²⁵ Joseph Roach, “The Global Parasol: Accessorizing the Four Corners of the World,” *The Global Eighteenth Century*, ed. Felicity A. Nussbaum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) 93-106.

¹²⁶ André Bazin, “The ontology of the photographic image,” *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) 9-16.

¹²⁷ Peter Stallybrass, “Worn Worlds: Clothes, Mourning, and the Life of Things,” *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, eds. Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999) 28.

assigns to fabric. The length of fabric bears the trace of his body, yet in performance and even more so in the photograph, *Loneliness* refuses to grant a viewer access to his body. Instead, the unknown spectacle of his body twines between living performer, passive, prone body, and stilled image.

The length of cloth functioned as the shell the quote on the elevator wall above Gómez-Peña's body referenced: "surely one day we will be able to crack this shell open, this unbearable loneliness, and develop a transcontinental identity." The fabric and the poem rendered legible the surfaces of meaning across which the political and affective thrust of *Loneliness* was entwined. From the Latin, 'text' literally means a thing that is woven, referencing the action of weaving, joining, or braiding. My aligning, here, of text and textile follows Roland Barthes attention to the multiplicity of a given text; far from a stable object, the text, for Barthes, functioned like a woven textile, meaning emerging in the tensile encounter between threads.¹²⁸ The poem, like the length of fabric covering Gómez-Peña's body, functions as a surface; meanings skitter across the text(ile), revealing not depth so much as the entanglement of various signifiers: the enclosed space of the elevator, his covered body, the twine containing it, the evocation of loneliness, and—in the same textual breath—of immigration, of a transcontinental identity.¹²⁹

Barthes forwards his notion of text in his brief essay "The Death of the Author," positing the reader, not the author, as the "site where this multiplicity [of textual meaning] is collected."¹³⁰ The reader, for Barthes, "is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds collected into one and the same field all of the traces from which writing is constituted."¹³¹ It is a sited figuration of meaning making that maps

¹²⁸ Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986) 54.

¹²⁹ Mireille Ribiére, *Barthes: Philosophy Insights* (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, 2008) 48-49.

¹³⁰ Barthes, *Rustle*, 54.

¹³¹ Barthes, *Rustle*, 54.

onto Gómez-Peña's invisibilized body. Wrapped in fabric he signifies, in the space of the photographic image, a literal manifestation of the man without. And, yet Gómez-Peña's body renders legible the man within history, biography, or psychology not as the subject-less, universal reader of Barthes's text, but rather as a particularly sited immigrant subject.

To be without, in the signifying codes of *Loneliness*, is to be marked as a particular type of subject. While the cloth obscured a ready ability to mark his body as particularly gendered or raced, the fabric and its floral motif, which repeats across the bolt of cloth rendered his body legible as—if not precisely feminine—not masculine either. Certainly, fabric and textiles are closely intertwined in psychoanalysis, cultural histories, and art history with women and women's labor.¹³² *Loneliness* seemingly draws upon these feminine and feminist histories, injecting the immigrant subjectivity into a reading of the body and labor that lies beneath the folds of the cloth. It was Gómez-Peña's passivity, though, which most fully marked his body as feminized: an unresisting body that the score of the performance revealed as available for whatever attention, or inattention, fellow passengers cared to inflict. His prone body was, through the bolt of fabric, rendered passive and available for violence and sexualized assault. He turned himself into a package tied up with string, an objectification, which is only repeated—like the floral motif twining its way across the bolt of fabric—in the photograph, the artist now the art object.

While Gómez-Peña describes *Loneliness* as iterating the affective sensations of immigration, the score of the performance likewise implicated performer and viewers in a particular politics of racialized and gendered labor. The cloth evokes an urban history of textile

¹³² See: Sigmund Freud, "Femininity," *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1965) 139-167; Lucy Lippard, "Making Something from Nothing (toward a Definition of Women's 'Hobby Art')," *Textiles: Primary and Critical Sources, volume 4: Identity*, ed. Catherine Harper (London: Berg, 2012) 284-292; Kathryn Sullivan Kruger, *Weaving the Word: the Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production* (London: Associated University Press, 2001).

factories, while the site of the performance evokes a history of who operated and worked in elevators. If “the *surface* of fabric... is a surface upon which histories of use are etched,” Gómez-Peña’s fabric, contextualized through LA reveals an on-going history of industrial textile production.¹³³ Such questions gesture outwards to LA’s Fashion District (most probably only a few blocks away from the downtown building in which the performance was staged) and its litigious dependence upon an undocumented labor force to produce fast fashion in “sweatshop-like conditions.”¹³⁴ Bolts of fabric, the raw material for creating clothing, signify the illegal labor practices of contractors in LA, a collapsing US textile industry, and, expanding outwards, the global scope of the textile industry. Employing some 45,000, LA clothing sweatshops are increasingly staffed by undocumented immigrants, often women.¹³⁵ Continually under threat from law enforcement for illegal hiring practices and substandard employment conditions, LA sweatshops are mostly owned by “smaller-sized companies managed by owner-operators” and are adept at quickly closing a location and re-surfacing weeks later in a new site.¹³⁶ To view Gómez-Peña’s body now in the photograph is to note the various threads that make up the landscape of the textile industry: agency, labor, immigration, economic independence and marginalization, and precarious labor. Gómez-Peña, balanced between the living and the abject, wove a narrative of labor, bodies, and the city onto and through the textile, which covered his body.

¹³³ Harper x.

¹³⁴ Kathleen Miles, “‘Sweatshop’ Conditions Found in LA Fashion District at Contractors for Urban Outfitters, Aldo, Forever 21,” *Huffington Post* 14 Dec. 2012 17 June 2015 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/14/sweatshop-la-fashion-urban-outfitters-aldo-forever-21_n_2302493.html>.

¹³⁵ Leah F. Vosko, Martha MacDonald and Iain Campbell, *Gender and the Contours of Precarious Employment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) 1.

¹³⁶ Haya El Nasser, “LA garment industry rife with sweatshop conditions,” *Aljazeera America* 9 Sep. 2015, 3 March 2016 <<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/9/9/sweatshop-conditions-in-la-garment-industry.html>>.

Walter Benjamin, in *The Arcades Project*, relates “fashion to the fashioning of modern urban life and the affect it conveys.”¹³⁷ Benjamin’s textual play becomes a means of constituting his “vision of modernity and metropolitan life.”¹³⁸ Fashion renders legible not simply the individual but also the contours of urban life, revealing how the urban envelops and obscures certain subjects in certain ways and in certain spaces. The fashion that Benjamin discusses, though (and which will re-emerge in Chapter Four) is distinctly different from the bolt of raw fabric that covers Gómez-Peña’s body. While fashion for Benjamin, writing in the early twentieth century, connotes the emergence and solidification of consumer culture, the bolt of fabric highlights a particular moment within a larger narrative of consumer culture.

The fabric pauses discourses of modern urban life at a moment of production, alerting a viewer of *Loneliness* not to the affective pleasures of consumption but the practices of marginalization, exploitation, and labor, which define modern urbanity. In the photograph, the fabric is gathered up over Gómez-Peña’s feet, the selvage edge splayed around his ankles. The selvage, the edge point of the fabric’s pattern is a thin strip of white rarely if ever seen in a completed garment; it is meant to keep a bolt of fabric from unraveling and marks its serial number. His form, filling the frame of the photograph, is objectified by the fabric—quite literally marked with the fabric’s serial number and barcode—his body obscured, legible only as a bundle, a package, a bolt of fabric. Bound by the length of fabric, Gómez-Peña’s body is embraced by the folds of LA’s urban memory, his swaddled form entangled in threads of racialized display, labor, immigration, marginalization, and adornment.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Bruno 43; Walter Benjamin, “Fashion,” trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 79.

¹³⁸ Bruno 43.

¹³⁹ Fashion, for Benjamin, “unfolds as a form of historical remembering... fashion becomes the material of time and history.” Bruno 43.

For the performance's duration, Gómez-Peña never left the elevator; contained by fabric, he was caught in perpetual transit, going up and down and getting nowhere. His performance defied the logic of the elevator: they are spaces in which people usually do not linger. To align the sartorial signification of Gómez-Peña's obscured form—a trussed, brightly wrapped, body—with the elevator is to frame *Loneliness* as engaging a history of elevator politics, in which certain subjects become associated with staying in and laboring in such spaces. Low-wage and unskilled laborers, elevator operators were most often women and people of color.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, by the mid-century, apartment and offices buildings were increasingly being designed to accommodate multiple elevators: private elevators for the residents or higher paid employees and service elevators designed for use by a building's janitorial staff.¹⁴¹ This spatial separation of elevator space reveals the imagined threat of the elevator: it is *so easy* to brush shoulders with one's fellow riders. The work's thematic concerns, like the elevator between floors, were suspended between the affective loneliness of migration and the socio-economic constraints upon which the experiences of certain immigrant subjects can be predicated. Such constraints were, and are, often tied to the expectations of how certain raced and gendered subjects are expected to labor. (As Valdez recalls, her high school home economics teachers "told the Chicana students that they would one day be cooking and cleaning in the homes of affluent whites."¹⁴²) The elevator not only metaphorically represented an immigrant's loneliness but also collapsed an affective-kinesthetic state of indeterminacy onto the socio-economic and racialized politics of laboring in elevators. *Loneliness* proposed, if not an equivalence, a relationship between the artist's durational artistic labor and the low-wage and so often racially delimited labor of elevator operators.

¹⁴⁰ Andreas Bernard, *Lifted: a Cultural History of the Elevator* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).

¹⁴¹ Bernard 216.

¹⁴² McMahan 36.

Loneliness staged a sartorial negotiation between the artist's anonymous body and his viewers in relationship to the spatial negotiation of the tight space of the elevator. The elevator, as Lauren Berlant reminds us, is a space of intimacy. Intimacy evokes the ability to create closeness, whether emotional or spatial. It is the affective response to the private, the cherished or confidential. The piece's poem attempted to articulate the shared transit of Gómez-Peña and his passengers as one of immigration. Everyone in the elevator experienced the same corporeal sensation of upward or downward movement: "a person between nations, an elevator between floors."¹⁴³ The elevator, in the end, did not invite the pleasurable intimacy of a romantic relationship or a shared secret; rather, it staged the tense intimacy of being too close to strangers. Berlant writes, "when people of apparently different races and classes find themselves in slow, crowded elevators...intimacy reveals itself to be a relation associated with tacit fantasies, tacit rules, and tacit obligations to remain unproblematic. We notice...[intimacy] when something about it takes on a charge, so that the intimacy becomes something else [becomes] an 'issue.'"¹⁴⁴ The elevator made visible the barely contained classist and racist social rules, which govern interpersonal relationships; the piece ended, after all, with Gómez-Peña getting roughly thrown (away) into a dumpster.

Gómez-Peña immobilized his own body, rendering himself vulnerable to the intimacy of the elevator's enclosed space and his fellow passengers. Not obviously marked as racially, ethnically, or economically 'other,' his body, nevertheless, pressed against the expected conventions of the elevator, setting in motion a string of attacks against his body. The repeated violent and sexual assaults Gómez-Peña experienced throughout the performance's duration

¹⁴³ "Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *The Loneliness of the Immigrant*, 1979/2011," *Under the Big Black Sun, California Art 1974-1981, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles* 8 May 2015 <<http://sites.moca.org/blacksun/2011/09/27/guillermo-gomez-pena-the-loneliness-of-the-immigrant-19792011/>>.

¹⁴⁴ Lauren Berlant, "Intimacy: A Special Issue," *Critical Inquiry* 24.2 (1998): 287.

rendered the ‘immigrant’ body legible as one vulnerable to the threat of and as well as actualized violence. As Cheng argues, *Loneliness* forestalled empathetic connection with his body, rendering as it did his body ‘unreadable.’ For Cheng his body “contaminate[d] the nonidentity of a functional space...[and by] partially surrendering his control to the viewers...[made] them accomplices to his immediate experiences.”¹⁴⁵ While Cheng’s argument rehearses a narrative about performance art that notes a performer’s culpability in forcing viewers to behave in particular—often violent, misogynistic, or racist—ways, the elevator as Cheng seems to imply is never simply an unmarked functional space. Rather, its tight quarters and inherent liminality evoke histories of forced passage and anxiety.

The elevator has long functioned as a site of urban fear. The US public’s first experience with the elevator came in 1854 at the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations held in New York City. Elisha Graves Otis, the inventor of the safety catch designed to stymie the downward plummet of a broken elevator, gave repeated demonstrations of his new invention. Otis would hoist a model elevator operating on a simple rigging system to its maximum height then sever the elevator’s cable causing the car to plummet only a few feet downwards before stabilizing due to his safety catch.¹⁴⁶ The public’s introduction to the elevator was through an imagined—and realized—fear of the elevator breaking down. While the fear, if not the ‘reality,’ of the broken elevator car plummeting downwards at ever accelerating rates was dramatized at the exhibition, a far more prevalent fear ghosts writings on the elevator: claustrophobia. Writing on Baudelaire, Benjamin quotes George Simmel assertion that, “Before buses, railroads, and streetcars became fully established in the nineteenth century, people had never been put into the position of having to stare at each other without exchanging a word for minutes or even hours on end.”¹⁴⁷ The

¹⁴⁵ Cheng 180.

¹⁴⁶ Bernard 1.

¹⁴⁷ Bernard 210.

correlation between emerging modes of transportation—the elevator merely representing the most modest mode of spatial dislocation—and “the destabilization of ingrained forms of perception and communication,” lead to trains, subways, and the elevator “above all...[becoming] the paradigmatic locations,” where claustrophobia manifested.¹⁴⁸ Feelings of claustrophobia arose, according to neurologists, “at the intersection of mobility and restricted space”; the elevator offered the perfect spatial nexus of these two sensations.¹⁴⁹ The fear associated with the elevator, after safety devices prevented elevators from plummeting downwards, was simply that of “getting stuck,” the temporal duration of one’s imagined momentary transit between floors extended indefinitely.¹⁵⁰ While writers in the early twentieth century abstractly discuss the notion of ‘getting stuck,’ evoking an unnamed existential fear, *Loneliness* locates the fear of perpetual, indefinitely stalled transit. It is the stalled journey of the immigrant or the refugee, stuck between borders or between floors. The photograph, tightly cropped around Gómez-Peña’s wrapped figure, visually mirrors the phenomenological fear of the tight space made viscerally manifest in elevators.

Simmel notes that emerging modes of transportation like buses, railroads, and streetcars inaugurated the strange sensation of passengers being forced “to stare at each other without exchanging a word for minutes or even hours on end,” his comment is predicated upon a particular understanding of transportation. It is one dependent upon his *milieu*—European, relatively affluent, and white. To imagine the way in which people were transported in the transatlantic slave trade or are transported in on-going human trafficking like that at the US Mexico border, is to frame the corporeal and affective sensation of being crammed body to body in a tight space with one’s fellow passengers, not exchanging a word for minutes or even hours

¹⁴⁸ Bernard 209-210.

¹⁴⁹ Bernard 211.

¹⁵⁰ Bernard 211.

on end as a sensation of transport that is thoroughly racialized, tied to (forced) immigration, and to structures of economic marginalization. Harvey Young reminds us that for those forced into bondage in the Middle Passage, their “bodies...densely packed...[like] cargo and often shackled, were rendered immobile even as they moved across the ocean.”¹⁵¹ While the elevator’s cramped quarters and Gómez-Peña’s immobile body might evoke the phenomenology of the Middle Passage or human traffic across the US-Mexico border, *Loneliness* forestalls the expectation of arrival clear in either of those contexts. Rather, Gómez-Peña simply stayed still: stuck in an urban purgatory, endlessly going up and then down and getting nowhere. *Loneliness* rendered legible the particular racialized and gendered politics of what it means to be stuck, to be caught in a state of perpetual transit.

While *Loneliness* was part of a series of works Gómez-Peña completed over the course of ’78 and ’79 that saw the artist siting his politically and affectively charged interventions throughout LA, he was simultaneously creating the performance aesthetic for which he is now most well-known. A pastiche of post-modern and neo-Azteca styles, these works, which Gómez-Peña would carry out throughout the ‘80s and ‘90s, were most often group performances. These performances engaged histories and legacies of colonization, immigration, ethnography, tropes of ‘authenticity,’ and globalization. One of his most well known works in this vein, which I quickly gloss here, is *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit...* from 1992.¹⁵² The piece, co-created

¹⁵¹ Harvey Young, “Standing Still: Daguerreotypes, Photography, and the Black Body,” *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010) 42.

¹⁵² The two performers global tour of the piece is documented in the film, *The Couple in the Cage: a Guatinalui Odyssey*. In *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit...*, Fusco and Gómez-Peña costumed themselves in a post-modern pastiche of indigenous cultural stereotypes and late 20th century commodity fetish objects: grass skirts and leopard capes, sunglasses and high tops. Their cage was filled with a variety of ‘ethnographic’ objects: spiritual totems of the newly discovered peoples, a TV, cokes, and handicrafts. Fusco and Gómez-Peña’s performance included sitting around watching people watch them, as well as periodic ‘native dances,’ for which visitors could pay to see. *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit...* revealed and critiqued the gendered politics that attaches to bodies of color by destabilizing the sartorial signifiers associated with indigeneity. Playing with the codes of Pre-Columbian cultures,

and performed with Coco Fusco, featured the two in a small cage presenting themselves as recently ‘discovered’ Amerindians. The piece, designed to coincide with the Quincentennial of Columbus’s ‘discovery’ of the Americans, aimed to performatively intervene in the long history of European and US projects of display in which people of color were exhibited as novel oddities for a paying European or US audience.

While some ten years separate the two pieces, each was particularly built around a ‘tight space’—the elevator or the cage.¹⁵³ For dance scholar Danielle Goldman, the notion of the tight space serves as a spatial metaphor that delimits the bodily choreography and structural agency of social actors.¹⁵⁴ A tight space, in other words, is a zone of constraint that determines the ways in which racial marked subjects can move. The elevator and the cage instigated uncomfortable questions about racial identities, ethnic others, and the tense interface of relational intimacy. Aligning the curation of *Loneliness* in *Under the Big Black Sun* in 2011 with Gómez-Peña’s larger oeuvre frames the photograph as indexing not only the ’79 performance, invested in the economic and affective conditions of immigration but as also connoting the ways the bodies of

colonization, and a capitalist modernity, Fusco and Gómez-Peña presented hybrid bodies. Photographs from the series display Fusco’s face painted in a series of ‘tribal’ stripes while dark sunglasses obscure her eyes; Gómez-Peña wears an elaborate headdress, its iconography a pastiche of Mayan and Aztec symbology, while his face is covered in a *lucha libre* mask. Their hybrid self-fashioning attempted to destabilize the discourses of display, exhibition, and authenticity, which attach to the ethnographic subject’s body. The two performed the piece at a variety of sites around the world: Irvine—a city in the early ‘90s known for its xenophobic attitudes towards Mexicans—Columbus Plaza in Madrid, and Covent Gardens in London, amongst others. Each site was chosen as it contained a certain spatial history vis-à-vis racism, colonial conquest, or the exhibition of people of color. Cheng 155; Anna Johnson, “Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña,” *BOMB* 42 (1993) <<http://bombmagazine.org/article/1599/>>; *The Couple in the Cage: a Guatınai Odyssey*, dirs. Coco Fusco and Paula Heredia, perf. Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Third World Newsreel, 1993.

¹⁵³ The 1854 Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations, in which Otis demonstrated his improved elevator design, was held in New York’s newly built Crystal Palace, modeled after London’s structure of the same name, built to house the city’s World’s Fair held three years prior. The London World’s Fair was the first, setting off a long century of global exhibitions, in which not only technological advancements and the newest inventions were displayed, but also people. The history, then, of the elevator and of displaying people of color as ethnographic and cultural oddities for European or US viewers align in the space of the global exposition, in the space of spectacles of display.

¹⁵⁴ Danielle Goldman, *I want to be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

people of color have historically entered museum spaces. Both *Loneliness* and *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit...*, sited in their respective tight spaces—the elevator, the cage, the delimited frame of the photograph—engaged the racially charged history of museum display.

Under the Big Black Sun was housed at The Geffen Contemporary, a few blocks south of MOCA's primary location on Grand Street in downtown LA.¹⁵⁵ Entering the exhibit, a museumgoer was confronted with large-scale works by Robert Arneson, Terry Schoonhoven, and Bruce Nauman.¹⁵⁶ Film footage of the exhibition that acquainted a potential visitor with the scope of the exhibit, lingers on these opening works.¹⁵⁷ Likewise it shows Chris Burden's large-scale installation *The Reason for the Neutron Bomb*; Suzanne Lacy's mural-sized map of sexual assaults in LA *Three Weeks in May*; and Mark Pauline's '78-79 sculpture-cum-machine *De-manufacturing Machine*. The exhibit was dominated by large and dramatic pieces, framing a mode of looking that seemed to privilege the monumental. Gómez-Peña's photograph, the only work by the artist in the show, never appears in frame.

¹⁵⁵ The Geffen Contemporary opened in 1983 and was imagined as a temporary space while the Grand Street location was still under construction. The building, along with many other ex-warehouses in the early 1980s, was first abandoned and then co-opted by artists as studio spaces and galleries. The temporary location, however, proved to be extraordinarily popular with the public and the museum's curators, so, even when the Grand Street location opened the museum extended their lease with the city on the space. Re-designed by Frank Gehry, The Geffen Contemporary still closely resembles the warehouse it once was.

¹⁵⁶ Arneson's piece, *Portrait of George*, is a ceramic head of George Moscone, the mayor of San Francisco assassinated along with Harvey Milk in '78. The bust is some seven feet tall, and positioned in the center of the main entrance into the exhibition, it dominated the space, forcing museumgoers to flow around it. Schoonhoven's twenty-foot long painting, *Downtown Los Angeles Underwater* from '79, hung on the wall directly across from *Portrait of George*. The murky turquoise and brown tones of the piece capture an eerie underwater LA, towering office buildings lean precariously as schools of fish swim across the canvas. Schoonhoven's painting depicts the city following a devastating earthquake, foregrounding looming concerns of an environmental catastrophe. Hanging from the balcony level above Arneson and Schoonhoven's pieces, Nauman's sculptural piece, '81 *South American Triangle*—an equilateral triangle made of metal beams, an upside down chair, its seat gone, hanging in the center—was suspended five feet above the floor. A disquieting abstraction of torture, the thick beams of the triangle initially obscured the chair from a viewer's gaze. Only by bending down and craning one's head underneath the work did the ominously suspended chair become visible.

¹⁵⁷ "Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974-81," *VernissageTV* 7 Oct. 2011, 12 May 2015 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zx6t19bxhrI>>.

His work is not mentioned in any of the reviews of the show; nor is it discussed in any of the essays in the exhibit's catalogue. Even an essay by art historian Thomas Crow that begins, "Artists who defined the...1970s in Los Angeles tended to function under the sign of their own disappearance," fails to mention *Loneliness*.¹⁵⁸ Describing the political-aesthetics of the fugitive, he continues, "Concealing or removing the body from view thus becomes the equal and opposite requirement to putting it on conspicuous display."¹⁵⁹ Crow's historicization of the period seems to describe literally the aesthetics and politics of Gómez-Peña's piece, yet he does not even name-check the work. Absent from the archive of footage and writing, which surrounded the exhibit, *Loneliness*'s placement within the show renders the concealment of Gómez-Peña's photographic body (of work) all the more potent. Lost amongst the vast pluralism of some 500 pieces and the huge exhibition space of The Geffen Contemporary, the installation of *Loneliness* reiterates the anonymity so central to the piece's performance in '79. Gómez-Peña's small photograph, his body wrapped in fabric and rendered unrecognizable, becomes—like in '79—the ultimate example of a fugitive body politic.

Schimmel, introducing the exhibition at its opening, described it as a "block party," an analogy that both acknowledged the number of artists included in the show—more than 130—but also, as Annie Buckley wrote, in her review of the exhibit, evoked "a gathering of neighbors who may not share more than a friendly hello but together constitute community."¹⁶⁰ The sheer preponderance of works chaotically exhibited together evoked a block party of art objects, and certainly, historically, many of the artists included in the exhibit did know each other, whether from school, art spaces, or political organizing. What is at stake, however, in framing the

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Crow, "The Art of the Fugitive in 1970s Los Angeles: Runaway Self-Consciousness," *Under the Big Black Sun, California Art 1974-1981*, eds. Lisa Gabrielle Mark and Paul Schimmel (Munich: DelMonico Books, 2001) 44.

¹⁵⁹ Crow 46.

¹⁶⁰ Annie Buckley, "Under the Big Black Sun," *Art in America* 11 Dec 2011, 2 May 2015 <<http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/under-the-big-black-sun/>>.

expansion—aesthetically and in terms of the growing visibility of artists of color and women—of contemporary art practices as a block party, as pluralistic? While the block party connotes the celebration of urban community, the history of the block in LA is thoroughly imbricated with municipal segregation accomplished through zoning laws, redlining, and other discriminatory practices like the excessive policing of predominately minority communities. To evoke the block party, then, is to note how it became possible through municipal policing, which ensured such parties would always already be largely segregated. For all that *Loneliness* remained almost entirely unnoted in relationship to the exhibit, it is, I argue, the work around which the exhibit's interest in pluralism is rendered legible: to be plural is to advance a relational aesthetics predicated on anonymity.

It is an understanding of plurality, which aligns with Jean-Luc Nancy's being singular plural: the individuated 'I' is not prior to or in advance of a 'we' but rather *being* necessarily implies a 'being with.' "Being," Nancy writes, "cannot *be* anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the *with* as the *with* of this singularly plural coexistence."¹⁶¹ Being singular plural attempts to imagine community. Community, though, for Nancy, as for *Loneliness*, evokes not comfort but rather the "contagion, the contact of being with one another in...turmoil...the disturbance of violent relatedness."¹⁶² It is a description that parallels Berlant's explanation of the tense intimacy of the elevator, a space in which the tacit social rules that bolster a sense of community or relationality break down. To be plural *Loneliness* proposed is to be singular, individuated, and yet always already anonymous. Grounding the universal subject hailed by Nancy's philosophic discourse within the visual signifiers of US-Mexican immigration, the subject referenced in *Loneliness* is anonymous, abandoned, forgotten, harassed, and, finally, thrown away.

¹⁶¹ Nancy 3.

¹⁶² Nancy xiii.

The violence of relatedness that Nancy theorizes, is made manifest within the experiential force of photographic space. Nancy writes that the photograph renders legible the attempt—always inadequate—to forge connectivity across the void of the (photographic) approximation of knowing ‘someone,’ simultaneously marking difference and banality.¹⁶³ He argues that the turmoil of forging community is made manifest in the act of looking at a photographic image. The photograph serves as a metaphor for the inability to forge community or ‘know’ someone, the slick surface of the image repelling the imagined penetration required to access one’s interior life. *Loneliness* seems paradigmatic of this notion; after all, Gómez-Peña’s body is wrapped in fabric ensuring his body is not even visually available for a viewer’s gaze. The photo enacts its sensorial violence in the realm of remembrance. Look at me, *Loneliness* calls, only to rescind its invitation of visual contact, retreating into indecipherability.

The photograph of *Loneliness* paradoxically rendered the immigrant subject legible by foreclosing a viewer’s ability to *see* the immigrant body. To look at the photograph is to not quite know what one is looking at. Is it a person? A wrapped mannequin? A man? A woman? Gómez-Peña’s humanness is unknown, let alone his particular subjectivity as a Mexican immigrant or his identity as an artist. If Gómez-Peña’s body remains unclear, so too does the location of the performance. The signification of a public elevator, with all its attendant valences of relationality and movement is erased in the image. The elision of the performance’s location is not simply a condition of the photographic frame. In documentation and scholarship on *Loneliness* the location of the performance goes unnamed. This archival void of the exact location of the performance returns a viewer of the photograph or a scholar of the piece back to questions of anonymity and invisibility. We can circle ever closer to where the work happened—the city: LA, the location: downtown, the type of elevator: in an office building—and yet always the work

¹⁶³ Nancy 8.

returns us to a space of unknowing. *Loneliness* is predicated upon, whether in its '79 performance or the photograph, a fundamental lack of knowledge: the anonymous, wrapped body, the unknown elevator.

Loneliness's fundamental anonymity presses against the imagined efficacy of a term like pluralism and the assertion of identity so present in *Spray Paint LACMA*. The piece's affective and geopolitical challenge to the exhibit's triumphant narrative of artistic pluralism was not only born out in the score of the '79 performance or the frame of the photograph. Rather, it was also clear in the work's spatial marginalization within The Geffen Contemporary. While the photograph was positioned quite differently than *Spray Paint LACMA*, it, likewise, provides a means to understand the relationships between the art objects in the exhibit. Attending to the relationship between spatially placed art objects reframes pluralism as not simply a description, but also as a relational experience, connoting the capacity to be plural *with* others, a *being with* in all its proposition of (photographic) contact.

The photograph captures a viewer and renders them, like the image, still. It is a performative experience, the museumgoer mirrors—or attempts to mirror—the stillness of the photographic image. It is a *being with*, which is not ontological but rather experiential. Bruno writes that the type of weaving intrinsic to a textile, like the one that encased Gómez-Peña's body, "is a folding form of in-betweenness...[which] can stand for the bridge of remembrance...[a] type of material separation and connectivity."¹⁶⁴ Fabric, then, like a photograph or like a line of text, carries the ability to weave, entangle, memories and historical time: the time of '79, the time of elevator's short trips up or down, the time of 2010, standing in front of the photograph, framed and protected behind a reflective glass surface. The photograph stages a performance of being with for all that the image is profoundly *not* alive, for all that the

¹⁶⁴ Bruno 43.

viewer finds herself not in the co-presence of a fellow performer, but only the slick surface of the photo, alive with the textures and folds of fabric and walls.

Conclusion

Performance studies scholarship on performance in museums focuses primarily on the spectacle of live performers in gallery spaces. Such exhibits, like Marina Abramović's retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, foreground questions of objectification, commodification, and represent a transformation in museum culture, the definition of art works expanding to include live performers. While photographs do not necessitate a shift in normative museum policies and practices, as is the case with live performance, museums' interest in photographs of performance illuminates concerns of documentation, presentation, and memory. Photographs like those of *Spray Paint LACMA* or *Loneliness* serve as an interface between museums' archival imperatives and live performance. An interface, Metzger writes, is at once "a boundary and a [site of] connection."¹⁶⁵ Not stable, an interface is continuously in flux and marks the collision or boundary between distinct ideas.¹⁶⁶ In the case of *Spray Paint LACMA* and *Loneliness* that interface asks scholars of performance to attend to the ways in which performance is documented; the performativity of photography; and, finally, the political implications of displaying photographic remnants of performative actions never intended for the museum.

While images are an important methodological tool for performance scholars (how else to write about a performance one has not seen but through its documentation?), the theoretical divides between performance and photography reaches back to the founding of Performance Studies in the early 1980s. Richard Schechner, expanding upon work by Herbert Blau, asserted live performance's inherent ephemerality, writing, "performance originals disappear as fast as

¹⁶⁵ Metzger 5.

¹⁶⁶ Metzger 8-9.

they are made.”¹⁶⁷ Writing less than ten years later, Peggy Phelan solidified live performance’s ontological ephemerality, arguing that the medium’s ability to circumvent modes and methods of capture or reproduction issued a challenge to capitalist modes of circulation and the art market in particular.¹⁶⁸ Emerging out of such thinking was the importance of ideas like liveness and presence within performance. Performance studies scholars understand presence as connoting the charged exchange between a live performer and her equally live viewer.¹⁶⁹ Conversely, film scholar Mary Ann Doane writes photography’s primary function is to record the present.¹⁷⁰ The photograph, in other words, foregrounds the fact that the performance it documents is over: presence or liveness is gone.¹⁷¹

Documentation, I argue though, is predicated upon the material conditions of the performance in question. Who took the photograph, and does the image continue to circulate

¹⁶⁷ Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 50.

¹⁶⁸ Diana Taylor, for example, argued that understandings of performance as ephemeral are inherently Euro-centric. Such arguments, Taylor notes, overlook the political implications of asserting that performance practices do not disappear but rather persist as epistemological challenges to colonial authority. Auslander, conversely, argued that the line between live performance and mediatization, or documentation, is blurrier than Schechner or Phelan’s claims might imply, importantly noting that scripted theater (like the commercially successful *Tony n’ Tina’s Wedding*) are predicated upon nightly repetition and an industrial logic of performance, the staging of each show controlled and codified. Most recently, Rebecca Schneider argued that rather than focusing on the event of the performance, instead scholars should attend to the gaps between performances, exploring the contextual implications in temporal lag. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Rebecca Schneider, *Performance Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁶⁹ Jones, referencing the increasing presence of live performers in museum exhibits, describes the term as “the possibility of unexpected relational sparks flying.” Adrian Heathfield writes that performance’s “generative force” emerges in the moment of co-presence between performer and viewer. Amelia Jones, “Temporal anxiety/’Presence’ in Absentia: Experience Performance as documentation,” *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance, and the Persistence of Being*, eds. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012) 199; Heathfield 7.

¹⁷⁰ Doane 128-152.

¹⁷¹ Rebecca Schneider writes, “We consider the live to be radically contingent, talking place only in present time, and passing away into the past...at each moment.” Rebecca Schneider, “Still Living: Performance, Photography, and Tableaux Vivants,” *Point & Shoot: Performance and Photography*, eds. France Choinière and Michèle Thériault (Montréal: Dazibao, 2005) 61.

under the sign of their artistic labor or that of the performer's? How many photos were taken? From what angle were they taken? In black and white or color? *Spray Paint LACMA* and *Loneliness* depict not only their respective performance events but also index the necessity of their own production, pressing into visibility the urgency of the act of documentation. The document is not merely a means of preserving an ephemeral act, allowing a performance to continue to circulate long after its live performance or confirmation that a performance did indeed happen. The document is a means of asserting and instantiating presence. Certainly, the photos of *Spray Paint LACMA* or *Loneliness* do not allow a viewer to be in the co-presence of either Valdez or Gómez-Peña. There is a qualitative difference between the experience of witnessing a live performance event (standing in the elevator in '79, for example) and viewing a photograph. The photos, though, allow us to imagine the term 'presence' as not only linked to concerns of liveness, framing how we might understand performance through a different set of criteria. *Spray Paint LACMA* and *Loneliness* reveal that presence is not necessarily linked to being present. Rather, the photographic document is the site/sight/cite through which the members of Asco and Gómez-Peña become visible: become present to an audience.

The term is politically fraught, indicating as it does the ability for someone to be in someplace at sometime. The photographs assert the double bind of marginalized presence: to assert one's presence is always already to attempt to instantiate that presence within and against structural conditions that seek to keep one absent. Presence, according to the OED, indicates: the condition of being present; the state of being with or in the same place as a person or thing; those who are present; a person or thing that exists or is present in a place but is not seen; as well as an instance of being present. The photos attest to an instance of being present, if only for the instant of the time of the photograph. Gamboa has described Asco's work thusly: the 'time' of all of

their photographs strung together would not equal a second of performance time.¹⁷² His comment plays upon the shutter speed he used to document all of Asco's performative actions and interventions (1/100), but it also makes clear that the instant matters. The photographs become the document of the instant, an instance of being captured by the city's visible light. While discourse on presence in performance studies often returns the term to considerations of liveness, we must equally attend to the visual perception of being present, caught by the photographs.

Photography is often understood as 'capturing' a subject, evoking material and corporeal examples of capture and arrest. *Spray Paint LACMA* and *Loneliness*, however, testify to the artists' ability to *withstand* the violence of capture.¹⁷³ The camera points and shoots, but unlike so many other acts of pointing and shooting, Asco and Gómez-Peña did not succumb. If, as Barthes writes, the camera is an experience with a micro-version of death, then their photos render legible the stakes of submitting to the death of the camera and yet still persisting in the face of (the camera, the city, the museum's) assaults.¹⁷⁴ Liveness, in their work, references an historical condition of attempting to "stay alive" against the threat of the draft, police harassment and aggression, gang violence, the dangers of the US-Mexico border-crossing, poverty, or presenting one's body as passive and unresisting. Presence, or liveness, for Asco and Gómez-Peña was (and is) not a question of disappearance but of a prescient effort to not disappear against all efforts to the contrary.¹⁷⁵ To document is not an unmarked act but one that issues a challenge. The challenge is not the anti-capitalist challenge Phelan assigns to live performance, but rather the challenge of viewing the photograph as a stage within which it is possible to assert

¹⁷² Gamboa, personal interview.

¹⁷³ Young, *Embodying Black Experience*.

¹⁷⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) 14-15.

¹⁷⁵ One of Gamboa's most recent artistic preoccupations is linked to the way in which his body serves as a document to the US's atomic tests throughout the 1950s. Carried out not too far from LA, Gamboa describes his body and life as "a mixed blessing of fallout, smog, and a million years of genetic memory." Harry Gamboa, Jr., "Nuclear Ephemera," *albertini 2014 the kite*, 7 March 2016 <<https://albertini2014.wordpress.com/2016/03/06/nuclear-ephemera/>>.

not only one's agency but also one's presence. Analyzing Asco and Gómez-Peña's work through performance remainder foregrounds such an understanding of the photographs of their work. Performance remainder, in other words, draws together the live event and the photo, asserting that such images materially account for the presence of the artists.

The final definition of presence, according to the OED, is the place or space in front of or around a person, their immediate vicinity. While the definitions of the word mentioned earlier ask us to attend to the body, this final meaning shifts focus to the question of space. Scholar Shawn Michelle Smith begins *At the Edge of Sight*, a volume that theorizes the politics of the invisible within early photographic history, by describing her experience of viewing a photograph.¹⁷⁶ Her description of viewing Joseph Nicéphore's first photograph in a gallery at the Harry Ransom Center is not visually, but visceral, attentive to the space of the gallery and her bodily response to viewing the image. Smith performs a slippage in her writing between seeing and experiencing. She describes stooping and leaning to avoid the glare reflecting off the Plexiglas in front of the photo; seeing is about moving to see better, and in the body's shifts to see, experiencing the work. Smith's scholarly attention to her own body's experience with Nicéphore's photograph reveals the ways in which a photo can stage an experience.¹⁷⁷ The experiential immediacy of looking is informed by the gallery space and one's spatial, optic, and affective relationship to the image.

The two photographs staged presence in the moment of spatial encounter with a museumgoer. I do not wish to imbue the static photograph with the live but, rather, assert the

¹⁷⁶ Smith 1-3.

¹⁷⁷ Smith writes, "The museum has housed it [Niépce's first photograph] in its own small viewing room, an ornate modern shrine. There, alone in the darkened room, behind Plexiglas, illuminated from above, sits the first photograph, displayed in an ornamental gold frame. The excess of 'aura' produced around the artifact is remarkable." Her description parallels museums' installations of their master works. The Louvre, perhaps most famously, has, since 2005, displayed the *Mona Lisa* on its own wall, protected behind bulletproof glass and in a climate-controlled enclosure. Positioned thusly, the protections surrounding it meant to instill visitors' awe—you are in the presence of a something profound—the *Mona Lisa* stages its own continued art historical prominence. Smith 1.

experiential sensation of viewing a photograph as a type of performance. One encountered *Spray Paint LACMA* or *Loneliness* as tangible surfaces, across which the resonances and residues of the city's and the museums' pasts persist. The photographs negate the clandestine time of tagging in *Spray Paint LACMA* or the durational endurance required to perform *Loneliness*. To understand each photograph as scripting a performance for a museumgoer, then, is to imagine performance not through Adrian Heathfield's contention that performance focuses a spectator's attention to the "moment by moment of the present," or through Kristine Stiles's iteration of action art that focuses upon the end result of a performance.¹⁷⁸ Rather, the photographs collapse the already known end result of the performance *into* the now of viewing the photograph. The photograph stages a temporal fold in which the end—Asco's scrawled signatures whitewashed over by LACMA or Gómez-Peña's body thrown into a dumpster—becomes the present of a viewer's experience within the now of the museum gallery. Such a collapse—the end of the performance touching the now of the act of looking—is an encounter with intimacy, if this time rendered temporal. The interface between performance and photograph render legible the shifted temporality of performance, clarifying how performance remainder allows for an expansion of performance's presumed ephemerality.

While the museum gallery engages the question of spatial presence into a discussion of *Spray Paint LACMA* and *Loneliness*, the exhibits also, of course, foreground questions of documentation as a pragmatic archival procedure. In relationship to the museum, such documents ensure that certain time-based art forms are accounted for within an historical or curatorial record. Jones has noted that, while it is an impossibility for past performances to be preserved in the present through documentation, it is "a different story entirely" to insist upon the

¹⁷⁸ Heathfield 8.

political necessity of historically recovering past performances through documents like photos.¹⁷⁹ These two concerns—liveness and the archive—are imagined as categorically different, if each important. The document is politically useful, but it is distinct from an ontological understanding of what constitutes performance. Refuting this argument, however, *Spray Paint LACMA* and *Loneliness* render legible the inextricable link between presence and documentation. The exhibits of the artists' respective photographs iterated an assertion of the continued presence and presentness of Chicano art. *Spray Paint LACMA* and *Loneliness* make clear that a performed action is only as viable as its documentation; the photograph instantiates, affirms, and, finally, testifies to one's presence. Not only were the artists there in '72 and '79, but also they are still here in '08 and '11, claiming presence however fraught or hidden that presence might be within an historical genealogy of California art.

Archives, of course, are not without politics and are thoroughly imbricated within hierarchies of power.¹⁸⁰ Asco and Gómez-Peña's performance works, in many, ways were invested in attempting to elide the archive, at least as it has been constituted by museums. Gamboa writes, "The tangible evidence that remains of Asco is supported by hearsay and conflicting memories of plausible events. The works of Asco were often created in transitory or easily degradable materials that crumble at the slightest prodding and fade quickly upon exposure to any glimmer of hope."¹⁸¹ Gamboa coined the phrase 'elite of the obscure' to describe the "collection of the anonymous, the undocumented, and selected barrio stars," that made up

¹⁷⁹ Amelia Jones, "Temporal anxiety/'Presence,'" 201.

¹⁸⁰ Derrida writes "that the meaning of 'archive' . . . comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded." Jacques Derrida, "Introduction," *Archive Fever*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1996) 2.

¹⁸¹ Harry Gamboa, Jr., "Light at the End of the Tunnel Vision," *Urban Exile: Collected Writings of Harry Gamboa Jr.*, ed. Chon A. Noriega (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 101.

Asco.¹⁸² The artists associated with Asco were certainly aware, like the artists of earlier avant-garde movements from whom they drew aesthetic and political inspiration, that to be on the margins allowed for artistic radicalism impossible within mainstream arts discourses. While the grammatical agency accorded the phrase ‘to be on the margins’ usefully delimits the aesthetic and political allegiance Asco, and Gómez-Peña, had towards their positionality, the material implications of the margins was brought into relief by one of Gómez-Peña’s more recent monologue-performances. Presented at the Redcat Theatre, the artist theatricalized the tension between his vanguard artistic practice and attempting to afford health insurance. Linguistically anticipating the specter of bodily demise articulated in Gómez-Peña’s recent work, Asco described their relationship to the mainstream in the ‘80s as a “hangman’s knot of fatal choices: obscurity vs. art stardom; ideological purity vs. consumer demand; reflection of society vs. refraction of self; and spontaneous anonymity vs. prefabricated history.”¹⁸³

The curatorial strategy of using photographs to document each work (as opposed to, perhaps, re-performance) renders legible the way in which the two exhibits retroactively redressed the exclusion of Chicana/o artists in the curatorial record, while also re-instantiating, through the use of photography, the very absence that the initial performance works sought to critique. Each photograph *revealed* the questions of absence, visibility, and marginalization that propelled both Asco and Gómez-Peña’s initial performances in the ‘70s. Ephemeral and ephemera both share the same root word. Each engages, to differing degrees, the act of disappearance, yet the photographs encourage a re-thinking of ephemerality. “There must be some sort of gap, absence, or lack,” Mary Ann Doane writes for the photograph to affirm its

¹⁸² Chavoya and Gonzalez, “Elite of the Obscure: an Introduction,” 21.

¹⁸³ Harry Gamboa, Jr., “The Chicano/a Artist: Inside and Outside the Mainstream,” *Journal: A Contemporary Arts Magazine* (1987): 21.

medium specificity.¹⁸⁴ Writing alongside Rosalind Krauss, she argues that medium specificity is “ultimately impossible to reduce...to materiality or to disengage it from the notion.” She continues that it might be understood as the “transgression of what are given as material limitations, which nevertheless requires those material constraints as its field of operations.”¹⁸⁵

While the photograph cannot replicate the medium specificity of the performer’s live body, it can, as it were, become itself through disappearance. The photos are not always already disappearing, but rather they index the disappeared, the absent-ed, that gap into which the ‘marginalized’ are pushed by a curator’s racist comment or security guards’ actions. It is precisely the absence of the performers’ live bodies, the gap between the performance and the photograph that ties the images back to the aims of the initial performances and asserts the continual and continued disappearance of the artists. The charge of creating work within the contours of invisibility and silence resonates across each image.

¹⁸⁴ E. H. Gombrich, “Conditions of Illusion,” *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960) 203–41.

¹⁸⁵ Doane 131.

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Chapter Two

Hold the Pose: Haunting, Stillness, and the Curation of Contemporary Dance

This chapter frames performance remainder through the triangulated interface among museum viewership, histories of representation, and performed embodiment. I focus on PLASTIC, a dance work by New York-based, Cyprian born choreographer Maria Hassabi.¹⁸⁶ PLASTIC was first exhibited at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles in February 2015 before being shown subsequently at the Stedelijk Museum in the Netherlands and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York; it is Hassabi's first piece specifically developed for and exclusively presented in museum spaces.¹⁸⁷ Like all Hassabi's dance works, the choreography was based off of images and pictures of bodies. While the first chapter sought to recuperate the still image as a site of documentation, which renders visible artists marginalized within museum institutions, here the oscillation between performance and image focuses on the act of looking and of being caught within a look. We moved (I was one of the dancers) such that with each gesture, each pose we evoked the memory of a still image, an almost perfect reversal of the move from embodied, past performance to photograph discussed in Chapter One.¹⁸⁸

PLASTIC's movement vocabulary is slow and sustained and includes long minutes of holding a single posture. Hassabi's choreography explores how stillness can be found within

¹⁸⁶ The cast at the Hammer included Casey Lin Brown, Alison D'Amato, Ellen Gerdes, Hristoula Harakas, Maria Hassabi, Molly Lieber, Oisín Monaghan, Devika Wickermesinghe, and myself.

¹⁸⁷ Institutions like the Tater Modern in London, MoMA in New York, and the Center Pompidou in Paris have been at the forefront of curatorial initiatives to expand the breadth of performance programming and exhibition within their respective spaces. In various ways, each is striving to make performance not a "minor history" within each institution's mission, but on par with their curatorial agendas, and curators at each institution are actively questioning the limitations and the potential of museum performance. See: *Another Modern Art: Dance and Theater*, organized by MoMA archivist Michelle Elligott in 2009; Serge Laurent, Catherine Wood, and Ana Janevski, *De la Performance au Spectacle Vivant*, Le Musée par la Scène, Le Spectacle Vivant au Musée: Pratiques, Publics, Médiations, Paris, 18-20 Nov. 2015. Unpublished conference roundtable.

¹⁸⁸ Between chapters one and two, the way in which the photograph registers is quite different. In Chapter One, I discussed the indexical relationship between performance event and photograph, the two linked in a cause and effect relationship. In PLASTIC, however, the trace is no longer tied to the effect of the chemical process of exposure, but rather the more elusive and affective notion of haunting. Haunting refuses the link that would allow for an equivalence to be drawn between the thing and its trace.

movement, or, rather the impossibility of embodied stillness.¹⁸⁹ Not dissimilar from choreographic practices from the 1960s in which photographs of still figures served as the basis for creating movement, Hassabi's work upends the temporal progression between live performance and photography discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁹⁰ As art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty describes, such choreographic practices ensured that "the felt body of the dancer...[was] both intensely present and . . . already a trace."¹⁹¹

This chapter traces the implications of PLASTIC's production, which was dependent on a collection of pictures of figures (often iconic women's figures from art history); I elaborate the piece's predominate choreographic mode, stillness, in relation to its visual antecedents and the ways the work was received by museumgoers as evidenced by their actions when they encountered the performance. The interface between Hassabi's source materials and PLASTIC's live performances renders legible a tension between mediation and presence; placed within the context of the art museum PLASTIC's choreography and the dancers' bodies reveal a fraught, and certainly gendered, history of figural representation activated in part through the encounter of dancers and museumgoers. PLASTIC interrogates the interface between image and "posing...central to much feminist art in the late 1970s and 1980s," expanding, I argue, this earlier feminist critique through the histories of display and decorum embedded within the museum.¹⁹² Chapter Two argues live dance and dancers' bodies serve as embodied archives for prior performed actions.

Dance scholar André Lepecki writes that a dancer's body *is* an archive, activated through

¹⁸⁹ Erin Bomboy, "Impressions of: Maria Hassabi's 'Premiere' at The Kitchen in conjunction with Performa 13," *The Dance Enthusiast* 7 Nov. 2013, 13 July 2015 <<http://www.dance-enthusiast.com/features/view/Impressions-of-Maria-Hassabis-Premiere-at-The-Kitchen-in-conjunction-with-Performa-13-2013-11-18>>.

¹⁹⁰ See: Yvonne Rainer's oeuvre from the 1960s, including *Terrain* (1963) and *Trio A* (1965), Steve Paxton's *Flat* (1964), and the slightly later work *Caught* (1982) by David Parsons.

¹⁹¹ Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Mediating Trio A," *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008) 158.

¹⁹² Lambert-Beatty 138.

the performance of a specific piece of choreography.¹⁹³ For Lepecki, dancers' bodies become archives through performing older, historic pieces. The overlaps—and disjunctures—between the current performance and its referent are telegraphed to a viewer only through a dancers' body. She becomes the vehicle for historical returns, or hauntings, her movement an embodied archive. Expanding upon his argument, this chapter argues that a dancer's body is not only an embodied archive of a specific piece of choreography, but is haunted by memories of a broader landscape of socially scripted actions. Like in *Loneliness*, dancers' stilled bodies issued an invitation to engage, which a viewer could take up as she pleased: with prolonged attention, neglect, physical touch, or verbal abuse. The expectations, rules, and disciplinary apparatus of the museum produced a disquieting and tense encounter between dancer and viewer, museumgoers seemingly unsure how to approach or what to make of live performers in the space. Trained to expect inanimate art at museums, dancers bodies were an aberration. The charged zone of encounter that PLASTIC produced renders dancers' bodies legible as performance remainders, haunted by particular histories of museal display.

PLASTIC gestures outwards to a set of embodied practices, disciplinary structures, and histories of display that encourage a reading of the piece as, to borrow a well-rehearsed grammatical construction from performance studies, not not new. Current debates around museum performance have examined the presence of live performers within the museum as an almost ahistorical phenomenon. And certainly a phenomenon that need reach no farther back in time than the founding of institutions like MoMA in the 1920s.¹⁹⁴ Art historian Claire Bishop writes, "Live dance seems to exist in a different time zone to that of history: it is usually

¹⁹³ André Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances," *Dance Research Journal* 42.2 (2010): 28-48.

¹⁹⁴ Claire Bishop, "The Perils and Possibilities of Dance in the Museum: Tate, MoMA, and Whitney," *Dance Research Journal* 46. 3 (2014): 62-76.

deployed by the museum as presentist spectacle.”¹⁹⁵ Bishop’s observation, of which she is critical, acknowledges the troubling and persistence separations between live performance and exhibitionary and museal logics often reproduced in scholarship on dance in the museum.¹⁹⁶ Likewise resisting discourses of presentism, scholars like Lucian Gomoll and Ramón Rivera-Servera have resurrected histories of human display common throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, exploring how such histories impact current curatorial practices.¹⁹⁷ Linking these bodies of scholarship, this chapter resists claims of ‘newness’ associated with performance in the museum, instead questioning the interpolative force the museum has upon live bodies and the agency afforded them.

As a means of explaining the way in which PLASTIC was received at the three museums, this chapter traces a genealogy of embodied stillness and museum decorum. PLASTIC renders legible the extent to which the interpretation of stilled bodies is contingent upon the formation of the Western museum and concurrent exhibitionary contexts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Stillness resurrects particular histories of displaying people that come primarily from

¹⁹⁵ Bishop 72.

¹⁹⁶ Bishop, for example, resists the urge to frame museum dance as ‘new’ by attending to past iterations of dance in the museum, particularly from the 1960s and ‘70s.

¹⁹⁷ Chapter One touched upon this history in relationship to the historical context of Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s performance piece *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* (1992), and Chapter Four similarly notes this history. Ramón Rivera-Servera’s forthcoming book is entitled *Exhibiting Performance: Race, Museum Cultures, and the Live Event*, and Lucian Gomoll’s manuscript is titled *Performativity and Difference in Museums*.

Lucian Gomoll, “Objects of Dis/Order: Articulating Curiosities and Engaging People at the Freakatorium,” *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities*, ed. Amy K. Levin (Lanham, England: Altamira Press, 2007) 201-216 and “The Performative Spirit of Amalia Mesa-Bains’ *New World Wunderkammer*,” *Cultural Dynamics* 27. 3 (2015): 357-377.

Exhibits and art pieces that have critically and/or problematically engaged this history include: *ART/artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections* (1988) at The African Center in New York City; the ill-received, although critically-intended, *Into the Heart of Africa* (1989-90) at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto; *Mermaids, Mummies, Mastodons: The Evolution of the American Museum* (1990-92) at the Peale Museum in Baltimore; conceptual art installations *The Other Museum* (1991) and *Mining the Museum* (1992) by Fred Wilson and exhibited at, respectively, the Washington Project for the Arts Gallery and the Maryland Historical Society; and, the more recent, *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage* (2011-12) at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris.

the nineteenth century; this genealogy follows neither a direct chronology of the development of art museums nor Hassabi's choreographic influences. Nevertheless, they help to develop an understanding of still choreography, articulating the way stilled people have been framed as 'objects' to be gazed upon. Such histories reveal how the bodies of Hassabi's performers have been circumscribed by histories of curtailed agency, practices of othering, and the authorial frame of the museum.

Scholarship on live performance and memory is important to my analysis. Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor theorizes how the performing body issues an embodied challenge to the archive, understood as a largely textual repository of cultural knowledge and one imbued with sanctioned authority.¹⁹⁸ The way in which performance transfers cultural knowledge and social memory offers an embodied counterpoint to the text-centrism of the archive, revealing how a dancer might carry histories within her gestures and movements. Focused not so much on the epistemological potential of performance (Taylor's concern), Lepecki argues, as discussed earlier, that a dancer's body *is* an archive. His argument frames the archive as an animate, ever-changing repository of movement and dance history, activated through the performance of a piece of choreography. He writes, "in dance...there...[are] no distinctions left between archive and body. The body is archive and the archive body."¹⁹⁹ Their arguments, while distinct, prove key in my own analysis, iterating as they do the way in which past histories become inscribed

¹⁹⁸ Diana Taylor has theorized the way in which the body functions as a site of performance memory, as much as it might also destabilize notions of preservation associated with the archive. She writes, "performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated," practices. For Taylor memory and (embodied) practices of forgetting and remembering are politicized acts with material implications. Such implications are grounded in the political and cultural history of the Americas. To assert that performance is coterminous with memory and history, is to foreground the epistemologies of non-Western culture practices (and scholars) within performance studies. Countering theories of performance's ontology (most famously articulated by Peggy Phelan) Taylor argues not for a theory of what performance *is*, but, rather, what it can *do*. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) 3.

¹⁹⁹ Lepecki "Body as Archive," 31.

into the gestures and postures of the performing body.

My argument depends upon an interpretation of the space of performance, and particularly how a space bears, within the present, the imprint of its development. Scholars like Marvin Carlson, Mark Franko, and Lepecki note how the space of performance impacts a performance's reception. The histories and concerns of space, they argue in different ways, haunts the present of a live performance. Carlson contends that, "the...experience [of viewing a piece of live performance] is always ghosted by previous experiences and associations," which are linked to not only the script or the actors, but also the space of the performance.²⁰⁰ For Carlson, writing about theater, it is the theater and the stage, which hold such connotations. Franko and Lepecki write, "Dance becomes museal when it highlights and accumulates evidence of its relation to the historical past... an archival site, the museum inspires dance to emulate the artifactual quality of the archive while also transforming it—and itself."²⁰¹ Their contention alerts us to the fact that the museum, in particular, informs how scholars might analyze live performance. The notion of haunting informs the way in which I understand performance remainder across this chapter.

Throughout this chapter, I engage a notion of haunting to move between the 'present' of PLASTIC's presentation at the three museums and the various pasts I argue informed the piece's performance. The Oxford English Dictionary explains that to haunt means to practice an action habitually as well as to frequent a place. The precise 'origin' for the word is unclear and so the word slips between both meanings. At its root, 'haunt' is contingent upon a sense of return, repetition, and recurrence. To understand PLASTIC through the lens of haunting is to account for the choreographed precision and repetition of the piece's movement. Each gesture and pose

²⁰⁰ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: the Theater as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001) 2.

²⁰¹ Mark Franko and André Lepecki, "Editor's Note: Dance in the Museum," *Dance Research Journal* 46.3 (2014): 3.

in the piece was precisely choreographed, and the piece is designed to repeat on two- or four-hour loops. Haunting has been well theorized within theater and performance studies, the term's temporal fluidity useful for framing time-based practices.²⁰² Carlson writes of theater that, "images of the dead continu[e]...to work their power on the living," and that "the past reappear[s]...unexpectedly and uncannily in the midst of the present."²⁰³ To turn to haunting as a methodological and theoretical framework for analyzing PLASTIC, then, is to engage a discipline specific discourse and imagine how it might function in relationship to museum spaces. Haunting reveals how the "past structures the possibilities of the present."²⁰⁴ To be haunted is to be moved. We are moved to terror, to fear, to shiver; moved to respond, and our response cannot be anything but the return of movement—or perhaps stillness—in kind.

This chapter analyzes a performance piece in which I also performed. While I begin my analysis attentive to my corporeal and affective experience performing at the Hammer Museum, my analysis moves outwards to discuss the other two museums at which PLASTIC was presented. The museum, invested in the archival and the artifactual, historical pasts and chronologies of development encourages an interpretation of a live performance that is not only beholden to the present. Dance is not only that which is always already disappearing, but is, within the museum, haunted by histories of preservation and exhibition.

Haunting Bodies: Encounters, Stillness, and Ideologies of Display

Over five and a half minutes the lights slowly fade to black. I am poised on the edge of the large gray beanbag chair; I hear the almost imperceptible click of the lights, the signal that

²⁰² See: Herbert Blau, *Take up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Gabriele Brandstetter, "Choreography as a Cenotaph: The Memory of Movement," *ReMembering the Body*, eds. Gabriele Brandstetter and Hortensia Völckers (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz; New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2000) 102-134; Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

²⁰³ Carlson 1.

²⁰⁴ Jeffrey A. Weinstrock, "Review: *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*," *American Studies International* 35.2 (1997): 109.

the bank of spot lights mounted on the gallery wall in front of me will begin their slow dissolve to blackness. Pressing my hands incrementally downwards into the soft beanbag, I slowly stand up. My hands, hanging loosely, glide up my thighs, finding their way to the edge of my jeans' pockets. Ever so subtly I dig the tips of my fingers into the fabric of my pants, so as to aid my hands' smooth descent into my pockets. I walk now, a few steady steps to the wall against which the lights are mounted. Moving slowly, leaning against the wall requires unexpected concentration and core strength. I cannot let my body sink naturally into the support of the wall; rather, I am always balanced, incrementally shifting my weight to maintain control of my body's sideways lean. Finally finishing my tilt, I stare into the bright yellow circles of light angled towards me. My breathing slows. The lights are dimmer now, close to near darkness. Their incremental fade throws the gallery into shadowed relief. Each lighting instrument is ringed by its double: an expanded halo of illumination. Soon enough, only the filament within each instrument is illuminated. They briefly pulsate: a cluster of burning embers. Then the lights are out.

PLASTIC engaged the way women's bodies have been represented within a larger landscape of images and pictures, many of which are displayed and circulate within museum spaces. The piece questioned, through live performance, what it means to ape such images within the museum itself, a space that (metaphorically at least) also contains such images. In a reversal of much scholarship that questions the museal ability to transform live performers into art objects, PLASTIC preempts such concerns, staging the objectifying process self-consciously and deliberately. While PLASTIC, unlike some of Hassabi's other works, is not as beholden to exclusively drawing inspiration from pictures of women, the passive poses dancers moved between—often on the ground, often in a recline—and the charged reception (dancers were spit on, kicked, yelled at, and ignored) dancers received at all three institutions reveal how the space

over-determined our reception. Performance remainder renders PLASTIC's dancers legible as embodied remainders of art historical representations of women.

PLASTIC, Hassabi's first piece presented exclusively in museum spaces, explores the differences between theatrical and exhibitionary contexts. The piece, as Hassabi describes it, explores the plasticity of live performance as well as evoking the material conception of the word 'plastic' and its relationship to sculptural forms.²⁰⁵ The dance's movement phrases were largely recycled from the choreographer's 2011 piece SHOW. However, as I will continue to elaborate, the shift in context (SHOW premiered at The Kitchen in New York, a black box theater space) changed the reception of Hassabi's choreography.²⁰⁶ PLASTIC opened at the Hammer on January 31, 2015, curated by Aram Moshayedi.²⁰⁷ He first encountered Hassabi's work in the Lithuanian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale and, struck by her use of slowness, invited her to work with the Hammer. Moshayedi and Hassabi, realizing the cost of presenting PLASTIC would exceed the museum's budget, reached out to the Stedelijk Museum and MoMA as presenting partners.²⁰⁸ At each museum, PLASTIC was performed for the duration of the museum's open hours, structured as a repeating loop of movement that began again every four hours.

²⁰⁵ "SHOW," *Maria Hassabi*, 3 April 2016 <<http://mariahassabi.com/work/shownovember-2011/>>.

²⁰⁶ SHOW explored how it is that movement and relationships are revealed—are *shown*—within performance. Hassabi describes her play with the doubled meaning of the word 'show' as rendering legible the inherent plasticity of live performance.

²⁰⁷ Discussing the project at the Walker as part of the museum's curated convening, *New Circuits: Curating Contemporary Performance*, Moshayedi framed PLASTIC as a new work developed specifically for the Hammer. His terminology revealed the museum's curatorial stake in Hassabi's choreography; the museum would not be (merely) re-presenting Hassabi's work, but was actively supporting the creation of a new piece. Aram Moshayedi and Maria Hassabi, "Artist Conversation," *New Circuits: Curating Contemporary Performance*, Minneapolis, 28-29 Sep. 2015. Unpublished conference conversation.

²⁰⁸ In April, the piece was presented for a week at the Stedelijk, overseen by Ash Bulayev; there only four dancers performed. The work's last stop was at MoMA in New York, and, like at the Hammer, the piece was performed for four weeks. Curated by Thomas Lax, PLASTIC expanded to include seventeen dancers, positioned at different locations throughout the museum.

At the Hammer, the cast had nine dancers. Four, including Hassabi herself, performed a traveling movement phrase that began on the museum's third floor in front of the museum store and, over the course of several hours, carried each dancer down the museum's main stairwell. The majority of their movement was on the floor, slowly moving dancers between a series of sitting and lying down poses. Hassabi's choice of space was motivated by a desire to activate, as she termed it, spaces within the museum not usually used for displaying art: spaces a visitor walks through on her way to get to the art.²⁰⁹ Such disruptions, whether in front of the store or on the staircase, were designed to prompt visitors to reflect upon their chosen spatial trajectory, and by extension, the aesthetic or economic implications (trying to navigate through dancers, for example, in an effort to get to the gift store) of their movement through the space.²¹⁰ The remaining five dancers, of which I was one, performed a solo in a small, enclosed gallery on the Hammer's second floor.²¹¹ The Hammer was the only museum to include the solo installation.

²⁰⁹ Attempting to choose sites similar to those at the Hammer, Hassabi proposed several spaces to the Stedelijk, including stairwells. Her initial proposition, however, was rejected, as *The Oasis of Matisse*, a large, sprawling survey show aligning Matisse's works with pieces from the museum's permanent collection, took pride of place. Dancers, the Stedelijk argued, were mobile in a way that the exhibit's paintings were not, and, thus, could be placed anywhere. PLASTIC, in the end, was largely performed in the museum's busy lobby, dancers maneuvering in-between visitors trying to purchase tickets or exit the museum.

²¹⁰ The desire to include the gallery presentation alongside the outdoor quartet refutes of earlier models of presenting dance in the museum, which programmed dance specifically in non-gallery spaces. Ana Janevski, an Associate Curator in the Department of Media and Performance Art at MoMA, notes that earlier examples (from the '60s and '70s) of presenting dance only happened in the museum's garden. While these garden performances, by dancers like Yvonne Rainer, Steven Paxton, and Simone Forti, reveals a desire on the part of the museum to engage dance artists, the garden placement, nevertheless, imagined dance as outside—literally—the museum's exhibit spaces. Laurent, Wood, and Janevski, *De la Performance au Spectacle Vivant*.

²¹¹ Only able to support Hassabi and three dancers through funding from the Hammer Projects series, the museum's solution to Hassabi and Moshayedi's desire to include a solo performance was to enlist the labor of UCLA graduate students. We were not paid, but received class credits through the University. Interestingly, while discussing the work at *New Circuits* in September of 2015, neither Hassabi nor Moshayedi discuss the role graduate students played in the presentation of PLASTIC. While both make note of the importance of the gallery to the scope of the exhibit—adding, as Moshayedi notes, much needed context for the outdoor dancers' performances—the two's discussion of the funding streams they depended upon does not expand to include our unpaid labor. Moshayedi and Hassabi, *New Circuits: Curating Contemporary Performance*.

Entering the gallery space, a museumgoer encountered a large didactic by the door explaining Hassabi's practice and PLASTIC. This text was the only posted explanation of PLASTIC; nothing accompanied the four dancers moving throughout the museum. A short brochure about the work by Moshayedi was also placed near the door. The gallery's walls were painted a dark gray, matching the plush black carpet and our costumes. We each wore a simple gray button up long-sleeved shirt, tight grey jeans, and white tennis shoes.²¹² A cluster of lighting instruments were grouped across two walls, positioned such that their beams of light directly confronted a museumgoer as she entered the space. Mounted in the corner, and spreading halfway across the two converging walls, the lights faded up and down on a thirty-minute cycle, our only external cue as to how much time had passed. A soundscape, created by Morten Norbye Halvorsen, pulsed beneath our performance, periodically drifting into silence before beginning again.

Thomas Lax, who curated PLASTIC at MoMA, noted that the piece did not exist "until that first person walked up the stairs and saw Maria lying there."²¹³ His comment foregrounds the extent to which PLASTIC was predicated upon the relationship between performers and viewers, perhaps also encouraging us to imagine a piece of visual art as similarly not existing until that first person enters the gallery and sees it. Hassabi likewise described the importance of knowing that, "there would be people everywhere around us, that people were going to ignore us,

While *The Artist is Present*, discussed in the next chapter, revealed the extent to which performance can function as an important revenue generator for a museum, far more typical is a scenario described by Tate curator Catherine Wood. Countering the oft-repeated charge that performance generates revenue for an institution, she explained that it is difficult for performance curators and departments to advocate for time-based exhibits within the larger institution. Museums, she clarified, rarely recuperate the cost of such exhibits. The traditional model of exhibition is predicated upon months-long exhibits, in which the cost of mounting an exhibit is made back through ticket sales. If, however, a dance exhibit is only up for a week (like at the Stedelijk) the museum is essentially presenting the work at a loss. Laurent, Wood, and Janevski, *De la Performance au Spectacle Vivant*.

²¹² The four performing outside wore much the same, although their costumes included large patches of bejeweled fabric. The New York based fashion collective, threeASFOUR, styled PLASTIC.

²¹³ Siobhan Burke, "'Plastic,' at MoMA, Is on the Floor and the Stairs," *The New York Times*, 9 March 2016, 14 April, 2016 <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/10/arts/dance/plastic-at-moma-is-on-the-floor-and-the-stairs.html?_r=0>.

and that somewhere in there, somebody would stay and pay attention to us.”²¹⁴ PLASTIC, in other words, encouraged museumgoers to note “their own experience of looking” and moving through the museum, by placing dancers directly in museumgoers’ way.²¹⁵ The piece rendered viewers’ own movements through the museum legible as a type of choreographed performance, dependent upon the acknowledged and unacknowledged norms and regulations that govern museums. PLASTIC offers a framework for understanding how live dance differently activates gallery space and visitor experiences, pressing against the normative expectations and institutional logics that underwrite such spaces.

PLASTIC’s choreography consisted of a series of set postures strung together by simple and direct transitions. Each pose was held for a particular amount of time, anywhere from one minute to five.²¹⁶ Beginning from a picture, Hassabi’s choreography attempts to transform live dance and the dancer’s body into a still image. She describes her practices as addressing “the relationship of a body to images,” by creating dance works that are, in essence, a series of linked poses.²¹⁷ Hassabi’s use of prolonged held poses, slow movement, and extended duration attempt to press the dancer’s body into the time of an image. Unlike Marina Abramović’s work, discussed in the next chapter, Hassabi uses stillness and duration not as tools to exhaust the body, revealing its physical limit, but rather as choreographic strategies that replicate the stasis of a picture. PLASTIC collapsed the past photograph—unseen by anyone save Hassabi herself—into the prolonged present of our extended movements. Shifting between various postures of repose and vulnerability, submission and disinterest, PLASTIC engages multiple mediums—

²¹⁴ Burke, “‘Plastic,’ at MoMA.”

²¹⁵ Lax 4.

²¹⁶ As February progressed, many of us gave up counting, realizing that the pace of the choreography had become so ingrained in our muscle memory that we simply felt when a minute or two minutes had passed.

²¹⁷ Maria Hassabi and Scott Lyall, interview by Lauren Bakst, *BOMB*, February 11, 2014

<<http://bombmagazine.org/article/1000022/scott-lyall-and-maria-hassabi>>.

photography, sculpture, painting, all suggested by the embodied repetition of the dancers' ever performing bodies.

PLASTIC's still poses reveal a gendered politics of embodiment that stages the tense interface between viewership and representation. Who holds still and how museumgoers view still bodies is a relational interface contingent upon institutional formations, gendered histories of performance, and artistic representations of certain subjects in states of repose. In her 2009 solo, *SoloShow*, Hassabi chose some three hundred images of the female figure across history—images of ancient sculptural forms to photographs of contemporary dancers. She constructed the solo by stringing together poses modeled after these disparate pictures. While not as overt in its exclusive selection of women's images, PLASTIC likewise evokes a history of female representation in art. Predominantly performed on the floor, dancers' prone and reclining bodies resemble nothing so much as "nineteenth-century paintings of odalisques, Orientalist fantasies of concubines lying on erotic display."²¹⁸ Our bodies stood in as abstracted representations and representatives of the absent images upon which the choreography was based. Our bodies evoked the connotations of passivity and availability so present in the images we aped.

Hassabi's use of pictures to fuel her movement practice builds upon a history of choreographic practices that foreground the relationship between the moving body and the still image. The photographic, or pictorial, functions as a challenge to dance's perceived ontology and visibility. Judson choreographers, like Steve Paxton and Yvonne Rainer, pressed against understandings of dance that imagined the form as fluid, virtuosic, or linked to continual movement, creating work that "eschewed 'fluidity and continuity,' ...[and] reach[ed] for elements of the photographic," like held poses or stillness.²¹⁹ Rosalind Krauss describes this shift in dance's meaning after viewing a piece by Deborah Hay from 1977. In the work, Hay stood in

²¹⁸ Thomas J. Lax, "Maria Hassabi Glances," *MoMA Brochure* (2015): 5.

²¹⁹ Lambert-Beatty 132.

front of her audience and announced that instead of making clear movements she was simply going to speak, describing how her body was feeling. For Krauss, Hay's refusal to visibly move, stripping dance to being in co-presence before an audience, signaled a rupture in the way dance produces meaning.²²⁰

Like Hassabi, Paxton often constructed dance works from figural photographs, sourcing images from sports magazines or taking photos during his rehearsals.²²¹ In his 1964 piece *Flat* a solo male dancer performs a series of quotidian poses, holding each for as much as fifteen seconds. Acknowledging the photographic origin of the piece, Paxton described *Flat* as a “photographic score-catalogue.”²²² Rainer inserted still poses into her work and would also repeat movement phrases over and over. Such techniques were designed to allow a viewer to absorb the piece more fully; she writes such strategies meant, “each movement might be seen as more than a fleeting form,” and linking the choreographic strategy back to the pictorial, continues, “much as one can observe a piece of...[art] for one minute or many minutes.”²²³ Her piece *Terrain* from 1963 included a smaller section entitled *Duet Section*, performed with Trisha Brown. Evoking a gendered and sexualized history of the still pose, Rainer and Brown, dressed in matching black bras, performed a series of poses like: “Focus out—coy over r. shoulder and l. hand,” and “head up, mouth open...r. hand under l. tit.”²²⁴ Lambert-Beatty describes *Duet Section* as aping pinup photos; however, the choreography also aligns with early twentieth

²²⁰ Rosalind Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 2,” *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985) 211.

Writing some thirty years later, Lepecki likewise frames the perception of bodily stillness in dance—just standing there—as signaling an ontological break in the formation of Western concert dance. His argument remains fixated on the possibilities contained within stillness, which might reveal a means of toppling Western notions of subjectivity. André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

²²¹ Lambert-Beatty 132.

²²² Sally Banes, “Vital Signs: Steve Paxton’s *Flat* in Perspective,” *Writing Dancing in the Age of Postmodernism* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994) 227–239.

²²³ Sally Banes, *Democracy’s Body: Judson Dance Theater 1962-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) 15.

²²⁴ Yvonne Rainer, “Terrain,” *Work 1961-73* (New York: New York University Press, 1974) 30-31.

century dance practices, like ballet, strip shows, and burlesque revues, which drew upon the conventions of tableaux vivants. Performers in such forms, dance historian Ann Daly argues, “operated in a pictorial mode, striking pose after pose.”²²⁵ Rainer’s *Performance Documentation*, created five years after *Terrain*, was a dance for three slide carousels, which projected images from her piece *Stairs*. Literalizing the gendered objectification of *Duet Section*, *Performance Documentation* turned the dancers from *Stairs* into, in Rainer’s words, “theater-objects.”²²⁶ While *Duet Section* is most overtly marked as critiquing the gendered and sexualized interface between performer and still image, Paxton and Rainer’s works highlight that moment of encounter between dancer’s body and still image, prolonging the moment in which the dancer’s body becomes akin to the object, akin to the still image.

Art historical and literary examples proliferate that link stillness to femininity. While femininity has been explored as the object of the gaze, to become legible as that object one must be, in some way, available for the gaze. As art historian Henry Sayre writes, re-framing Norman Bryson’s phrase, the feminine is “something fixed, pictorial, framed.”²²⁷ And it is masculinity, which mobilizes the fixed feminine object, allowing “her to unfold in time, to ‘blossom.’”²²⁸ Numerous examples reveal how idealized femininity is imagined as a creation of men and as emerging from the stillness and passivity of the sculptural form. The paradigmatic example is Lot’s wife, transformed into a pillar of salt upon turning to look back at the city of Sodom. His wife, who remains unnamed in the Bible, is rendered forever still through her act of

²²⁵ Ann Daly, “Dance History and Feminist Theory: Reconsidering Isadora Duncan and the Male Gaze,” *Gender in Performance: the Presentation of Difference in the Performing Arts*, ed. Laurence Senelick (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992) 249.

²²⁶ Yvonne Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away,” *Arts Magazine* 41. 6 (1967): 47.

²²⁷ Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: the American Avant-Garde since 1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 74.

²²⁸ Sayre 74.

disobedience.²²⁹ In Ovid's epic poem *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion carves his ideal woman out of ivory. Having fallen in love with his creation, he prays to the goddess of love to transform the—literal—object of his desire into flesh. Returning home to his studio, the sculptor discovers Aphrodite has granted his wish. Ovid describes how Pygmalion, “speaking love, caresses it with loving hands that seem to make an impress, on the parts they touch, so real that he fears he then may bruise her by his eager pressing.”²³⁰ His caress transforms ‘it’ into ‘her,’ and the shift in pronouns signals a shift in the tenor of Pygmalion’s touch, from a gentle caress to the bruising harm of ‘his eager pressing.’ As Thomas Lax, who curated PLASTIC at MoMA, writes, “the line between affection and harm is as thin as the one between the inanimate and the living,” in Ovid’s prose.²³¹ In Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, Hermione, accused of infidelity by her husband, spends the majority of the play as a statue, only to be magically returned to life in the concluding act, the unfounded accusations against her forgiven.²³² Across these examples, the interface between the (feminized) body and sculptural stillness is fraught with romantic obsession, idealization, conceptions of infidelity, and disobedience. The logic of sculptural stillness is predicated upon a women’s compliance with a set of standards of behavior and appearance, and it is only by fulfilling such obligations that she can become animated. However, if such obligations are not met, the stilled body remains forever caught in a state of perpetual stasis: the elevator between floors.²³³

²²⁹ “But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.” Genesis 19:26.

²³⁰ Publius Ovidius Naso, “Pygmalion and the Statue,” *Metamorphoses*, trans. Brookes More (Boston: Cornhill Publishing Co., 1922) 243.

²³¹ Lax 8.

²³² William Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale* (London: Methuen, 1963).

²³³ Stillness, understood as an embodied sensation—the sensation of movement—emerges alongside kinesthesia. Bonnoe de Condillac’s *Treatise on the Sensations* from 1754 uses the metaphor of the statue (a feminized statue at that) to describe the way in which a subject comes to understand both itself and others through touch. De Condillac’s understanding of sensation and its link to self actualization is predicated on stillness and a corresponding lack of senses, which, in turn, allows the statue to only feel its breath and know itself as a self. He writes, “Utterly immobile, the statue nonetheless felt parts of her body touching other areas, and also the sensation of breathing. These sensations emanating from the viscera

Stillness as a choreographic modality and a way of occupying space evokes passivity, availability, and vulnerability. While PLASTIC is ghosted by the mentioned but unseen image that initiated Hassabi's creative process, to be stilled provoked a series of encounters that rendered our dancing bodies legible as passive and available for visitors. Dancer David Thomson, who performed PLASTIC at MoMA, described the sense of vulnerability he felt performing the work in the museum's open spaces, "You run into situations where someone has a camera, and you realize they're actually shooting a whole portfolio with you, and that's when it gets a little unnerving."²³⁴ His comment speaks to a particular sense of bodily invasion or compromise, in which his performance is no longer a self-contained art piece available for viewership, but rather functions in service to someone else's art practice. The comment, which Hassabi likewise has vocalized, imagines the threat of viewership as tied to the breakdown of artistic authorship, as, paradoxically, photographs of dancers stand in as the performance itself.²³⁵ The unauthorized photographer represents the break down of PLASTIC's criticality, transforming the dance piece back into a literal still image. If Chapter One argued that the still image can assert the presentness of performers' bodies, an argument that notes the political efficacy of photography, then PLASTIC's relationship to photography is different. For performers, the act of documenting the work did not expand their agency, but rather seemed to encroach upon their bodily autonomy.

The threat of the camera, however, was quite distinct from the manhandling dancers experienced at all three museums to which PLASTIC traveled. The piece's use of held postures and its preponderance of prone poses forced dance into a position of abjection relative to the

and muscles, especially during the act of breathing, formed a base-line state from which a sense of self emerged... Only through the action of touching itself did the statue gain a sense of the space it occupied. Unlike all the other senses, touch offered the possibility of a double sensation, that of touching and of being touched. Once the statue touched itself and compared that with the sensation of touching something else, it began to establish both self and otherness." Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2011) 85.

²³⁴ Burke, "'Plastic,' at MoMA."

²³⁵ Moshayedi and Hassabi, *New Circuits: Curating Contemporary Performance*.

logics of cultural value and display that underwrite museums: viewers were always looking down at our prostrate bodies. In the previous chapter, I described the physical and verbal assaults Gómez-Peña's prone, still body prompted within the contained space of the elevator. Likewise referencing a lexicon of passive, prone, and still bodily poses, those of us performing in PLASTIC found ourselves subject to neglect, unwanted physical touch, jabs, and verbal abuse. The anecdotes of how museumgoers responded to the prone bodies of the dancers proliferate: dancers were spit on (the Stedelijk), kicked (mostly at the Stedelijk), accused of being insane and needing therapy (at the Hammer), used as the backdrop for photos—visitors leaning on the dancers or giving them bunny ears (all three institutions)—or, most usually, simply ignored. All of us had physical contact foisted upon us by museumgoers. If seemingly not as violent as Gómez-Peña's descriptions of his experience and spread across the collective experiences of all of us who performed PLASTIC, such responses point to a relational politics of stillness. Our prolonged poses or slow movements did not forge an interface between live and inanimate mediums of artistic expression. The surprise of realizing our bodies were alive was the surprise of realizing the expected conventions of the museum were shifting. Unlike Hay's piece from '77 mentioned above, PLASTIC did not only reduce dance to “the presence of the body before the audience.”²³⁶ To be ‘before’ a viewer was never only a neutral, ontological proposition about what dance can be; rather, to be before a viewer in PLASTIC was to be below them, revealing a distinct politics of viewership. The overt and learned behaviors that choreograph how one is meant to move through museum galleries were rendered legible as they came into tense interface with our stilled bodies.

How visitors' reacted to dancers' bodies is linked to the way the norms of spectatorship developed within museum and exhibition contexts. The modern museum, which developed

²³⁶ Lambert-Beatty 156.

across the long nineteenth century, “explicitly targeted the popular body as an object for reform [a proposition]... accomplished...by...rules forbidding enacting and drinking, outlawing the touching of exhibits.”²³⁷ Museums emerged as public spaces in which the decorum associated with other sites of public assembly (theaters, parks, the street) were severely curtailed; museums, instead, became spaces in which visitors were instructed how to “respect property and behave gently,” strictures closely linked to the manners and sensibilities required of the emerged bourgeoisie body.²³⁸ Such strictures were tied to producing certain notions of value. The prohibition on touching the art or artifacts on display rendered such objects precious; contained in the touch is the potential for defacement and damage (certainly Asco knew exactly the political potential for defacement when they enacted *Spray Paint LACMA*). Museumgoers’ desire to touch us, their discussions about whether they could (or should), whispered requests from museum personnel for us to move, and, finally, repeated touches, reveal how our bodies defied the expectations of the space. We did not readily fit within a genealogy of art objects, and so the attendant norms associated with interacting with such objects fell away.

Our bodies disrupted the accepted score of a visitor’s movements through a museum, troubling the ingrained expectations of such spaces. Hassabi uses the term ‘activate’ to describe PLASTIC’s relationship to space, yet the slow pace of her choreography belies the churning connotation of the term’s root word: active. Rather, PLASTIC’s slow movements and prolonged moments of maintaining a single posture recall a different term: occupy. To occupy space connotes a military force, a hostile take-over, or, perhaps, a prolonged protest action. Far from seeking to situate dance as an integrated part of the spatial logic of the museum, PLASTIC instead positioned dance as an interloper, an invader: an occupying force. Our bodies, so obviously taking up public space—blocking the stairwell or disrupting crowds of visitors trying

²³⁷ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 100.

²³⁸ Bennett 102.

to make their (orderly) way to other galleries performed contrary to how people are meant to behave in such spaces. Our reclining, seemingly still bodies deviated from the orderly, upright bodies of museum visitors, slipping between spatial disruption, art, and fall victim.

One particular dancer's experience reveals the complex interface between individual agency, choreography, and a gendered notion of personal safety, which the gallery space and the movement engendered. The dancer found herself performing her two-hour shift for one male viewer. Entering the gallery for the start of her solo, she discovered him splayed out on the beanbag chair. She, as we had been instructed to do by Hassabi, asked him to get up, as the first half an hour of material require a dancer to be on the chair; he refused, however, and unsure how to proceed, she simply carried out the score pressed against his body on the chair. For the next two hours he lingered in the space, never leaving the chair and staring intently at her. Only after a security staff member remotely viewing the gallery alerted Hassabi to the situation, did the choreographer enter the gallery and request that he leave. I note this not to rehearse a series of anecdotes about the experience of performing, but to argue that stillness coupled with the space of the gallery inflected our sense of agency as performers. No longer existing within the bodily tempo of those around us, we instead sunk into a state of bodily arrest. PLASTIC brought our bodies to the threshold between art object and agential performer. It was a threshold that was to invite unwanted physical contact, stymieing a sense of bodily autonomy, which somehow imagined rapid movement as tied to agency and action.

In addition to the body, the technologies of display also affected our reception. The gallery solo at the Hammer used the extended fade up and down of the lights to explore a politics of visibility within the duration of pictorial time. Distinct from Paxton and Rainer's exploration of held poses, artists like David Parsons and, far more contemporarily, Cassils have explored the interface between the performing body and the still image through light. Parsons's 1982 work

Caught played with notions of visibility through optic effects. Holding the control to a strobe light in his hand, Parsons would activate the light only when he was at the height of a jump. The effect for the viewer was a series of disconnected images of the dancer seemingly suspended in mid air. While *Caught* was perceived as a series of ‘still’ images of Parsons in mid-air, the work depended, like PLASTIC, upon the tempo between movement and illumination. Cassils, a trans performance artist, used a very similar effect in their 2012 work *Becoming an Image*. In the piece, Cassils, dressed only in flesh-toned underwear, physically attacks a 2000-pound clay block. The physical feat only becomes visible to spectators through the flash of a single photographer’s camera. While *Caught* attempts to render visible only those moments of performed transcendence, the dancer’s body seemingly perpetually in flight, *Becoming an Image* implicates the viewer in Cassils’s physical duress as their body is revealed through a series of illuminated instances. Akin to Gamboa’s comment quoted in Chapter One—that the ‘time’ of all of Asco’s photographs strung together would not equal a second of performance time—*Caught* and *Becoming an Image* make clear that the instant of illumination does matter. And, in the dissolve to black as the effects of the flash fade, the urgency of needing to see the body is viscerally evoked: when will the performer next be literally visible? Parsons and Cassils’s work reveals how PLASTIC constructed zones of encounter not only through movement but also through other design elements, most potently light.

The slowly fading lights aided in a perception of the gallery as existing within a categorically different temporal zone. Our bodies became specters, dramatically lite and always fading into or out of darkness. As the gallery was enveloped into shadows, and only small pools of amber light remained, bodies in the space took on the appearance of Dutch portraiture: illuminated faces cast against an expanse of darkness. While the dimmed lighting created a calming, almost meditative, environment, as the lights neared total darkness the gallery’s affect

would shift: the confusion, disorientation, even terror of the unknown darkness.²³⁹ Many visitors, who entered the gallery without stopping to pick up a pamphlet or read the didactic, appeared unaware that other bodies—ours, other visitors—were present. Several times during my own performances, a visitor would stand incredibly close to my body unaware I was there due to the darkness of the room. Staring transfixed at the slowly brightening lights, several visitors audibly gasped in surprise and one screamed upon realizing they were not alone. The lights became a duet partner, assisting us in our performance, and influencing the way in which visitors' reacted to our bodies.

Entering while the lights were fully bright, a visitor was assaulted by the blinding beams of the lighting instruments. If a museumgoer did not fully enter the gallery—as indeed many did not, perhaps unaware that they were invited and encouraged to enter the space—their perception of the work was one of being aggressively blinded by a bright light. The rest of the gallery and our presence in it, for these visitors, remained unnoted. PLASTIC's lights re-imagined how a visitor is able to view a fellow person on display. Rather than seeing all, the lights ensured that the exhibit was first viewed through momentarily blindness. Seeing, then, for those visitors who entered while the lights were fully bright, was re-configured as aggressive, as an assault. The lights interpolated the relationship between viewer and viewed as one predicated upon the violence of sight, of the gaze. And yet, the lights did not stay bright, but were always shifting towards a fade to black.

The lights foregrounded the importance of the visual and of sight within the museum, and, yet, what PLASTIC was always working towards was blindness: the over-bright lights rendering one momentarily sightless or the impenetrability of total darkness. The lights proposed a way of

²³⁹ Philbin, visiting the gallery during the opening weeks of the exhibit, was horrified at how completely the gallery was thrown into darkness when the lights were either off or nearly off. She insisted—against Hassabi's wishes—that a small light be placed over the didactic in the gallery, ensuring that the room was never completely dark and that the text explaining the piece was always illuminated.

re-scripting the relationship between dancer and viewer. While the larger argument across this chapter draws together the live performance of PLASTIC with earlier histories of museum display, here the lights also function as a material object that impacts how I analyze the live performance of PLASTIC. The bank of lighting instruments ensured that viewers and performers alike all optically experienced the shifting light. The temporality of the solo was never only the sustained tempo of our choreography; it was also the extension of the work across all of the bodies in the gallery: the effects of the performance lingered, pupils dilating and constricting. We were not art objects or mannequins; not stilled bodies divested of our agency. Rather, we were all experiencing the phenomenological effect of the lights. Together.

While the solo at the Hammer literalized the way in which being able to see lingered across the bodies of viewers and dancers, theater studies scholars have imagined how the more metaphoric connotations of seeing are mobilized within performance. Herbert Blau writes of theater that “we are [always] seeing what we saw before.”²⁴⁰ While Blau means to indicate the way in which text-based theater works re-stage again and again the same words across a different stage, his comment likewise applies to the spectacle of the body within the museum. We are seeing what we have seen before: women holding still, almost like sculpture, almost like static art objects. Of course, the key word in the above sentence is ‘holding.’ The museum is not ‘seeing,’ as it were, what it has seen before. We were not sculpture; we were not still. The steady rise and fall of our chests, the rapid blinking of our eyes attest to the movement always enlivening our performances. The museum space renders legible the capitulation of our bodies to not simply Hassabi’s work but also the frame of the museum, which remembers women’s bodies in distinct ways.

Performance studies scholar Harvey Young argues stillness reveals the embodied and

²⁴⁰ Herbert Blau, *The Eye of Prey* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 173.

historical conditions of capture.²⁴¹ Focused on blackness within a US context, Young nuances what it means to be stilled whether in performance or photography. As Hassabi discusses PLASTIC, the evocation of race and racialization vis-à-vis stillness is not evoked. However, as Young proposes, and as I continue to outline in relationship to choreographies of still moves, questions of capture, arrest, and race are thoroughly imbricated within the dance piece, and only foregrounded when placed within the museal context. While stillness as a choreographic modality complicates the boundary between mediums—a means of bringing Hassabi ever closer to the still image from which she begins her choreographic process—still or stilled bodies are not unmarked. To stand or hold still renders the embodied and phenomenological sensation of being stilled legible as a site of control and authority.²⁴² The still(ed) body is one available for arrest or surveillance. Practices of stillness, Young argues are thresholds, “simultaneously separating and being the living/dead, moving/still, and breathing/breathless,” and I would add performer/art object to Young’s taxonomy.²⁴³ The connotations Young assigns to stillness return us to the initial scene of haunting scholars locate within the theatrical milieu. There is an inherent tension to holding still or watching stilled bodies; it is the tension of the threshold, as Young terms it.

If the museum asks us to remember stilled bodies in particular ways, it is a memory grounded in repetition: the same types of poses, images, sculptural objects repeated over and over again. Lepecki argues dance is “[not only] that which *passes away*...but also as that which passes around...and as that which also, always, *comes back around*.”²⁴⁴ A dance work, a piece of choreography, is thus not tied to a particular context or body, but rather is, in Lepecki’s estimation, an autonomous entity transcending temporal contexts and entering new dancers. To

²⁴¹ Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

²⁴² Young 5.

²⁴³ Young 45.

²⁴⁴ Lepecki, “Body as Archive,” 39.

come back around indicates the haunting quality Lepecki wishes to assign to dance, but it also gestures as the repetition inherent in the act of haunting or the act of reception, dependent as Carlson argues, upon cultural constructed memories. Carlson, in some ways akin to Lepecki, describes the phenomenon of “the recycled body of the actor.”²⁴⁵ We might think of this assertion literally, as Carlson means to, through the way in which certain dancers performed PLASTIC at all three museums. Likewise, the five of us who performed the solo in the gallery performed on a loop. The final few minutes of each of our solos overlapped with the initial minutes of the next performer’s shift. Standing inside the gallery in front of its glass doors, the lights slowly fading, the next performer—standing just on the other side of the glass—would slowly emerge, only to disappear as the lights faded all the way to black. Literalizing a process of passing around or recycling, PLASTIC rendered stillness legible as the site of the return or the repeat—the site of haunting. How can we imagine the ways in which stillness comes back around as a choreographic modality particularly structuring and disciplining bodies in museum spaces?

I shift now to noting stillness’s long association with bodies, agency, and ideologies of display, turning to histories of embodied display popular in the nineteenth century. While this leap in time and context is anachronistic, the comparison aims to solidify a genealogy of stilled bodies. It is a haunting return in my writing of the ways in which the held pose and the contained body registers. Haunting, after all, acknowledges the allure—however uneasy that allure might remain—of the half-seen, the ‘akin to,’ the ‘reminds me of.’ It engages precisely those comparisons that are at once evocative, vivid and yet also somehow elide direct corollaries.

The emergence of the art museum in the nineteenth century was linked to a broader landscape of public institutions and spaces, like “history and natural science museums, dioramas

²⁴⁵ Carlson 8.

and panoramas, national, and, later, international exhibitions, arcades and department stores.”²⁴⁶

Such spaces were largely dependent upon the potency of the visual, yet they also served as material spaces for developing and circulating “new disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology) and their discursive formations.”²⁴⁷ In conjuncture with the emergence and establishment of such spaces and disciplines, stillness came to frame the practice of closely observing and, thus, understanding an object or discipline.

Stillness represents an ideology of apprehension. The term ‘apprehension’ proves useful for the multifaceted way in which I wish to frame stillness, at once an intellectual metaphor for knowledge acquisition, an embodied state, and the act of taking ahold of another person or thing. The term, like stillness, twines between the violence of the grasp—literal and physical or ‘merely’ intellectual—and the embodied and sensorial perception of growing awareness. Stillness entangles the violence of the grasp—Young’s notion of black capture—with that of intellectual acquisition. Disciplines like anatomy or anthropology sought to understand the body in particular ways, and the museum and related exhibitionary contexts like World’s Fairs emerged as the spaces within which such knowledge could be visually displayed and disseminated. Within the space of the museum or the exhibit, such notions are not separate but brought into embodied presence through the spectacle of bodily displays. Stillness, as a metaphor for a kind of disinterested, clinical observation and the optimal bodily state for both the observer and observed, links the ideological imperatives of such disciplines and spaces back to the body.

These spectacles of bodily display included the practice of displaying people in the name of entertainment and scientific discovery. Most usually such people were of color, differently abled, or somehow deemed sexually or physically ‘abnormal.’ Numerous individuals who were displayed as part of the nineteenth century’s mania for such spectacles also performed in

²⁴⁶ Bennett 59.

²⁴⁷ Bennett 59.

elaborate and virtuosic ways. For others, however, it was enough to simply be, their physical body or adornments framed as ‘primitive,’ ‘freakish,’ or ‘odd’ enough. Saartjie Baartman is one of the most well known examples of this latter form of exhibition.²⁴⁸ Certainly Baartman was never ‘still,’ yet the absence of historical records that discuss any nominal performance, but instead exhaustively detail her anatomy—and most particularly her secondary sexual characteristics—reveals the extent to which her exhibition depended not upon performance but rather the ability to closely observe her body.²⁴⁹ Indeed, Suzan-Lori Parks’s play *Venus*, which dramatizes Baartman’s life in Europe, opens with the actress playing the title character standing still before the audience. The actress stands on a revolving platform, which rotates such that she faces upstage, enabling the audience to observe unhampered her body, the potential challenge of the returned gaze forestalled.²⁵⁰ Following her death in 1815, Baartman’s body was dissected by leading French scientists Henri Marie Ducrotay de Blainville and Georges Cuvier, and her skeleton, genitals, and brain were put on display at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris. Her remains were to remain on display until 1974.²⁵¹ She is paradigmatic of a model of exhibition predicated

²⁴⁸ Her story dramatized in Suzan-Lori Parks’s 1996 play, *Venus: A Play* and in the 2010 French film, *Vénus Noire*, Baartman was exhibited/toured in various exhibition contexts throughout Europe in the early nineteenth century. Parks’s play importantly dramatizes Baartman as an actor in her own narrative, who, while displayed in racist contexts, is also able to locate her own agency. My own prose attempts to account for the historic women’s agency while, nevertheless, acknowledging the structural potency of not simply European exhibits, but also larger frameworks of colonialism, racism, and emerging discourses of taxonomy and phrenology that pathologize race and through which human zoos were understood. Kechiche’s film was not without controversy, as critics felt the director re-enacted in the twenty-first century the same spectacle of exhibition centered on the figure of a black women, which had occurred in the early nineteenth century. Suzan Lori Parks, *Venus: a play* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1997); *Vénus Noire*, dir. Abdellatif Kechiche, MK2, 2010.

²⁴⁹ Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch, and Nanette Jacomijn Snoep, eds., *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage* (Arles: Actes Sud and Musée du Quai Branly, 2011) 46.

²⁵⁰ Young 120.

²⁵¹ Gilles Boëtsch, “Georges Cuvier, A New View of the World,” *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage*, eds., Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch, and Nanette Jacomijn Snoep (Arles: Actes Sud and Musée du Quai Branly, 2011) 64.

Only in 2002 year were her skeletal remains removed from museum’s collection and returned to South Africa for funeral services and burial. Blanchard, Boëtsch, and Snoep 49.

upon the still, passive (female) body.²⁵²

Focused on the eighteenth century, dance studies scholar Susan Foster uses stillness to describe the convergence of choreography and anatomy. Foster writes anatomy, like early choreography, “stilled both the observer and the object of study and created an unmarked plane onto which the various features of the physical were located.”²⁵³ Tools like the microscope, invented in Europe in the seventeenth century, helped to produce the figure of the (masculine) Enlightenment scientist, able to observe and thus generate knowledge by rendering both the object of his gaze and his own body still. Foster’s historiography links stillness to the visual and, further, to scientific discovery. Lindon Barrett extends this line of reasoning, writing, “the scopic [came] to stand...for reason, intellect, and perhaps even consciousness...[and] is a preeminent cultural matrix of power and order.”²⁵⁴ Stillness reveals, then, the Mobius stipe-like twine of Barrett’s cultural matrix. Often the most ideal bodily state to adopt to assert power and order *is* stillness.

PLASTIC used stillness as a means to re-position the relationship between the dancer and the viewer, or the viewed and the viewer. In the face of our nearly unmoving bodies, any movement a viewer made was amplified, “registering...[as] a kind of monstrosity.”²⁵⁵ PLASTIC reversed the relationship between performance and audience member, such that in the face of our

²⁵² The history she represents has been taken up by a variety of artists. Visual artists like Renee Cox, Bharti Kher, Hassan Musa, Tracey Rose, and Kara Walker, and performance artist Coco Fusco engage the legacy of human zoos and the way in which such exhibits conflated sexual availability, ‘freakishness,’ and non-whiteness. Kher’s work *Arione* from 2004 is a life-size figural sculpture of a black woman. Bare-breasted and dressed in black hot pants, the sculpture holds a tray in one hand filled with pink cupcakes; one leg of the sculpture is that of a horse. The piece’s elements form a critical pastiche, marking visual legacies of sexualization, racialization, and bodily oddity. Ziba Ardan, *Bharti Kher* (London: Parasol unit, 2012) 116.

²⁵³ Foster 84-85.

²⁵⁴ Lindon Barrett, *Blackness and Value: Seeing Double* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 216.

²⁵⁵ I am indebted to Steven Chodoriwsky, an artist, writer, and designer who teaches at California State Polytechnic University Pomona, who shared his observation. He viewed PLASTIC while it was exhibited at the Hammer.

nearly unmoving bodies, we appeared static, the viewer made aware of any movement in their own body. While stillness allows one to be viewed with greater ease, it also forces one to recognize one's bodily excess in its face. By forcing a visitor to recognize his body's gestures and movements, PLASTIC's stillness shifted the direction of the gaze, framing the museumgoer's own body as other. The gallery's immersive environment created "a spatial dialog," implicating visitors in a critical practice of viewing and, in turn, being viewed.²⁵⁶ Lax questions in his essay on PLASTIC, what exactly is so threatening about Hassabi's movement practice? What is threatening *is* stillness, a mode of moving such that a cultural matrix predicated upon power and order begins to break down, as still bodies mirror each other, rendering subject and object unclear. The still body, in other words, can function as a challenge to larger frameworks of regulation and containment.

To stage stillness asserts one's presence and ability to persist. Certainly, Baartman is emblematic of this. Her story has come to represent not simply the racism and sexism that underwrote human zoos, but more broadly she serves as a feminist symbol, foregrounding questions of race, gender, colonialism, scientific racism, and a politics of visibility. While I argue these prior histories of embodied display haunt PLASTIC's reception in the present, I do not wish to unequivocally equate performers in PLASTIC to a figure like Baartman. Vastly different contexts surround each. Rather, what I mean to accomplish by reading these iterations of embodied display together is to forward a trans-historical framework for understanding stillness as complicit in gendered and racialized ideologies of display and articulate the way in which haunting mediates the corporeal through the institutional. "Haunting," as sociologist Avery Gordon writes, "is not the same as being exploited, traumatized, or oppressed." Rather, it brings to the fore "repressed or unresolved social violence," in direct or, in the case of PLASTIC,

²⁵⁶ Gomoll, "Performative Spirit," 364.

oblique ways.²⁵⁷ Haunting is a means of demanding accountability and redress, asserting as it does the need “to recognize our own implication in historical processes.”²⁵⁸ Performance remainder, as an analytic, makes possible this move. Drawing together the live performance of PLASTIC and these earlier histories of embodied display reveals how such legacies impact the reception of live bodies in museum spaces now.

If this nineteenth century history of embodied display and scientific ideologies reveals one way in which we might analyze PLASTIC, Hassabi’s references for her still poses supplies another way. She describes some of figures she drew upon to construct PLASTIC: “‘junkies in the middle of the street . . . luxurious figures at rest . . . a person forgotten in a corner of the city . . . people simply staring, sitting, standing.’”²⁵⁹ While her list of associations marks, if obliquely, one of her art historical reference points (luxurious figures at rest), her choreographic inspiration also draws upon thoroughly unproductive figures. Her list renders legible a larger framework for imagining stillness’s efficacy, linking the bodily state to connotations of labor. What does it mean to be simply staring, sitting, standing? And who is allowed to simply sit around? Within Western art, women often occupying such roles, their bodies reclined, splayed, displayed. As the earlier evocation of nineteenth-century paintings of harems—Orientalist fantasies of an unmoored exotic East—makes clear, to be still does not carry simply gendered connotations. It is also linked to considerations of race, labor, and class.

The nineteenth century predominates with European and American paintings of elegantly attired white women reclining on sitting room chairs or splayed across divans.²⁶⁰ White women

²⁵⁷ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) xvi.

²⁵⁸ Weinstock 110.

²⁵⁹ Lax 8.

²⁶⁰ See: Jacques-Louis David, *Madame Récamier*, 1800; Édouard Manet, *Reading*, 1865; Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Portrait of Madame Claude Monet*, 1872; Berthe Morisot, *Woman with a Fan: Portrait of*

fill bathtubs and sit before vanities; they stand, so as to clearly reveal their fashionable attire, in the center of well-appointed rooms.²⁶¹ Such paintings revealed a woman's social status, tied to the sartorial and decorative trappings of wealth, states of repose, and whiteness. While these nineteenth century, reclining women showcase their social standing, earlier centuries depict the prone female body as goddess and allegory and usually nude. Following performance studies scholar Jennifer Brody, I want to read PLASTIC through one particular image of a reclining figure, *Olympia*, contextualizing, the dance work, "in relation to questions of race, gender, and sexuality that circulate," within the painting.²⁶² While the comparison is, in some sense, arbitrary, the posture of the white woman who dominates the painting's horizontal plane closely resembles poses included in PLASTIC's choreography. *Olympia* depicts exactly one of the 'luxurious figures at rest' Hassabi references.

The painting, now canonic within Western art history, was painted by Édouard Manet in 1863 and first exhibited in 1865. The canvas features a naked, white woman reclining on a divan. Her skin is incredibly pale, almost translucent. Behind her, a clothed black woman stands, her arms filled with a large bouquet of flowers. *Olympia* visually resembles a series of art historical images: *Venus of Urbino* by Titian, *Sleeping Venus* by Giorgione, and *Rokeby Venus* by Diego Velázquez. Manet's *Olympia* re-created the nude, reclined figure, yet, for critics of the day, his Venus was not idealized but all too real, her translucent skin and sallow pallor seemingly indicative of ill health and the blight of a rapidly modernizing urban existence.²⁶³ The painting came to epitomize a shifted painterly style, Manet imagined as "the gentleman rebel whose

Madame Marie Hubbard, 1874; James Tissot, *July: Specimen of a Portrait*, 1878; Julius LeBlanc Stewart, *Reclining Woman*, 1882.

²⁶¹ See: Berthe Morisot, *Woman at Her Toilette*, 1875/80; Édouard Manet, *Nana*, 1877; Georges Seurat, *Young Woman Powdering Herself*, 1888-90; Edgar Degas, *Morning Bath*, 1890.

²⁶² Jennifer De Vere Brody, "Black Cat Fever: Manifestations of Manet's 'Olympia,'" *Theater Journal* 53.1 (2001): 106.

²⁶³ Valerie Steele, "Nana," *Impressionism, Fashion, & Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2012) 133.

canvases are both sign and symptom of modernity.”²⁶⁴ The consternation *Olympia* provoked was framed through the white woman’s reclined, naked body. The clenched hand covering her genitals (a sign that her body is available, but only for a price) and the black cat at the end of her divan marked her as a prostitute.²⁶⁵ (*Chat*, or cat in French, carries the same double-entendre as ‘pussy’ in English; the women, then, is, in the words of bell hooks, “selling hot pussy.”²⁶⁶) While her body and her imagined sexual availability have been over-determined based upon her posture, Meurent’s status as prostitute is predicated not simply upon her supine figure but also the clothed and subservient figure of Laure behind her. As Brody writes, “the black female body is the vehicle needed for the (re)productive performance of ‘white’ sexuality.”²⁶⁷

It is the reclined postures of figures like Meurent that PLASTIC apes. It is a pose linked to an understanding of sexualized femininity predicated upon whiteness, and necessarily and problematically grounded in the specter of the black female body, standing above and looking down. In PLASTIC, as in much art historical writing on *Olympia*, Laure’s stance is not depicted; she remains invisible. If the link between art historical representations of femininity and PLASTIC’s still poses returns us repeatedly to a scene of whiteness, the museum gallery itself points to a more complex interface between stillness, gender, race, and labor.

Museums are spaces in which to be simply sitting, standing, or staring is to be working, if carrying out some of the most marginalized labor within the museum: that of the gallery guard or docent. Security staff are the lowest paid positions and within the hierarchy of museum spaces, the least prestigious. Like Gómez-Peña’s still body in Chapter One, which gestured outwards towards certain racialized and gendered labor practices—the garment worker, the elevator

²⁶⁴ Brody 101.

²⁶⁵ The white woman who modeled for Manet was Victorine Meurent, a French painter who regularly showed her work at the Paris Salon.

²⁶⁶ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992).

²⁶⁷ Brody 105.

operator—PLASTIC choreographically rendered legible the divide between the labor of the dancer posing still and the labor of the guard standing still.²⁶⁸ For museum guards, stillness is indicative of a kind of politics of invisibility. It is a politics directly addressed in Fred Wilson’s 1991 piece *Guarded View*. In the work, four, black, headless mannequins stand on a white plinth. (All of us who performed PLASTIC at the Hammer, and I imagine this continued at the subsequent two museums, were continually mistaken for mannequins. Several times, I overheard visitors debating whether I was actually a living person or a very realistic mannequin.) Each of Wilson’s mannequins is dressed in the uniform of a security guard from a major New York museum: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Jewish Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. For all that, sartorially, the mannequins perform a distinct institutional specificity, the lack of heads iterates the anonymity expected and required of museum guards. Wilson has noted of the job, “You’re on display but you’re also invisible.”²⁶⁹ While *Guarded View* renders the paradox Wilson describes materially legible through his headless mannequins, the piece also reveals the extent to which stillness, and quite literally just standing in place for hours on end is scripted as both labor and (invisible) display. It is labor, as Wilson’s black mannequins demonstrate, labor that is distinctly racialized.²⁷⁰ For all that *Guarded View* critically questions the racial and labor politics of stillness at play in PLASTIC, his piece, nevertheless, obscures the bodies of women of color. His four mannequins are meant to depict men.

²⁶⁸ See: Mierle Laderman Ukeles series of performances at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in July of 1973, all organized under the title, *Maintenance Art Tasks* and Santiago Sierra’s *Workers paid to remain inside cardboard boxes/ Trabajadores remunerados para permanecer en el interior de cajas de cartón*, from 2000.

²⁶⁹ “Guarded View,” *Whitney Museum of American Art*, 14 April 2016
<<http://collection.whitney.org/object/11433>>.

²⁷⁰ Facilities and security positions are roughly split between White Non Hispanic and Minority employees, while, “Curators, Conservators, Educators, and Leadership...is 84% White Non Hispanic, 6% Asian, 4% Black, 3% White Hispanic, and 3% Two or More Races.” Roger Schonfeld and Mariët Westermann, *The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey*, *The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation*, 2015, 8.

The link between PLASTIC and security personnel is not simply staged here in my writing. Rather, the final exhibit of the dance piece at MoMA brought into relief the relationship between dancers and guards. MoMA was the most crowded museum at which PLASTIC was presented, and so to ensure dancers' safety museum guards were enlisted to direct visitor traffic and act as guardians of sorts for the often less visible performers. Hassabi explained, "Some guards...[were] very sensitive and so attentive. They...[were] able to set the limits with the public in a very smooth way." She continued, however, that with others "the experience...[was] 'less enjoyable.'"²⁷¹ Her frank assessment of the relationship between dancers and guards returns us to the labor politics embedded within *Olympia*: the white prone body being served by the erect, black body. Hassabi's comment re-inscribes a politics of artistic labor in which hierarchies are rigidly maintained between artist and model and model and servant. Of course, in *Olympia* the line between artist, model, and servant is not so clear. Meurent, like Manet, was an artist, and both Meurent and Laure modeled for Manet. What the painting iterates, then, as it slips between representational politics and biographical histories, is the instability of subject-positions. Likewise, PLASTIC's dancers slipped between power and submission, gazing back at museumgoers, our bodies prone on the museum floor.

Live dance in the museum is haunted by and implicated in a matrix of embodied ideological practices, whether they be linked to gendered representations, visitor reactions, racialized histories of embodied display, or museum labor. The presentation of PLASTIC at the Hammer, in particular, frames this matrix through the classificatory regimes that assign value to objects and bodies based upon aesthetic or cultural distinctions. The Hammer is affiliated with UCLA, and the University's only other museum is the anthropological and ethnographic Fowler Museum. Established in 1963 by then Chancellor Franklin Murphy, the Fowler was created to

²⁷¹ Burke, "'Plastic,' at MoMA."

“consolidate the various collections of non-Western art and artifacts” the school owned.²⁷²

During his tenure at UCLA, Murphy also oversaw the establishment of the campus’s sculpture garden, which includes works by Rodin and Matisse, and is now a part of the Hammer’s collections. The two museums iterate a clear divide between ‘fine art’ and cultural artifacts.²⁷³

On the one hand, the institutional and classificatory divides between institutions like the Hammer and the Fowler attest to the history of museums’ development in the West. On the other hand, narratives of ill-treatment, infrastructural failings on the part of museums (the absence of dressing rooms or sprung floors appropriate for dancing), and miscommunication between curators and performers dogging the curation of live performance in art museums reveals the extent to which the live body continues to elide the institutional parameters of art museums.

PLASTIC asks us to attend to prior histories of embodied display and figural representation within the context of the art museum. Questions of agency, racialization, exploitation, or economic advantage are radically different between these distinct moments, yet these earlier histories inform how we might analyze the uneven narratives of power that circulate between financially solvent institutions and performance based artists and performers. Such a

²⁷² “History of the Museum,” *Fowler Museum at UCLA*, 6 Jan. 2016
<<http://www.fowler.ucla.edu/about/history>>.

²⁷³ Early 19th century museums did not separate between categories of fine art, cultural artifact, natural history object, or bodies and remains. Institutions like the Peale Museum in Philadelphia, included a mastodon skeleton, portraits, figurines from Easter Island, and an Egyptian mummy in a single gallery space. William T. Alderson, ed., *Mermaids, Mummies, and Mastodons: The Emergence of the American Museum* (Washington: American Association of Museums, 1992).

While the Fowler’s curatorial departments have been at the forefront of museum practices that seek to complicate the racist, colonial, and imperial legacies that ghost the collections of many anthropological and ethnographic museums, the museum’s collection is, nevertheless, directly tied to colonialism. The Fowler’s permanent collection includes objects acquired “under coercive colonial circumstances,” which were later reclassified “as ‘primitive art’ . . . and more recently as ‘world arts.’” The latter is, Gomoll argues, a “redemptive phrase that invokes a framework which exceeds the European epistemologies that have lorded over the meaning and value of non-Western material culture for too long.” It, nevertheless, promulgates a system of classification that iterates a divide between art and non-Western/primitive/traditional/world art. While one might take issue with the critical utility of a phrase like ‘world art,’ the onus to address the troubling historical legacies of modern Western museums falls almost exclusively to institutions like the Fowler. Gomoll, “Performative Spirit,” 359

focus interrogates rather than accepts the classificatory rubrics, which continue to dictate the terms of how art, aesthetics, and cultural value are assigned. Placed within the museum gallery, the dancer's body moves slowly and stays still; it is a corporeal choreography imbued with ideologies of display and capture, passivity and persistence.

Returns

PLASTIC had closed a few weeks earlier, and after devoting so much of my February to the museum, I had avoided it. But new exhibits were open, and so I was back. As I made my way up the lobby staircase, I paused, drawn to the closed gallery doors through which, for a month I had performed PLASTIC. A new exhibition was now up in the space. I could see the placard by the doors indicating the work of Lauren Bon and Metabolic Studio was on display inside.

Opening the gallery door, I quietly walked in. The room, for all that a new piece was up, was much the same as it had been for PLASTIC's run. The same soft gray carpet covered the floor; the walls were still gray. The lighting in the space was dim, soothing, and a droning soundscape filled the room. Bon and Metabolic Studio's installation, a fabric sculptural object able to recycle water, dominated the room. Water dripped from the gallery ceiling, creating a sense of continual return: water falling only to be caught by the fabric and brought back up to the ceiling to fall again. It seemed fitting that the piece, which next occupied the gallery space was likewise invested in the unfolding of time and a constant repetition. Dressed—coincidentally—in the same black jeans and white tennis shoes I had worn for PLASTIC, I felt transported into the affective and physical state of remembering, re-living PLASTIC.

The notion of haunting has a long tradition within theater and performance scholarship. Museums, however, are rarely framed in this way. For all that museums impart knowledge and display objects and artifacts from the past, they are not haunted spaces but educational or cultural repositories. How do such understanding shift if we imagine museums as sites of haunting? Or,

to return to the language of the LACMA exhibit discussed in the previous chapter, zones where one encounters phantoms? Haunting allows us to imagine the temporality of curation and display not as a progressive and ever-evolving chronology. Rather, haunting produces a genealogy of returns, in which it becomes possible to imagine the critical impact histories that ground and haunt the formation of the museum have upon the reception and interpretation of a performer's body. Our bodies, holding still and counting out second by second each moment of our extended poses, made possible a return to prior histories of figural representation and embodied display. This is not to make the facile argument that stillness somehow forges a link between distinctly different moments and cultural contexts. Rather, it is to assert the need to account for dance in the museum not as a wholly presentist project but one always already in part determined by museal legacies which haunt the present.

“Stillness,” as Seremetakis writes, “is the moment when the buried, the discarded, and the forgotten escape to the social surface of awareness.”²⁷⁴ PLASTIC acted as conduit for that escape, evoking in the quietude of the Hammer's gallery or the crowded interstitial spaces of MoMA those subjects who performed and labored in stillness, visible or unseen, powerful or passive. Hassabi's dance work instrumentalized choreographies of stillness as a means to bring to the surface certain histories of embodied display and encounter. Performance remainder renders legible how stilled bodies in museal contexts are never only about the kinesthetic modality. Rather, to be still, performance remainder asserts, reveals how the time of performance is haunted by certain histories of display, linked to formations and representations of race and gender. Stillness acts precisely because it presses against notions of useful or linear time; instead, still bodies simply linger in and fill up space. Stillness, in other words, is a type of haunting.

Conclusion

²⁷⁴ C. Nadia Seremetakis, ed., *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994) 12.

In *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*, Peggy Phelan writes, “Performance and theatre are instances of enactments predicated on their own disappearance.”²⁷⁵ She continues that the continued thrall of the live—in the face of mediatization, virtuality, and economies of reproduction—is its ability to prepare us for loss and “especially for death.”²⁷⁶ Phelan’s argument, however, hinges upon imagining a boundary point between presence and absence, disappearance and embodiment. Refuting Phelan’s divisions, this chapter holds two temporal concerns in balance: that of the present and the presence of the live dancer’s body and that of the past and the absent performers and museumgoers who attest to the formation of the modern Western museum.

Drawing together PLASTIC’s live performance, the archive of pictures Hassabi used to create PLASTIC’s movement vocabulary, and the persisting legacy of how performers’ bodies have been displayed and received in museal contexts, I argue that the phenomenon of presenting dance in the museum needs to be understood through prior iterations of embodied display. PLASTIC, analyzed through performance remainder, becomes a wormhole or sorts, in which the past legacies of embodied exhibition are rendered relevant for the present, highlighting how such histories inform a reading of gender, labor, and race in the live performance. Performance remainder makes clear, not only, the feminist politics that inform Hassabi’s oeuvre, but also resurrects concerns of race and labor as they come to bear upon PLASTIC.

Haunting, across this chapter, serves as an example of performance remainder. Hauntings matter because they render (partially) legible those events or subjects who continue to demand attention, foregrounding the inevitability of returns and the necessity of redress. They evoke not the finality of death or the binary of presence and absence, which Phelan asserts, but rather

²⁷⁵ Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 2.

²⁷⁶ Phelan, *Mourning Sex*, 3.

“endings that are not over.”²⁷⁷ Film scholar Bliss Cua Lim describes hauntings as that which “can be managed but never fully foreclosed.”²⁷⁸ Lim’s assertion points to the way in which haunting is not stable; the definitive end point of a performance, rather, remains open. This understanding of hauntings—they reveal the necessity of redress or are about endings that are not over—reveals the future directed charge of the ghost. The ghost demands that something is to be done: mark me. One of the most oft-cited lines within the English-language canon of theatrical texts, it attests to the paradoxical presence/absence of the ghost at the same time that it also directs Hamlet to attend to his father’s desire. This understanding of hauntings’ efficacy finds traction in relation to the definition of ‘remain.’ A little used definition of the word is that which remains still to done (OED). There is a futurity to the assertion that something remains still to be done, a ghosting assertion that to remain is to enact change or transformation. To hold pose after pose in *PLASTIC*, our bodies appearing largely still, frames the primary corporeal modality of the piece through the efficacious futurity of what it means to remain: the past remains, still, within the present.

Haunting in *PLASTIC* only becomes legible as a force that acts upon the body through choreographies of embodied stillness. The still pose is the moment when forces—buried, discarded, or forgotten—emerge to the fore of visibility and awareness. The still pose reveals the gendered and racialized forces, which act upon the dancer’s body in the present. To encounter the prone, reclined body of a dancer at MoMA or at the Hammer was to encounter a figure overdetermined by legacies of stilling certain types of subjects. Our poses evoked genealogies of stilled bodies: passive, prone, reclining, captured, seized, gazed upon, gendered, and racialized. I follow scholars like Lepecki, Gordon, and Lim in asserting haunting’s ability to disrupt hegemonic modes of producing knowledge; it resurrects the way in which “abusive systems of

²⁷⁷ Gordon 139.

²⁷⁸ Bliss Cua Lim, “Introduction: The Embodied Afterlives of Translation,” *Discourse* 31.3 (2009): 186.

power make themselves known...especially when they are supposedly over and done with.”²⁷⁹

Haunting reveals how “relationship[s] among power, knowledge, and experience,” become legible in the interface between performance practices and museal display.

Lambert-Beatty notes the choreographic strategy Hassabi deployed in PLASTIC, basing her movement off of images and pictures of bodies, invites an understanding of the live dancer as becoming a trace. “The felt body of the dancer,” she writes, “[is] both intensely present and . . . already a trace.”²⁸⁰ While this grammatical formulation bears more than a passing resemblance to Phelan’s oft-quoted assertion that performance “becomes itself through disappearance,” the trace, I argue, remains in particular ways.²⁸¹ Trace, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, indicates a way or path, a course of action, the track made by the passage of a thing or person, the marks remaining that indicate a former presence, an impression left on the mind, and, finally, a series of steps in a dance (OED). Trace, thus, is the residue that marks a previous presence (the footprint, the signature), but it is also, importantly, linked to movement. A trace is a course of action; it is a series of dance steps. The coincidence, then, among Lambert-Beatty’s description, the definition, and PLASTIC reveals how trace is not simply an impression of absence but is a means of taking action through movement.

To imagine the dancer’s body as a trace while performing PLASTIC is to question what the dancer’s body is a trace of *and* what her body is tracing through movement. The trace, I argue, reveals the urgency of refusing to account for PLASTIC only in relationship to the context of the Hammer, the Stedelijk, or MoMA. PLASTIC leveraged the paradox of the trace, or of the ghost—present yet absent—provoking viewers to respond to dancers’ bodies in particular, charged ways. Throughout the twelve months that PLASTIC traveled between the three

²⁷⁹ Gordon xvi.

²⁸⁰ Carrie Lambert-Beatty, “Mediating Trio A,” *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008) 158.

²⁸¹ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 146.

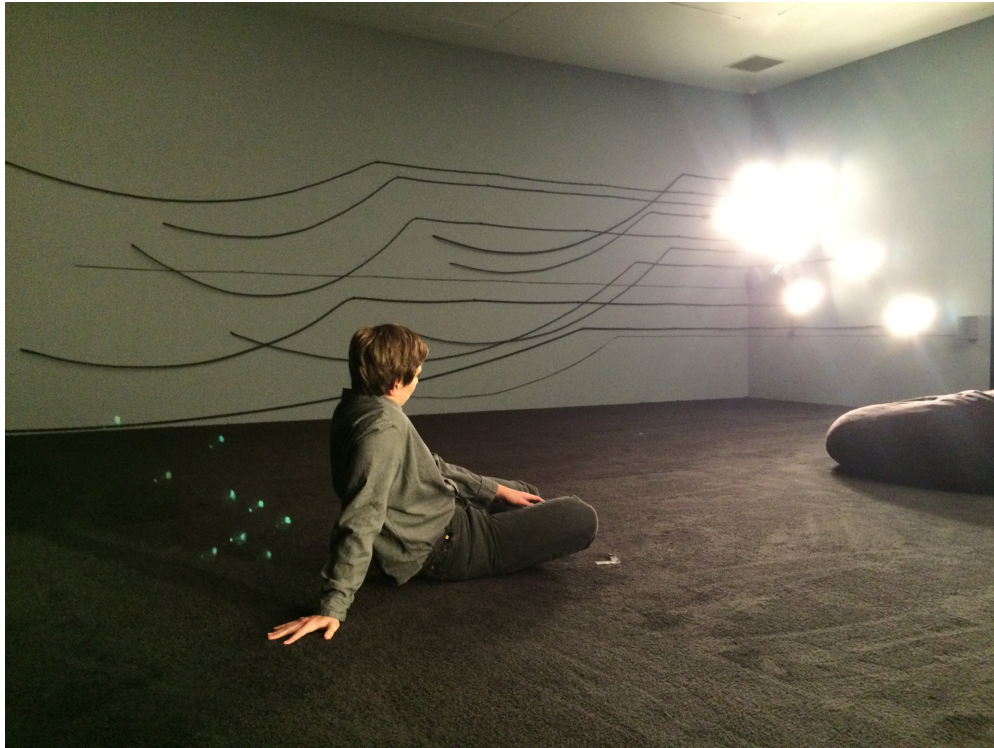
institutions, the piece was marked by repetition of a very similar set of encounters. The sheer preponderance of tense encounters clarified the way in which our bodies functioned as a challenge to viewers' expectations of the space and the 'art' on view. Our bodies, thus, were haunted by particular histories of museal display and the way in which bodies on display have been treated. Live performers cannot enter museum spaces unmarked. The museum is grounded in discursive histories that sought to frame race and gender in distinct ways, rendering certain bodies legible as 'other.' Performance remainder clarifies how live dance is always already moving alongside that which has come before, tracing absent histories into the felt, present body of the dancer. To perform live, thus, was to perform alongside—to return to Phelan's deathly preoccupation—the dead. The past is not gone; the present is held open. Performance remainder frames live dance through these earlier histories, arguing such legacies impact the reception of live bodies in museum spaces.

While PLASTIC was haunted by the legacies of earlier practices of embodied display, the dance's poses also evoked museum labor and the gendered connotations of seemingly still and passive bodies. Like haunting, though, the relationship among PLASTIC, labor, and gender is not direct. Rather, the dance conjured the specters of spatially adjacent laborers, museum docents, as well as temporally distant ones, Laure standing above Victorine. PLASTIC obliquely gestured at hierarchies of labor present in museum spaces and within museal display, noting the ways in which such labor is all too often contingent upon race and gender. The next chapter, however, takes up the question of gendered labor and performance directly. Chapter Three focuses on performance artist Marina Abramović and the employment contracts of performers hired to perform her work in museums. The contracts script a clear legal obligation between institution and performer, artist and viewer, creating a scheme within which it is possible to chart how agency and labor circulates. The contract, unlike haunting, produces a link among performer,

labor, and a larger political economy.

Leaning against the wall of the gallery space at the Hammer, my gaze is soft, almost unfocused. I stare at the filaments of the lighting instruments mounted on the wall in front of me. Slowly fading, they still cast beams of light into the darkening gallery. Caught within each beam, I see clouds of small dust motes. They swirl, buffeted by the slight eddies of air in the gallery. My body is largely still; only my chest rises and falls with my breath. It is a moment of stilling my own body and seeing, as Seremetakis writes, that “moment when the buried, the discarded, and the forgotten escape to the social surface of awareness.” If it is only dust clouds visible in the slowly darkening gallery, they, nevertheless, shimmer ghost-like in the fading glow of the lights, a material specter that seems to invite the possibility of haunting. The lights go out. A soft mechanical click as the instruments go off. The dust is gone.

Appendix



PLASTIC at the Hammer Museum, author performing. Photo by Brynn Shiovitz.



PLASTIC at the Hammer Museum, performer Ellen Gerdes. Photo by the author.

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Chapter Three

The Text Remains: Performances of Contract and the Conditions of Contact

The tent was largely empty; designed to hold 750 guests, it was cavernous and quiet with only the eighty of us performers and the hired wait staff inside. It was raining, and I could hear raindrops faintly hitting the tent's roof far above me. I was naked, lying atop a large circular dinning table. My body seeped downwards onto the surface of the cold table, and pressing down into the top of my body was a life-size plastic skeleton. I was one of six women hired by Serbian-born performance artist Marina Abramović and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles to perform *Nude with Skeleton* for MOCA's 2011 fundraisers' gala.²⁸² The gala was, and remains, the most bizarre performance experience I have had: the sleek white tent erected in the street outside MOCA, a wait staff, guests who included Hollywood celebrities, celebrated visual artists, and California politicians. Yet, while the gala was a thoroughly strange experience, each of us who performed was hired under contract with the museum. The conditions of our contracts determined how long we could perform, how much we were to be paid, and the confidentiality required of us, in effect *determining* the conditions of our performance.

Controversy surrounded the event in the days leading up to and after the gala. The event was viewed as exploitative. Our bodies—some of us naked, all of us on display for the enjoyment of wealthy and powerful arts donors—were positioned in relationship to the stipulations of our contracts (we made less than California minimum wage, when our time was accounted for hourly) and the economics of the gala. This confluence of the bodily choreography of our performances with our economic labor is focalized in the interplay between contract and performance. Throughout this chapter, the contract propels my investigation of performance and

²⁸² Abramović first performed *Nude with Skeleton* in 2002. Some of the content throughout this chapter focused on the MOCA gala is taken from a previously published article in the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*. The article takes the form of a critical performance reflection on my experience. Gwyneth Shanks, "Lying with a Speaking Spine: Reperforming Marina Abramović's *Nude with Skeleton*," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 27.1 (2012): 109-123.

Abramović's work, illuminating the intersections between performance, the body, labor, and capital, attuned to the gendered and economic stakes of performing under contract *now*.

How does an attention to contracts re-frame how Abramović's performance work might be understood? What concerns do labor contracts and contract theory foreground in a study of her work? And, conversely, does her work ask us to rethink what a contract *is* and *does*? How might we entwine the textual conditions of an employment contract, like mine with MOCA, with the specific bodily choreographies of Abramović's performances? While my contract with MOCA conditioned the scope of my performance, the contract is also a textual, material remain of my labor. Foregrounding the document in an analysis of the artist's work re-frames her performance practice through the language of agreement and consent, framing ideas of labor and compensation, inequity and agency.

Performance allows for a theorization of the contract as a *practice*, and the bodies of Abramović's performers render legible the symbolic and material stakes of the conditions of contract. Performance foregrounds the idea that contracts are not *decreed* but, rather, *enacted*.²⁸³ Abramović's performance pieces undercut the stability of a contractual agreement: the imagined premise that contract is predicated upon continual willful consent and parity. Her performances, playing out in time and dependent upon the interactions between performers and spectators, reveal the ways in which consent and parity are continually negotiated. Likewise, analyzing her performances *through* contract illustrates the extent to which the terms of such agreements are predicated not simply upon the exchange of money for labor and/or a commodity. Rather, the body and bodily presence are the condition of exchange, the currency of contract, and the

²⁸³ Kathryn Schwarz, *What you Will: Gender, Contract, and Shakespearean Social Space* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) 3, 9.

commodifiable excess of the performance. The body is the living contract.²⁸⁴ Performance asks us to imagine contracts as contingent, relational, and unstable; contract foregrounds performance's textual remains, asking us to understand a performance as a series of agreements.

Across this project, I focus on how live performance becomes re-constituted as remainder in relationship to the visual arts. In the past decade, performance has gained an unprecedented visibility in museums and visual arts contexts more broadly; this shift is significant for understanding how different types of artistic production are valued culturally and economically. The museum, attentive to archival processes, re-frames performance's temporality, foregrounding the past as opposed to the present-ness so often equated with live performance, and makes the question of remainders and afterlives pertinent. The contract, as a material remainder of performance, collapses the space between text and bodies, and allows performers' bodies to be read *as* contractual codes. The contracts are conditioning documents, which determine the scope of a performance, but also remains of that performance, re-framing it through the textual language of contract and concerns of labor, time, compensation, inequity, agency, and parity. Contracts render legible how one is able to be present, revealing the textual legal agreement, which underwrites the material present of one's body in a given space.

The aims of this chapter are not only to align contract and performance art as a means to differently illuminate each, but also to use contract as a means to reconsider historic and current theorizations of Abramović's performance practice. Considered one of the pivotal performance artists of the 1970s and '80s, her artistic practice has been influential in illuminating durational performance practices, asking artists and scholars to consider the physical and mental limits of

²⁸⁴ Here I shift Pierre Klossowski's phrase 'living currency.' I draw upon his work, framing how his triangulation of desire, value, and the body is illustrated in Abramović's re-performances and performances. I use Eleanor Kaufman's work as she offers a cogent analysis of his ideas, as well as a clear translation of his thought into English. As of this writing, there are no published English translations of *La Monnaie vivante*. Eleanor Kaufman, *The Delirium of Praise: Bataille, Blanchot, Deleuze, Foucault, Klossowski* (Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

the performing body. Long a staple of performance art anthologies and historic over-views of the development of performance art, Abramović has recently ignited scholarly attention through her vocal attempts to archive her past works. Abramović's performances emerged almost exclusively out of textual scores, or written instructions, which describe the scope of a performance. While her use of scores is not unique, their specific language positions her work in relationship to questions of consent, agency, will, and responsibility—ideas all intimately linked to understandings of contracts.²⁸⁵ To frame her scores within discussions of contract theory frames agreement and negotiation, gender parity and consent within the performance of her work.

This chapter investigates Abramović's solo works from the 1970s, reconsidering two of her most overtly gendered pieces *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange*. The scores are the only ones in her oeuvre to include some variant on the phrase, "I take responsibility," wording I read through the overly determined codes of contractual language and as intervening in discourses of agreement, consent and parity. The contract clarifies the ways in which an attention to Abramović's early experiments with gendered consent reveals the very different ways the contract now functions within her project: as a condition of economic employment as opposed to a performed negotiation of what consent and parity indicate. While Abramović's career-long use of textual scores to delimit her performances reveals the extent to which her work has depended upon the legalese language of the contract, the particular gendered dimensions of the two pieces reveals that, for her oeuvre, there has never been a separation between contractual agreement and a gendered subjectivity.

A focus on contract allows not only for a historical and theoretical reevaluation of Abramović's practice, but is also pertinent for engaging recent scholarship on her work. In the

²⁸⁵ See: Kathy O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1988); Schwarz, *What you Will: Gender, Contract, and Shakespearean Social Space*.

past decade, she has been at the forefront of discussions on re-performance, or the performance of a work understood as predicated upon one, unique live performance and the particular body and presence of that artist. Abramović's conception of re-performance is legal and contractual: to re-perform a piece, one must first get permission from the artist (or foundation that controls the artist's work), pay for the privilege of re-performing the piece, and "understand the original work" in its historic context.²⁸⁶ Only after these conditions have been met can one make one's own version of the work, which must "always refer...to the original source." These re-performances have most famously happened in museums, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), both in New York City. Following Abramović's own language, scholars have understood these recent museum presentations *as* re-performances.

Amelia Jones and Rebecca Schneider, in particular, have delimited the ways in which presence, temporality, and questions of authenticity are complicated by the term re-performance, and Jones has discussed the role of the museum in framing such questions.²⁸⁷ Jones grounds her essay on *The Artist is Present*, Abramović's 2010 retrospective at MoMA, in the myriad types of documentation, or ephemera, required to contextualize Abramović's decades long career and support her affirmation of the power of live performance. Jones argues, drawing upon Peggy Phelan's conceptions of the representational force of live art, that the interplay between

²⁸⁶ Abramović's 2005 work *Seven Easy Pieces* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum inaugurated her interest in the idea of re-performance. In *Seven Easy Pieces*, she re-performed five performance works from the 1960s and '70s by different artists, one of her own works from '75, and one new work. The impetus behind the project was anger; Abramović was angry that younger artists were taking parts of '70s performance works and re-contextualizing those aesthetic elements with little or no formal acknowledgment of the artist who initially "worked so hard at the time" to create something new. *Seven Easy Pieces* was a performance but also a blueprint for the proper ethical and legal appropriation of other artists' works. All quoted material is transcribed from Abramović's explanation of *Seven Easy Pieces* taken from MoMA's multimedia, online archive of artists' works. "Marina Abramović. Seven Easy Pieces. 2005," *MoMA Multimedia* 28 July 2014 <<http://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/190/1998>>.

²⁸⁷ Amelia Jones, "'The Artist is Present': Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence," *TDR: The Drama Review* 55.1 (2001): 16-45; Rebecca Schneider, *Performance Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

documentation and live performance reveals a limit point of performance art: “The live act itself *destroys presence* (or makes the impossibility of its being secured evident).”²⁸⁸ Unlike Jones, my argument frames the contract as scripting the bodily conditions of a live performance.

Like Jones, I turn to museum presentations of Abramović’s performances. The visibility of Abramović’s work in museums reveals the importance such spaces increasingly have as hosting venues for performance art. The museum, likewise, foregrounds concerns of archiving, preservation, and value: the focus of this project. Rather than indicating the ways in which documentation destroys presence, the contract renders legible how a performer’s body was materially allowed to be present in the gallery space, scripted by the textual dictates of their contracts. Attention to the contract provides a means of questioning the particular conditions of how re-performance happens. Such a line of questioning implicates the artist, the performers, and museum within larger discourses of time, money, and labor.

The conditions of performers’ contracts provide a means to nuance questions of the compensation of cultural workers. What is the relationship between the art market and performers’ contracts with each institution? The contract illuminates a set of secondary concerns that engage the economic considerations driving the arts market and museums’ curation of performance. The presence of her work within each museum requires theorization of the interplay between visibility and economic support, commodification and ephemerality, and her own artistic prominence and the relatively anonymity of her contracted performers.²⁸⁹ As performance gains increasing visibility in visual arts contexts, the historic disparities between

²⁸⁸ In “The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction,” Phelan writes that, “In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, or voice, or ‘presence.’” It is this understanding of the metonymic force of the live act that Jones references when she expands upon her argument vis-à-vis presence and live performance to write, “The live act marks the body, understood as an expression of the self, as representational.” Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 150; Jones, “The Artist is Present,” 18.

²⁸⁹ I am indebted to conversations with Alison D’Amato on the presence of dance within visual arts contexts for clearly articulating these ideas.

performance and art economies are brought into relief.²⁹⁰ In Abramović's performances, however, such concerns are revealed through the gendered presentation and reception of her work.

The objectification of female bodies and continued disavowal of woman artists has long been a concern within performance studies and art history; indeed such discussions are often credited with launching the turn to the body as a medium with which to create art in the 1960s and '70s. An attention to the ways in which gender underwrites and informs contract—questions of agreement, acquiescence, consent, and will—have been well theorized in legal studies, contract theory, art history, and theatre studies.²⁹¹ Writing in the '80s, Carole Pateman argued the social contract is predicated upon its underlying sexual contract, which enforces female subjugation.²⁹² Similar to Pateman, Shakespearian scholar Kathryn Schwarz explores the heterosocial and patriarchal tenets of Western social contract. Schwarz argues that narratives of women acquiescing to heterosocial norms dramatizes female agency. She writes, "Feminine will becomes the means of social contract."²⁹³ Schwarz, focused on dramatizations of feminine acquiescence, explores the political implications of enacting consent. While Pateman and Schwarz's political stances differ, both bodies of work bear on my analysis of Abramović's performances, arguing as they both do that the grounding dictate of (social) contract is tied to the female subject. The material conditions of each performance I examine foreground the way

²⁹⁰ Shannon Jackson, "The Way We Perform Now," *Dance Research Journal* 46.3 (2014): 53-61.

²⁹¹ I turn to feminist secondary literature on contract theory, a mode of political theory most strongly framed within a Western context by thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as my interest in the contractual stipulations of largely anonymous performers re-performing Abramović's works renders legible a set of concerns around artistic labor and adequate compensation that implicate larger social inequities. See: Carole Pateman and Charles Miles, eds., *Contract and Domination* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Katherine Bartlett and Rosanne Kennedy, eds., *Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991).

²⁹² Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*.

²⁹³ Schwarz 3.

gender inequities are legitimized through presumed consensual contractual agreements.²⁹⁴

The contract, as an analytic, provides a means to historicize the gendered and economic stakes of Abramović's early works and re-frames how scholars might understand performance through contract. The chapter is divided into two interlinking sections. I begin with her recent retrospective at MoMA in 2010, the scope of the exhibit—the totality of her career to date—providing an initial contextualization of her work for a reader and engaging questions of contract and economy through an analysis of re-performers' contracts with the museum. I, in particular, analyze performers' employment contracts with MOCA at the museum's fundraising gala. The final section considers questions of contractual exchange more abstractly through *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange*, mentioned earlier. Performance allows for a theorization of the contract as a practice, and Abramović's performers' bodies bear the symbolic and material stakes of the conditions of contract. This chapter asks, how might performers' contracts and Abramović's contract-cum-scores be understood as textual performance remains, allowing for a new understanding of the artist's performance work to emerge?

The Contract and the Museum: Re-performance and the Economics of Display

Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present opened in the spring of 2010 at MoMA. The exhibit was the first solo retrospective for Abramović, and the largest exhibit the museum ever dedicated solely to the work of a performance artist.²⁹⁵ Curated by Klaus Biesenbach in collaboration with the artist, the exhibit narrated the scope of her four-decade long career.

Biesenbach and Abramović included six live performances in the retrospective, five re-

²⁹⁴ The structure of the contract imagines that both parties consent to the terms of said agreement.

²⁹⁵ The year before Abramović's retrospective the museum curated a smaller exhibition dedicated to the work of Taiwanese-born performance artist, Tehching Hsieh. The exhibition was the first in the Performance Exhibition Series. *The Artist is Present* was not technically part of this performance series, but Biesenbach curated both shows. He has noted in the press that the Hsieh show functioned as a dress-rehearsal of sorts for Abramović's retrospective, reassuring the museum that it was possible to 'effectively' curate performance work in a museum and that such an exhibition had an audience. Carol Kino, "A Rebel Form Gains Favor. Fights Ensue," *The New York Times*, March 10, 2010. 19 Aug. 2014 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/14/arts/design/14performance.html?pagewanted=all>>

performances by other performers of her earlier works and a new piece performed by Abramović. Promotional text for the retrospective reads, “In an endeavor to transmit the presence of the artist and make her historical performances accessible to a larger audience, the exhibition includes the first live re-performances of Abramović’s works by other people ever to be undertaken in a museum setting.”²⁹⁶ The significance of this shift—performance to *re*-performance—is grounded in the terms and implications of the performers’ contracts. Close to forty performers were hired by MoMA to re-perform the five works for the duration of the retrospective’s three-month run.

Much has been written about Abramović and re-performance; indeed she has become the paradigmatic artist to discuss when theorizing re-performance. While such scholarship questioned how live performance shift understandings of time, temporality, and embodied archives, the contractual grounding of re-performance for Abramović has been glossed over.²⁹⁷ When scholars have attended to the contract, however briefly, it has been read as a disavowal of the anti-capitalist politics often attached to mid-century performance experiments.²⁹⁸ Re-performance as contractual agreement engages labor and compensation but also consent, agency, and parity. This expanded context for the re-performances entangles labor, pay, workers’ safety, and the corporeal choreography of the re-performances.

The retrospective was housed on MOMA’s sixth floor. The first gallery was empty of objects or museum furniture, the gallery walls instead dominated by photographs and flat screen televisions playing Abramović’s early performances on loop. Several large projection screens hung from the ceiling, each featuring one of the five pieces from the *Rhythm Series*. Only as a museumgoer attempted to exit this first gallery would she encounter the retrospective’s first live

²⁹⁶ “Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present.” *Exhibitions, MoMA* 15 Jan. 2015
<<http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/965>>

²⁹⁷ See Amelia Jones’s essay on Abramović and Rebecca Schneider’s book-length work on re-performance, or reenactment, *Performance Remains*.

²⁹⁸ Schneider 3-6.

re-performance, *Imponderabilia*. Abramović and her then performance partner, Ulay, first performed the piece in 1977 at the Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna in Bologna, Italy. In it the two stood naked, facing each other in the frame of the gallery's only doorway. The particular contractual changes that were required to stage *Imponderabilia* in the museum were the most publicized, and created striking differences between the museum's re-performance and the '77 performance.²⁹⁹

The score, or written instructions, for *Imponderabilia* indicate roughly the parameters of the performance. It reads,

In a chosen space

Performance

We are standing naked in the main entrance of the Museum, facing each other. The public entering the Museum have to pass sideways through the small space between us. Each person passing has to choose which one of us to face.³⁰⁰

The score makes clear the ways in which *Imponderabilia* stages a corporeal politics, forcing viewers to question how one approaches—kinesthetically, visually, and mentally—the gendered, and sexualized spectacle of and imminent contact with naked bodies. Confronted with two naked strangers, viewers of the '77 performance had to decide whether they would enter the gallery, passing between the artists' bodies, and, if so, how they would position their own body in relationship to Abramović and Ulay's naked forms. *Imponderabilia* forced the public to become

²⁹⁹ I mention the well-publicized nature of the contractual changes to *Imponderabilia* because the exhibition files to *The Artist is Present* are sealed for fifteen years following the end of the show. My understanding, thus, of the specifics of performers' contracts has been based upon published pieces from MoMA performers describing their experiences. *I have been in conversation with Abigail Levine, a scholar and dance artist who performed at MoMA about her contract with the museum.* Abigail Levine, Gary Lai, and Rebecca Brooks, "Three Reperformers from 'Marina Abramović: the Artist is Present' Respond to the MOCA Gala Performances," *The Performance Club* 28 Nov. 2011, 24 May 2015 <<http://theperformanceclub.org/2011/11/three-reperformers-from-marina-abramovic-the-artist-is-present-respond-to-the-moca-gala-performances/>>.

³⁰⁰ Klaus Biesenbach, ed., *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010) 100.

co-participants in the work, whether by walking between the artists' bodies or deciding not to pass between them. The affective and kinesthetic sensations of *Imponderabilia* emerged across the two's bodies.

The contractual changes to the re-performance of *Imponderabilia* shifted the stakes of nude performance from social critique to objectification, a shifted politics, which emerged in accounts of how the public interacted with the work. The performers' contracts with MoMA, like the score, clarified the parameters of the museum's staging of *Imponderabilia*. The contractual stipulations that framed the re-performance of *Imponderabilia* were spatial and temporal. The spatial changes to the work, built into the performers' contracts, specifically positioned performers and spectators' bodies in relationship to the museum's architecture, while the temporal shifts created a pre-determined end point for the performance. Taken together, these contractual conditions shifted the criticality present in the '77 performance vis-à-vis kinesthetic discomfort, nudity, and re-mapping public spaces. The contractual additions to the parameters of the re-performance were rendered legible across performers' bodies, entangling the choreography of the piece with the banality of work-shifts and concerns of liability and safety.³⁰¹ The title of the performance, from the Latin, is the plural form of imponderables: those things, which dwell outside of quantifiable logic, which defy precise determination or evaluation. MoMA rendered the titular logic of the work—a kinesthetic orchestration of the gallery space, such that gallery visitors were forced into the *imponderabilia* of physical contact with naked strangers—thoroughly calculable, determined as it was by the liability codes of a non-profit, public institution and the contracts of each performer.

³⁰¹ The score and contract, both textual documents, are distinct from the embodied, time-based performances of *Imponderabilia*, for all that they provide *context* for the performance. I return, at the end of the chapter, to this dyad between text and embodiment, contract and performance; what interests me in this section is the way the textual conditions of both documents were legible *within* the re-performance and the political implications of translating such contractual conditions onto performers' bodies at MoMA.

A wall text adjacent to the re-performance of *Imponderabilia* read, “The doorway has been widened due to museum regulations,” allowing museumgoers to slip between the two performers without touching either’s body, not possible in the ’77 performance.³⁰² Performers’ contracts indicated how far apart they were to stand, further ensuring that the widened doorway could accommodate visitors’ unobstructed passageway.³⁰³ An additional entryway into and out of the gallery was also constructed, making it possible for the public to completely avoid the piece. In the ’77 iteration of *Imponderabilia*, Abramović and Ulay stood in the only doorway into the Galleria, leaving visitors no choice but to enter by passing between them.³⁰⁴ The spatial shifts to the work at MoMA made it possible for museumgoers to avoid physically confronting either performer, entering or exiting the gallery through the unobstructed door. Those who did participate in the performance did so willingly. Performers’ contracts with the museum, thus, delimited performers and museumgoers’ contact, conditioning a scenario in which it was possible to look and not touch.

Imponderabilia, like many of Abramović’s performances, was imagined as temporally open-ended. Her performance scores often created situations that demanded a viewer’s intervention to end the work. When first performed in Bologna, public nudity was illegal, and a subscript to the score notes that, “The performance was interrupted and stopped by the police.”³⁰⁵

Performers’ contracts with MoMA avoided the critical ambiguity built into *Imponderabilia*, and,

³⁰² Abigail Levine, “Marina Abramović’s Time: *The Artist is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art,” *e-misférica* 7.2 (2010): online.

³⁰³ These changes were, in part, meant to protect performers from injury or assault. Similarly, gallery docents were instructed to ask museumgoers to carry purses and bags such that they would not knock into the performers’ genitals. During a public talk-back with Abramović, Biesenbach, and the re-performers, (hosted by MoMA in their Titus Theatre following the end of the retrospective) several performers who performed *Imponderabilia* noted that over the course of the exhibit they stood closer together, in violation of the museum’s regulations. Their aim was to more closely replicate the conditions of corporeal discomfort present, they imagined, in the 1977 performance. *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present, The Legacy of Performance Art*. MoMA, Titus Theatre 1, 2 June 2010. Ti 1:50 2010-17D

³⁰⁴ Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 140.

³⁰⁵ Biesenbach 100.

instead, clearly delimited the amount of time performers could perform, always already pre-determining the way in which the piece would end. Performers of *Imponderabilia* could only work for seventy-five minutes at a time before being replaced by a new set of performers: the end of a performance was the end of a performer's shift.³⁰⁶ Coincidentally, the length of the '77 and '10 iterations of *Imponderabilia* were almost equivalent.³⁰⁷ While the literal duration of *Imponderabilia* changed only slightly, the stakes of what the steady passing of time meant within MoMA's re-performance radically shifted. The initial performance staged legal censure, creating in the possibility and, eventual, act of censure, a discussion around decency, profanity, nudity, and the ability of art to challenge such ideas. The staging of censure central to the '77 performance was neutralized by the stipulations of performers' contracts.

The performers' bodies were transformed, rather, into work-shifts, corporeal time clocks against which a viewer might note the passing of seventy-five minute increments. Such a link between the body and contract is not new to contract theory. Karl Marx theorized one such iteration of the link between the body and the contract through the idea of labor-time. Labor-time argues that a laborer, within the contract, becomes substituted for the time of his labor, "Time is everything, man is nothing; he is at most an incarnation of time."³⁰⁸ Labor-time is calculated, ensuring that a worker can be contractually enlisted to work for a certain number of hours on the understanding that their labor will produce a certain number of commodities. Time becomes a quantifiable object such that it can be understood as "the employer's money."³⁰⁹ The contract is a means of substituting the laboring subject for a determined length of time meant to produce a

³⁰⁶ Abigail Levine, "Being a Thing: the Work of Performing in the Museum," *Women & Performance: a Journal of Feminist Theory* (2013): 1.

³⁰⁷ *Imponderabilia* was the only one of the five re-performances in which performers' seventy five minute shifts roughly corresponded to the duration of a piece's previous performance.

³⁰⁸ Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.) 58-59; and George Lukás, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971) 89-90.

³⁰⁹ E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Essays on Social History*, eds. M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974) 39-77.

commodity; the laborer is an *incarnation of time*. The performers' contracts translated their bodies into time, or, more particularly, the passage *of* time. MoMA re-scripted *Imponderabilia's* opened-endedness into a commodity. Time, after all, is money, and the textual stipulations of the performers' contracts reveal how their *bodies* staged their labor-time, rendering it tangible in their fleshy, naked presence. They became time-commodities.

Jones has questioned why museums invariably seem to objectify performance, writing, "What are we to do with the fact, that, when the art world and its corollary discourses...embrace performance they seem inevitably to turn live acts into objects?"³¹⁰ Her question and my own analysis of the retrospective renders legible the importance of display and visibility as opposed to the corporeal or kinesthetic within museums. Here I shift to examine how the visual logic of the retrospective became the frame through which *Imponderabilia* was understood. Taken together, these examples—the alignment of the re-performers with the ephemera in the retrospective and the specific language of reviews of the exhibit—reveal the effects contractual changes to the re-performance of *Imponderabilia* had upon its political efficacy. More urgently, though, these changes alert us to the ways in which performers' bodies are interpolated by visual logics and MoMA's particular history.

Biesenbach described the retrospective as preserving Abramović's past works and exhibiting her past work to a public in the present.³¹¹ The sixth-floor galleries of the retrospective presented a chronology of the artist's works, "revealing different modes of representing, documenting, and exhibiting her ephemeral, time-based, and media-based works."³¹² Biesenbach explained his decision to include live re-performance by noting the deficits of the show's

³¹⁰ Amelia Jones, "Temporal Anxiety/'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," in *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance, and the Persistence of Being*, eds. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012) 198.

³¹¹ *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present, The Legacy of Performance Art*.

³¹² "Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present."

ephemera, “When you look at photography from the 1970s, you know that the world [was not black and white but rather] had color.”³¹³ Because of these limitations, the museum included live performance. Each re-performance was placed next to video documentation of Abramović or Abramović and Ulay performing the work in question. Didactics explained the ‘original’ context of each piece, as well as the changes that were made for the retrospective.³¹⁴ The re-performers, thus, stood in for the displaced bodies of Abramović and Ulay.

The archive of reviews and the exhibition catalogue reveal a troubling gendered politics. Reviewing the show for *The Washington Post*, art critic Blake Gopnik viewed the re-performances as “fragments of reality that have been safely commodified and artsied up.”³¹⁵ His words performed an almost visceral linguistic violence upon the bodies of the re-performers, just so many fragmentary pieces of Abramović and Ulay’s bodies-of-origin. A review written by art historian Sven Spieker for *Art Margins* derides the re-performances again through the anonymous bodies of the actors and dancers hired to present the works. Verging into sensationalism, Spieker notes, in relationship to *Imponderabilia*, accounts of “the occasional erections allegedly sported by visitors and performers alike.”³¹⁶ Various describing the performers as “gorgeous professionals,” “firm young bodies,” and “lithe women,” both Gopnik and Spieker’s critiqued MoMA’s changes to *Imponderabilia* through the bodies of the re-performers, bodies at once not ‘real’ enough and too sexually titillating. Most reviews of the show continually returned to the bodies of the female performers. If the focus on women’s bodies in the reviews seems an ironic art historical return to the ways in which naked women are

³¹³ Marina Abramović: *The Artist is Present, The Legacy of Performance Art*.

³¹⁴ Levine, “Marina Abramović’s Time.”

³¹⁵ Blake Gopnik, “Blake Gopnik on 'Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present,' Museum of Modern Art,” *The Washington Post* 18 April 2010, 21 Aug. 2014 <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2010/04/16/ST2010041603818.html?sid=ST2010041603818>>.

³¹⁶ Sven Spieker, “The Artist is Present: Marina Abramović at MoMA (Review Article),” *Art Margins* 29 May 2010, 21 Aug. 2014 <<http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/2-articles/582-artist-present-marina-abramovic-moma-review-article>>.

allowed to be within art museum spaces, the one photo of performers' training included in the catalogue likewise reiterated a certain gendered framing of women's bodies grounded in museal memory.³¹⁷ The training was a days long retreat with the artist, in which the group discussed and practiced a variety of simple, meditative exercises.³¹⁸ The photograph shows eight performers, all naked, wading into a river. Seven of the figures in the photo are women; only one of the male performers, his body mostly obscured by a fellow female performer, is included in the frame. The photograph formally returns a viewer to the works of painters like Paul Cézanne, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, or Feliz Vallotton and legacies of visibility and display that objectify women's bodies. The photo framed the physical expertise required of the trained dancers and performance artists through the visual lexicon of the female nude. This archive of the exhibition performs a sexualized objectification of the re-performers, most particularly the women.

Performers' bodies were no longer understood as socially prescribed and phenomenologically charged matrixes through which to contemplate the potentiality of live performance. Rather, they were placed in comparison to Abramović's body, which was evoked as barometer against which to measure the fidelity of the re-performance. Evocations of Abramović's body shifted the discourse surrounding the live performances from that of bodily experimentation or endurance to that of visual accuracy or authenticity. The notion that the re-performances were somehow less real became a convenient way to dismiss the re-performances as not doing anything. Such a dismissal disavows the particular politics of Abramović's works re-imagined within the context of MoMA: at once the importance of an institution whose tenure has been fraught by masculinist curatorial practices devoting an entire retrospective to a female artist and the politics of exhibiting time-based works from the '70s, which (although Abramović

³¹⁷ Biesenbach 21.

³¹⁸ Judith Thurman, "Walking Through Walls: Marina Abramović's performance art," *The New Yorker* 8 March 2010, 27 Aug. 2014 <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/03/08/walking-through-walls>>.

never aligned *herself* with these politics) partly emerged as a critique of museum spaces and practices.³¹⁹ The idea that the re-performances might impact a viewer was disavowed through the language of sexual objectification.³²⁰

These examples underscore the visual logic of the retrospective and the objectification of re-performers' bodies. This visual logic returns us to performers' contractual conditions, which deemphasized the critical kinesthetic choreography of the '77 performance. Analyzing the gendered objectification of the exhibit through the re-performance of *Imponderabilia* reveals the ways in which gendered inequities become legitimated through presumed consensual contractual agreements.³²¹ To assert, however, the corrosive affects of the performers' contracts largely ignores the performers' own agency (and perhaps culpability) within the retrospective. While performers' contractual conditions did certain things to the score of *Imponderabilia*, setting in motion of chain of consequences for the re-performance, the performances themselves also *did* something. The press's focus on the young, (apparently) white, female body was couched as a search for Abramović's own past body within the present of the re-performances; it was a search with particular gendered, racialized, and ageist implications.

To attend to performers' agency is to acknowledge the ability of the re-performance to refute the logic of historical authenticity, which underwrote the retrospective. The notion, in other words, that the retrospective was presenting an accurate and representative view of Abramović's career and performance works was complicated by who performed *Imponderabilia*.

Staging certain iterations of *Imponderabilia* with two men, two woman, or artists of color—all

³¹⁹ See the emergence of the Guerrilla Girls as a feminist critique of MoMA's curatorial practices. Guerrilla Girls, *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995) 13.

³²⁰ For all that the prevailing popular discourse surrounding the exhibition minimized and dismissed the labor of the hired performers, the selection of Abramović and particular pieces by her, nonetheless, did something. I return to the efficacy of the re-performances at the end of this section.

³²¹ Indeed, the museum, as represented by Biesenbach, was upset by the continued focus on the performers' nudity by members of the press. Derisively discussing the press coverage of the exhibit, Biesenbach said, "All the press seemed to focus on was the nakedness." *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present, The Legacy of Performance Art*.

three variations deviating from the ‘authenticity’ of Abramović and Ulay’s ’77 performance—asks one to imagine the re-performance as a mode of critical address. These different variations on the ’77 performance critiqued its white, heteronormative politics, proposing embodied variations on the types of subjects that could stage the piece. Affective responses of discomfort or titillation become nuanced in relationship to same-sex couples, artists of color, and older performers. Considerations of race rarely enter into the discourse surrounding Abramović’s practice—her white body seemingly always imagined as ‘unraced’ by critics. MoMA’s re-performances asked viewers to retroactively understand *Imponderabilia* as staging critical questions of race, gender, sexuality, and age. In the literal choreography of orientating one’s body towards one performer or another, the re-performance of *Imponderabilia* offered an expansion of the piece’s corporeal politics. These variations acknowledged that the ‘re’ of re-performance is hardly a guarantor of ‘authenticity,’ but rather a chance to retroactively redress the implications of an historical performance piece.

MoMA’s contractual stipulations staged a precarious balance between the performers’ bodies as a central and critical medium of *Imponderabilia* and their bodies as becoming object—or objectified. The precarious shift from embodiment to objectification renders legible the interplay between visibility and economic support, commodification and contractual labor present when performance is presented in visual art spaces. The term ‘precarious’ finds traction in relationship to theories of employment and labor: the decline of standard employment contracts and the increasing prevalence of precarious labor. Precarious labor, theorized across political theory and sociology, describes work that is “risky or hazardous,” lacks “security or stability,” and is most often performed by women.³²² Performance work, like service sector work often framed as precarious, occupies periphery spaces within employment landscapes; indeed,

³²² Leah F. Vosko, Martha MacDonald and Iain Campbell, *Gender and the Contours of Precarious Employment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) 1.

performance has often exactly occupied such peripheral spaces as a political stance against normative employment practices.

Performance and service sector work are both part of a larger economic landscape increasingly regulated by immaterial labor. Immaterial labor, following Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, is labor that produces immaterial products like social relationships, affective states, modes of communication, images, or ideas.³²³ Certainly not all precarious labor is immaterial, nor is all immaterial labor precarious, but the type of performance labor I am discussing falls within the center of a Venn diagram of both. Paolo Virno describes immaterial labor as akin to performance; both, he argues, are acts of production with no material product.³²⁴ He continues that immaterial labor is performative, and performance labor doubles-down on that assertion. Hardt, Negri, and Virno, amongst others, have argued that immaterial labor's qualities—"communicative, informational, image-oriented"—are "becoming hegemonic and transforming other labor processes."³²⁵ Immaterial labor and precarious employment offers scholars of performance an opportunity to engage the dyadic exchange between textual contract and live performance, foregrounding questions of labor, shifting employment conditions, and the ways in which insecure employment is most often a concern of women.³²⁶

Existing precisely in the precarious space between adequate economic compensation and the assertion that intangible factors like creative growth or personal satisfaction are compensation enough, performers are, as dance scholar Randy Martin asserts, "the ideal laborers

³²³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

³²⁴ Paolo Virno, "Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus," *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, eds. Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 13–37; *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004).

³²⁵ Michael Hardt, "Immaterial Labor and Artistic Production," *Rethinking Marxism* 17.2 (2006): 176.

³²⁶ Judy Fudge and Rosemary Owens, *Precarious Work, Women, and the New Economy: the Challenge to Legal Norms* (Oxford and Portland, OR: Hart Publishing, 2006) 1; Vosko, et al, 1.

in an idealized creative economy.³²⁷ It is an assertion born out by fellow dance scholars Mark Franko and André Lepecki. Referencing Abramović's re-performances at MoMA and MOCA, the two frame contemporary dancers and performance artists as both "privileged worker[s] for all sorts of [museum] exhibitions...[and] the most usable and expendable bodies available for work whenever 'performance' needs to be activated."³²⁸ The dancer-cum-performance artist has become the paradigmatic hyper-flexible cultural worker, a 'translator' of a myriad of different aesthetic forms, akin to currency.³²⁹ The dichotomy Franko and Lepecki highlight is the tension between the theoretical frame of immaterial labor and the embodied effects framed by the figure of the dancer.

Re-framed through performers' contracts with MoMA—what I have been terming the textual remains of the museum's re-performances—*Imponderabilia* is not rendered stable through an attention to its documentation, but rather brought into precarious imbalance. Performers' employment contracts with MoMA were short-term, a little over three months, lacked the benefits packages associated with standard employment relationships (or SER), and required performers to be flexible.³³⁰ Performers were initially offered a contract most found

³²⁷ Randy Martin, "A Precarious Dance, a Derivative Sociality," *TDR: The Drama Review* 56.4 (2012): 66.

³²⁸ Mark Franko and André Lepecki, "Editor's Note: Dance in the Museum," *Dance Research Journal* 46.3 (2014): 2.

³²⁹ As early as 1968, Bruce Nauman began two of "his...long-duration scores with the apparently neutral line 'hire a dancer.'" The dancer, for Nauman, as the continuation of his score reveals, represents a professionally trained physical body, able to ape anonymity, allowing the conceptual framework of the artist's score to rise to the fore (as opposed to the distractingly, unique body and presence of the performer). Throughout each score, Nauman returns to concerns of money and compensation; the score notes that, "If it is not possible to finance a dancer for the whole of the exhibition period a week will be satisfactory, but no less." While the dancer represents the ideal physically trained body, she also presents an economic challenge to the successful execution of Nauman's score. Indeed, the score, originally published in an exhibition catalogue by the Walker Arts Center, includes the note, scrawled in pencil below the typewritten text, "never carried out." The dancer, thus, is a troubled figure. Able to physically enact an artist's conceptual vision, she also requires payment lessening her usefulness. Robert C. Morgan, ed., *Bruce Nauman* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002) 319; Franko and Lepecki 2; Neal David Benezra and Joan Simon, eds., *Bruce Nauman: Exhibition Catalogue and Catalogue Raisonné* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1994) 133.

³³⁰ Levine, *Lai, and Brooks*, "Three Reperformers."

untenable and particularly egregious coming from an institution like MoMA, whose operating budget is on par with major opera houses and Broadway theaters, where employers are required to pay their labor force union wages.³³¹ The initial contract would have paid \$50 for a two and a half hour performance shift, included no monetary compensation for prep time or the time between shifts, and no workman's compensation, troubling for workers whose physical training and ability to use their bodies in virtuosic ways had secured them the job in the first place. While the performers did negotiate for a slight increase in pay and a change in employment status to "temporary employee," which assured them workman's compensation in the event of injury. Such contractual changes were only approved by the museum, however, after two performers fainted during rehearsal, making clear "the difficulty and risk" of the durational work.³³² The economic viability and visibility of performance within visual arts spheres like MoMA reveals how performers' contracts condition not only the aesthetics of a performance but render legible their disposability. Such contractual dismissals were rendered starkly legible across the naked bodies of the re-performers, framing the gallery's doorway, their posed figures paradoxically inviting and regulating contact. The contractual stipulations ensured that the performers were perceived not as bodies taking up space but as bodies one could gaze at from a safe remove, foregrounding the performers as *visual objects*.

The larger economic imperatives of MoMA impact the way re-performance, as a contractual agreement is understood. The context for analyzing the re-performances of *Imponderabilia* is not simply the museum's sixth floor galleries, but also the broader landscape of the museum's curatorial legacies, its mandate, and recent adoption of corporate business

³³¹ The museum's operating budget for 2008-09 fiscal year (the year directly preceding Abramović's retrospective) was \$160 million. Phillip Boroff, "Museum of Modern Art's Lowry Earned \$1.32 Million in 2008-2009," *Bloomberg News* 10 Aug. 2009, 24 May 2015 <<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=ag20MDxuqAko>>.

³³² Levine, et al "Three Reperformers."

models. While performance works dependent upon the labor of a live performer are not new to museum spaces, the past decade has seen an increased presence of such works in museum spaces.³³³ Curating performance, as MoMA did, directly in gallery spaces reveals a shifted valuation of performance; not simply an event to draw visitors to a museum, performance is a form that demands curatorial attention.

The retrospective emerged out of the museum's Department of Media and Performance Art. Founded in 2006, the department collects time-based works, which include, not only performance art pieces like Abramović's work, but also "moving images, film installations, video, performance, [and] motion- and sound-based works."³³⁴ The department focuses on collecting works from the 1960s to the present. The department is one shift MoMA's current artistic direction, Glenn Lowry, has implemented. Lowry, arriving in 1995, sought to change perceptions of the museum through an expansion of the type of art it acquires and exhibits.³³⁵ In particular, the museum's legacy from the seventies and eighties defines popular perceptions. Calvin Tompkins writes, "In the seventies and eighties, they [art critics] complained that the

³³³ There is historical precedent within modern and contemporary art museums for curating the work of performance art and dance artists, as well as a 19th century history, in which performers were presented at World's Fairs and expositions. Museums, including MOCA, the Guggenheim, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Walker Arts Center, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Getty and their Research Center, and the Hammer Museum have all curated performance works in recent years. Other chapters engage both of these histories in more depth.

³³⁴ "Media and Performance Art," *MoMA* 25 May, 2015

<<http://www.moma.org/explore/collection/media>>.

³³⁵ MoMA's mandate evolved, from the museum's opening in 1929, to focus on the acquisition, preservation, and exhibition of *modern* art, a genre and periodization most particularly associated with the visual arts and with European and US works dating from the *fin de siècle* to the mid-20th century. The museum's initial mandate, under the directorship of Alfred Barr, framed 'modern' art as more akin to how 'contemporary' art is often described: current, being made now, by still living artists. Barr argued modern art was art of the moment, or the very recent past, and included the contributions of filmmakers, photographers, choreographers, architects, designers, as well as visual artists. This early legacy, which was invested (quite literally) in art being made in the now and inclusive of performance forms, has been etched over by the museum's more recent curatorial pasts. Richard Meyer, *What was Contemporary Art?* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013) 26.

museum's view of modern art was too narrow."³³⁶ While critics complained about the museum's chronology, so to did feminist activists. The feminist art activist collective, Guerrilla Girls, formed in 1985 in response to the museum's exhibit *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*. The exhibit, the inaugural event in the museum's recently re-modeled and expanded building, was advertised as an "up-to-the minute summary of the most significant contemporary art in the world."³³⁷ The exhibit, which featured works by 169 artists, included only thirteen women and no artists of color. Its curator, Kynaston McShine, stated, "any artist who wasn't in the show should rethink 'his' career."³³⁸ Incensed by the sexist and racist curatorial politics and rhetoric of the show, the Guerrilla Girls picketed the museum, decrying the increasingly exclusionary art politics of the early '80s. While *The Artist is Present* represented an expansion in curatorial focus for MoMA, entire floors are still organized more or less chronologically and installed solely with object-based art. The department has proved to be, not only, an extension of the museum's commitment to a more critical engagement with modernist discourse and contemporary art practices but also economically sustainable. The relatively low cost of acquiring film works or the ephemera that documents a performance event is further augmented by the record profits the museum earned from shows like *The Artist is Present* or the more recent, and far less favorably reviewed, *Björk*. Performance art, like the museum's film series, *The Artist is Present* argued, is a central concern of 20th century art narratives, and, as the profit margins for the exhibition indicated, a concern with commercial viability.

If Lowry has shifted and expanded the museum's mandate, allowing for more diverse types of art and artists to be featured at the museum, his tenure has not been without its critics.

³³⁶ Calvin Tompkins, "I Remember MoMA," *The New Yorker*, 25 Sep. 2006, 128.

³³⁷ Guerrilla Girls 13.

³³⁸ Guerrilla Girls 13.

Under Lowry's leadership, the cost of visiting the museum has also increased dramatically. In 2004, the cost of general admission jumped from \$12 to \$20.³³⁹ It now hovers at \$25.³⁴⁰ His pragmatic leadership and corporate management style have angered many. "Lowry's main achievement," Tompkins writes, "has been 'to stifle a debate about the transformation of what was once a chaotically creative institution into a well-oiled business-model museum,' a museum whose interests are now fixed on 'the needs of the tourists and the trustees.'"³⁴¹ Tompkins, however, is not unaware of the shifted tenor of the museum's representational politics. The curatorial practices that underwrote the Guerilla Girls' activism were embedded within the museum's earlier history of curatorial "feudal barons," a half-dozen male curators who set the museum's artistic agenda for decades.³⁴² To become corporate, then, signals a complex matrix of representational practices and politics. On the one hand, the museum has been derided for shifting the mandate of a modern art museum from preserving and exhibiting works of historical import to that of art-as-entertainment.³⁴³ On the other hand, the museum's spatial expansion, increasing investment in contemporary works, and the break-down of the power of the curatorial department meant exhibits like *The Artist is Present* became possible: a single-artist show dedicated to a female artist working within performance.

Abramović's re-performances reveal the tension between the assumed equality of a

³³⁹ Boroff, "Lowry Earned \$1.32 Million."

³⁴⁰ See for example work by artist-activist, Filip Noterdaeme. His Homeless Museum of Art (HoMu) based in New York lacks a space and uses interventionist performances to refract the city's economic disparities through the rising admission cost and real estate grabs of NY museums. MoMA is one of his prim targets.

³⁴¹ Tompkins 128.

³⁴² Tompkins 131.

³⁴³ The recent and poorly reviewed retrospective on Icelandic singer Bröjk, curated by *Biesenbach*, has galvanized criticism that MoMA's increasing interest in performance is less invested in art historical lineages or curatorial rigor and more in economic bottom-lines fueled by the allure of celebrity artists and donors. Eric Ducker, "Has it Come to This?: A Rational Conversation About Music in Museums," *The Record: Music News from NPR* 4 May 2015, 25 May, 2015

<<http://www.npr.org/sections/therecord/2015/05/04/404148991/has-it-come-to-this-a-rational-conversation-about-music-in-museums>>.

contract and the power dynamics that condition the actual “lived experience” of a contract.³⁴⁴ 2010 was a banner year for MoMA; it was the museum’s most well attended year to that point in time, with 3.09 million visitors. *The Artist is Present* was the third most well attended exhibit of the year, beat out only by exhibits on Monet’s water lilies and Tim Burton’s career.³⁴⁵ As major museums, like MoMA, adopt corporate-model of management, it is imperative to engage performance through the codes of that model, namely employment contracts. To imagine the retrospective’s re-performances as a kind of contract, is to add a different discursive dimension to the ways in which embodied forms of performance become channeled through networks of curatorial practices, institutional codes, labor stipulations, and the emerged model of corporate arts economies. *The Artist is Present* reveals the entanglement of re-performance, contractual labor, arts economies, and the interpolating force of visual logics and ideas of display.

To shift from MoMA’s retrospective to the fundraising gala MOCA held in the fall of 2011 is to frame questions of performance and contract, arts economies and museum spaces through the opulent economics of a museum gala. On November 12, 2011, some 750 guests poured into a large white tent erected in front of MOCA; guests were there for the museum’s annual fundraisers’ gala, which Abramović had curated. For several years, MOCA has invited prominent artists to stage the events.³⁴⁶ The galas, couched in the veneer of an art exhibition, were a pastiche of art world celebrity, Hollywood elite, and California politicians. I and some hundred other performers were hired to perform at the gala. We, like the performers at MoMA less than a year earlier, were under contract with the museum to perform Abramović’s work.

In many ways, MOCA was a more ready fit for Abramović’s performance work than

³⁴⁴ Sean Metzger, “Ripples in the Seascape: the Cuba Commission Report and the Idea of Freedom,” *Afro-Hispanic Review* 27.1 (Spring 2008): 107.

³⁴⁵ Erica Orden, “MoMA Attendance Hits Record High,” *The Wall Street Journal* 29 June 2010, 1 Nov. 2014 < <http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703964104575335301840480246>>.

³⁴⁶ In 2009 Lady Gaga, accompanied by dancers from the Bolshoi, performed at the gala, and in 2010 Doug Aitken designed the show.

MoMA. Since its founding in '79, the museum has acquired and displayed contemporary art, particularly focused on the work of challenging artists. An elusive descriptor, Abramović's durational and often physically painful scores might certainly be described as challenging to perform and watch. MoMA, founded in '29, has a reputation as a far more conservative institution than MOCA and is some fifty years older than the LA-based museum. MoMA was also, in 2009 (the fiscal year preceding their curation of *The Artist is Present*) the seventh-largest museum in the US.³⁴⁷ MOCA, conversely, by fall of 2011 was in the midst of a severe budget crisis.³⁴⁸ Jeffrey Deitch, MOCA's then artistic director, was hired in 2010 to manage the museum's almost chronic underfunding.³⁴⁹ Deitch's decision to invite Abramović to curate the evening was certainly not unconnected to *The Artist is Present*, and reads as nothing so much as MOCA wishing to cash-in, literally, on the artist's cache.³⁵⁰ The markedly different contexts of each event reveal the ways in which a contractual analysis of performance is never simply about the stipulations of a contract and the score of a performance. The context of our performances illuminates how contractual stipulations and performance choreographies find political traction when enacted in particular spaces. Contracts are imagined as predicated upon mutual assent and consent; framing the gala through our contracts exposes the inequities, both economic and bodily, which our performances affirmed.³⁵¹ The larger context within which we performed—the gala but also the nearby Occupy movement—makes prescient the need to think about our performances as wage labor, in service of an arts economy often predicated upon inequality.³⁵²

I focus on *Nude with Skeleton*, focalizing the concerns of economic disparity through the

³⁴⁷ These rankings are based off of museums' annual operating budgets. Boroff, "Lowry earned \$1.32 million."

³⁴⁸ Mike Boehm, "L.A.'s MOCA in Deep Financial Trouble," *The Los Angeles Times* 19 Nov. 2008, 25 May 2015 <<http://articles.latimes.com/2008/nov/19/entertainment/et-mocal19>>.

³⁴⁹ Randy Kennedy, "Museum Role Fits a Former Art Dealer," *The New York Times* 30 June 2010, 25 May 2015 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/04/arts/design/04deitch.html?_r=0>.

³⁵⁰ Orden, "MoMA Attendance."

³⁵¹ Metzger, "Ripples," 105-121.

³⁵² Levine, ""Being a Thing."

figure of the naked female performer. This marks a methodological shift in the chapter, as I theorize the interplay between contract and performance through my own embodied experience, offering a counter-point to my reliance on descriptions of MoMA's re-performances. While the act of writing about performance is necessarily one of translation, my experience shifts my performance analysis from the predominately visual to the corporeal. I can attest to the pain of performing *Nude with Skeleton*, the periods of boredom when my attention drifted, the physical weight of the skeleton, and the overwhelming exhaustion I felt upon completing the work.

Abramović's intention for the event, which she discussed with us during our rehearsal, was to transform the typically entertaining space of a museum gala into one of discomfort for the guests. The gala included close to a hundred performers. Approximately eighty performers crotched beneath the gala's dinning tables, only their heads visible: a perverse parody of floral centerpieces entitled *Better than Flowers*. Those of us performing *Nude with Skeleton* lay flat on our backs, heads turned to one side atop large, shiny, white, rotating, circular turntables placed in the center of each larger circular VIP table. A life-size plastic skeleton lay atop each of our bodies. We were instructed not to move, to lie in as near to stillness as possible. We were instructed not to speak to the guests, or interact with them in any way beyond our gaze. The guests were instructed not to talk to us, feed us food or drink, or harass us in any way. (They were free to discuss and take photos of us.) Another twenty performers with vocal training joined Abramović on the runway-like stage that bisected the gala tent, and recited lines from her manifesto, "An Artist's Life," during dinner. The aim was to stage a gala were the guests might feel the uncomfortable, voyeuristic power of their own gaze as the "art" stared back.³⁵³

I see myself centered in the frame of a photo, one of many taken during the gala by the press core. The photo is darkly lit, and only my body, illuminated by the stark white lazy Susan

³⁵³ Shanks 109.

on which I lay, is clearly visible. The lighting and composition of the photo is dramatic; it is as though the plastic skeleton and I are pulsating with a barely contained bioluminescence. Expanding outwards from my body is the rest of the dining table: the picked-over remains of the main course, steak, litter the modernist, square dinner plates. The guests seated around the table are barely visible; only the white of their lab coats glow in the photo.³⁵⁴ The photo stages the symbolic resonances of my body and the skeleton: my flesh and the smooth bones of the skeleton connoting mortality.³⁵⁵ The portions of steak on most diners' plates, streaks of the meat's juices swirled across the white china, literalize consumption and the opulent maintenance of life. Between us, we stage a dramatization of *memento mori*: the meal representing, if death, also the ability to sustain life; the skeleton connoting death; and the duration of the gala marking the passage of time. To frame this tableaux through my contractual compensation and the ticket price of each seat is to overlay the performance's symbolic connotations of life and death with our vastly different economic positions.

Our participation in the gala literalized, in a particularly theatrical way, the interchangeability of, "money and the human body," framing Abramović's durational performance piece as an economic agreement between a hosting institution and performer.³⁵⁶ We were guaranteed a blanket wage of \$100 for approximately twenty hours of work: the two hour audition process, a full day of rehearsal on Friday, and then another full day of rehearsal leading into the performance on Saturday.³⁵⁷ Our monetary compensation worked out to approximately

³⁵⁴ As guests entered the gala tent, hired assistants handed out white lab coats. Guests were instructed by Abramović to keep their coats on throughout the gala. It was an attempt, on her part, to costume the guests as though they were co-experiments within the gala performance as well as cover up their expensive clothing and jewelry, creating an egalitarian space.

³⁵⁵ *Nude with Skeleton* was inspired by cultural references as distinct as Tibetan Buddhist rituals in which monks sleep with human remains to acquaint themselves with death, to the European visual art tradition of *memento mori*.

³⁵⁶ O'Dell 46.

³⁵⁷ Our pay-rate is, of course, one frame for understanding the valuation of our participation. When considering why a performer might choose to participate in a performance, wages are not necessarily the

five dollars an hour, three dollars below the 2011 California state minimum wage.³⁵⁸ Guests paid at least \$2,500 to attend the gala; those seated around my VIP table paid either \$100,000 to reserve the table's full twenty-four seats or \$10,000 for an individual ticket.³⁵⁹ Many performers explained their desire to participate as wishing to experience the physical sensation of performing Abramović's works; others described a more political agenda for their participation—we were the 99% quite literally “looking back” at the 1%. In the fall of 2011, the language of the Occupy Wall Street movement was on the minds of many performers. Such justifications both acknowledged critiques of the gross economic disparity between the performers and guests at the gala, yet also acknowledged our agency as performers to choose to perform, to choose to place our bodies within a lopsided economy of gazing and being gazed at.

Concerns with the economic optics of the gala are not only retroactively staged in my writing. Such concerns circulated in the days leading up to the event, publically voiced by prominent artists like choreographer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer. Rainer, two days before the gala, penned an open letter to Deitch. In the letter, she charged that Abramović and MOCA's score for the evening was exploitative of the performers.³⁶⁰ Rainer compared the gala's performance score unfavorably to *Saló, or the 120 Days of Sodom*, Italian director Pier Paolo

primary or deciding factor. Certainly working with Abramović, one of the most well-known and influential performance artists still living and creating work, was not without value. Indeed many of us expressed reservations about the disquieting economic politics of the event, but, nonetheless, decided to participate based upon the imagined affective and kinesthetic value of performing Abramović's works. Indeed, this chapter and my essay for the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* iterate the continued value of my participation in the gala. To simply frame our performances as an incredible opportunity, however, is to ignore what our performances did.

³⁵⁸ We were also given a yearlong membership to MOCA, valued at seventy-five dollars; adding the cost of the membership into our wage, our hourly pay was seventy-five cents over minimum wage “Minimum Wage Laws in the States - January 1, 2012,” *Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor* 26 July 2012 <<http://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/america.htm#California>>.

³⁵⁹ “MOCA Announces MOCA Gala,” *Art Now Magazine* Sep. 2011, 15 Mar. 2012

<http://www.artnowmag.com/Magazine/News/2011/Sep/News_Sep0611.html>; Shanks 114.

³⁶⁰ Rainer's information about the event came from Los Angeles based dancer and choreographer Sara Wookey who voiced her concerns to Rainer after auditioning for the gala. Wookey was offered a job as one of the re-performers of *Nude with Skeleton*, but declined.

Pasolini's controversial 1975 film. *Saló*, based upon the Marquis de Sade's book *The 120 Days of Sodom*, dealt with issues of fascism, economic disparities, and sexual depravity and exploitation. The film includes numerous scenes in which eighteen young men and women (often naked in the film) are force fed, mutilated, and otherwise tortured for the amusement of the film's four wealthy and corrupt fascists. Rainer, whose information about the gala came from a dancer and choreographer who auditioned for the event but was angered by Abramović's proposal for the evening, imagined the gala's optics would unfavorably and grotesquely parallel *Saló*.³⁶¹ "Ms. Abramović," Rainer wrote, "[displayed] obliviousness to differences in context and some of the implications of transposing her own...performances to the bodies of others. An exhibition is one thing . . .but titillation for wealthy donor/diners as a means of raising money is another."³⁶² Rainer's letter addressed the seeming disregard on MOCA and Abramović's part to examine the implications of transposing her performance works to different performers' bodies and further to staging such re-performances at a fundraising event. Her letter importantly highlighted the contractual inequities upon which our participation in the event was predicated.³⁶³

The contractual stipulations of our employment with MOCA meant we remained anonymous.³⁶⁴ We were required to sign non-disclosure agreements as well as an image release

³⁶¹ Sara Wookey auditioned for and was offered a role performing *Nude with Skeleton*. However, she turned down the offer and later wrote an op-ed piece discussing her position. Sara Wookey, "Open Letter to Artists," *The Performance Club* 23 Nov. 2011, 26 Jan. 2016 <<http://theperformanceclub.org/2011/11/open-letter-to-artists/>>.

³⁶² Yvonne Rainer, "Letter from Yvonne Rainer to Jeffrey Deitch," *SFMOMA, Open Space* 15 Nov. 2011, 5 Nov. 2014 <<http://blog.sfmoma.org/2011/11/letter-from-yvonne-rainer-to-jeffrey-deitch/>>.

³⁶³ Shanks 114-115.

³⁶⁴ During the Q & A session following a conversation between choreographer Maria Hassabi and curator Aram Moshayedi, an audience member voiced concern that, in their view, museums often fail to acknowledge the name and biography of performers presenting work. The audience member went on to explain that the program, a staple of performance programming, ensures that the names, training, and biography of performing artists are publically acknowledged and shared. Chapter three discusses the conversation between Hassabi and Moshayedi in more detail. Aram Moshayedi and Maria Hassabi,

form, which ensured our images could be reproduced by the museum for any and all reasons. Our names were not attached to our images, nor were they included anywhere in the programing surrounding the gala. We were, as a group, reduced to Abramović's name, important only in that we were re-performing her work. The refusal to acknowledge any of us by name reduced our artistic contribution to that of bodies-for-hire, always already subsumed by the potency of Abramović's moniker-cum-brand.³⁶⁵

Walking to and from the bus stop to get to MOCA in the days leading up to the gala, I passed the Occupy encampment; this spatial coincidence reveals one way in which anonymity can be politically mobilized. The two encampments in downtown LA—the grand white tent of the gala and the numerous smaller tents of protestors—were less a coincidence as two responses to a larger economic landscape. The stakes of anonymity within the Occupy movement were distinctly different from those produced through our contracts with MOCA. The oft-quoted slogan from the movement, “We are the 99%,” sought to mobilize civil disobedience and urban occupation through the evocation of the anonymous collective. We all, the phrase argued, are linked through our shared economic standing. Particularly in the political climate of the Occupy movement, the conditions of our contracts were easily framed as blatant exploitation. Yet, the political efficacy of collective anonymity mobilized by the call “We are the 99%” provides a counter framework for understanding our performance. If such an understanding of collective mobilization did not supersede the material conditions of our contracts, it nonetheless offered a more nuanced way of viewing our anonymity. If, as Abramović explained in regards to publicity campaigns that only feature her, she makes a good marketing figure, our anonymity made for a

“Artist Conversation,” *New Circuits: Curating Contemporary Performance*, Minneapolis, 28-29 Sep. 2015. Unpublished conference conversation.

³⁶⁵ Jones describes a similar subsumption of performers' names, writing about the publicity campaign for *Marina Abramović Presents* held in 2009 at the University of Manchester's Whitworth Art Gallery. Jones writes, “the public relations for the exhibition... featured a glamorous portrait of Abramović... without the names of the other performers.” Jones, “The Artist is Present,” 38.

good call to protest.³⁶⁶ As guests initially sat down (and uncomfortably attempted to avoid eye contact), the initial topic of conversation was our exploitation or agency.

To note the ways in which our performances of *Nude with Skeleton* staged economic disparity and re-iterated our anonymous status, is to note the ways economic disparity and anonymity was revealed across the bodies of six naked women. *Nude with Skeleton* was one of the works re-performed at MoMA, and the performers were both men and women. For the MOCA gala, Abramović proposed that, again, both men and women would perform the piece. Deitch and the museum's management ruled against allowing men to perform the piece; the explanation was that guests would be too uncomfortable by the sight of naked men so close to their dinner plates. Naked women, apparently, would not pose the same problem. Our bodies, MOCA determined, struck the appropriate balance between gala decorum and discomfort. The retrograde sexism of this decision focalized the concerns that attended the gala—exploitation, gross spectacle, wage inequity—onto our naked bodies. While our contracts framed our wages in the supposedly neutral legalize language of contract law, our gendered bodies became the visible and corporeal instantiations of the economic inequities upon which our labor was predicated. To foreground performers' contracts with museum spaces is to reveal not only the precarity of this type of anonymous performance labor but also to instantiate the bodies of young women as the most visible indexes of the emergent landscape of museum curation and performance labor.

Klossowski, writing in 1970, framed the contingency between the logic of commodity exchange, dependent upon money as currency, and an “economic system...[which] has as its currency living bodies.”³⁶⁷ Not dissimilar from Marx's notion of labor-time in which the body itself is integral to commodity exchange, “Klossowski writes that ‘bodily presence is already a commodity, independent of and *in addition to* the commodity that this presence helps to

³⁶⁶ Jones, “The Artist is Present,” 39.

³⁶⁷ Kaufman 113.

produce.”³⁶⁸ Importantly, then, for Klossowski it is not the labor of the body producing goods that becomes commodified but simply bodily presence. With implications that reach far beyond the scope of live performance, he continues that the “traffic in live bodies would...not be just an effect of a market economy but instead the driving force...of its very existence.”³⁶⁹ Our presence at the MOCA gala is one iteration of Klossowski’s notion of a bodily economy—our bodily presence the condition upon which the exchange of money at the event was grounded.

Klossowski’s model of living currency frames how museum economies can be understood as predicated upon the commodification of bodily presence. Our re-performances collapsed the space between the commodity and bodily-presence-as-commodity, the ‘re’ iterating not so much a temporal complication of performance’s ephemerality but rather the ‘re’ of a reproducible good. To render Abramović’s practice intelligible within a museal context—art historically important—was to render presence legible as a commodity, produced and re-produced through our ever-exchangeable bodies.

Roughly three hours into the gala, one of Abramović’s assistants came over to my table. Leaning around guests and across dinner plates, she brought her face close to mine, mouthing, “You can come down now. Do you need my help? Can you get the skeleton off your body?” I nodded. Or tried to. I could barely move. The process of sitting up, lifting the skeleton off, pulling my legs up under me, and climbing off the table was excruciating. It was an almost absurd image. Naked in front of a room of famous strangers, I stumbled across the remains of a dinner; the austerity of Abramović’s artistic aesthetic gone, only an exhausted, trembling, vulnerable body remained. Any potential power *Nude with Skeleton* might have had—our ability as performers to remain largely still, a feat which required physical and mental endurance—was erased in that moment, and the reality of a gala for wealthy donors for which we were, in the end,

³⁶⁸ Kaufman 114.

³⁶⁹ Kaufman 114.

the entertainment was clear. My body was no longer the impossible body of durational performance, but instead a vulnerable one; not so much because of my nakedness, but because my trembling, shaking limbs revealed the secret of their exhaustion. For all my and other performers' desire to view our participation as a form of resistance, we could only choreograph our aesthetic protest so far. In the end, we all had to stop the performance, step over dinner plates, awkwardly climb out from under dining tables, revealing our naked bodies, sweat pants, holey socks, and trembling, shaking limbs.³⁷⁰

The moment when I ended the performance the phenomenological potency of *Nude with Skeleton* was broken. The idea that the performance could function as a critical tool, in line with the protests of the Occupy movement, broke down and revealed that the real promise of the performance, always already figured by the gala context, was to re-inscribe the economic disparity between the museum and the performers. The lure of performing in protest, counter to the over-determined moneyed logic of the gala, could not circumscribe the contextual frame within which the work sat. In the end the surprised comment voiced by one guest that 'it was a real vagina' interpolated my performance through the material vectors of power and money within the gala tent, always already tied to gender. The gala rendered legible in a visceral and corporeal way, the unequal agreements, which contracts legitimate.

Yet our performances of *Nude with Skeleton* acknowledge the stakes, not only, of our labor contracts, but also the more phenomenological responses of our bodies during performance. Thinking through the particular ways performers' bodies *feel* their own flesh within Abramović's works, I want to account for my body as not only representing gendered and economic contractual exchanges within the context of the gala, but also as a kinesthetic, corporeal force that *presses* against the limits of contract. The linguistic similarities between *contract* and

³⁷⁰ Shanks 121-122.

contact is not simply a malapropism, but rather a means for understanding the critical materiality of the interplay between the contract of the body and the contact of the flesh within our performances. I was in literal corporeal contact with the table, the skeleton, and yet also in contact—if not physically—affectively and visually with the diners around my table, my fellow performers, whom I could see as my lazy-Susan slowly turned, all of the guests at the gala, the wait staff, the tent housing the event, the block of Grand Street the tent took up, MOCA, and the Occupy Movement. *Nude with Skeleton* frames the bodily sensation of contact—with objects, spaces, other people, or art history—as a contractual negotiation. Our contracts, once performed, ceased being static documents, but became the totality of our embodied, tactile negotiations. To enact contract is to perform contact—a mode of continual negotiation that is affective, embodied, and political. To understand *Nude with Skeleton*, or *Imponderabilia*, through performers’ material contracts and through the various registers of contact implicit within each performance is to grapple with the contingent and relational nature of contract. To be in contract is to be in contact with another, and it is that contingent relationship which renders contract unstable.

The contract frames her work through the economic viability live art offers museum spaces but also places the presentation of her work within a US discourse of economic disenfranchisement, the actions of the Occupy Movement, and the on-going efforts on the part of performers to advocate on their own behalf for adequate compensation for their performance labor. The embrace of performance by museum spaces has been described as breathing “new life...[into] culturally and economically dead spaces.”³⁷¹ It is a somewhat perverse metaphor to use to describe the importance of performance for museums like MoMA or MOCA; the ‘new life’ performance offers such spaces is not tied to performers’ increased economic stability but rather

³⁷¹ There is a long history of artists presenting performative or time-based works in museum and gallery spaces; Abramović’s own career has largely been supported by such spaces. The difference, however, between earlier presentations of her work and her retrospective at MoMA and the gala at MOCA are the numerous performers hired to execute the scores of her performance works. Levine, “Being an Object,” 1.

to that of the institutions in question. In a public discussion following the end of the MoMA exhibition, Abramović, the re-performers, and Biesenbach discussed their experiences with a packed lecture hall. Biesenbach introduced the event proclaiming that, “All the artists are present.”³⁷² The celebratory hailing of the forty odd performers crammed on stage around Abramović and Biesenbach as ‘artists’ might be starkly, and cynically, juxtaposed to performers’ initial contract offer from the museum. If all are artists, some, Biesenbach’s comment could not quite hide, were far more important in the eyes of the institution than others. As performance is increasingly imagined as a way of boosting visitor attendance, and thus revenue, for a museum, it is necessary to attend critically to the subjects upon whom the economic burden for such curatorial practices are being enacted.

Abramović was the 247th most well paid artist in 2011.³⁷³ While performers at MoMA were quick to point out that their contract negotiations with the museum happened without Abramović’s involvement and were conducted solely with the HR department, the material conditions of the performers’ position in relationship to Abramović still remains. As much as her personal commitment to her performers might be evident (and indeed she was nothing but kind and generous to all of us who performed at the MOCA gala) her particular positionality must be noted.³⁷⁴ It reveals a model of cultural production and presentation that depends upon the viability of creative precarious labor. The precarious financial positions performers increasingly are placed within—the experience of working with Abramović compensation enough, as the

³⁷² *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present, The Legacy of Performance Art.*

³⁷³ The list is compiled based on the amount paid at auction for one of a listed artist’s pieces. For Abramović, that amount was \$362, 500. “The List: The Art Economist’s Top Earning 300 Artists,” *The Art Economist* 1. 8 (2011): 21-30.

³⁷⁴ While Abramović’s use of re-performance is one example of this type of performance labor, dance and performance scholars have also theorized Tino Sehgal’s work in much the same way I have understood Abramović’s practice. Ramsey Burt, “Performative Intervention and Political Affect: de Keersmaecker and Sehgal,” *Dance and Politics*, ed. Alexandra Kolb (Bern: International Academic Publishers, 2010) 257-280.

narrative so often goes—reveals one iteration of the breakdown of a US social contract, refracted through the pragmatic devaluation of performers' labor by museums.

Neither MoMA's contractual stipulations nor our contracts with MOCA could entirely delimit the scope of *Imponderabilia* or *Nude with Skeleton*. MoMA's *Imponderabilia*, allowing performers differently raced and gendered from Abramović and Ulay to perform the piece, re-oriented its corporeal politics. To come in contact, as one pressed through the gallery doorway, with the bodies of two women shifted the tenure of the performance from a heteronormative frame—literally—of differently sexed bodies to one that engaged a queer politic. Or, at least, in its difference from the '77 performance, the re-performance issued a challenge to the concerns of authenticity and historical accuracy that dominated so many of Biesenbach's curatorial choices.³⁷⁵ Performers' contracts with MoMA or our contracts with MOCA re-frame our performances as labor and economically precarious labor, at that; yet it was our bodies, performing in particular kinesthetic ways, which transposed the textual stipulations of our contracts onto our bodily choreographies of contact. Our performing bodies—fleshy, breathing, shaking, exhausted—rendered legible the symbolic and material stakes of the conditions of contract.

The ways unequal contractual labor is revealed through the bodies of her female re-performers renders Abramović's use of contractual language in her scores pertinent. Her scores, particularly those of *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange*, scripted certain relationships between herself and her audience, framing her performances as modes of gendered bodily address and agreement. This final section seeks to understand the contract as a grounding predicate for the gendered politic of Abramović's performance work.

³⁷⁵ Biesenbach described tracking down the exact same model and make of Volkswagen bus used by Abramović and Ulay in *Relation in Movement* and attempting to locate the exact same razor blades manufactured in Italy in the '70s for a display of objects used in *Rhythm 0*. *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present, The Legacy of Performance Art*.

The Contract and the Score: *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange*

The way in which one is rendered a contractual subject, *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange* reveal, is marked by gender. Abramović performs this gendered reveal through the logic of the contract and her continual assertion that she can and will ‘take responsibility.’ In *Rhythm 0* (1974), Abramović displayed an array of items on a table beside her and invited spectators to do whatever they wanted to her unresisting, passive body for six hours. In *Role Exchange* (1975), she switched places with a female sex worker, identified only as Suze, in Amsterdam; Abramović sat in Suze’s window in the Red Light District, while Suze attended the opening of Abramović’s exhibition at the De Appel Art Center. The score for each piece included some variant on the phrase, “I take responsibility,” formulating each performance *as* a contract. The phrase performatively reconstitutes Abramović, and her collaborator, as the final guarantors of both performances. The phrase positions the artist(s) as, at once, the medium of her work, the guarantor of its outcome, and the external regulating system who ensures that a contract has been fulfilled.³⁷⁶ Following scholar Peggy Kamuf, who theorizes responsibility as a form of responding to an other, I argue that the specific gendered performances of consent, or its unmaking, in *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange* clarify that responsibility is a gendered response.³⁷⁷ The two pieces reveal how one can perform-as-contract, rendering legible the necessity of one’s body to the contractual agreement, and performing as both the authority figure that shapes the performance and as the structural logic that guarantees its outcome.

Like a musical score, Abramović’s performance scores describe the actions she was to carry out over the course of the work, a textual attempt to delimit the scope of her performance. The scores are written documents, which detail a set of actions that are to be carried out by the

³⁷⁶ J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (1962: Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) 6.

³⁷⁷ Peggy Kamuf, *Book Of Addresses* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

artist in contingent relationship with the performance space, the audience, and the objects used in the performance. Abramović's scores served a functional purpose; they concretized the piece such that the artist could propose it to a presenting space.³⁷⁸ While the score provides a practical means for hosting spaces and institutions to attempt to determine the risks of a proposed performance, it could never fully account for the outcomes of a performance. Like a musical score, which transcribes the aural sounds produced by various instruments or voices into the written symbols of music notation, Abramović's scores transpose embodied actions into written language. Such acts of translation between different registers of communication necessarily fail to account for the totality of performance. The score, like the contract, occupies a paradoxical relationship between object and event, attempting to guarantee, textually, the scope of a performance, while also acknowledging the inability of the score to account fully for the totality of the performance event, in all its embodied contingency.

Abramović's *Rhythm Series*, of which *Rhythm 0* was the culminating performance, began in '73. The series explored the limit points of her body across five different performance works. How, the series asked, might her body mark time by revealing its physical and mental rhythms, between states of consciousness and unconsciousness? The first piece performed in the series was *Rhythm 10*, then *Rhythm 5*, *Rhythm 2*, *Rhythm 4*, and, finally, *Rhythm 0*. The scores of the performances proposed a series of—potentially—dangerous interactions between the artist's body and objects.³⁷⁹ While the historical record of the events of each performance describes the

³⁷⁸ Indeed, several of her earliest performance scores were never performed. Proposed to the Galerija Doma Omladine in Belgrade, the score of *Come Wash with Me* from 1969 detailed that the public was to undress upon entering the gallery space, give their clothes to the artist, who would then “wash, dry, and iron...[them] and when...[the clothes] are ready,” the public could dress and leave. Biesenbach 48, 12-13.

³⁷⁹ In *Rhythm 10*, the artist rhythmically stabbed an array of knives between the splayed fingers of her hands. After constructing a large five-pointed star on the ground in *Rhythm 5*, she lit it on fire and lay down within the center of the star, eventually passing out. In *Rhythm 2*, she consumed, first, medication given to patients suffering from catatonia, which threw her body into physical spasms; after the effects of the medication wore off, she took a second pill, often prescribed to schizophrenic patients, which induced a state of catatonia. In *Rhythm 4*, she crouched in front of an air blower until she lost consciousness.

bodily harm Abramović ended up inflicting upon herself, the score of each piece purposefully failed to delimit the ways in which the artist would be placing her body in harm. The titular logic of the *Rhythm Series* is that of the countdown, if a hiccupping one, jumping from 2 to 4 before terminating with 0. Each performance work in the series was structured such that Abramović placed her body in physical danger, yet only the score of *Rhythm 0* overtly engaged Abramović's subjectivity as a female artist, positioning her passive body as available for her audience's machinations. The logic of the series clarified that its terminating event was the objectification of Abramović's body. While the artist has distanced her project from a feminist politics, second-wave or otherwise, the progression of *Rhythm Series* betrays an attention to the ways her body registers in relationship to her audience.

Rhythm 0's score opens with the title of the piece, or time signature to stay within the language of musical notation. The time signature tells one how a musical score is to be counted. The time signature becomes a "translation device that...render[s]...intelligible," the linguistic instructions of the score *for* Abramović's body.³⁸⁰ Within *Rhythm 0*, the title renders intelligible Abramović's embodied play between objectification and agency. The zero is at once representative of nothing but is also central to mathematics. Zero is the additive identity of integers, real numbers, and many algebraic sets; combined, in other words, zero always already echoes back the identity of the number in question. Zero also acts as a placeholder, connoting the value of an integer. It occupies the space between positive and negative numbers. The piece's time is the time, or the rhythm, of the paradox—how to be in no time and every time at once. To shift from the metaphor of time signatures back to the gendered politics of the piece, *Rhythm 0* twines, like zero, between objectification and agency; the piece's zero time signature renders that entanglement intelligible as the terminating and central concern of the *Rhythm Series*.

³⁸⁰ Olivia Khoo and Sean Metzger, eds., Introduction, *Futures of Chinese Cinema: Technologies and Temporalities in Chinese Screen Cultures* (Chicago: intellect, 2009) 19.

Opening with the line, “There are 72 objects on the table that one can use on me as desired,” the score announces its allegiance to the grammatical realm of the possible through the use of the auxiliary verb *can*. Not only is it possible for an audience member to interact with the objects and the artist but their ability to use the objects on the table is stymied only by their own desire. The score continues,

Performance

I am the object.

During this period I take full responsibility.

1974

Performance, 6 hours (8 P.M.- 2 A.M.)

Studio Morra, Naples

This performance is the last in the cycle of rhythms (Rhythm 10, Rhythm 5, Rhythm 2, Rhythm 4, Rhythm 0). I conclude my research on the body when conscious and unconscious.³⁸¹

The final line of the score alludes to the earlier four works in the *Rhythm Series*, in which the artist attempted to perform through literal states of bodily consciousness and unconsciousness. In *Rhythm 0*, the entanglement between the two is framed through her self-interpolation as an object. Physically conscious, the score of the piece imagines unconsciousness as the passive body of the artist total available for any of the audience’s machinations. Presenting her body as the 73rd object in the performance available for the manipulations of the audience, *Rhythm 0* complicated ideas of artistic agency, bodily control, and gendered autonomy. Other objects included: razor blades, roses, honey, a bullet, a gun, perfume, a scalpel, a feather, grapes, scissors, nails, bread, and a metal bar. The score of the performance interpolated Abramović and her audience into the staging of gendered violence and uneven narratives of power, revealing the inequalities of exchange, embedded within the construct of the contract. ‘See me perform,’ the subtext of the performance seemed to read, ‘and *you* can make me do anything.’ “Abramović had ceded

³⁸¹ Biesenbach 74.

control,” Biesenbach writes of the work’s performance, “becoming the subject of the plots and intentions hatched around the objects. After the audience had cut and stripped her of her clothing, and painted and hit her body, they watched as one participant placed the loaded gun against her head.”³⁸² After six hours, well into the early hours of the morning, the performance ended.

While *Rhythm 0* might have ceded Abramović’s control, the score firmly maintained her responsibility. The line directly after “I am the object,” an assertion of her body’s object/object status, is “During this period I take full responsibility.”³⁸³ There is a contradiction between these two lines, born out in the spatial placement of the two sentences in the score; each occupies its own line on the page. Abramović is both a self-proclaimed object of the performance, subject to the audience’s whims, but is also the one finally held accountable for the outcome of the performance. Whatever happens—to Abramović, audience members, the gallery space—she, the artist, is able and willing to ‘take responsibility.’ The phrase complicates a straightforward narrative of female subjugation—the passive female figure available for any manner of manipulations by her audience. *I take full responsibility* is a performative declaration, an operative, as Austin might term the phrase, which “serves to effect the [performance] transaction,” between the artist and her imagined audience-cum-participants.³⁸⁴ To be responsible means to acknowledge that one is involved *with* others and with the unknowability of such (inter)action. *I take full responsibility* stages a contractual agreement in which the artist’s guarantorial power frames the performance, and reveals the distance between control and responsibility. Abramović complicates straightforward notions of consent, which underwrite contracts by scripting a performance that rendered her body passive yet also placed the final onus for the outcome of the work on herself.

³⁸² Biesenbach, “Marina Abramović,” 17.

³⁸³ Biesenbach 74.

³⁸⁴ Austin 7.

While the score of *Rhythm 0* asserts Abramović's artistic agency and culpability, photographic documentation from the performance reveals the affective strain of enacting bodily consent continually. Photos from the end of the performance show her standing, stripped of clothing, tears welling in her eyes. Dried blood drips from a cut on her collarbone, the small wound staunched with a clear Band Aid, a rose stem curves around her neck, and a heavy metal chain and pendant hangs between her breasts. Various indecipherable graffiti is scrawled across her stomach in red lipstick and two red rose petals are affixed to her nipples. Abramović has described *Rhythm 0* as one of the most difficult performances of her career. Between the textual score-cum-contract, the photographs, and Abramović's own explanation of her affective state during the performance, three distinct understandings of *Rhythm 0* emerge. While I in no way mean to discount the ways in which Abramović has narrated her own performance experience, framing *Rhythm 0* through its score provides a way of nuancing narratives of shame, duress, or female passivity often attached to the work. The score reveals the textual extent to which such affective and embodied responses were always already framed through the artist's own agency and responsibility. Such a framing renders legible Abramović's own staging of accountability, while, simultaneously, acknowledging the performed politics of consent, parity, or acquiescence. Agency is not stable, but rather contingent.

Performed a year after *Rhythm 0*, and commissioned by the De Appel Gallery in Amsterdam, *Role Exchange* is one of Abramović's most explicitly gendered performances. Like *Rhythm 0*, the performance scripts a gendered contractual exchange. In *Role Exchange*, the contractual agreement at the center of the work was centered on prostitution. The score reads, *Role Exchange*

I find a woman [Suze] who has worked as a professional prostitute for ten years.
At this point I have also worked as an artist for ten years.
I propose to exchange roles.
She accepts.

Performance

The woman replaces me at my opening at the De Appel Gallery in Amsterdam.
At the same time I sit in her place in a window of the red light district in Amsterdam.
We both take total responsibility for our roles.

1975

Performance, 4 hours

De Appel Gallery and Red Light District, Amsterdam³⁸⁵

The performance was documented through a series of photographs: of Abramović sitting in Suze's display window (taken by Ulay) and of Suze at the De Appel Gallery (taken by the gallery's staff).³⁸⁶ Super 8 cameras also recorded each of their performances, and the footage was subsequently shown as a two-channel installation at the Gallery.³⁸⁷ According to Abramović, "there was no direct audience participation in the gallery [a seemingly vague assertion of Suze's role, which the photographs of Suze and film footage do nothing to clarify], although the brothel had three male visitors who came in off the street."³⁸⁸ Of Abramović's three visitors, the first only wanted to touch her, the second wanted to talk, and the last was a regular customer of Suze's and left after realizing she was not there.³⁸⁹ *Role Exchange* rendered public the private arrangement between prostitute and john and between artist and hosting institution. Beyond revealing the parallel logics of these two contractual exchanges, equating the female artist with the female prostitute, *Role Exchange* shifted the focus from the relationship between Abramović and the anonymous johns to between the two women. The central contract of the work is not the

³⁸⁵ Biesenbach 82.

³⁸⁶ Suze was a pseudonym, and Abramović describes meeting with Suze and her husband in their home outside Amsterdam in the months leading up to the piece itself.

³⁸⁷ It is unclear whether documentation of the piece includes photos or filmed footage of the interactions between Abramović and her johns. Photos of the piece, at least, only show Abramović. Anna Novakov, "La Fille Publique," and "Role Exchange: Desire, Beauty, and the Public, *Marina Abramovic* in conversation with *Anna Novakov*," *Veiled Histories: the Body, Place, and Public Art*, ed. Anna Novakov (New York: San Francisco Art Institute Critical Press, 1997) 9-35.

³⁸⁸ "Role Exchange (1975)—Marina Abramovich," *Curating the World* 19 Jan. 2012, 8 Aug 2014 <<http://curatingtheworld.wordpress.com/2012/01/19/role-exchange-1975-marina-abramovich/>>.

³⁸⁹ Novakov 28.

possibility of the Abramović interacting with Johns, but rather her exchange, or bodily transposition, with Suze.

Role Exchange, as it plays between the figurative and literal connotations of the act of selling one's self and one's body, reveals the structure of performance art. Namely, that such works engage the symbolic and material registers of an action or concept, metonymically equating the colloquial concept of 'selling out' or 'selling oneself' with its literal manifestation, at least as selling oneself has been transposed onto sex work.³⁹⁰ In *Role Exchange*, however, the metonymic distance of much performance art is collapsed in the space of direct exchange: Suze substituted for Abramović, Abramović for Suze. The phrase 'we both take total responsibility for our roles,' participates in this economy of direct exchange. Each woman is equally accountable for the performance and its outcomes. The phrase indicates that each woman will carry out her prospective role to the utmost of her ability. To take responsibility implies not only the burden of responding to unknown contingencies, as in *Rhythm 0*, but also an obligation of commitment.

If 'take' connotes getting into one's hold or possession something, whether through voluntary action, control, or force, 'responsibility' modifies the term take such that one is reminded of the necessity of the Other in the notion of responsibility. As literary scholar Peggy Kamuf writes,

In 'responsibility,' one begins to hear the reawakened 'metaphor' of response, that is, of answering another, but also answering to, before, and even for another. That there is response in responsibility, in other words, that there is always some other for whom, before whom, or to whom one is responding when one does what is called *taking* responsibility, this is perhaps what is too daunting to think about,

³⁹⁰ As numerous art historians and scholars of performance art have argued, the particular potency of much performance or body art of the 1960s and 70s was the way in which the performer's body served as an embodied metonym, blurring "the line between art and life." The metonymic stakes of performance are the contingencies that arise between a "concrete act" carried out by the actor and an equivalent action, which might be political, social, or economic in nature. The performative act, thus, is never fully contained by the frame of 'representation,' but rather forms a chain of signifiers, leading to the act framed as 'political' or 'economic.' O'Dell 6; Kristine Stiles, "Uncorrupted joy: international art actions," *Out of Actions, Between Performance and the Object, 1949-1979*, eds. Paul Schimmel, Kristine Stiles (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; Thames and Hudson, 1998) 238.

and therefore one doesn't let oneself think about it too much, but takes refuge in rational law and the law of reason, where there is responsibility only for a subject or a self.³⁹¹

Responsibility is about responding to another, about drawing that other into oneself and oneself into that other. If this explanation of Kamuf's Derridean linguistic reasoning seems deliberately opaque, what is *too daunting to think about* is precisely the realm within which Abramović's performative *taking of responsibility* dwells. It is precisely for and before another that *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange*'s scores document her pre-emptive understanding that to perform is always already to be taking responsibility. "The act of (taking) responsibility," Kamuf continues, "has to do with... a factor of unknowability."³⁹² In other words, to acknowledge the need to take responsibility, one acknowledges that something unforeseen might occur. If the outcome—of a performance—were a forgone conclusion, the burden of responding to what has occurred would not need to be named, would not need the contractual assurance of responsibility. Responsibility is a mode of address, a means of not simply taking responsibility (for an action or unforeseen futures) but also of *giving*. For Kamuf, to fully submit to the siren call of responsibility—the response to another—is to give into and give over reason. In Abramović's two works, it is a giving over, if only for the duration of the performance, of her body and agency.

If Kamuf's linguistic play with responsibility does not address the particular gendered implications of taking and giving, *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange* ground the stakes of responding in the gendered figure of the artist (and in *Role Exchange* Suze, as well). Carole Pateman, less than ten years after *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange* were performed, theorized the sexual contract as the grounding predicate upon which modern, Western contract theory rests. The sexual contract is, Pateman argued, enacted between individual men and woman who occupy, respectively, positions of domination or subordination in relation to each other. Pateman grounds

³⁹¹ Kamuf 5.

³⁹² Kamuf 8.

her theory of contract in dyadic pairs, heterosocial logic, and the stability of terms like ‘woman’ or ‘man.’ Art historian and critic Jovana Stokić writes of *Rhythm 0* that Abramović, “is the only one in power to begin the process. By objectifying herself, she dictates how we should treat her...in exposing the objectification, the circle is closed; the patriarchal logic of the master-slave dialectics are revealed.”³⁹³ Stokić’s reading of *Rhythm 0* aligns with Pateman’s theorization of sexual contract; the logic of the master-slave dialectic, for Pateman, is the logic of patriarchy.³⁹⁴ She argues that to be marked *as* a contractual subject is contingent upon one’s positionality as ‘woman’ and hence as always already subordinate.³⁹⁵ Both Stokić and Pateman premise their understandings of contract and gender upon the totalizing logic of patriarchy, within which it is impossible to perform contrary to set subject positions.

Rhythm 0 and *Role Exchange* construct only to deconstruct the presumed stability of Stokić and Pateman’s contractual understandings. Pateman’s work, in its structural insistence on the stability of dyadic pairs like dominance/subordination or woman/man, fails to account for the performance of contract. Both performances reveal how performance-as-contract enacts the shifting conditions of consent, parity, and responsibility. The performativity of *Role Exchange* or *Rhythm 0* is embedded within their textual scores, revealed in the use of the word ‘role.’ *Role Exchange*’s score reads, “We both take responsibility for our roles,” the term ‘roles’ references an inherent performativity. While Abramović positions herself as passive woman against whom things happen, she is also the final arbiter of the entire performance. Abramović, and Suze, are both the object of the performances’ promises, but are also the guarantors who hold the risk of each promise. Both performances reveal that gendered responses are contingent upon the

³⁹³ Jovana Stokić, “The Art of Marina Abramović: Leaving the Balkans, Entering the Other Side,” *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present*, ed. Klaus Biesenbach (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010) 24.

³⁹⁴ Pateman 1, 6, 10-13.

³⁹⁵ Pateman 17.

adoption of simultaneous roles, at times in conflict with each other. The scores reveal the internal tension within *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange* among bodily agency, artistic accountability, and gender parity. If Abramović (and Suze in *Role Exchange*) was both the object and the guarantor of each performance, was both giving and taking responsibility, then she, more than the score, more than the record of the live performance, *was* the contract.

Abramović's written scores firmly inscribe her artistic control through the text, while pressing her body to the limits of corporeal control. For her re-performers, then, it matters that we were not the authors of our scores-cum-contracts. Rather, we were only left with the second half of her critical practice: pressing out bodies to a durational limit. To retroactively acknowledge the key textual and authorizing component of her work complicates the narrative of corporeal endurance that so often dominates in discussions of her work. Rather than continue to read her re-performances as the return of her body of work, the 're' importantly indicates that what prefigured our participation was the absence of our authorial (and textual) control. We had no responsibility.

To perform contract and to perform as contract reveals the deconstructive logic of Abramović's performances. It is a logic that seeks to undercut the presumed stability of contract and its predicates: man/woman, john/prostitute. Abramović became the site across which these various roles and agreements are rendered legible. The dyadic pairs central to contract theory are focalized across her performing body. To assert that Abramović performed *as* contract reveals the looping logic of contract; she performs contract as a constant enunciation of slippage. *Rhythm 0* and *Role Exchange* make evident the way in which her performances staged the enactment of a contractual agreement, muddling the neat distinctions of give and take central to such agreements.

Conclusion: Textual Remains and Material Afterlives: Performance and Contract

I begin my conclusion not with the contract, but rather with the terms that I tracked throughout this chapter and against which the idea of contract was proposed: namely performance art and re-performance. Understanding performance through the textual remains of performers' contracts or Abramović's scores, re-imagined through the textual cues of contractual accountability and agreement, re-configures *how* performance comes to mean. Scholars of performance practices as well as art historians have debated the meaning of the term 'performance art.' Scholar Adrian Heathfield argues that performance art directs a viewer's attention to the "moment by moment of the present," forcing a spectator to stay within the now of a performance rather than focus upon the end result.³⁹⁶ While Heathfield foregrounds the phenomenological experience of performance art's temporality, art historian Kristine Stiles rejects the term, regarding its usage as ubiquitous and homogenizing, and instead theorizes action art. Stiles locates the ascension of the term 'performance art' to the reprinting of J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* in 1975 and the critical traction Austin's theorization of performative speech acts gained.³⁹⁷ Action art historically contextualizes certain politically inflected aesthetic acts between 1949-1979. The stakes of action art are that such works "propose...something can be done, and then they make it happen. People who make things happen present potential problems to normative behavior and values."³⁹⁸ Stiles's notion of action art focuses on doing, on the fact that something happens over the course of a piece of action art. For Stiles the term 'action' also betrays its linguistic inheritance to 'activism,' a mode of political engagement, which for Stiles has (historically at least) depended upon the use of the body.³⁹⁹ Performance art, as a descriptor, fails to achieve the same connotation of a political investment. Contextualizing the term within a trajectory of Marxist art history, Stiles argues that action alerts

³⁹⁶ Adrian Heathfield, ed., *Art and Performance: Live* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 8.

³⁹⁷ Stiles 246.

³⁹⁸ Stiles 283.

³⁹⁹ Stiles 235.

a viewer to the *producer* behind the artwork, and thus to the labor of the production of the work.⁴⁰⁰ While Stiles's historical theorization of action art focuses attention on the labor of producing a work, action art also focuses a viewer's attention on the aftermath of a piece: the realization that something occurred over the course of the work.

Theater scholar Elin Diamond understands performance art not so much through what it does as through the theatrical conventions it rejects: namely the grounding authority of the (play) text. "Performance," she argues, locating her argument in much the same historic moment as Stiles, "came to be defined in opposition to theater structures and conventions."⁴⁰¹ W.B. Worthen, drawing upon Diamond's work, explains that, "performance [art] has been so 'honored with dismantling textual authority, illusionism, and the canonical actor' that it is questionable whether any frontier remains between dramatic studies and performance."⁴⁰² Performance art, then, in these definitions aims to frame an art practice that is particularly invested in time—whether it be the foregrounded flash of the present or the aftermath of a work—and, while it is citational, drawing upon concurrent activist movements or Austin's linguistic text, it eschews a definition that might tie it to textuality.

While these various understandings of performance—or action—art attempt to clarify what exactly is meant by, as Stiles's notes, the ubiquitous term, *re-performance* injects a further temporal, and corporeal, complication into understanding what exactly performance is or does. Re-performance is meant to account for the oddity of performance works initially imagined as only being performed once being performed *again*. While not a new phenomenon, re-performance has achieved a certain critical attention within performance studies and art history, bolstered by the curation of performance works from the 1960s and 70s by museums in recent

⁴⁰⁰ Stiles 231.

⁴⁰¹ Elin Diamond, Introduction, *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. Elin Diamond (New York: Routledge, 1996) 3.

⁴⁰² W. B. Worthen, "Drama, Performativity, and Performance," *PMLA* 113. 5 (1998): 1093.

years. As Jones writes, “The interest in re-enactments marks the current fascination with retrieving live events that took place and are now known only through archival documents, film and video clips, interviews, and so on.”⁴⁰³ By engaging their bodies as a medium across which to create art works, performance artists of the period sought to de-center the prominence of the museum and gallery as the nexus points for establishing oneself as an artist. If the materiality of a work is the body and the actions performed by a body in time and in relationship to spectators, then the economic imperative of gallery spaces or museums to ‘own’ a work, display an art ‘object,’ and to sell it was seemingly stymied. At least such was the utopic promise of performance or body works. *Re-performance*, though, has shifted this historicization. It marks a capitulation of the criticality often attached to such works to the art market, re-imagining the performance in question as repeatable. *Re-performance* captures a tension between performance as ephemeral and performance as an ever-iterative practice and, therefore, commodifiable.⁴⁰⁴

Re-performance might also be framed as complicating the anti-textual authority, as Worthen terms it, which has been equated with performance art. *Re-performance* proposes a previous performance as its ‘text’ and the bodies of past performers as the grammar that renders said ‘text’ legible. It is the difference and temporal distance—not the same-ness—between the past and the present that becomes the citational grounding of *re-performance*. One understands, in other words, a *re-performance* as such precisely because it is not the same, can never be the same, as any other previous iteration of a performance. To return to Stiles’s formulation of action art, we might re-term *re-performance* *re-action* art. Reaction implies transformation, passage, stressing not the iterative or archival imperative so often linked to *re-performance*, but rather its ability to simultaneously respond to and change the performance in question. *Re-action* art is a

⁴⁰³ Jones, “The Artists is Present,” 19.

⁴⁰⁴ Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) 36.

response to a previous work, which acknowledges its precarious citationality, its slippage between then and now, the momentary flash of the now refracted through the aftermath of the already completed performance. Re-action renders the seeming stability of re-performance, as an archival and historical transmitting project, *unstable*.

I move now from performance art and re-performance to performance studies. The shift between these terms, of course, is aided by the central word that remains the same across each—performance. Yet there is also an inherent slippage, not simply etymological, that ties these terms together. Performance art becomes a way to delimit performance studies. Phelan’s influential understanding of performance’s ontology as predicated upon disappearance cites Angelika Festa’s non-textual performance art to support her claims.⁴⁰⁵ Performance studies and its understanding of performance has been largely grounded in the conditions and aesthetics of contemporary performance art and the predominance of completely, or largely, non-textual performances. To define performance is to define performance art, and to define performance art is to define ephemeral, and to define ephemeral is to define non-textuality, which is to return to a definition of performance. To intervene in this tautological discourse, then—bisecting the looping logic of definitional returns—through an attention to contract foregrounds the way in which performance might be understood through its textual remains.

Contract provides a way to intervene in performance studies discourse that imagines a stark divide between live performance and documentation, asserting as it does the textual considerations such documents place upon performers’ bodies.⁴⁰⁶ To grapple with the relationship between performance art and text is not necessarily to end up beholden to a dramatic text or an understanding of performance in which the text somehow authorizes the scope of the performance. To frame Abramović’s work through contract engages the oft-unacknowledged

⁴⁰⁵ Phelan 152-163.

⁴⁰⁶ Worthen 1093.

textuality of her practice, but contract also blurs the boundary between performance as a representational form and as revealing the material conditions upon which it is contingent. The meaning, then, of Abramović's performance art practice as framed through contract "depends on the citation not of the text [the contract] but of the regimes" of meaning, which add gendered, legal, ethical, institutional, and economic force to the guarantee the contracts evoke.⁴⁰⁷ "A performance," Worthen writes, "is merely a site of passage...[for a textual source, like a contract] in which instabilities are both made and made manifest."⁴⁰⁸ A performance acts as the conduit of a text. Far from conditioning the scope of a performance, performers' contracts or the scores are simultaneously revealed and brought into question. Such an accounting asks scholars to attend to the remains of a performance not as the residue of something gone but as shaping its contours, conditioning the body politics of action.

While performers' contracts offers one way to make sense of the discursive divide between performance art and textuality, it is also clear that the imagined stability of contracts is revealed as contingent, relational, and unstable once enacted through performance. To assert that Abramović or her re-performers performed *as* contract—our bodies and artistic agency the structuring logic of accountability and agreement—reveals the looping logic of contract; we performed contract as a constant enunciation of slippage not stability, a contingent negotiation between our bodies and those of our audience members. In other words, we did not simply perform at MoMA and MOCA under contract—that 'under' demarcating the various vectors of economic inequity, precarious labor, and lack of institutional support that we experienced—but rather *as* contract. That *as* acknowledges the critical and pragmatic need to continue to discuss the economic landscape associated with museum performance, but importantly also allows us, as re-performers, not simply to be conditioned, delimited, and subscribed by our contracts.

⁴⁰⁷ Worthen 1097.

⁴⁰⁸ Worthen 1102.

This is not to make the facile argument that live performance carries some innate radicality, always already performing against larger structural discourses of economic inequity or employment landscapes that depend more and more upon precarious labor. Our bodies revealed not agency so much as, quite simply, our contracts. Contracts are an acknowledged but rarely visible component of arts economies, imagined, at least on the part of a museum's Human Resources department, as private documentation between the institution and an artist. The interplay between performers' bodies and their contracts renders visible the (employment) codes that inscribed performers' embodied presence. No longer a decree, performance forces contract into contact with the fleshy present of corporeal embodiment. The definitional tension between contract and contact, the two words differing by only one letter yet, nonetheless, revealing a grand divide between textual and authorial accountability and phenomenological sensations, renders legible the productive tension that grounds Abramović's performance practice.

The exhibition of Abramović's work at MoMA, MOCA, and the Guggenheim (not discussed in this chapter) were some of the most well publicized presentations of performance art by US museums. The MoMA retrospective and earlier Guggenheim show became touch-stones for discussing the increasing visibility of live performance works in museum spaces, seemingly signaling an embrace of performance art by institutions which had long ignored the medium. These museum presentations of her work enlivened a body of performance studies scholarship invested in framing how museums re-script performance art's imagined ephemerality into ephemera, turning the performance into re-performance, the live performer into a living document of a previous performance. What these performances also reveal, however, is the gendered memories of institutions like MoMA and MOCA. To press on the underlying contractual logic of *Imponderabilia* or *Nude with Skeleton* renders intelligible the extent to which women's bodies are always already poised to be present in museum spaces in particular ways.

While the contracts remain as conditioning textual remnants of the performances, so to do our bodies remain, re-performing and re-producing a gendered and sexist institutional memory.

The final chapter shifts focus, moving away from the space of the museum gallery that has grounded my first three chapters. Rather, I turn to the proscenium stage and explore how questions of gendered labor, economic compensation, and artistic creation vis-à-vis visual art are dramatized in theater. This final chapter seeks to understand how theater, rather than the museal context, might frame how we understand the intersection among performance, visual art, and gender.

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Chapter Four

Staging Art Legacies and Histories: Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*

The lights come up on the ensemble of actors frozen in place; together they form a tableau vivant of Georges Seurat's *Un dimanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte* or *A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte*.⁴⁰⁹ The image lingers for several long moments, allowing the audience to appreciate the compositional similarities between the actors on stage and Seurat's painting. This tableau opens Act II of Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's musical *Sunday in the Park with George*.⁴¹⁰ The moment continues; the tension rises in the audience. How long will the actors simply remain still? Finally, the character of Dot (meant to depict the women in the foreground of the painting dressed in a dramatically bustled skirt) begins to sing, "It's hot up here."⁴¹¹ In quick succession the other characters chime in, their list of complaints encompassing the heat, boredom, the stink of their painted companions, and the fact that they are all slowly fading. The song personifies the specific figures in Seurat's painting not by creating a narrative to explain their relationships but by imagining what it might be like to be stuck in a painting, hanging on the wall of a museum. The song lyrically illustrates a corporeal purgatory, in which one is forever stilled: hot, sticky, bored, and stiff.

Focused on the 2008 Broadway revival of *Sunday* directed by Sam Buntrock, this final chapter takes up the intersections between live performance and visuality through the conventions of the proscenium stage.⁴¹² In *Sunday*, the performance remainder indicates an art

⁴⁰⁹ Seurat's painting was completed over the course of two years between 1884-86.

⁴¹⁰ Sondheim composed the score and wrote the lyrics for the musical, while Lapine contributed the book and directed the original Off-Broadway and Broadway productions in 1983 and '84.

⁴¹¹ Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine, *Sunday in the Park with George* (New York: Applause Theater Book Publishers, 1991) 123.

⁴¹² The complete title of the musical is abbreviated to *Sunday* throughout this chapter.

First presented Off-Broadway in 1983 at Playwrights Horizons, the musical was originally conceived of as a long one-act show. *Sunday*, with the addition of the shorter second act, transferred to Broadway in 1984. In its initial Broadway run, the show received mixed critical reviews, but was nominated for ten Tonys (winning only two) and won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Buntrock's production opened in London in 2005.

object's art historical and financial legacy. The fact that (certain) art works remain, are acquired, collected, displayed, and circulate is both the subtext of the musical but also the condition that underwrites its possibility. Originally created by Sondheim and Lapine as the hundredth anniversary of Seurat's painting neared, the musical stages, if fails to explain, how it is that certain art works gain historical and popular traction. Themes of artistic genius and creation unite the two acts, set a hundred years apart from each other and each focused on an artist named George. Act I charts the creation of Seurat's famous painting; Act II is largely set at the museum opening for the contemporary (i.e. 1984) George's latest sculptural machine piece. This chapter shifts an understanding of performance remain from notions of documentation or the histories a performer's body evokes, to question how and why art works accrue cultural capital and art historical importance. While much Western art historical scholarship has focused on the importance of the Impressionist and Post-Impressionists for documenting the changing landscape of urban centers and for prefiguring the emergence of modernist art practices in the early twentieth century, my aim is not to retread such scholarship.⁴¹³ Rather, I explore how *Sunday* animates what it means for art to persist, remain or linger.

Within the musical, to persist, remain, or linger is embodied by the actors on stage through the use of tableaux vivants.⁴¹⁴ To remain in one position for an extended period of time, in other words, literalizes the far more abstracted notion of an art object's cultural or historical

⁴¹³ See amongst other works: T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the art of Manet and His Followers* (New York: Knopf, 1984); Theodore Reff, *Manet and Modern Paris* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Anna Gruetzner Robins, *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2007).

For an extended note on the ways in which feminist art historians re-imagined discourses of modernity, modernism and visibility vis-à-vis the Impressionist, please see footnote twenty-four. This footnote notes books that narrative the normative (often masculinist) discourses that historically surrounded the reception of Impressionist work.

⁴¹⁴ While the 1984 production used both live actors and flat cutouts to create the painting in particular, the '08 production's digital animations reimagined the two-dimensional painting or unidirectional tableau vivant as filmic and visually immersive for the audience. Timothy Bird and The Knifedge Creative Network created the projections.

legacy. *Sunday* is punctuated by these tableaux vivants; in Act I, characters stage the incremental creation of Seurat's painting, and in the second act, they ape the norms of a museum opening.⁴¹⁵ These tableaux vivants underscore the relationship between, in Act I, the characters and Seurat's painting, and, in Act II, the characters and the production and circulation of contemporary art. While the musical's tableaux vivants seemingly forge a link between performers' bodies and, for example, the persisting legacy of Seurat's painting, it is impossible to maintain stillness. The tableaux vivants always end; those moments when actors break out of their held poses renders legible *Sunday*'s core dramaturgy, which valorizes the cultural import of the 'timeless' artwork over and above characters, laboring to stay still, stuck in the corporeal purgatory of the stilled painted image. The held pose serves as a metaphor for the enduring legacy of certain artworks, collapsing an art object's cultural value onto and into the body.

This chapter examines the gendered dynamics among characters and how such dynamics impact an understanding of the visual cultures the musical references. Throughout *Sunday*, characters discuss gender: the gendered labor of painting or posing and the gendered class differences among characters. My analysis offers a feminist counter-reading of the relationship between George and Dot, recuperating her as not simply George's scored lover and the mother of his unclaimed child, but as central to framing the musical through remainders. While her

⁴¹⁵ Tableaux vivants are a theatrical convention dating back to at least the "late medieval and early renaissance periods," and performances of the *Quem Quaeritis* and similar liturgical dramas. The convention was used again in Europe, beginning in 1500s, as means of celebrating or commemorating royal visits or anniversaries. The use of tableaux vivants in theatre, though, is perhaps most associated with the nineteenth-century; theatrical troupes integrated the staging of a painting into the narrative of a play, either by, as in Victorian melodramas, having the actors form a picture on stage or by "constructing a play out of the story implied by a painting." Jack W. McCullough, *Living Pictures on the New York Stage* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981) 1-10.

The French philosopher and writer Denis Diderot used the tableau vivant as a means of producing a "certain kind of subject (an Enlightened, rational one) as a certain kind of object," i.e. the *mise en scène* of the tableau. The tableau vivant for Diderot functioned as an embodied illustration, which indexed an interface between 'live' and 'art.' Deborah Levitt, "Living Pictures: From Tableaux Vivants to Puppets and Para-Selves," *Acting and Performance in Moving Image Culture: Bodies, Screens, Renderings*, eds. Jörg Sternagel, et al (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2012) 179.

pregnancy serves as ancestral link between the two acts (the George in Act II is the great-grandchild of George/Seurat and Dot), reading the artworks that circulate in the musical through Dot renders legible the commercialism and commodification that undergirds the persisting legacy of *A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte*. The musical stages a gendered understanding of not only who is allowed to create art but also genders certain kinds of visuality.

This chapter links writing on late nineteenth century French painting with scholarship on American musical theater. There is a large body of popular scholarship on the Broadway musical, yet the form is often maligned within critical studies due to its embrace of spectacle, commercialism, and a certain anti-intellectualism (criticisms that do not necessarily map onto Sondheim's oeuvre).⁴¹⁶ Stacey Wolf and David Savran, two of the most prominent scholars on American musical theater, have discussed what the form reveals about gender, race, economics, and distinctions between 'high' and 'low' art.⁴¹⁷ While Wolf's gendered critiques of Sondheim's work is pertinent for my work here, the majority of scholarship on Sondheim or the American musical in the '70s and early '80s (the time period when *Sunday* was created and originally staged) is historical in scope, framing the form through the contributions of a set canon of

⁴¹⁶ See: Richard Kislak, *The Musical: a Look at the American Musical Theater* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980); John Clum, *Something for the Boys: Musical Theater and Gay Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

Sondheim's work has instead been described as "chilling cerebral and remote," "unhummable," and "clever and intelligent but cold," and he is credited with developing the "thematically orientated musical," as opposed to the narrative driven musical. Ben Brantley, "Down by the Blue Purple Yellow Red Water," *The New York Times* 22 Feb. 2008, 24 Oct.

2015 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/22/theater/reviews/22geor.html?pagewanted=all& r=0>>; Sandor Goodhart, "Reading Sondheim: The End of Ever After," *Reading Stephen Sondheim: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Sandor Goodhart (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) 3; Stacy E. Wolf, "Keeping Company With Sondheim's Women," *The Oxford Handbook of Sondheim Studies*, ed., Robert Gordon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) 365.

⁴¹⁷ See: David Savran, *Highbrow/lowdown: Theater, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Stacy E. Wolf, *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); "Keeping Company," 365-383.

composers, directors, and performers.⁴¹⁸ This chapter does not replicate this genealogical work, but rather questions what *Sunday* reveals about the interface between performance and visibility. Drawing upon social art historical scholarship, I read Sondheim and Lapine's musical through the social and cultural milieu of late nineteenth-century Paris (Act I) and late twentieth-century contemporary art (Act II). While I make note of Sondheim and Lapine's reputations and contributions to the musical stage, this chapter analyzes what *Sunday* does vis-à-vis questions of painting, art economies, cultural capital and legacies, and the gendered politics of display.

The chapter is divided into two interlinking sections. Following the structure of the musical itself I begin focused on Act I, analyzing the way in which artistic labor and agency are predicated upon gender within the structure and themes of the musical. While the acts are set some hundred years apart, I draw upon the conventions of the production's design as well as repeating themes of artistic labor, bodily commodification, and performance to question how the musical both stages and critiques the interface between performance and the visual arts. The musical's ability to link narratives across time proposes a new paradigm for understanding the overlaps between disparate visual contexts and art economies. *Sunday* centers visual art within a matrix that links its reception to embodied relationality and gendered visibility.

Reviewing the '08 revival, Ben Brantley at *The New York Times* wrote, "'Sunday' remains a lopsided piece — pairing a near-perfect, self-contained first act with a lumpier, less assured second half."⁴¹⁹ While critics like Brantley have decried the disjuncture between the two acts, the division between the two acts serves as a metaphor for the critical, material, and theoretical distinctions between live performance and remainders, which animates this project. I

⁴¹⁸ See: Banfield 1993; Ethan Mordden, *The Broadway Musical in the 1970s: One More Kiss* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Joanne Gordon, ed., *Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997); Sandor Goodhart, ed., *Reading Stephen Sondheim: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁴¹⁹ Brantley, "Down by the Blue Purple Yellow Red Water."

end with *Sunday*—a clear deviation from the works discussed in the previous chapters—as the theatrical stage and the musical’s themes re-script how scholars understand the intersection between performance and contexts and discourses of the visual arts. *Sunday* attests to a key blind spot within an emerging body of scholarship focused on the interface between performance and the contexts and discourses of the art world. While there are a few exceptions, theater’s imagined reliance upon narrative, plot, and characterization have rendered the form anathema to the contemporary art world.⁴²⁰ The musical comprises the various analytical modalities used across the project: visual images (Chapter One), critical memories evoked by the still pose (Chapter Two), and text (Chapter Three). In the conclusion, I return to the ways the musical recalls concerns from previous chapters, allowing for a theatrical re-imagining about how gender, images, the still pose, and artistic genius have been discussed. The proscenium stage offers a final frame for capturing a notion of performance remainder, structuring a relationship between live performance and embodied stillness and the cultural capital and import of artworks.

The Art of Being Still: Gendered Stages and Visual Cultures

⁴²⁰ The first US-based theater company to work with a museum, Native Voices, began their residency with the Autry National Center of the American West in Los Angeles in 1999. Native Voices, focused on new play development, exclusively produces works by Native American, Alaska Native and First Nation playwrights. While Native Voices is, in some ways, divorced from the Autry’s exhibitions, the company, nonetheless, offers a potent counter cultural narrative of the American West through the contemporary stories and voices of indigenous artists. In the spring of 2015 the New York-based theater company, the Civilians, completed a yearlong residency with The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The three works the Civilians devised during their residency were all staged in the museum and directly responded to the Met’s art objects and architectural features.

As Shannon Jackson writes, “Dance is... enjoying a special kind of incorporation in the art museum at present in a way that ‘Theater’ is not.” Jackson cautions that the binaries often erected to discuss the incorporation of live performance into visual art spaces turn the heterogeneous worlds of ‘performance’ and ‘visual art’ into singular entities. ‘Performance’ becomes code for performance art or contemporary dance. Aligned with Jackson’s critique, critic and performance curator Andy Horwitz wrote in 2011 “the visual arts world... finds theater laughable and as a result rarely studies it,” or, I would add, supports and curators it. Jackson urges scholars of performance to explore why theater is not being embraced with the same enthusiasm as contemporary dance or performance art. Shannon Jackson, “The Way We Perform Now,” *Dance Research Journal* 46. 3 (2014): 56-57; Andy Horwitz, “Visual Art Performance vs. Contemporary Performance,” *Culturebot: Maximum Performance* 25 Nov. 2011, 18 Oct. 2015 <<http://www.culturebot.org/2011/11/11663/visual-art-performance-vs-contemporary-performance/>>.

The 2008 revival of *Sunday* opens with an empty stage. As the lights come up, the audience sees the three white walls of the simple set. While a few set pieces and props are downstage left and right, the overwhelming visual impact of this initial moment is a bare stage, evoking the blank page or canvas waiting to be filled (or the empty gallery awaiting the next exhibit.) This opening tableau dissolves as Daniel Evens, the actor playing George, enters. As he speaks, “White. A blank page or canvas,” a black line snakes its way across the stage’s three walls as though sketched on a page. As Evens continues speaking—“Through design”—the line resolves into an approximation of the shoreline between park and lake that bisects the horizontal plane of Seurat’s painting.

Dot enters, played by Jenna Russell in the revival, as the animation springs into life behind George—images of sailboats lazily coast across the three walls, and figures walk through the park.⁴²¹ Soon after her entrance the opening song of the musical begins; sung by Dot, “Sunday in the Park with George” establishes not only the tenor of the two’s relationship but also sets in motion the musical’s themes of “creative genius...and...the creation of a timeless, transcendent artifact.”⁴²² Annoyed by George’s admonishment to stay still, Dot sings of the boredom and fatigue of posing.⁴²³ Her title song also, of course, indicates her position as a proxy for the audience; she is not George but, rather, describes what it is like to be *with* him, much as the audience is positioned as viewing the musical. Of course, there is a key distinction between Dot and the audience; she is the only one who is both viewer and *viewed*.

⁴²¹ In the 1985 Broadway production, Mandy Patinkin and Bernadette Peters originated the roles of George and Dot, respectively.

⁴²² Edward T. Bonahue, Jr., “Portraits of the Artist: Sunday in the Park with George as ‘Postmodern’ Drama,” *Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook*, ed. Joanne Gordon (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997) 172.

⁴²³ Sondheim refers to “Sunday” as an “inner monologue song.” Richard Kislán, “Stephen Sondheim,” *The Musical: a Look at the American Musical Theater* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980) 161.

Within the dramaturgy of Act I, stillness functions as a placeholder for the condition of being viewed or, in turn, viewing others. Stillness, and related terms like fixed, are spoken and sung throughout the first act. George chides Dot—as well as his other sitters—to “stand still,” while Dot describes George as “Fixed. Cold.”⁴²⁴ Stillness describes a desired physical state, a reflection of bodily concentration, allowing the living person to become akin to the static painted figure. It is also an emotional attribute, a castigation of the artist’s unfeeling nature. Its importance within the musical is foregrounded through its lyrical repetition and its physical embodiment in the repeated tableaux vivants. The question of stillness—and its inherent failure—animates a discussion of the gendered politics of artistic creation and the interface between the ‘still’ painting and live performance, creating, in the fractious dialogue between the visual and the aural, a provocation about what ‘artistic creation’ looks like. Reading Dot, not George, as the central character in Act I renders the persisting legacy of *A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte* legible through commercialization and commodification, revealing the gendered narratives of artistic genius and creation that reify categorizes of fine art over and above feminized visual production and cultures.

As the musical theme for “Sunday” swells, George and Dot are still speaking. Her character is based on the women in blue in the foreground of Seurat’s painting. The women and her male companion are the two most obviously (and awkwardly) on display in Seurat’s painting, their clear profiles presenting their fashionable clothing to the greatest effect.⁴²⁵ In these opening moments of the music, Russell, like the woman in the painting, is costumed in a skirt with a

⁴²⁴ Sondheim and Lapine 18, 22.

⁴²⁵ Indeed, the two seem almost a satire of the prevalence and importance of fashion within Impressionist paintings. Critics at the time and contemporary art historians have speculated that Seurat meant the two as a subtle critique, speculating that their overly-fashionable clothing (particularly the women’s) render them foolish, too trendy. Gloria Groom, ed., *Impressionism, Fashion, & Modernity* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2012) 267-69.

prominent bustle, and she balances a small indigo parasol on her shoulder. Over the music, Dot begins to speak:

Dot: I feel foolish.

George: Why?

Dot: I hate this thing. (*Indicating bustle*)

George: Then why wear it?

Dot: Why wear it? Everyone is wearing them!

George: Everyone...

Dot: You know they are.

George: Stand still, please.

Dot: I read they're even wearing them in America.

George: They are fighting Indians in America—and you cannot read.

...

George: Could you drop your head a little, please. (*She drops her head completely*)

Dot! (*She looks up, giggling*)

If you wish to be a good model you must learn to concentrate. Hold the pose. Look out at the water.⁴²⁶

This exchange sets up the still pose—or the tableau vivant—as a site of conflict and a bodily posture to which Dot and others are constantly admonished to return to by George. While George responds to Dot's comments, each of his rejoinders is patronizing. His initial question, "Then why wear it?" implies a critique of (feminized) fashion trends—the idiocy of wearing uncomfortable or constricting clothing simply because others are. Dot's response, nevertheless, affirms the necessity of dressing like everyone else, linking her choices to those of women in America. While George's questions reveal a contrary individualism (in line with the character's actions throughout the musical), Dot is invested in being in fashion, which, for her, allows for a sense of communal, trans-Atlantic, belonging. The two's banter about fashion, however, is quickly foreclosed by George; he ends continued discussion of Dot's bustle by stating, "Stand still, please," and finally "Hold the pose." This interlude reveals the patronizing logic of the pose: those that pose are always already subordinate to the act of artistic creation. Dot's discomfort with her clothing, her inability to read, or the US government's policies ("They are

⁴²⁶ Sondheim and Lapine 18-19.

fighting Indians in American”) are subsumed by the totalizing concentration required for George to create. Stillness functions as a proxy for the tension between originality and derivation, labor and creation, masculine visual logics and feminine visuality.

The exchange characterizes George as totally consumed with the task of sketching Dot’s figure, yet the specifics of their conversation nuances how her bustle, and by extension Dot herself, function within the musical. While George’s admonishment that she stand still renders legible the gendered dimension of the stance, the topic of their conversation—the bustle—frames the male-dominated and valorized field of ‘high art’ through the preoccupations of European 19th century feminine visual culture.⁴²⁷ A close reading of the bustle, in other words, “puts pressure on...notions...[like] artistic genius, greatness, quality, and the canon, as well as how such constructs were predicated upon and constitutive of masculinist systems.”⁴²⁸ Their conversation aligns George’s ‘high art’ to Dot’s preoccupation with ‘high fashion,’ categorizes of production and consumption linked to social standing and class status.

Dot’s allusion to American women wearing bustles indicates she is, like many women would have been in the Paris in the nineteenth century, a consumer of fashion magazines. Throughout Europe and the US in the nineteenth century, there were few avenues open to women to create images and few images created primarily for a female viewership. One notable and prolific exception was fashion plates, which circulated in the pages of fashion magazines and periodicals.⁴²⁹ Art historian Anne Higonnet contends fashion plates drew upon the iconography

⁴²⁷ Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” *Women, Art, and Power: and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988) 21-34; Griselda Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity, and the Histories of Art* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003) 50-90.

⁴²⁸ Temma Balducci and Heather Belnap Jensen, Introduction, *Women, Femininity and Public Space in European Visual Culture, 1789-1914*, eds. Temma Balducci and Heather Belnap Jensen (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014) 2.

⁴²⁹ In 1866, the fashion magazine *La Mode Illustrée* had 58,00 subscribers, which was “more than ten times the circulation of its July Monarchy counterparts and equal to that of...*Le Figaro*,” a popular political magazine. The ‘political’ magazine *L’Illustration*, justifying its creation of a journal specifically

of women's private drawings and watercolors to advertise and sell the latest styles. Most usually such images—self-portraits, portraits of children, home interiors—were collected into a single album, allowing a woman to flip through a self-authored curation of her life. Higonnet's study reveals the interconnectedness of women's private artistic creations and the far more popular and visible fashion images, in part establishing the importance of such albums through their influence upon fashion plates.⁴³⁰ While fashion magazines were part of a much larger nineteenth-century preoccupation with commodities and leisure time, fashion plates and the editorial content in such magazines reflected back to an affluent subsection of women images and text largely produced by women.⁴³¹ Fashion magazines presented, circulated, and repeated, with each new edition, a distinctly feminine visuality, centering feminine visual culture within French visual culture more broadly.⁴³² Dot is referencing a female-authored and female-aimed iteration of visual culture. It is a reference that might be read as an assertion of a feminine visuality counter to the masculinist visuality framed by Seurat's fine art.

dedicated to fashion, argued, "Fashion today is everywhere. The fashion journal has become as compelling a necessity for the wife as the political journal is for the husband." While *L'Illustration* maintained a gendered ideological divide, which underwrote much nineteenth-century discourse around fashion, the magazine's opening salvo—fashion today is everywhere—is a compelling claim for collapsing claims that sought to iterate divides between the political and the feminine. Continuing this line of argumentation, Honoré de Balzac wrote, "fashion is the expression of society... fashion is, all at once, an art, a custom, a sentiment." Justine De Young, "Representing the modern woman: the fashion place reconsidered (1865-75)," *Women, Femininity and Public Space in European Visual Culture, 1789-1914*, eds. Temma Balducci and Heather Belnap Jensen (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014) 97; De Young 99; Honoré de Balzac, *Treatise on Elegant Living*, trans. Napoleon Jeffries (Cambridge, MA: Wakefield Press, 2010) 147-53

⁴³⁰ Anne Higonnet, "Secluded Vision: Images of Feminine Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe," *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York: Harper Collins 1992) 171-185.

⁴³¹ The majority of editors and writers for fashion magazines were women. *La Mode Illustrée*'s editor and the team in charge of its plate production were all women; similarly, *Le Moniteur de la Mode* and *La Mode Artistique* were both edited by women. De Young 99; Higonnet 180.

⁴³² Fashion was so strongly associated with the feminine, because, following the French Revolution 'appropriate' displays of masculinity were increasingly distanced from the foppery that had previously defined masculine display in the aristocracy. Increasingly, women's fashion "took on a new social significance... her appearance was a guide to the affluence of her household... [and] was thus on permanent display." Marie Simon, *Fashion in Art: The Second Empire and Impressionism* (London: Zwemmer, 1995) 18.

Dot's allusion to reading about American women wearing bustles comes while George is viewing her. Her reference, then, to fashion magazines creates a subtle re-mapping of this unidirectional gaze; she, like George, is positioned as a consumer of images of women. Both viewer and viewed, Dot renders legible the expanded positionality of the live performer-cum-model on display. These few lines of dialogue and the opening song that follows allow Dot to express her emotional discontent with her role as model/lover, a discontent linked to her circumscribed bodily agency in service to George's art. Chapter Three discussed questions of embodied agency linked to simultaneously being viewed and viewing through contemporary museum performers' employment contracts; *Sunday* likewise renders such concerns legible. The musical, however, nuances such concerns through the form's conventions: sung address and emotional revelations.

Dot's bustle reveals how theatrical media like costumes, can represent "global human difference."⁴³³ Her series of pronouncements on the bustle render legible the commodified circulation of consumer objects in which she participates. While her bustle stands in for feminine visual cultures, it also represents globalized consumer culture. Dot's justification for wearing the uncomfortable bustle is that it is also being worn in America, placing her and her bustle within a trans-Atlantic circulation of commodity objects.⁴³⁴ (The *gauche* Americans who appear later in Act I likewise gesture at such trans-Atlantic circulations.) Theater scholar Joseph Roach argues, costumes and props function as synecdoche and metonyms on the theatrical stage; he writes, "when a crown arrives onstage as a visual metonym, it substitutes for many of the things its

⁴³³ Joseph Roach, "The Global Parasol: Accessorizing the Four Corners of the World," *The Global Eighteenth Century*, ed. Felicity A. Nussbaum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) 94.

⁴³⁴ Concurrent with the Haussmannization of Paris was the rise of mass production and industrialization, harbingers of the creation of the department store and ready-to-wear clothing; fashion was no longer the purvey of the wealthy, but rather something that could be enjoyed (or at least lusted after) by many segments of Parisian, and indeed European and US, society. Likewise, the expanding rail and postal networks meant that it was easier to ship Parisian goods to the French provinces and the broader world: what is being worn in the US is also being worn in Paris. De Young 98.

wearer would otherwise have to say and do to introduce...herself convincingly [as royalty] to the audience.”⁴³⁵ The bustle, then, is a visual metonym for fashion trends, which travel from Paris to the US.⁴³⁶ While the bustle might signify the trans-Atlantic circulation of consumer goods, on stage it serves “to identify or locate the wearer.”⁴³⁷ The bustle “stand[s] in for...[Dot’s] costume as a whole,” as the costume in very literal ways stands in for Dot.⁴³⁸ The bustle, adorning Dot’s figure renders the visual metonym legible through the garment’s propinquity to the body. The significations of the objects that populate the stage space (costumes, props, set pieces) are never far removed, either metaphorically or literally, from the body itself.

Dot, we understand because of her bustle, is the woman in blue in the foreground of Seurat’s painting, but, as a character, we also understand she is fashionable—indeed, to a fault. The bustles the women in the painting and Dot both sport are the *strapontin*, a more pronounced version of the garment introduced in 1883.⁴³⁹ As Justine De Young writes, “during the Second Empire and beyond,” fashion magazines no longer exclusively emphasized wearing the latest fashion trends.⁴⁴⁰ As ready-to-wear clothing and accessories were increasingly available to a larger cross-section of society, the ability to have the latest styles no longer signified one’s social

⁴³⁵ Roach 98.

⁴³⁶ In his essay, Roach traces connections between early modern drawings that document the scenographic details of theatrical productions and the frontispieces from concurrent global atlases. His argument entails mapping difference onto the costumes and accessories used in theatrical productions. In *Sunday*, however, the ‘map’ is not so literal. No longer an atlas, the forms of communication referenced in George and Dot’s exchange are the fashion magazine and the newspaper, far more textual forms of learning about distant places than the visual frontispieces. Fashion magazines were also a way of learning about distant places not through difference, but rather similarities born of consumer culture. The bustle collapses difference, rendering America and Paris equivalent.

⁴³⁷ Roach 98.

⁴³⁸ Part way through “Sunday,” as I discuss in more depth later, Dot the character/actor on stage is replaced by an animated silhouette. George continues to sketch the animation, projected on the stage wall, as Dot signs directly to the audience.

⁴³⁹ The *strapontin* “referred...to a structure of articulated hoops that could be raised against the back of a chair, and then swung back into place as soon as one got up. After 1885 Seurat repainted the women’s skirt, “enlarging and rounding out the bustle and raising the hemline off the ground.” These shifts were meant to ensure that the painting remained current in terms of shifting fashion trends. Simon 65; Debra N. Mancoff, *Fashion in Impressionist Paris* (London, New York: Merrell, 2012) 94.

⁴⁴⁰ De Young 99.

status. Rather, fashion editorials placed a greater emphasis on discernment: “not every new fashion should be followed,” fashion writers cautioned, “only those...in good taste.”⁴⁴¹ Dot’s costume visually marks her as overly frivolous and whose taste—and therefore respectability—is questionable. Most importantly, though, the bustle is a “visual metonym” for sameness itself.⁴⁴² Sameness and its opposite, uniqueness, are gendered. To be the same (i.e. fashionable) is devalued in relationship to George’s unique artistic talent and genius, a genius, which is distinctly masculine.

Beyond Dot’s fashionableness, her bustle also signifies class and race. George and Dot discuss the bustle in the same breath as American Indians. Their exchange directly links trans-Atlantic circulations of consumer fashions to the US government’s genocidal policies towards American Indians.⁴⁴³ The bustle, as a metonym for gendered conformity, instantiates a vision of Euro-American racial sameness, which, in its potency, does not need to reveal that which it is in contrast to, namely the American Indian imagined as sartorial, racially, and culturally ‘Other.’ The nineteenth century was “profoundly marked by the appeal of far-off lands [and peoples] and the discovery of everything unknown, strange, or supernatural.”⁴⁴⁴ Such ‘strange’ or ‘unknown’ peoples and places were presented en-mass to predominately non-indigenous, white European and American audiences through touring ethnographic villages, World’s Fairs, and museums.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴¹ De Young 99.

⁴⁴² Roach 103.

⁴⁴³ The first World’s Fair in 1851 at the Crystal Palace in London included an entire pavilion dedicated to French fashion as well as ethnographic displays. France was the only country throughout the nineteenth-century to continually present a pavilion dedicated to fashion. Simon 13; Susan Brown, ed., *Fashion: The Definitive History of Costume and Style* (New York: DK Publishing, 2012) 166-167.

⁴⁴⁴ Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch, and Nanette Jacomijn Snoep, eds., *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage* (Arles: Actes Sud; Paris: Musée du Quai Branly, 2011) 24.

⁴⁴⁵ To return to the allusion of the US-Indian wars remarked upon by George, William Cody, or Buffalo Bill, toured Europe in the late 1880s with his *Wild West Show* presenting the sharp shooters, cowboys, and American Indians of the US west. The show first toured England in 1886, the year Seurat was to finish and display *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* at VIIIème Exposition de peinture and the IIème Exposition de la Société des Artistes Indépendants in Paris. The Wild West Show returned to Europe in 1889 and was presented at the Paris Exposition. Figures like Oglala Lakota chief Ogilasa nee Joseph Red

Historian Michael Kwass argues that, by the nineteenth century, fashion was thoroughly linked to authenticity, which “was to be grounded in the body.”⁴⁴⁶ While Kwass’s ‘authentic body’ was that of the white, fashionable European, human zoos were grounded in a similar logic: clothing revealed an individual’s racial ‘authenticity.’⁴⁴⁷ Dot’s bustle serves an interface between the contemporary musical and discourses of display predicated upon ‘modernity’ and ‘primitivism.’ As museum studies scholar Tony Bennett argues the divide between modernity and primitivism was ideologically entrenched through the nineteenth century’s fascination with exhibition, which served to classify, separate, and, finally, render visible the imagined differences between “peoples and races.”⁴⁴⁸ The ‘Other’ marked by her bustle importantly remains invisible within the material and embodied world of the 2008 production of *Sunday*. George’s comment and Dot’s bustle enforce the unspoken racialized cultural view of Seurat’s painting, Impressionism more broadly, and the American musical. The alignment affirms the costume piece’s ability to signify visually the racial, gendered, and classed politics.⁴⁴⁹

Shirt, dressed in buckskin and feathered war bonnet, toured with the show. While Red Shirt’s participation in the *Wild West Show* has been contextualized as an attempt on his part to act as an envoy from tribal nations to non-native communities, images of Red Shirt that circulated as promotional materials for the show iterate a sartorial styling distinctly different from the white European dignitaries he was to meet: William Gladstone, the Prince of Wales, and Queen Victoria. Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: the Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

⁴⁴⁶ Michael Kwass, “Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France,” *The American Historical Review* 111.3 (2006): 653.

⁴⁴⁷ A French description from the early 1800s proposes that the ideal ethnographic exhibit should dress “each man...in the manner of his own country,” revealing the importance clothing played in presenting racial, ethnic, and gendered difference within such venues. Blanchard, Boëtsch, and Snoep 28.

⁴⁴⁸ Bennett writes, “the exhibition of other peoples served as a vehicle for ‘the edification of a national public and the confirmation of its imperial superiority.’” Paris exemplified the trend towards ever-greater exhibitions that separated colonial powers from colonized subjects. The 1889 Exposition in Paris, just three years after Seurat finished his painting, featured “simulated ‘native’ villages,” populated by Asian and African peoples. Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 77, 79, 83.

⁴⁴⁹ Kwass argues that Euro-American fashion consumer, by the nineteenth century, was not explicitly linked to class (or race), but rather consumption was “mediated by principles of utility, authenticity, individuality, and...cleanliness, taste, and health.” Fashion, thus, was not advertised as directly revealing

Centering the bustle within the musical, and its specific meanings linked to femininity, modernity, and consumerism, likewise centers concerns of circulation and display. The bustle, so clearly positioned as a luxury, consumer good renders the other object, which circulates in the musical legible as a consumer good: Seurat's painting. It is now owned by the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC), and in the decades following its completion in 1886, it was exhibited in Paris, Brussels, Minneapolis, and Boston before being bequeathed to the AIC in 1926.⁴⁵⁰ The exhibition history of the painting traces an emerging global pathway, foretelling the ubiquity of Impressionist works in museums around the world and the way such images have been re-purposed to adorn all manner of things. Numerous writers in the nineteenth century and contemporary art historians have noted Impressionist painters' acumen at depicting the consumer goods increasingly available in a modernizing Paris; it is, perhaps, a fitting legacy for such works that they are some of the most reproduced images in museum gift stores, adorning umbrellas and tote bags, posters and scarves. The bustle, representing mass production, foregrounds Seurat's painting not as a unique object of artistic creation, but rather as a mass-produced, globally circulating consumer good: re-printed on museum gift store items and enlivened by Sondheim and Lapine's musical. Framing the first act through Dot and her bustle exposes fashion and the painting as co-conspirators in a project of aligning aesthetics and consumption, codified notions of gender, race, and class, and exhibition and visibility.

The brief exchange between Dot and George reveals the parallel consumer histories of their respective objects, her bustle and his painting, while, nevertheless privileging Seurat's

one's class or wealth, but, instead, marked one as respectable. Fashion's efficacy as marking class was replaced with a broader range of signifiers that touched upon practicality, naturalness, authenticity, respectability, and vitality. Kwass 658.

Charles Baudelaire describes fashion as the ultimate symbol of modernity. Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen, 1869*, trans. Louise Varèse (New York: New Directions Publisher, 1970). Mancoff 10.

⁴⁵⁰ "About This Artwork: *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*," *Art Institute of Chicago*, 27 Oct. 2015

<<http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/27992>>.

painting. Clear in the oblique relationship between Dot's bustle and George's painting is the cultural cache afforded each object and, by extension, each character. The bustle was synonymous with frivolity and the ludicrousness of feminized commodity culture. Throughout the end of the nineteenth-century, it was repeatedly satirized in print culture and in theatrical works like George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.⁴⁵¹ Conversely, the very existence of *Sunday* bears out the continued and lasting legacy of Seurat and his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist peers. George's directive to Dot to "stand still," as she asserts a degree of self-reflection about notions of individuality (her conflicted response towards her bustle) reveals how the painting exerts a measure of control over and above the bodies of the people it depicts. Indeed, the slippage in my argument from the historic relationship between feminine visual cultures and Impressionism and the musical's dramaturgy renders the continuation of a gendered artistic narrative legible in the interface between Seurat's painting and Sondheim and Lapine's musical.⁴⁵²

The American musical has long trafficked in the portrayal of highly gendered (and racialized) characters. Certainly, this prescriptive analysis of the American musical holds greater analytic weight in the "Golden Age" of the musical, epitomized by the work of Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein (*Show Boat*) and the subsequent partnership between Richard Rogers and Hammerstein (*Oklahoma!*), yet Sondheim's musicals equally depend upon stereotype.⁴⁵³ As Wolf argues, "Sondheim's women...elicit the quintessential challenge of analyzing musical

⁴⁵¹ George Bernard Shaw, *Arms and the Man* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1926); Amber Butchart, "Exhibitionism: Fashion Fantasies—Fashion Plates and Fashion Satire 117-1925," *Amber Butchart: Fashion Historian* 21 March, 2011 27 Oct. 2015 <<http://amberbutchart.com/2011/03/21/exhibition-review-fashion-fantasies-fashion-plates-and-fashion-satire-1775-1925/>>.

⁴⁵² Historically, of course, *plein air* painting struggled to gain acceptance from the art establishment then dominated by the tradition and structures of academic painting. However, the circle of artists who advocated for and practiced what came to be known as Impressionism gained favor from the public, if art critics remained skeptical of their work. In a similar fashion, we might note the musical's struggle to be considered on par with 'straight' plays or tragedy.

⁴⁵³ Wolf, "Keeping Company," 366.

theater from a feminist perspective, because the characters tend to be stereotypically, even misogynistically, portrayed.”⁴⁵⁴ The Golden Age delimited and firmly established “two basic types: feisty women who fall for their men and trouble women who fall for their men,” and Sondheim’s oeuvre expanded upon this narrow range to include a measure of ambivalence.⁴⁵⁵ Sondheim’s female characters, as scholar Laura Hanson writes, give voice to their “doubts” and attempt to “sort out...their conflicting feelings towards love, marriage, men, their own self-images, and the pursuit of their dreams.”⁴⁵⁶ While his women are certainly more ambivalent about the normative gender expectations that were narrative hallmarks of previous eras of the American musicals, his female characters, nevertheless, function within a set of constraints that limit their agency.⁴⁵⁷

Hanson argues that Dot champions her own self-respect, “refusing...[George’s] explanation that she should be content because she is part of his work...[and] sings an assertion of her right to be her own person.”⁴⁵⁸ While Hanson offers a clear reading of “We Do Not Belong Together,” George and Dot’s last duet in Act I, her reading fails to account for Dot’s full narrative arch. Pregnant by George and unmarried, Dot may sing of her desire for more than George can offer her, but her self-actualization is not boundless. She leaves George for Louis the baker, needing the social respectability and financial security marriage to a man will bring. Likewise, the musical, while sympathetic to Dot, valorizes George’s artistic genius. Her ability to ‘create’ is funneled back through the heteronormative narrative of the Golden Age musical:

⁴⁵⁴ Wolf, “Keeping Company,” 365.

⁴⁵⁵ While Sondheim and his collaborators’ contributions to the American musical most clearly defined the 1970s, other works, like *Cabaret* (1966), *A Chorus Line* (1973), *Chicago* (1973), or *The Wiz* (1975) likewise pressed against the raced and gendered musical narratives that predominated throughout the 1940s and into the late ‘60s. Wolf, “Keeping Company,” 366.

⁴⁵⁶ Laura Hanson, “Broadway Babies: Images of Women in the Musicals of Stephen Sondheim,” *Stephen Sondheim, A Casebook*, ed. Joanne Gordon (New York: Garland, 1997) 14.

⁴⁵⁷ Hanson writes, describing the Golden Age musicals, “the act of marriage in musicals, with its promise of children, brings the characters in line with the civilizing mores of society and promises to perpetuate those values.” Hanson 14.

⁴⁵⁸ Hanson 16.

having a baby. It is her role as a mother, which, across the musical's two acts, proves to be her ultimate utility.⁴⁵⁹ That narrative arch, though, remains in the character's future as Dot starts to sing "Sunday."

As George returns to sketching following his directive to "Hold the pose. Look out at the water," she begins,

Dot: George.

Why is it you always get to sit in the shade while I have to stand in the sun?

George?

Hello, George?

There is someone in this dress! (*Twitches*)

A trickle of sweat. (*Twitch*)

The back of the—(*twitch*)

—head.

He always does this.

Now the foot is dead.

Sunday in the park with George.

One more Su—(*twitch*)

The collar is damp,

Beginning to pinch.

The bustle's slipping—(*twitch*)

I won't budge one inch. (*Tiny twitches*)

...

Artists are bizarre. Fixed. Cold.

That's you, George, you're bizarre. Fixed. Cold.

...

(*George races over to Dot and rearranges her a bit, as if she were an object, then returns to his easel and resumes sketching.*)

...

Well, if you want bread

And respect

And attention

Not to say connection,

Modeling's no profession. (*Poses*)

⁴⁵⁹ Certainly, other Sondheim heroines offer more compelling critiques of the gendered expectations of the musical theater heroine. *Follies*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Into the Woods*, for example, each feature female characters that buck notions of beauty, youth, and gendered expectations for romance and love.

If you want instead,
When you're dead,
Some more public
And more permanent
Expression
(Poses)
Of affection,
You want a painter⁴⁶⁰

The song's lyrics reveal the corporeal conditions of posing, describing modeling as requiring concentration, physical stamina, and an ability to ignore bodily discomfort. Describing the way in which her body aches to move while being painted or how the sweat rolls down her body, Dot animates the labor that prefigures and ghosts so many figural paintings hanging in museum galleries. It is only through her continual recitation of the ways in which posing affects her body that the task becomes legible *as* labor. Dot's lyrics ask an audience member to understand the creation of the Seurat's painting through their own bodies—imagining the phenomenological labor required to pose. While Dot enumerates the discomforts of modeling (sweat, itches, feet that fall asleep), the verse “Well, if you want bread/ And respect/ And attention/ Not to say connection, / Modeling's no profession,” moves beyond the bodily effects of posing to the socio-economic implications of such work. As Dot sings, modeling does not bring one economic security (like Louis, the baker), respect (like George), or connections. To pose is not a neutral act, the song reveals, but rather one tied to gendered expectations of muse and artist, class status, and emergent notions of ‘leisure time.’⁴⁶¹ The song's lyrics function on a meta-theatrical level, directing our attention not only to the relationship between George and Dot on stage but also the relationship between live performer and the absent composer and lyricist (Sondheim) whose

⁴⁶⁰ Sondheim and Lapine 21-24.

⁴⁶¹ Linda Nochlin, “Morisot's *Wet Nurse*: The Construction of Work and Leisure in Impressionist Painting,” *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York: Harper Collins 1992) 231-243.

words and notes condition Russell's performance. Particularly gendered and classed, the still pose required to model iterates one's social immobility: reveals stasis, fixity.

The constant repetition of the need to pose and stay still creates a useful and potent embodiment of the masculinist and authorial directives, which underwrote the visual hierarchies of nineteenth century French culture. In "Gossip," sung by the ensemble, the group holds a tableau while they sing about their various relationships and work. The tableau uses suspended movement—after all, actors can only remain still for so long—as a theatricalized and controlled choreography of suspense. When will the song end? When will the tableau break? When will a fight break out on stage? The staging, aided by the frozen projection of the park back grounding the actors, heightens the lyrics' barely contained discontent with class hierarchies. For example, the Boatman, continually cancerous throughout the show, sings,

Overprivileged women
Complaining,
Silly little simpering
Shopgirls,
Condescending artists
'Observing,'
'Perceiving'...
Well, screw them!⁴⁶²

His lyrics strike out against his more affluent park companions, his ire particularly gendered, reserved for upper-class women and silly shopgirls. Yet the controlled and largely still staging of the song offers an embodied contrast to his lyrics, underlining the tense balance required to maintain class status as Paris rapidly modernized. The ensembles' tableau vivant frames stillness as the corporeal state just before the class revolution.

Unlike the ensemble, who hold their still pose throughout "Gossip," Dot leaves her still pose mid-way through "Sunday." Following George's manhandling, the lights change, indicating a shift in how the audience is meant to interpret Dot's song. She is no longer in the same scene as

⁴⁶² Sondheim and Lapine 44.

George, dutifully posing for him; rather, she is singing her innermost thoughts and feelings to the audience. As she sings, “Well, if you want bread,” Dot begins to move across the stage space. Hooking her parasol over George’s arm, she claims the downstage, arms spread wide as she signs. Her dynamic movement is linked to a shift in the animation. A bright white silhouette of Dot appears on the wall behind her; it is this silhouette that George continues to sketch, as she sings of her frustration with George’s inability to connect. In the original production, Bernadette Peters’s dress opened, allowing her to move about the stage space dressed in corset and bloomers, the padded infrastructure of her bustle clearly visible. While Peters’s staging was coquettish, and foreshadowed the upcoming scene in which the character appears at her dressing table in her underthings, the ’08 design choice eschewed this sexualized construction of femininity.⁴⁶³

More potently for an analysis vis-à-vis the bustle, the white animated silhouette on the stage wall reveals Dot’s ultimate utility. In the interplay among Dot, her bustle, and the projected silhouette of her form, the musical’s scenography literalizes Roach’s argument; the silhouette, however, also shifts his argument, grounded in the propinquity between actor and costume.⁴⁶⁴ The bustle represents Dot not because the garment enfolds her body, but precisely because the silhouette is not linked to her body. In the spatial and material distance between Dot and the two-dimensional animation, the silhouette underscores the extent to which she is merely a shape, an object, within George’s artistic process. It is her shape, rendered as clean geometric lines and curves that is of interest to George. Dot’s silhouette plays “between [the] seen and unseen,” revealing the fashionable “contour of [her]” clothing and her particular currency within the arch

⁴⁶³ The duet “Color and Light,” stages yet another of Seurat’s paintings, *Jeune femme se poudrant*. Dot, sitting at her vanity, embodies the women in the painting. Originally, an additional painting, *Une baignade, Asnières*, was also to have its own song, but, in the final production, it is only a short scene near the start of the show. A large frame is wheeled on stage, the painting projected into it. The song the boys in the painting were to sing, “Yoo-hoo!” survives only as underscoring. Banfield 358.

⁴⁶⁴ Roach 98.

of the musical's narrative and the historical discourses of the late nineteenth-century.⁴⁶⁵ As Sean Metzger writes, "the silhouette connotes a...form but also a surface without substance." and, etymologically, indicates "something done cheaply."⁴⁶⁶ Dot's animated silhouette can be contextualized in relationship to notions of feminized frivolity that attached to fashion but also to its shifting economic structure, in which goods could be made ever more cheaply for sale in large department stores. Within histories of visual culture, the silhouette is also particularly gendered and sexualized. A tantalizing mystery, a woman's silhouette reveals just the shape of a body—or garment—evacuating the individual. Roach's argument frames how costumes and props render legible the gendered, racialized, or classist assumptions that instantly identify and explain a character. Dot's bustle not only identifies the character, but also, the silhouette reveals, substitutes the character for the garment, the animated outline of her shape masking the woman herself.

The nineteenth century writer Constant de Tours, a pseudonym for Constant Chmielenski, described the silhouette as a form, which particularly marked and interpolated a woman as Parisian. He writes, "The Parisian woman! That pretty silhouette that one recognizes with a joyful heart on returning to Paris... Who is she? A great lady, a rich or not so rich bourgeoisie, a factory worker, a shopkeeper... a department store employee, or a worker... In a word, she is all Parisian women."⁴⁶⁷ Chmielenski's description from 1890 of the silhouette depends, as Metzger describes, upon the visible: he *sees* women in the streets and public spaces of the city. His description, however, also evacuates the individuation of a wide socio-economic range of women; there are not Parisian women so much as a Parisian Woman, a move from the individual

⁴⁶⁵ Sean Metzger, *Chinese Looks: Fashion, Performance, Race* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014) 139.

⁴⁶⁶ Metzger 139.

⁴⁶⁷ Constant Chmielenski (pseud. Constant de Tours), *Guide-album de tourist: Vingt Jours à Paris* (Paris: Maison Quantin, 1890) 56.

to the symbolic achieved through the silhouette. The bustle, however, replaced the far fuller crinoline in the late 1860s. The bustle's silhouette was imagined as allowing the wearer a greater degree of freedom than the larger and more cumbersome crinoline, for all that it disciplined a woman's body, forcing her to move and occupy space in particular ways.⁴⁶⁸ While the animated silhouette indicates the objectifying logic that underwrites Dot's relationship with George and the construction of femininity within nineteenth-century Paris, it also iterates a certain notion of female emancipation and women's increasing presence on Paris's public streets.

While the silhouette trades on the (sexualized) form of the women's body, clothed or otherwise, Metzger's analysis ends arguing that the silhouette makes visible a transformational process.⁴⁶⁹ The silhouette appears in theater and film, he argues, during those moments in which a turning point is in store for a character; the outline of the character's form indicated that what might fill in that outline is not yet clear, not yet decided. If the silhouette marks a moment of becoming, the technologies of Western theatrical scenery are likewise grounded in a history of becoming. Introduced to the English-speaking stage in the mid-1600s, moveable scenery was a key scenographic innovation that meant audiences were no longer forced to imagine the setting for each scene in a play, but could instead be visually transported to ever-changing locales.⁴⁷⁰ The silhouette, thus, functions as a sight of becoming in several ways. Disaggregating the character Dot from her form, the projected silhouette allows Dot to leave her still pose and sing out to the audience her inner most feelings. The appearance of her silhouette marks a moment of transformation for Dot, or at least the beginning of the character's narrative arch, which concludes with her leaving George and immigrating to America. As part of the musical's larger scenographic deployment of animation, the silhouette performs a continual becoming-visible of

⁴⁶⁸ De Young 98.

⁴⁶⁹ Metzger 156, 158.

⁴⁷⁰ Roach 93.

Seurat's painting. The animated silhouette is an interface among the character, her costume, the (animated) set, and the historic painting.

Dot's song ends with, "But most of all/ I love your painting..."⁴⁷¹ Musically, the melody that supports her lines is made up of a plethora of eighth notes, resembling "the flickering light effects that Seurat and his contemporaries would achieve with their dots."⁴⁷² The musical composition of her song reveals Sondheim's desire to demonstrate the compositional similarities between his music and Seurat's painterly techniques.⁴⁷³ As the last notes of "Sunday," fade, Dot returns to her initial still pose. The last few lines of the song are semi-spoken,

Dot: The tip of a stay.
Right under the tit.
No, don't give in, just
Life the arm a bit...

George: Don't lift the arm, please.
Dot: Sunday in the park with George...
George: The bustle high, please.⁴⁷⁴

While the visual placement of the notes on the page and their aural performance calls back to Seurat, Dot's lines add a gendered dimensions to the aural allusion to the painter. Her lyric directly following her pronouncement of how much she loves George's paintings is "I think I'm fainting." Dot speaks the line as she returns to her position, and the white animated silhouette on the stage wall disappears. As Russell walked back across the stage, though, her body cast a long dark shadow across the walls of the stage, a dark twin to the white animated silhouette still

⁴⁷¹ Sondheim and Lapine, *Sunday in the Park*, 24.

⁴⁷² Stephen Banfield, *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 351.

⁴⁷³ This musical homage to another genre of art making, however, is not limited to the obvious allusion to Seurat. Stephen Banfield argues that throughout *Sunday*, and most overtly in Dot's opening song, Sondheim references Wagner. While Banfield is interested in the ways in which Sondheim seemingly incorporated musical forms and techniques occurring contemporaneously to Seurat's painting practice, here I am interested in the subtle allusion to the *gesamtkunstwerk*. The aural link within the song's final refrain to an artist committed to thinking across aesthetic practices—music, dance, painting—asserts a link between art practices imagined as distinct.

⁴⁷⁴ Sondheim and Lapine, *Sunday in the Park*, 24-25.

projected on the wall. Her shadow added layers of visual depth to the animation: an embodied indexical mark, lingering across the stage's walls. Russell's shadow functioned as an indexical rejoinder to the animation, marking the actress's embodied presence on stage, challenging the layers of stillness—the painting, the animated silhouette, George's directs to 'stay still'—to which Russell's character was subject. As each of the chapters in this project reveals, women's bodies are always already poised to be framed as objects in relationship to the contexts and discourses of the visual arts. Dot's movements and Russell's shadow critically animate that framing, pressing against an authorial, masculinist logic that would still the body.

The stage space not only re-animates the objectifying logic of the museum, but also allows for a re-imagining of labor and class vis-à-vis visibility. The woman represented in *A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte* on whom Dot is based, is undoubtedly of a higher economic and social status than that afforded the character. The woman in the painting's fashionable dress and her well-suited companion seem to represent members of the *haute-bourgeois*. Dot, conversely, becomes pregnant by George out of wedlock, and with limited options, marries Louis the baker for economic security. The character is also illiterate, and Russell portrays her, in a collision of class signifiers, with a broad Cockney accent, a musical convention that, helped by *My Fair Lady*, established the accent as a marker of class status. Dot represents not so much a confounding ahistorical characterization of the woman in the painting, but rather an amalgamation of a shifting understanding of the ways in which class, wealth, and status were rendered legible or obfuscated by consumer goods.

Dot's characterization, like the woman in the painting, is a facsimile of two distinct nineteenth century French female archetypes: the tasteful, genteel woman and the prostitute.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁵ Scholars have focused on the genteel woman as a way of historicizing the access women (of a certain class and privilege) had to public spaces and discourses, education, and artistic training. The prostitute, conversely, provides a particularly potent way to question the gendered dimensions of Paris's rapidly

The two figures in the painting, however, have also been historicized as a “cocotte or kept woman,” and her male companion.⁴⁷⁶ Cocottes, unlike ‘respectable’ women, were members of the demimonde, the “segment of Parisian society known for launching the latest” fashion trends.⁴⁷⁷ Demimondaines were also referred to as *singesses*, or female monkeys, and were known for strolling through Paris with small dogs, a means of garnering male attention. The fact, then, that the woman in the painting is accompanied by a male companion, a monkey, *and* a small dog seemingly signifies her status as a sexually available woman. Dot straddles these two historic and discursive figures, her fashionable dress placing her visually within the upper class, while her narrative arc, tied to her sexual promiscuity and unplanned pregnancy, align her with sex workers.

Dot represents a counter-framing of the musical, valorizing and privileging not the masculinist artistic practice and invisibilized labor of Seurat but rather centering considerations of embodied, gendered labor. If the musical seeks to complexify the discourse surrounding Seurat’s legacy (the artist a stand-in for both a larger canon of nineteenth-century European

shifting urban infrastructures and the Empire’s historic gendered inequities. Likewise, scholars have recuperated the figure as one iteration of a *flâneuse*. Paris was the center of sex work Europe in the nineteenth century, and while the state beginning in 1804 regulated prostitution, such safeguards were for the safety of Johns not workers, who were increasingly concerned with contracting venereal diseases. Additionally, women’s presence in public spaces, particularly as shop girls within the ever-growing service sector, produced a literal alignment of women’s bodies and consumption. Shop girls were paid very little, and, so to augment their low wages, many turned to prostitution. Working without the oversight of the state, they were able to keep all their earnings. Indeed, shop girls working as prostitutes were so common, the term was euphemistically used to refer to sex workers. Nochlin, “Morisot’s *Wet Nurse*,” 234.

For discussions of the prostitute as *flâneuse* see: Elizabeth Wilson, “The Invisible Flâneur,” *New Left Review* 191 (1992): 90-110; Susan Buck-Morss, “The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore,” *New German Critique* 39 (1986): 99-139.

⁴⁷⁶ Martha Ward, “The eighth exhibition 1886: the Rhetoric of Independence and Innovation,” *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874-1886*, ed. Charles S. Moffett (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986) 434.

⁴⁷⁷ Not only the pronounced bustle but also the woman’s ‘breastplate’ bodice, her skirt with its pleated under layer and apron-like *tablier* drapery in the front, kid gloves, parasol with ribbon trim, and masculine hat mark her as a follower of the latest styles. Helen Burnham, “Changing Silhouettes,” *Impressionism, Fashion, & Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2012) 269; De Young 99.

artists and the more abstracted notion of artistic genius and obsession) *Sunday*, nevertheless, privileges the iconic figure. For all he eschews relationships, the audience is meant to sympathize, or at least respect, his artistic passion and drive.⁴⁷⁸ Dot begins the song “Color and Light” with the observation, “Sometimes he will work all night long painting...George doesn’t need as much sleep as everyone else.”⁴⁷⁹ The song offers insight into his particular artistic temperament—obsessive. Singing over and over again lyrics such as, “Red red red red/Red red orange/Orange pick up blue/Pick up red/Pick up orange,” and “There’s only color and light,” George simultaneously avows the laborious attention required to create his Pointillist works while, nevertheless, re-framing the repetitive labor of putting dots of paint on the canvas as an almost meditative process.⁴⁸⁰

Dot, conversely, represents a distillation of Seurat’s painting. Her name indicates that she stands in as an embodied placeholder for Seurat’s particular painterly technique; Dot, from her very naming, embodies Seurat’s painting.⁴⁸¹ If the pun on Dot’s name interpolates her as the material for Seurat’s painting, she also is meant to function as an embodiment of Sondheim’s score, the notes on the page a transposition of Seurat’s dots into music.⁴⁸² She offers, then, a re-imagining of Seurat and also of Sondheim. On a meta-theatrical level she functions as an (often critical) observer of not only George with whom she shares the stage, but also of Sondheim as composer. Dot, then, presses against what is meant by ‘artistic genius’ not because she, as a character, adds emotional depth to Seurat’s artistic legacy or helps to explain the ‘man behind the

⁴⁷⁸ Indeed, theater reviewers and scholars often make at least a passing reference to the thinly veiled autobiographical nature of the piece, Seurat a stand in for Sondheim. Frank Rich, “Stage: ‘Sunday in the Park with George’,” *The New York Times* 3 May 1984, 1 Dec. 2015
<<https://www.nytimes.com/books/98/07/19/specials/sondheim-george.html>>.

⁴⁷⁹ Sondheim and Lapine 33.

⁴⁸⁰ Sondheim and Lapine 33-37.

⁴⁸¹ Thomas P. Alder, “The Sung and the Said: Literary Value and the Musical Dramas of Stephen Sondheim,” *Reading Stephen Sondheim: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed., Sandor Goodhart (New York: Routledge, 2000) 52.

⁴⁸² The character’s name is attributed to Lapine.

paintings,' but because her still poses and her bustle render legible the sexist visual politic of the time period being theatricalized and the musical's core dramaturgy. A close reading of Dot reveals a feminist counter-dramaturgy, revealing how feminine visual cultures, histories, labor, and agency might be centered within the first act. By framing the character out of the musical's dramaturgy and placing her, instead, within art historical discourses of feminine visual culture and attending to the way in which stillness functions in the first act Dot can be recuperated as a feminist counter to Seurat-cum-Sondheim's masculinist discourses of artistic creation. Not simply a staging of a painting, *Sunday* uses the connotations of bodily stillness as a means of parsing out questions of gender and labor, returning an audience member constantly to how the body is able—or unable—to be still. *Sunday* renders legible the relationship among gender, agency, and mobility and asks a viewer to understand Seurat's painting as a pictorial remainder of embodied labor.

This feminist counter-analysis of *Sunday* becomes possible by foregrounding the musical's performance remains and afterlives. Certainly, the musical is ideal for this mode of analysis, constructed as it was around Seurat's painting and in conjuncture with the painting's hundredth anniversary. An object—or remainder—and its lasting cultural legacy, thus, conditioned the musical's creation. By aligning Dot's costume and the animated projections with the first act's themes and narrative, the gendered subtext of artistic creation, labor, and legacies emerges. The bustle, analyzed through Russell's costume, lines of dialogue, or the bright white silhouette that appears on the stage wall, presses against *Sunday*'s dominant narrative of individual artistic genius, revealing how the narrative is predicated upon gendered ideologies. A close reading of the garment reveals how such ideas are contingent upon a masculinist construction of fine art. Drawing upon Seurat and the Impressionist's lasting popularity, *Sunday*'s premise is dependent upon the mechanisms of collection, display, exhibition, and

circulation, which ensured such art works continued popularity and art historical importance. If the musical's narrative is grounded in Seurat's legacy, *Sunday's* 2008 Broadway revival merely underscores the extent to which the show is framed through the reproductive or repetitive logic of display and circulation. Seurat's legacy, in other words, becomes entrenched through the continual presentation of his art works. The bustle, then, bisects this logic of reproduction, rendering legible the gendered memory of art making.

The department store, the purveyor of ready-made fashion like Dot's bustle, emerged in relationship to concurrent modernist projects like "history and natural science museums, dioramas and panoramas, national, and, later, international exhibitions, [and] arcades."⁴⁸³ Such spaces were, to greater and lesser degrees, public venues in which people learned how to behave, as previously discussed in Chapter Two. Including spaces like arcades and department stores within a broader history of the emergence of exhibitionary contexts clarifies that such spaces were not only about learning how to behave 'properly' but also about "self-education from the point of view of capital."⁴⁸⁴ The bustle's history, linked to ready-made fashion, trans-Atlantic circulation, fashion magazines, and department stores, frames how we might understand the emergence of art museums as linked to commodity consumption. The strengthening of the art market in the 1980s, which the second act dramatizes by staging a museum opening, is not a radical shift from the content of the first act but merely an expansion of the prominence of the commodity-object, already circulating in Act I. The bustle, then, centers and foreground Dot's role, and serves as an unlikely link to the second act, in which the museum proper takes center stage.

⁴⁸³ Bennett 59.

⁴⁸⁴ Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976) 83.

While the musical's two acts are separated by a century, Act I conditions the way in which an audience receives the second act's commentary on art practices and markets. Act I juxtaposes and distances artistic creation from the labor of the other characters, and the second act takes up the notion of the artist as laborer, contextualizing that labor through the immaterial practice of 'networking.' The second act translates themes of art historical legacies into questions of art's cultural and economic capital.⁴⁸⁵ Act I revealed the 'genius' of the artist—a genius, which avowedly eschews the messiness of interpersonal relationships; Act II set in the present (i.e. 1984) stages the de-materialization of the art object, framing how the artist is scripted into a new economic dialogue. It is one increasingly predicated upon 'selling' one's particular aesthetic and point of view to museum curators, directors, donors, and gallery owners as opposed to selling one's artistic product.⁴⁸⁶ Act I dramatizes the production of visual art while Act II dramatizes its exhibition and circulation, shifting from foregrounding those who produce art to the art market writ large, which might be understood as producing narratives of genius and desirability.

The Economics of the Still Pose: Staging the Artist as Brand

Sunday's shorter second act takes place predominantly in a museum gallery as the contemporary (i.e. 1984) artist, likewise named George, attends the opening reception for his latest work, the *Chromolume #7*.⁴⁸⁷ Commissioned by the museum that also owns Seurat's painting, George's piece commemorates the painting's hundredth anniversary. The seventh in a

⁴⁸⁵ While the two acts are separated by some hundred years, the melodic through line that began with Dot's release in "Sunday" is only fulfilled at the end of Act II, when George meets Dot's specter, understood to be the contemporary artist's great-grandmother. The musical motif aurally entrenches the themes of love and family that underline the entire musical. While Sondheim has described *Sunday* as a thoroughly conservative view on art, one might also apply his descriptor to the musical's heteronormative treatment of familial ties and obligations. Bonahue 172.

⁴⁸⁶ Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004) 47.

⁴⁸⁷ I distinguish between George in Act I and George in Act II by referring to the first act character as George/Seurat and the contemporary artist as simply George.

series of similar works, the Chromolume is described in the stage directions as a “machine...post-modern in design...dominated by a four-foot-in-diameter sphere at the top. It glows a range of cool colored light.”⁴⁸⁸ The act focuses on the various conversations that define an opening, and frames the process of artistic creation as one of ‘putting it [i.e. a new commission] together’ one connection and conversation at a time, an economic re-imagining of Seurat’s practice of applying color dot by dot onto his canvases. The material for artistic creation, in other words, shifts: no longer paint it becomes the content of individual conversations between artistic collaborators, donors, museum curators, and art critics.

Both acts reveal an underlying dramaturgy that devalues overly commercial and trendy things—whether it be the bustle or the Chromolume—privileging an image of the artist as solitary creative genius. In Act II, this image of the artist emerges and is reinforced through the echoes between the two acts and the animated projections. *Sunday* deploys double casting (casting one actor to play multiple roles) as a means of reinforcing ideas about characters. This is most true for the leads, George/George and Dot/Marie, as the double casting alludes to the familial connections among the four. The specter of the first act’s characters inform the characterization of the more minor characters as well, re-inscribing clear and unfavorable notions about artistic labor and art economies. The double casting internally creates performance afterlives within the musical, the first act continuing to inform and compose the second.

⁴⁸⁸ In the 1985 production, the Chromolume was a large, cumbersome set piece, a large disco-ball positioned atop a pedestal. In the 2008 production, the piece is never seen on stage. Rather, a kaleidoscope-like projection of colored light envelopes the entire stage. Largely dark, the stage’s three walls are covered by a pulsating, ever-shifting pattern of blue, red, and green dots. Like the time-lapse animation of museumgoers observing Seurat’s painting, which opened the act, the projection includes a forced perspective. The museum seems to be not only the real space of the material stage but also a series of virtual galleries reaching away from the audience. While perhaps overly illustrative of the color theory that animated Seurat’s practice, the light machine, nevertheless, represents a transformation in what the end result of artistic creation looks like. No longer tied to notions of artistic mastery or the individual labor of the artist, the *Chromolume #7* represents the rise of conceptual art and the de-materialization of the art object. Sondheim and Lapine 133.

Beyond the double casting, however, staging parallelisms between Dot in Act I and George in Act II articulate *Sunday*'s core dramaturgy, which imagines and valorizes fine art as existing outside market forces and feminizes and devalues visual cultures that are a part of the market. Akin to the animated silhouette of Dot's figure that stands in for the character and she sings her inner feelings to the audience, animated doubles of George replace the artist throughout Act II. Circulating amongst patrons, art critics, and dealers at his opening, these simulacra stand in for George, accomplishing his networking obligations as he sings of his distaste for such events. Within the context of the gallery opening, George's animated doubles iterate a notion of the artist as circulating brand. The second act's tone makes clear that for Sondheim and Lapine this understanding of the artist is suspect and inauthentic. In Act II, the still tableaux no longer locate authorial control with the figure of the singular artist, but rather position the amorphous contemporary art market writ large as the site of control.

The main action of the second act begins with George and his grandmother, Maria, giving a presentation on the artist's relationship to Seurat's painting. Played respectively by Evans and Russell, the two reveal that Maria is Dot and George/Seurat's child, making George Seurat's great-grandchild. The relationship among George/Seurat, George, Dot, and Maria narratively links the two acts through the characters' ancestral ties. Throughout the opening, guests repeatedly comment upon the artist's personal link to Seurat. His familial relationship to the nineteenth century painter serves as a continual foil to the superficial connections he makes with donors or curators. Indeed the musical concludes highlighting the notion of family; having traveled to Paris to install his Chromolume on Island of La Grande Jatte, George suffers a crisis of artistic creation, convinced he has run out of original ideas and is merely creating the same artwork over and over again (there are, after all, seven Chromolumes). In the midst of his self-doubt, though, George is visited by Dot's specter who inspires him to re-imagine his creative

process. The ending, which valorizes individual artistic genius, creative ‘authenticity,’ and reinscribes Dot’s role as muse to a male artist, is upheld over and above the image of the artist presented at the opening.

Following George and Marie’s presentation, the various characters at the opening debate the relative merits of the Chromolume. Harriet Pawling and Billy Webster, a patron of the arts and her date, begin the second act’s main song, “Putting it Together.” The actress who played Mrs.— the gauche American woman who visits Paris with her husband to purchase Impressionist paintings in Act I—returns as Harriet.⁴⁸⁹ Across both acts, Mrs./Harriet is a patron of the arts, a wealthy figure who purchases or otherwise financially supports artists. Harriet, however, is also marked by the earlier character’s gracelessness and crudeness. Art, for both characters, is a symbol of status and cultural capital.

Billy: Well, I can’t say that I understand what that light machine has to do with his painting.

Harriet: Darling, it’s a theme and variation.

Billy: Oh. Theme and variation.

...

Harriet: I mean, I don’t understand completely—

Billy: I’m not surprised.

Harriet: But he combines all these different trends.

Billy: I’m not surprised.

Harriet: You can’t divide art today/Into categories neatly—

Billy: Oh.

Harriet: What matters is the means, not the end.

Billy: I’m not surprised.

Harriet and Billy: That is the state of the art, my dear,

That is the state of the art.

For Billy and Harriet, the meaning of George’s abstracted non-figural art is unclear. Indeed, their sung conversation is predicated upon the search for a meaning (“I don’t understand completely”) for all that Harriet’s recitation of banal explanations of contemporary art bely a pat meaning.

Harriet’s comment, “You can’t divide art today/Into categories neatly,” acknowledges the

⁴⁸⁹ In the 2008 production Judith Moore played Mrs., Harriet, and the Nurse. Cris Groenendaal played Louis the baker in Act I and Billy in Act II.

breakdown of codified notions of fine art. Yet her earlier line, “But he combines all these different trends,” reveals the musical’s stance on that breakdown; contemporary art, in *Sunday*’s valuation, is not, as critics, curators, and scholars might describe it, post-studio, conceptual, dematerialized, or post-medium. Rather, George’s Chromolume is trendy, whereas George/Seurat’s painting represents ‘authentic’ artistic creativity.

Bob Greenberg and Lee Randolph, respectively the museum’s director and publicist, continue the evaluation of George’s work, performing the next verse in “Putting it Together.” The same actor who played Jules, George/Seurat’s artistic rival in the first act, plays Greenberg, while the same actor who played Mr., Mrs. equally crass husband, plays Randolph.⁴⁹⁰ Thus, while the two continue the line of questioning begun by Harriet and Billy, the double casting paints the museum’s management as both petty—Jules—and gauche—Mr.

Greenberg (to Redmond): Times change so quickly.

Randolph: Lord knows.

Greenberg: That’s the challenge of our work. You never know what movement is going to hit next. Which artist to embrace.

...

Greenberg: It’s not enough knowing good from rotten—

Randolph: You’re telling me—

Greenberg: When something new pops up every day.

Randolph: You’re telling me—

Greenberg: It’s only new, though, for now—

Randolph: Nouveau.

Greenberg: But yesterday’s forgotten.

Randolph: And tomorrow is already passé.

Greenberg: There’s no surprise.

Randolph and Greenberg: That is the state of the art, my friend,

That is the state of the art.

Greenberg and Randolph continue to discuss George’s work through the lens of the trendy. Art, as they rather exhaustingly describe it, is constantly changing, adapting and adopting the latest styles. The four characters’ appraisal of George’s work hinges upon the financial: is he, and by extension his Chromolumes, a good investment? Harriet, Billy, Greenberg, and Randolph

⁴⁹⁰ Charles Kimbrough played Jules and Greenberg, and Kurt Knudson played Mr. and Randolph.

represent groups imagined, within the conservative ethos of the musical's creators, as unaware of the 'true' value and historical import of fine art. The musical's clear denunciation of the characters' assessments of art emerges through the resonances between tonally similar characters returning differently in Act II.

This valuation of the Chromolume, and indeed the art world more broadly ("this is the state of the art," after all) links George's machine to Dot's overly fashionable and frivolous bustle from Act I. In the first act, masculine fine art was valorized over and above feminine visuality, and the gendered dimensions of these respective visual forms neatly aligned with the gender of the characters. In the final act, however, the gendered dimensions of such valuations shift. Rather, the parallelism between Dot and George renders legible the musical's dramaturgy, which frames art as that which exists *outside* market forces. What capitulates to the market—fashion or artistic trends—is devalued and feminized.

The various evaluations of George's art circulate while the artist is off stage. Re-entering to polite applause from the guests, George begins to sing,

All right, George.
As long as it's your night, George...
You know what's in the room, George:
Another Chromolume, George.
It's time to get to work...
...
Say 'cheese,' George,
And put them at their ease, George.
You're up on the trapeze, George.
Machines don't grown on trees, George.⁴⁹¹

His lyrics illustrate the artist's own internal monologue, gearing himself up to begin each new conversation with, amongst others, Harriet, Billy, and Greenberg. The ending repetition of George's name characterizes for the audience how he feels about networking: a seemingly arduous task, for which he needs mentally to prepare himself. The ending repetition, however,

⁴⁹¹ Sondheim and Lapine 143-144.

also illustrates the way in which contemporary artists traffic as a brand, of a sorts, of themselves. As Miwon Kwon asserts the artist, or rather “an artist’s characteristic mode of operation...[circulates] as a new art commodity, with the artist him/herself functioning as the primary vehicle for its verification, repetition, and circulation.”⁴⁹² Lyrically illustrating Kwon’s point, “Putting it Together” instantiates through repetition the politics of artistic circulation, which, in part, define the successful contemporary artist. The repetition of the name replaces the artwork—the Chromolume—with the artist: the ultimate art commodity for purchase and circulation.

Breaking up each of George’s sung verses, are interludes of spoken dialogue, as he interacts with the various guests at the opening. Each time Evans begins to sing again the ensemble forms a still tableau. Like in Act I, the artist remains free from the immobilizing logic of the tableau, yet, unlike in the first act, these tableaux are not directed by George/Seurat to aid in his art practice. Rather, the tableaux illustrate the expansion outwards from the individual artist to a network of interconnected individuals upon whom artistic creation becomes predicated. George remains animated, lyrically gesturing at the conversational, economic, and material connections, now conveniently stilled, that he is forging with guests. As the ensemble freezes on stage he sings,

Piece by piece—
Only way to make a work of art.
Every moment makes a contribution,
Every little detail plays a part.
Having just the vision’s no solution,
Everything depends on execution:
Putting it together—
That’s what counts.

Walking amongst the clusters of people grouped on stage, George slips in and out of various groups, filling champagne glasses. As he leaves each group to walk to the next, an animated

⁴⁹² Kwon 47.

double of the actor appears on the stage wall. Thus Harriet's line, "Actually, the Board of the Foundation is meeting next week..." is directed not at George, but rather at his animated double projected on the wall next to her. The lyrical iteration of the idea that to create art in '84 depends upon an artist's continued ability to 'sell' himself is replicated in the visual projections. The animation literally translates George into an object, rendering visually legible that it is not the live presence of the artist that is needed but his image. The projections represent the commodification of the artist into a circulating brand through the logic of visual replacement and duplication. It is only through this process of visual doubling, George's animated doppelgangers indicate, that he becomes legible as an artist. To put the work of art together no longer requires the labor of the still, posed model but rather is dependent upon relationships, which form between individuals and institutions, "Every moment makes a contribution," as George sings. It is these relationships that the still tableaux pointedly reveal. The tableaux represent the economic and interpersonal circuits that position the artist as a hub within a larger network of funding sources and exhibition opportunities.

George's animated doubles call back to Dot's silhouette projected on the wall behind her in Act I. In each case, the projection of the actor's body onto the stage walls indicated that the actor's movements and sung expression was internal, the animated double of their respective bodies acting as a visual placeholder for how the other characters on stage perceived them. In Act I, Dot's silhouette revealed the character's formal utility for George/Seurat; likewise, in Act II George's animated double renders legible the artist's utility, if this time for himself. George no longer depends upon the gendered labor of the model/muse. Rather, framed by the same staging device as Dot in Act I, the artist's labor is revealed. The visual link between the acts particularly genders George's attempts at networking. The visual parallel between the projections feminizes the labor that supports artistic creation. Within the dramaturgy of the musical, the 'feminine'

becomes code for subordinated, undervalued, and, finally in Act II, satirized labor. *Sunday* valorizes the artist as masculine and establishes between the two acts a gendered hierarchy of artistic production. Seurat's particular genius and practice remain firmly planted at the top of such a hierarchy, while Dot's posing or George's networking are subordinated.

The final still tableau of the gallery party is the group gathering for a press photograph.⁴⁹³ As the actors on stage cluster together, the *mise en scène* seems almost amateurish, more reminiscent of a grade school play than the Broadway stage. And yet the economic network, which the photograph represents belies a far more complex institutionalization of art than the clunky staging might initially suggest. Such photos circulate in art journals, newspapers, and museums and galleries' promotional materials. The authorial control of Seurat in Act I is substituted for the institutional and market-driven controls of contemporary art economies. The musical, of course, does not actually take the photo; rather, within the show's staging it is only the pose that matters, staging the creation of an object—the photo—that is never taken. The corporeal symbolism of the stilled body in the tableau positions *Sunday*'s characters as pivots

⁴⁹³ Beginning in 2003, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam was closed for a decade for major renovations. In preparation for its re-opening in 2013, the museum staged a flash mob scene set in a shopping center in the city. The event, entitled *Our Heroes are Back*, featured an ensemble of hired actors dressed as the characters in Rembrandt's *The Night's Watch* (one of the museum's most famous paintings). Highly choreographed, the actors—some on horseback—streamed through the mall, navigating their way through unsuspecting shoppers, dramatizing the events leading up to the culminating image captured in Rembrandt's painting. After striking a final tableau, replicating the painting's composition, a large frame descended from the mall's rafters to frame the actors. Banners on either side of the frame proclaimed, in Dutch, "Our heroes are back!" and the museum's opening date, April 13, 2013. Prominently displayed beneath each tagline was the logo of ING, the museum's main sponsor. The convention of the tableau vivant—"actors hold the appropriate attitude as long as their nerves and sinews will allow them"—literally ensured shoppers had enough time to read and absorb the funding source for the event and for the museum, ING. As shoppers in the YouTube video clip of the flash mob applaud the final tableau, the clip cuts between the smiling faces of the crowd and the banners framing either side of the still tableau. The event garnered ING a series of corporate awards, including: Sponsor of the Year 2013, European Excellence Award, and the SAN Award for Corporate Communication. The ING sponsored theatrical flash mob iterates the growing dependence art museums have upon large corporate sponsors, the actors' still pose literally rendering legible the visual alignment among visual art, performance, cultural institutions, and economics. McCullough 7; Susan Bennett, "Theatricality and Audiences at the New Rijksmuseum," *Le Musée par la Scène, Le Spectacle Vivant au Musée: Pratiques, Publics, Médiations*, Paris, 18-20 Nov. 2015. Unpublished conference paper; "Onze helden zijn terug!" *ING Nederland* 1 April 2013, 7 Dec. 2015 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6W2ZMpsxhg>>.

within a larger arts landscape that includes: corporate sponsorships, funding sources, exhibition opportunities, branding, and marketing campaigns.

The 2008 revival invites an analysis of the interface between the theatrical stage and museum spaces, which is not only thematic but also economic. Museum studies scholar Amy Levin argues that, since their emergence in the nineteenth century, the ‘modern’ museum has been concerned with theatricality. She continues that this interest in theatricality is not divorced from but entirely predicated upon the business imperatives of running and operative such spaces.⁴⁹⁴ While the second act is primarily set in a museum, it reveals that to dramatize the museum is to display the economic and business imperatives of such spaces: it is to render legible the way in which questions of artistic production and display are determined by the art market.

The commercial and critical success of *Sunday* offers a potent counter-narrative to the preponderance of performance studies scholarship that frames museum performance as aligning perpetually underfunded performance practices with financially lucrative and powerful museums.⁴⁹⁵ Certainly, the performance work, which has been most ardently discussed and written about in relationship to the contexts and discourses of the art world lend themselves to critical evaluations of economic and financial incentives and uneven power dynamics. In contrast to the various re-performances of Abramović’s performance art or the photographic curation of Asco and Gómez-Peña’s work, Broadway’s commercialization frames an analysis that places live performance and museums like MoMA and LACMA on a more equivalent economic

⁴⁹⁴ Amy K. Levin, “Business as usual: Can Museums be Bought?” *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities*, ed. Amy K. Levin (Lanham, England: Altamira Press, 2007) 232.

⁴⁹⁵ Amelia Jones, “‘The Artist is Present’: Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 55.1 (2001): 16-45; “Temporal Anxiety/ ‘Presence’ in Absentia: Experiencing performance as documentation,” *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance, and the Persistence of Being*, eds. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (New York and London: Routledge, 2012) 197-221.

plane.⁴⁹⁶ While Abramović's exhibitions and her artistic cache, discussed in Chapter Three, frame profit margins and commercialization, the stigma that often accompanies such concerns within performance studies is valorized in relationship to the Broadway economy. Far from reproducing the narrative of economic disparity framed in Chapter Three or of curatorial marginalization discussed in the opening chapter, *Sunday*'s second act articulates how analogous cultural and economic forces instrumentalize ideas of liveness, visibility, and artistic creation. The tableaux vivants function as visual devices in which the "ways of seeing and curatorial authority" of exhibitionary contexts and the art market are embodied by the Broadway stage.⁴⁹⁷

Conclusion

Sunday draws upon the technologies of the proscenium stage and the American musical, rendering legible the intersection between performance and museal display through performance remainder. Previous chapters analyzed this intersection by: theorizing the shift from live performance to photograph in the case of Asco and Gómez-Peña; analyzing how museum

⁴⁹⁶ The premiere of *Sunday* in 1985 sparked an historical debate between the American musical as frothy entertainment or thematic. In '85, *Sunday* was nominated for several Tonys, including Best Musical. Sondheim and Lapine lost, however, to *La Cage aux Folles* by Jerry Herman and Harvey Fierstein. Herman and Fierstein's work was praised as the first Broadway musical to focus on a gay couple. In his emotional acceptance speech, Herman made a not so subtle jab at Sondheim's score, saying, "a simple, hummable tune is still alive on Broadway." Herman, the composer and lyricist for such Broadway hits as *Hello, Dolly!*, articulated a clear division between an image of the Broadway musical as mass-entertainment and one as intellectual and aesthetically complex. While Sondheim's prominence in the '70s and into the early '80s seemed to signal a shift in the tenor of musical theater, the skepticism epitomized by Herman's remark foreshadowed a shift in the American musical towards the mega-musical. The term mega-musical describes not simply large, commercially successful, or expensive shows, like the '70s hit *A Chorus Line*. Rather mega-musicals "are big global business: capital investments are larger, markets are bigger, more international and more numerous...[and marked] by rapid global expansion and marked internal growth since 1980." They are controlled and produced by a small group of producers and investors, like Andrew Lloyd Webber, Cameron Mackintosh, Disney, Viacom, and MCA, and such productions depend upon an industrial logic of performance. The casting, rehearsal, scenography, and performances of mega-musicals are highly controlled and codified, ensuring that *Cats* on Broadway is the same production as *Cats* in Los Angeles as *Cats* in London as *Cats* in Seoul. *Sunday* represents a distinctly different understanding—structurally, compositionally, thematically—of what the Broadway musical can or should be. Jonathan Burston, "Theater Space as Virtual Place: Audio Technology, the Reconfigured Singing Body, and the Megamusical," *Popular Music* 17.2 (1998): 205-206.

⁴⁹⁷ Amy J. Riordan, "Sunday in the Park with George: A Musical Curation by Stephen Sondheim," diss. University of Texas, Arlington, 2005, iv.

conventions interpolated PLASTIC's dancers; and foregrounding the contractual conditions that underwrote re-performances of Abramović's work. Each chapter foregrounded the relationship between live performance, material objects, and visual cultures, re-considering live performance through this project's central analytic: performance remainder. In *Sunday*, unlike the previous three chapters, the spatial context for grounding a discussion of visual art or the art world is shifted: the Broadway stage rather than the art museum gallery. This shift reveals how museal display becomes legible in distinctly different venues, yet, nevertheless, iterates certain questions of embodiment, the archive, institutional authority, or the art market. The musical, however, relates the stage to the art world, imbricating visual cultures within performance histories and vice versa. *Sunday* frames artistic production and art markets through a theatrical milieu, re-scripting concerns of artistic genius, gender, and images that emerged across the previous three chapters.

Performance remainder in this chapter funneled through *Sunday* provides a framework for re-imagining what it means to curate and exhibit art works, predicated not upon a careful art historical chronology, but rather on leaping across time and revealing the corollary between distinct moments. 1884, 1984, and 2008 each focalize a particular moment for understanding an arts economy, an economy that comes to include not simply the museum gallery, as I have been intimating, but also the Broadway stage. *Sunday* proposes a direct, ancestral link between the figural paintings of the late nineteenth century and conceptual art of the early 1980s. If the link between these two moments is intelligible through the coincidence of family ties, here I want to shift the musical's narrative device to the metaphoric. It is precisely *Sunday*'s ability to jump across decades and still maintain a narrative link between the art practices of the fin de siècle and the late twentieth century that is so productive. The musical's narrative links across time proposes a new paradigm for understanding the overlaps between disparate visual contexts and

art economies. The ties, which bind distinct moments of artistic production together are, within the world of the musical, predicated upon the relationship among art making, commercialization, and inter-personal relationships. Performance remainder renders legible how the overlaps in temporal periodization that *Sunday* asks an audience to embrace are not dissimilar from those already deployed by museums. To enter an exhibit, a museumgoer is engaged in a slippage in time, planted in the now of traversing the gallery, the museumgoer knows she is viewing art works of the past. Performance remainder alerts us to the slips in time upon which the museum gallery is always already predicated, centering visual art within a matrix that links its reception to embodied relationality and gendered visibility.

While the visual arts world may largely ignore theater in its increasing interest in archiving, acquiring, and presenting live performance, the same cannot be said of theater's interest in the visual arts. Plays about visual art, particularly painting, are not uncommon. They include, amongst others, Yasmina Reza's *Art*, *Inventing Van Gogh* by Steven Dietz, *36 Views* by Naomi Iizuka, *Red* by John Logan, *Scenes from an Execution* by Howard Barker, ***bobrauschenbergamerica by the SITI Company***, *Restoration* by Claudia Shear, and *Deshima* by Ping Chong. Many of these works have been performed on Broadway or off-Broadway. *Art* won the Tony for Best Play in 1998, an award *Red* was to also garner in 2010, while Iizuka's play premiered at the Public Theater in 2002. *Sunday* is not alone in framing visual art through its initial creation and subsequent reception. Dietz and Iizuka's plays rely upon similar conventions, as well as playing with double casting and disparate time periods. While these tropes do not constitute a pattern, they do reveal the ways narrative theater can imaginatively collapse the curatorial separation between the artist's studio and the museum gallery. The convention of aligning different centuries allows *Sunday* (and Dietz and Iizuka's plays) to stage the construction of artistic canonization and reception. Across both acts, the question of the gaze

and of being on display is linked to power, embodied agency, commercialism, and gender.

Sunday, thus, represents an important re-framing of the overlaps between visual art and performance as funneled through the narrative and material technologies of the proscenium stage and theatrical address.

In his essay “The Resistance to Theatricality,” Marvin Carlson charts the ways in which theater scholars have positioned ‘theatricality’ as an oppositional term to ‘performance.’ In Chapter Three, I argued the link between performance art and performance studies is not simply etymological. Rather, the way in which the discipline understands performance is linked to the medium-specific modalities of non-textual, or largely non-textual, performance and body art pieces. Performance is imagined as ephemeral, but importantly also marks a break with traditional forms of embodied representation. Carlson’s argument provides an expansion of the discussion begun in Chapter Three. As he writes, “theatricality has been reduced and constricted as a working term...as a [direct corollary] to the relative success of performance,” as a theoretical term. Carlson notes that theatricality comes to stand for those actions and situations, which are ridged and codified: empty, inauthentic signs.⁴⁹⁸ As Carlson and Michael Fried before him note theatricality is that which involves the conscious presentation or display of something or someone for an audience.⁴⁹⁹ Recuperating the term, Carlson finally suggests, theatricality

⁴⁹⁸ Marvin Carlson, “The Resistance to Theatricality,” *SubStance* 31.2/3 (2002): 240-241.

⁴⁹⁹ The history of 20th century art criticism is not unfamiliar with the tenants of theatricality. Most dogmatically and derisively, Michael Fried described the relationship between an art object and its viewer that “takes place in time, that has duration,” as a type of theatricality. Writing in 1967, Fried’s argument derides minimalist—or as he terms in ‘literalist’—art provoking a particular type of experience for a viewer: that of “an object *in a situation*...[that] *includes the beholder* [emphasis original].” Countering the subsumption of emerging minimalist art to allure of theater’s duration, modernist art, Fried contends, defeats theater by its inherent instantaneousness, its ability to always already be present. While Fried most famously derides theatricality within the realm of visual art, the term has also been critiqued by theater and performance studies scholars. Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968, 1995) 116, 125, 145-146; Carlson 241.

describes an “arena for...display.”⁵⁰⁰ This re-imagining of theatricality does not rehearse theoretical binaries that have marked performance versus theater studies but rather imagines theatricality—and theater—as a site of public, visual presentation. Carlson’s argument outlines how we might understand *Sunday* as staging display. Drawing together the performance of the musical, its costumes and set, and, finally, nineteenth-century histories of French visual culture reveals how *Sunday* renders the act of looking legible not as a momentary action but as a process of continual unfolding.

This final chapter retroactively expands the way in which previous chapters rendered time, labor, and gender legible through performance remainder. Deployed through this project as an analytic, each chapter foregrounds a different facet of performance remainder. Chapter One focused on the still photographic image, theorizing how the images function as expansions of the original embodied performance actions. The photographs framed the intersection between performance and photography beginning from the stilled image. *Sunday*, dependent upon recurring tableaux vivants, reverses this articulation between the two, privileging liveness. The musical’s tableaux vivants are always already on the verge of being broken, returning the actors on stage back into active animation and song. The suspended moment before the still pose is broken and the subsequent lyrical narration of the corporeal effects of stillness overtly frame characters’ stilled bodies as caught within structural legacies of gendered, authorial control. *Sunday* allows us to return to the photographs, hung and displayed at LACMA and MOCA, and imagine them as sites of suspended animation, caught between movement and capture, liveness and documentation. Performance, thus, in Chapter One becomes legible through the still image, performers becoming present in the space of the gallery. *Sunday*, however, retroactively articulates how *Spray Paint LACMA* and *Loneliness* iterate not simply the twine between

⁵⁰⁰ Carlson 246.

visibility and invisibility, but also movement and capture, revealing how the time of the photograph is inextricably linked to the artists labor. *Sunday* staged a tension between the inanimate object and the live performance, coalescing a series of concerns around what stillness represents both on the Broadway stage and in the museum gallery.

Such ideas align with Tirza Latimer and Harvey Young's reading of still photography.⁵⁰¹ Latimer argues photography should be understood "as a dramatic art...[and] as an arena in which to act rather than a stilled frame out of reality's filmic continuum," and Young frames photos as thresholds, "simultaneously separating and being the living/dead, moving/still, and breathing/breathless."⁵⁰² Latimer alerts us to the gendered agential potential possible within the still image, while Young affirms a racialized haunting present within the photographic frame. Linking Latimer and Young's arguments, *Sunday* envisions the still image as an arena of display—as theatrical—asserting the gap between action and acting, stillness and motion. To be at once animated and on display alerts us to the constant negotiate that occurs at the triangulated interface among agency, capture, and visibility. Dot's repeated still poses function as sights of critical memory that assert the specter of authorial masculinist control that prefigured the creation of so many museum art works—whether it be the racially and ethnically marked dismissals of Asco and Gómez-Peña or Dot's role as muse-cum-mother. The photos of Asco and Gómez-Peña's practice and *Sunday*'s tableaux vivants assert the still image as a *mise en scène*: a staged impression that places the objects and people within the frame of the photo or the proscenium frame in strategic and relational conversation.

Sunday's tableaux vivants do not only call back to the photographic images in Chapter

⁵⁰¹ Tirza Latimer, "Acting Out: Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore," *Don't Kiss Me: the Art of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore*, ed. Louise Downie (London: Tate Publishing, 2006) 56-71; Harvey Young, "Standing Still: Daguerreotypes, Photography, and the Black Body," *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010) 26-75.

⁵⁰² Latimer 56; Young 45.

One; they also echo the still postures in Hassabi's choreography. My primary argument throughout Chapter Two asserted that PLASTIC was haunted by previous histories of embodied display. PLASTIC produced and iterated a zone of encounter between dancers and viewers, which interpolated each within a set of expectations that evoked nineteenth century histories of embodied display. PLASTIC's still poses were ghosted by connotations of passivity, availability, and vulnerability. The piece, however, has repeatedly been imagined as "located at the junction between stillness and motion," and the various held postures created not only a "sculptural time," but also a meditative and contemplative affect for viewer.⁵⁰³ This notion of slow movement and held poses as meditative is not disconnected from discourses that imagine dance as performing effortless and grace. Certainly, Hassabi's constant directives to us to move with greater ease and fluidity so as not to betray our body's exertion are in accord with this understanding of dance. *Sunday*, however, upends the association between the still pose and ease, instead locating the still pose as a site of bodily labor. Stillness is not easy, but rather literally embodies fatigue, boredom, and, the always already, scripted moment of failure—the body breaking back into movement. To remember the still pose, here at the end through the lens of the musical, is to re-remember it as a site/sight of gendered labor.

Most clearly discussed in the third chapter, the discourses and contexts of the art world actively produce narratives of individual artistic genius. Abramović's re-performers were imagined as embodied illustrations of her particular aesthetic sensibility. Her retrospective and MOCA's gala reveal how museums depend upon the collapse of an artist and her work into a singular narrative of creativity and genius. While Kwon articulates this collapse as a transposition of the artist into a commodity, it likewise iterates the artist as a reproducible singularity. *Sunday*, however, pries apart this contingent relationship rendering legible the

⁵⁰³ Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977) 5; Aram Moshayedi, *Maria Hassabi: PLASTIC* ([Los Angeles]: [Hammer Projects Publications], 2015).

expanded network of people upon whom artistic production is predicated. The musical overtly acknowledges the dependent relationship among art object, exhibition, and the construction of the artist as individual and as genius. The animated interlude in which Seurat's painting recedes farther and farther away as silhouettes of museumgoers pass in front of the painting—emphasizes this notion. What this moment instantiates is not the visual prominence of the painting but rather that of silhouettes of the viewers who pass in front of it. The animation reveals that the prominence of an artist is linked to the process of continually displaying and viewing his work. Performance remainder offers a way of articulating how museal constructions of artistic genius affirm and reproduce cultural, aesthetic, and economic value. The contracts in Chapter Three divulge the uneven economic relationship between Abramović and her re-performers, while also affirming a museums' continual need to overtly script her collaborators as not artists and as anonymous. *Sunday* frames MoMA and MOCA's construction of Abramović as singular artist as paradoxical at best.

Each chapter illustrated how gender and gendered labor becomes legible through performance remainder. The project as a whole articulates how certain cultural producers are compensated and valued, and, further, how such considerations of value shift our understanding of performance. Performance remainder offers a framework for understanding the way in which temporality and gendered embodiment function in performance as it intersects with museal display. By analyzing the interface between performance and museal display through performers' gendered labor the stakes of arguing for an expanded understanding of performance's temporal efficacy become clear. In Chapter One, Valdez's photographed figure remains, asserting her doubled exclusion from LACMA's collection and Asco's nocturnal activities. Chapter Two revealed how the encounter between performers and museumgoers in PLASTIC was fraught, haunted by the gendered, and racialized, legacies of museal display. The contract remained as the

conditioning textual force of Abramović's performances and revealed the gendered agency—or the revocation of that agency—which underwrites her practice. In this final chapter, performance remainder frames the performance of *Sunday* through the musical's costumes and set design, which, together, render legible the sexist logic of the musical and the notions of artistic production it espouses. Women, in other words, are poised and posed to be in spaces like museums, yet only in particular ways: as models, muses, and nudes. Only by breaking the still pose—her silhouette projected on the wall behind her—does Dot render legible this entrenched museal memory, asserting her animated, singing body as a site of becoming differently within this history.

Sunday opens and ends with an empty white stage. The musical is bookended by the image of the white, empty space, waiting to be filled by the production, the next exhibit, the next artist, the next painting. The final aural note in the musical, heard just as the lights fade on the bright white stage, is a gasp. Of awe, of surprise, it is unclear. But the unsung, disembodied articulation asserts the ghosting presence of the body over the empty stage, fading from view.

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