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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Raw Sense: Choreography, Disability, Politics

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Art History, Theory and Criticism

by

Amanda Louise Cachia

Committee in charge:

Professor Grant Kester, Chair
Professor Michael Davidson
Professor Suzanne Hudson
Professor Mariana Wardwell
Professor Alena Williams

2017

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2017

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Joseph and Frances Cachia, for their continued generous support and love. I also wish to dedicate my years of intellectual hard work to my husband, Ryan Gambrell, who believed in me from the day we met. He is strength, beauty, talent, dependency and honesty rolled up into one dynamic, exquisite package, and I can't imagine life without him.

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This project would also not have been possible without all the artists that I recognize in the pages of my chapters, many of whom I have had the privilege to enjoy prolonged professional and personal relationships through my curatorial work. These artists include Fayen d'Evie, Helen Dowling, Ricardo Gil, Joseph Grigely, Raphaëlle de Groot, Wendy Jacob, Christine Sun Kim, Alison O'Daniel, Noëmi Laikmaier, Park McArthur, Carmen Papalia, Laura Swanson, and Corban Walker. I'd also like to

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As mentioned in the above paragraph, my curatorial work has allowed me the opportunity to work very closely with many of the artists who are the subject of this dissertation, so I'd like to thank all the people who have offered me opportunities to develop my critical ideas as they pertain to the intersection of contemporary art and disability studies. These include Matthew Callinan, Dr. Kristin Lindgren and Dr. John Muse at Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery at Haverford College (*What Can a Body Do?*, 2012); Jay Dolmage at the *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* and Geoffrey Shea (*Crippling Cyberspace*, 2013); Allisun Curtin and Scott Polach at Space4Arts, San Diego (*Composing Dwarfism* and *Performing Crip Time: Bodies in Deliberate Motion*, 2014); John Spiak at Grand Central Art Center at California State University in Santa Ana and Trish Stone, Dr. Jordan Crandall and Dr. Brian Goldfarb at gallery@calit2 at the

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I have dedicated this dissertation to my parents and to my husband, but I wanted to add a few more notes about the role each of them has played in my work as a junior scholar. My parents have partially financially supported me through the last five years, and it is important for me to acknowledge the privileged position I am in owing to their

generosity. If it were not for their unswerving belief in my efforts, none of this would have been possible. Finally, I would like to extend my warm appreciation to my husband Ryan Gambrell. He often jokes that he should be receiving a PhD with me, given how the commitment and the time that writing a dissertation demands inadvertently affects the many people inside one's circle of loved ones. So to you, Ryan, I am especially and affectionately grateful.

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<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17547075.2016.1218709>

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<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17458927.2015.1130311>

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Raw Sense: Choreography, Disability, Politics

by

Amanda Louise Cachia

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History, Theory, and Criticism

University of California, San Diego, 2017

Professor Grant Kester, Chair

This dissertation aims to illustrate the interventions of moving disabled bodies across time and space as a means of instilling social change. I will do this by exploring how various disabled artists engage differently and deliberately with the architectures of public space, ranging from the museum to the street, to that of the able-bodied subject, which have never before been addressed in art history and criticism. It also examines the

possibilities and limitations of raw form, gesture, movement and interactivity through multi-sensorial, synaesthetic, and empirical modalities in contemporary art practice. Specifically, I highlight how particular physical and neuro-developmental experiences may shed new light on a “disability choreopolitics,” offering an array of viewpoints, ranging from the perspectives of those who have blindness, cerebral palsy, deafness, dwarfism, prostheses, hearing aids, and who use wheelchairs for their mobility. Through mining the rich resources that the lived experiences these atypical bodies have to offer us, and the world, we will begin to observe how their moving, active bodies have been moving, shaking, dancing, hopping, running, crawling, screaming, tracing, bending, crouching, peering, and tripping in atypical shapes and forms in order to propel us towards a transformation of political life.

Blending together a dynamic intersection of installation, sculpture, architecture, video, works on paper, site-specific work, and experimental performance, my dissertation attempts to develop a new rhetorical framework for the “choreopolitics” of complex embodiment. Coined by writer and curator André Lepecki, the term “choreopolitics” is a portmanteau word that fuses the sound and meaning of the words choreography and politics, where politically passive bodies may become mobilized through manifold movement, in juxtaposition with an engagement with other bodies, objects, surfaces, and environments. Lepecki’s “choreopolitics” is adopted and applied towards a disabled, or complex embodiment, in this dissertation because it offers a relevant theoretical framework with which to develop my discussions of the artists. The politics of the disabled body in motion is rich and offers new knowledges that have never before considered from multi-modal perspectives. I argue that the choreography of the disabled

body as discussed through the artwork in this dissertation are political because the disabled body is a social and cultural object that carries great stigma and taboo. The disabled body as a moving body with agency is thus a powerful form of resistance and disruption, where it aims to shed reductive associations tied to antiquated ideas of restriction, similar to how Lepecki's project aims to dismantle limiting associations between dance and movement. Hand in hand with this theoretical framing of the artwork in this dissertation, I will also demonstrate how these interdisciplinary practices have been informed by interdisciplinary seminal social movements, and art genres and philosophies such as Fluxus, happenings, minimalism, sound art, activist art, critical dance studies, phenomenology, institutional critique, architecture, and more, through a comparative analysis with the contemporary work.

My chapters will not only consider what such radical, activist performative acts in public space represent, and how they might be transformative; they will also chart, document and archive a rich resource of lived experiences from several unique disabled point of views. By focusing specifically on aspects of performance, entwined with socially engaged, discursive art practices and everyday urban architectures through the work of contemporary artists, I aim to build a new discourse for the epistemology of disability art in this dissertation as a mode of disability activism. As a critical offshoot to this, I also aim to rethink the very frameworks of how art history and art discourse in general judge bodies and by extension the work of certain kinds of bodies.

Introduction: *An Empirical Turn Towards Complex Embodiment*

“Politics goes nowhere without movement.”¹

“...choreography has come to refer to a plan or orchestration of bodies in motion.”²

“...choreography, more than any performance, is what resonates with other systems of representation that together constitute the cultural moment within which all bodies circulate. Both choreography and performance change over time; both select from and move into action certain semantic systems, and as such, they derive their meaning from a specific historical and cultural moment. And both offer potential for agency to be constructed via every body’s specific engagement with the parameters governing the realization of each dance.”³

In *The Flesh of the World*, a 24-person exhibition that I curated in summer, 2015 across three different gallery spaces at the University of Toronto in conjunction with the PanAm and ParaPanAm Games, three variations of Canadian-based artist Mowry Baden’s untitled *Seatbelt* devices, *Untitled (Seat Belt, Three Points)*, 1970, (Appendix: Figure 1) *Untitled (Seat Belt with Concrete Block)*, 1969-1970, and *Untitled (Seat Belt with Pole and Two Straps)*, 1969-70 (Appendix: Figure 2), were installed at each of the three exhibition venues across two separate campuses. This three-pronged series of physical pivotal sculptures that rotate around a center point reflects Baden’s interest in movement and its impact on perception, and required that viewers interact with, and physically operate them, demonstrating the artist’s performative and collaborative approach

¹ Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998.

² Susan Leigh Foster, “Introducing Choreographing Empathy,” in *Choreographing Empathy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 15.

³ *Ibid.*, 5.

with the audience. Of this work, Baden says,

“Like so much of my art, it attempts to downplay vision... you can know that the path you’re traveling is not a pure circle, but only after you’ve made multiple journeys. The seatbelt here, with three points of attachment, is the subtlest of them all. You can walk around for ten minutes before the geometry begins to click in... the needle swings over to the non-visual senses gradually. The viewer gradually discovers where the sensory challenge is. And the experience is complex. Personally, I can’t exhaust it. Even today, I can’t wear it out. I began to realize this is a completely different territory for exploration.”⁴

While these works are arguably visually bland, once you strap yourself into the devices and begin to unevenly circle the central anchor point, one is able to grasp the experience of moving with a body that isn’t completely under your control. Through this interactive work, Baden illustrates a shared human ability to adapt to bodily circumstances that shift and alter. Indeed, through the *Untitled Seatbelt* series, Baden is unwittingly turning the viewers attention to an empirical notion of complex embodiment. The sense-experience of traveling in an interrupted circle while strapped into a device that modifies movement offers new knowledge. The adaptations the body makes under these new ambulatory circumstances are necessarily creative and inventive, for one must learn how to navigate space differently: physically, cognitively and multi-sensorially. One may come to appreciate newly-discovered bodily skill, form, shape and gesture, or revel in the choreographic possibilities under this new corporeal regime that blends together objects, bodies and space in a dynamic, evolving environment. Certainly, Baden achieves these outcomes through this work, and while the effect of the body in

⁴ Interview with Mowry Baden, *It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles, 1969–1973*, eds. Rebecca McGrew and Glen Phillips (Los Angeles: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2011).

motion under the reins of the re-contextualized seatbelts is subtle, I argue that it also attempts to draw the viewer into an equation with the artists in the exhibition and the larger community of people with disabilities.⁵

Through *The Flesh of the World*, I sought to disrupt the ideals of ostensible correct form, shape and movement ingrained in art history and dance studies, both through audience interaction and observation at the level of horizontality. I did this by curating many works into the exhibition that had the capacity to engage the audience. During the installation and opening of the show in June 2015, I had strapped on Baden's *Untitled (Seat Belt with Concrete Block)* and walked around in disrupted concentric circles in a clock-wise direction, because I was raising and placing one leg repeatedly on my right side whenever my body would inevitably encounter the concrete block that seemed determined to block my path within the circular journey (Appendix: Figures 3-4). I had to step and climb over the concrete block to maintain consistent movement and keep on my way. The concrete block caused my hip to rise up uncomfortably, and in the process, it served to remind me of the curvature in my spine, or scoliosis. I couldn't tell whether the up and down movement on my right side was balancing my always already off-kilter stature, as the curvature causes one side of my body to be slightly raised and higher than the other. I thought that perhaps a tingling pain from my spinal stenosis as a result of my brachyolmia (a rare form of dwarfism) might also be triggered by the negotiation of objects in space, but it was not. After several sequences of this gesture, I stopped and undid the seat-belt

⁵ Terence Dick, "The Flesh of the World" review, *Border Crossings*, Dec. 2015, Issue 136, Vol. 34, No. 4.

and returned to my own daily version of complex embodiment, distinct and yet in parallel with Baden's series given both require ambulatory adjustments of being-in-the-world. My experience of this work demonstrates how an empirical turn towards disability in curatorial practice and art history at large can be premised on one that *moves*, as this movement was offering new knowledge through direct physical engagement. In other words, to curate an audience moving and experimenting through adaptation is to get an audience thinking about, and empathizing with disability, differently in a bid to transform entrenched reductive attitudes.

Contemporary exhibitions that touch on disability-related themes and subject matter often fall into two common interpretations: one that reductively and simplistically equates the person (usually the artist) with his or her disability, and the other that regards disability as an index of our shared humanness. In *The Flesh of the World*, I aimed to offer this nuanced and empirical approach to issues of complex embodiment. The exhibition aimed to suggest that there is no one monolithic definition of disability, and resisted relying on an all-too-easy template or discursive framework based on the uniformity of other marginalized identity categories such as gender, race, or sexuality. This was illustrated through a lack of uniformity of the bodies that were on display, and while one might perceive a possible ghettoization of subjects based purely on their diagnostic determinations, I evaded this problem endemic to many exhibitions bringing together disability and art by not programming it exclusively with art about disability. In this show, some artists identified as disabled, while many others did not. Through a hybrid

selection of works, some requiring direct visitor participation and engagement, I aimed to draw the viewer into a new understanding of “adaptation,” in the hopes that the primitive idea that disabilities must be “overcome” can very slowly be erased. By offering an exhibition like this, where articulation of disability is often misunderstood and easily misinterpreted, the politics of complex embodiment were not only visible on a multi-modal stage, but they were performed: by the artists certainly, and especially by the audience. Within the context of this exhibition, I relied on a basic definition of empiricism that suggests that it is a modality for gaining knowledge through direct and indirect observation or experience. These interactions within the exhibition can be logged as a type of empirical – although certainly not rigid form of – evidence, where the idea is that it is only upon one’s direct encounter with objects which force physical adaptation that one’s mental assumptions and stereotypes can be broken down.

My point here is that asking the audience to “move” within an installation is a way of bringing the audience into a zone of empathy with the disabled subject, therefore emphasizing that a new model of reception and experience would be catalyzed in this relationship between the viewer and the *non-normative* body. In their acts of physically moving, the participant/viewer is affectively and compassionately moved as well. In the following analyses in this dissertation, there are many examples that demonstrate how this “movement” is enacted by the artists (the non-disabled or disabled subject, as the case may be), and as a consequence, how these physical gestures may impact the audience member, either through direct participation, or by viewership, which I argue is in itself, a

type of choreography that carries particular politics. Through this participatory movement, the audience member is motivated to empathize, and to also, hopefully, shed their reductive associations with the disabled body that may have larger consequences on instilling social changes towards the treatment of the disabled subject. Through these analyses, I demonstrate how the artists procure compassion from the participant and/or viewer that brings them into a shared sense of the disabled subject's vulnerability, suffering, and corporal conditions. The idea is that through this choreopolitical participation, some semblance of the disabled subject's various complex embodiments will bridge any gap or distance between the so-called "able" and the "disabled," and instead demonstrate a shared humanity in which we all partake, differently.

Dancer, choreographer and artist William Forsythe alludes to how the body in motion has historically and ideologically belonged to the domain of the precognitive and the illiterate, otherwise described as "raw sense."⁶ He argued that choreographic thinking offers alternative territory for these primitive associations.⁷ Similar to Forsythe's own questioning, how can we imagine other physical models of choreographic form, gesture and movement that contributes towards an evolving and sophisticated language, knowledge, and politics of complex embodiment? How might we come to see the rich, generative values in the rawness of bodies - these bodies in motion that ostensibly primitively move, bend, fall, twist, turn, and sense? What kinds of epistemological, cognitive,

⁶ William Forsythe, "Choreographic objects," in *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography: It Starts from Any Point*, ed. Steven Spier (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 91.

⁷ *Ibid.*

affective and discursive relationships might the disabled body have with objects, other bodies, and space? How do disabled bodies disrupt normative assumptions about places and architectures, and how might the unique ways their bodies move define new pathways for thinking about the senses? How can the choreography of complex embodiment propel the very ontology of bodies in motion forward and in new directions? My dissertation attempts to explore the possibilities and limitations of raw sense, form, gesture, movement and interactivity through multi-sensorial, synaesthetic modalities as considered by various artists with disabilities. Blending together a dynamic intersection of installation, sculpture, architecture, video, works on paper, site-specific work, and experimental performance, my dissertation brings together what Forsythe calls “choreographic objects,” or “disobedient objects” old and new, in a bid to develop a new rhetorical framework for the “choreopolitics” of complex embodiment.⁸ “Choreographic objects” is a term that is actually not about materialism at all, but rather how an object might generate movement and energy through its interaction with something else during an event. What is especially exciting about Forsythe’s conception of the “choreographic object” is how it may possess a “dynamic capacity for reconfiguring spacetimes of composition...[and] creating an emergent constellation from movement experimentation that opens up the choreographic to the beyond of dance.”⁹ In other words, how does participation between body and object generate a complex ecology and the possibility for new variations of

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Erin Manning, “Interlude: What Else” in *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 92.

choreography that may encapsulate the atypical movements of the disabled body? Typically, the objects that Forsythe utilizes to enact his constellations are part of the everyday, such as a balloon or a mirror, and certainly, this will also be the case as we examine how artists engage with objects in each of the chapters, such as the white cane, the podium, vibrations in a wall or floor, or how sound is feed and translated into musical score and sculpture etc. Following this, coined by writer and curator André Lepecki, the term “choreopolitics” is a portmanteau word that fuses the sound and meaning of the words choreography and politics, where politically passive bodies may become mobilized through manifold movement, in juxtaposition with an engagement with other bodies, objects, surfaces, and environments.¹⁰ Informed by seminal social movements, and art genres and philosophies such as Fluxus, happenings, minimalism, sound art, activist art, critical dance studies, phenomenology, and more, the work in this dissertation aims to illustrate the interventions of bodies across social time and space as a means of instilling social change.

In this project, the disabled body captures the various haptic, aural, visual, synaesthetic modalities the corpus is capable of transmitting. The visual appearance and performance of disability in visual culture has been thoroughly analyzed by disability studies scholars such as Lennard Davis, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Ann Millett-Gallant, and Tobin Siebers.¹¹ It is the idea of

¹⁰ Andre Lepecki, “Introduction: The Political Ontology of Movement” in *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

¹¹ Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (Verso, 1995). Davis has also edited and contributed to all four volumes of *The Disability Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997; 2006; 2010; 2013). Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Literature and Culture* (New York:

“complex embodiment” developed by Siebers that I’d like to especially utilize in this dissertation. Siebers coined the term “complex embodiment” in reaction to the limitations of the ideology of ability. He says:

“Disability creates theories of embodiment more complex than the ideology of ability allows, and these many embodiments are each crucial to the understanding of humanity and its variations, whether physical, mental, social, or historical. The ultimate purpose of complex embodiment as theory is to give disabled people greater knowledge of and control over their bodies in situations where increased knowledge and control are possible.”¹²

Complex embodiment can offer layers of inquiry and take us down an unconventional path, so that categories of difference, identity, and disadvantage in relationship to disability can no longer be essentialized. The perception and experience of disability is nuanced and contingent.

My research seeks to explore how various artists, through their performances, engage differently and deliberately with the architectures of public space, ranging from the museum to the street, to that of the able-bodied subject, which have never before been addressed in art history and criticism. By focusing specifically on aspects of performance, entwined with socially engaged, discursive art practices and everyday urban architectures through the work of contemporary artists, I aim to build a new discourse for the epistemology of

Columbia University Press, 1996); ed., *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); “Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography.” In *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, edited by Paul K. Longmore and Laurie Umansky, 335-374 (New York: New York University Press, 2001); co-ed., with Sharon Snyder and Brenda Jo Bruggeman, *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities* (New York: MLA Press, 2002); and *Staring: How We Look* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Ann Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Tobin Siebers, *The Mirror of Medusa* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1983); *The Subject and Other Subjects: On Ethical, Aesthetic, and Political Identity* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1998); *The Body Aesthetic: From Fine Art to Body Modification* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2000); *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2008); and *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2010).

¹² Tobin Siebers, “Disability and the Theory of Complex Embodiment – For Identity Politics in a New Register,” in *The Disability Studies Reader Third 3rd Edition*, e Ed. Lennard J. Davis (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 317.

disability art in this dissertation as a mode of disability activism. As a critical offshoot to this, I also aim to rethink the very frameworks of how art history and art discourse in general judge bodies and by extension the work of certain kinds of bodies – for example, how performance studies typically assume able-bodiedness in its arguments about hearing and vision, or how even when able-bodied people think about the idea of “experience” or “embodiment” we have particular kinds of bodies in mind. I suggest that by looking at works by artists who interrogates these assumptions, this will lead us to exciting new terrain in contemporary theory and criticism. The irony is that, according to disability studies scholar Tobin Siebers, disability is everywhere present in contemporary art, because nondisabled contemporary artists “see” the aesthetic merits of “disability” in art, ranging from the work of Pablo Picasso to Francis Bacon. Yet, we do not see a studied, documented, or historical trajectory of where disability studies and contemporary art productively intersect. My work implicitly draws on discourses based on queer, feminist and critical race perspectives, as these fields also have a history of interrogating “normative” embodiment.

In the upcoming chapters, my analysis of the work will be off-set by a comparative analysis, where I examine the work of 1960s and 1970s artists engaged in Fluxus, performance art, and minimalism in juxtaposition with the contemporary artists to offer an expanded narrative on these art movements from a disabled perspective. I argue that the choreography of the disabled body is a political project because their ambulatory pathways, in atypical shapes and forms, challenges our assumptions of an able-bodied and ostensibly normative art

history. This work offers a new way of examining art history through a disability studies lens. Similar in scope to feminist, queer and critical race interventions within the canon of art, my work suggests that an evolving definition of disability aesthetics provides new opportunities and directions to teach art history. One of the major projects of these feminist, queer and critical race interventions was to demonstrate how experience is relational and completely subjective. Jennifer Fisher says that the “results of any engagement are shaped by the point-of-view of the beholder, or, in other words, that there is a politics to the modality of connection itself.”¹³ The disabled moving, connecting subject has been an understudied area and I fill this gap by adopting a disability-centered approach towards performance, choreography, identity and visual culture.

As a scholar and curator who identifies as disabled owing to my rare form of dwarfism, I am uniquely positioned to contribute to a re-imagining of disability’s relationship to social and cultural frameworks. Conditions of my dwarfism include my four foot three inch stature, faster bone degeneration than the ostensible average-height person, spinal stenosis and scoliosis. While I’ve never had to have any surgery as an outcome of my dwarfism, I have had to deal with the social and cultural stigma attached to having a body that is considered atypical and startlingly noticeable in the public eye. As a consequence, I often have to negotiate the challenges of staring, occasional comments and questions, and living in a world that has been architecturally designed for the “average” six

¹³ Fisher, Jennifer. “Tactile Affects.” *Tessera*, Vol. 32, 2002, pp. 17-28.

foot man.¹⁴ My personal and professional life experiences and my intimate relationship in physically and cognitively negotiating the challenges of scale, space and perception in and through public places and architectures have inspired me to uncover how other artists are developing a potentially shared phenomenological mode of being in ways that can indicate a paradigmatic shift of knowing the world.

For example, my experiences of viewing exhibitions in gallery and museum spaces have always been characterized by particular spatial orientations, where I look upwards towards works of art hung high on the wall. Typically, they are installed at a ostensibly “average” height that is too high for me to adequately see it, mirroring my embodied intersubjective exchange with other average-height bodies (colloquially known as “leggies” by my husband, who has achondroplasia, the most common form of dwarfism) when I am in conversation with them, either one on one, or in groups. In tandem with this challenging experience of looking at objects high up on walls is how I am also “blinded” by certain spatial and physical conditions in my greater environment, along with how I am occasionally “deafened” as well. Again, given that audio components are sometimes embedded into a work of art that is also hung at this average height, out of ear’s reach for my stature, this means that I cannot hear it as well not be able to see it. This formula also applies to my intersubjective relationship to other human bodies, given that the sound to emanate from a voice that is much taller than me is often lost on my ears, particularly when I am ensconced in a noisy environment, such as a gallery

¹⁴ This blueprint for urban design goes back to Leonardo da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man* and Le Corbusier’s *Modulor Man*, to be discussed in more detail in the dissertation.

opening, which makes hearing even more difficult. How are the artists around me illustrating these very unique, underexplored phenomenological experiences of being in the world through their contemporary practices, and what new knowledges might these particularly embodied experiences bring?

In my concern over the limitations of ableist thinking towards disabled bodies, I hope to ensure that work that explores the “disabled experience” offers the opportunity to “reassign meaning” and thinking to disability. I will also attempt to offer a loose and continuously evolving definition around the term, “disability,” given this word means different things to different people. Broadly speaking, I will situate my writing in and amongst the familiar models of disability, ranging from the medical model to the social model, identifying how my ideas might intersect, depart and even conflict within these well-rehearsed rhetorical frameworks. Ultimately, I hope to offer a complex ideology around definitions of disability as complex as the bodies as I describe as the dissertation unfolds from chapter to chapter.

I will build an argument in this dissertation that a radical new disability activism based on the lived experience is present in contemporary art. This activism aims to shape and transform political life. Each chapter elucidates a different presentation or performance of a “choreopolitics” of complex embodiment in contemporary art practice through this notion of the “choreographic object,” illustrated through the work of two contemporary artists per chapter (eight in total, including myself). I prefer to focus on this number of artists so as to provide sustained and focused analyses of each of the

artists/artworks I am discussing, comparing and contrasting. Specifically, I highlight how particular physical and neuro-developmental experiences may shed new light on a “disability choreopolitics,” offering a complex array of viewpoints, ranging from the perspectives of those who have blindness, cerebral palsy, deafness, dwarfism, prostheses, hearing aids and tinnitus, and those who use wheelchairs for their mobility. Through mining the rich resources that the lived experiences of these atypical bodies have to offer us, and the world, we will begin to observe how their bodies have been moving, shaking, dancing, hopping, running, crawling, screaming, tracing, bending, crouching, peering, and tripping in atypical shapes and forms in order to propel us towards this transformation of political life. My chapters will not only consider what such radical, activist performative acts in public space represent, and how they might be transformative; they will also chart, document and archive a rich resource of lived experiences from several unique disabled point of views.

Oftentimes, I draw upon my own personal lived experience as a person with dwarfism in this dissertation alongside, when appropriate, the lived experiences of some of the artists (and indeed, I appear in many of the chapters in this dissertation engaging with work directly through my own complex embodiment). While I understand that this frequent first-person referentiality is less common in conventional academic writing as it goes against the appearance of objectivity, I’d like to make a case for my persistent use of these examples drawn from my everyday life, given I am addressing issues of embodiment that, in and of itself, require me to push against convention. The field of art history is

particularly unaccustomed to this method of academic writing as it is mostly a style that has proliferated within disability studies scholarship. There is a significant trend in disability studies scholarship for the lived experience to be more fully integrated into academic writing. Examples of the lived experience of disability are the touchstone of analysis, and each lived experience is different. The lived experience is important within disability studies because the body becomes a sign of political discourse – the body has political objecthood that has power to demonstrate certain truisms about the world in which we live, or at least, to destabilize what we may have previously thought as universally true for a range of human subjects. Philosopher professor, S. Kay Toombs, who lives with multiple sclerosis, says that lived experience “...provides important information for those engaged in activities such as developing ways to re-constitute public space (both physical and social) so that it is accommodating to different modes of being-in-the-world.”¹⁵ Toombs is suggesting that the lived experience is an important vehicle for changing ablest social and physical architecture in our environment for the benefit of disabled people. Maureen Connolly and Tom Craig state that “working with the body as a sign of political discourse allows us to examine how disability, stressed embodiment, and bodily contingency transgress the logics and inscriptions of a culture based in ableism, capitalism, and normative productivity.”¹⁶ In this way, they are outlining that much of our perceptions of shared understanding, perceiving and sensing of the world is

¹⁵ S. Kay Toombs, “The Lived Experience of Disability.” *Human Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Intersubjectivity as a Practical Matter and a Problematic Achievement (Jan., 1995), 21.

¹⁶ Maureen Connolly and Tom Craig, “Stressed Embodiment: Doing Phenomenology in the Wild” in *Human Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 25th Anniversary Issue (2002), 456.

actually based on cultural ideals of a “normal” healthy body. We presume what “normal” is but “the processes and outcomes of typical inquiry of stressed embodiment have been guided...by distanced scripts of productivity, commodity exchange, and myths of non-contingent bodies and thorough-going concordance.”¹⁷ I argue that this critical distance can be overcome and even removed by looking at the personal experience and the anecdote in order to shed light on alternative embodiments that educate us to these new modes of being. The experience of actual body-subjects can provide us with insight that could refine our activities and our language around the sensorial spectrum that continues to be ableist. We might then be forced to recognize oppression that is mandated by the ostensible stable body.

Lepecki’s work provides a secondary framework for how the lived experience of the body is entwined with the body’s choreopolitical movement in everyday life. He says that the “dancer’s labor is inseparable from the conditions of the world, and therefore, to acknowledge that the affective charge of each performance cannot but resonate with, and be informed by, such conditions...”¹⁸ He acknowledges that the history of choreography and dance has certainly addressed the social and political conditions of any given contemporary moment, but now more than ever, our artists are simultaneously producing and being produced by “physical and affective conditions of contemporary spectatorship and performing.” In this instance, we see how the body is a porous project

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ André Lepecki, “Introduction: Dance and the age of neoliberal performance” in *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016).

activated by the lived experience and the lived encounter where it continuously filters and circulates information in its environment through the shape, form and movement of the corporeal form.

The body in motion that is informed by deafness, the use of a wheelchair for mobility, or the spatial experiences of dwarfism offer a subjugated knowledge, and my dissertation brings these lived experiences into focus. There are sparse accounts of the lived and spatial experiences of disability within art historical discourse. I aim to offer a study where the fields of art history and disability studies begin to collide and take critical shape, and in doing so, I must also advocate for this important new style of academic writing within the discipline.

Each chapter hones in on a discussion around a certain modality of complex embodiment, and which includes, in this order, blindness and the prostheses, dwarfism, and deafness and hearing-impaired-ness. These physically disabled categories, however, are not straight forward, because they intersect with material, conceptual, perspectival, sensorial or ambulatory relations with space, complicating embodied definitions. Each of these modalities also has its own unique reductive associations attached to its variegated forms. I suggest that these associations can be radically transformed through consideration of the artists work. I selected these categories because these are the physical disabilities with which I am most familiar and have in-depth knowledge through association. In structuring the chapters in this way and without myself appearing to be reductive and insensitive to the specificities, differences, and particularities of each artists' work and their lived experiences of disability, I aim to build a new choreopolitical

disability activism in contemporary art. The example of “scale choreopolitics” discussed in Chapter Three indicates how I have divided up Lepecki’s generic “choreopolitics” into sub-categories and applications within each chapter of the dissertation. I believe these (not always strict or tautological) divisions in physical disabilities are a good and perhaps logical place to start, because it is here where I attempt to do the work of narrating the complex and varied specificities of, for example, a number of deaf and hearing impaired experiences as channeled by artists who either identify or not, or how several dwarf artists with achondroplasia articulate their spatial experiences. The physical disabilities that I discuss in my chapters may not indicate the direct embodied experience of the artists I discuss. Each approach and each work offers something compelling and contributes towards this choreopolitics that I aim to reinforce in this dissertation. So while “scale choreopolitics” might capture a framework for thinking about a certain type of physically disabled choreography, the politics within each of these sub-categories are not necessarily uniform, and they are especially and emphatically *not* in unison. Many times, the reader will find that there are many contradictions, and that artists are not waving the banner of the disability rights movement in the directions might one expect, or even the same direction at all. That would be too easy, neat and compartmentalizing. So the reality is that this is a territory that is puzzling, and fraught with great challenges. At times, I am quite candid, even critical, about my conversations with artists; at other instances, I censor the dialogues to both protect and respect their privacy.

All of this is to say that I must emphasize that this approach of using these possibly essentializing sub-categories towards my chapters does not necessarily dictate a definitive way of thinking through the intersectional, multi-disciplinary work of the artists I discuss. In fact, I aim to mirror the curatorial approach I took towards my *The Flesh of the World* exhibition, which aims to shed light on how particular complex embodied experiences make “raw sense.” I will borrow this curatorial approach in my chapters by illustrating a lack of uniformity of the bodies we observe in the artwork, and where necessary and with permission by them, to also illustrate a lack of uniformity in the bodies of the artists themselves. So while the reader might perceive a possible ghettoization of subjects based purely on their, at times, diagnostic determinations, I evade this problem by not drawing on work that is exclusively about disability, such as the work by Wendy Jacob in Chapter Five, who is interested in what corporeal knowledges vibration can be brought to bear in our daily lives. Or in the second chapter, which is dedicated to a discussion on the trope of the prosthesis, one might assume that I discuss the work of artists who are amputees. But this is not the case, as I take the definition of prosthesis in a much wider application, such as the blind man’s white cane, or a podium that is made to fit my 4’3” stature, that I use for conferences and events. I also suggest that it is through the performance of adaptation witnessed through many of the artworks I discuss, and which requires participation and engagement by both artist and audience, that a new understanding of enabling acts can be brought to bear on choreopolitics and choreographic objects. I also consistently trace a lineage for the artwork that

draws on various genres in art history that are not necessarily strictly about identity politics, or any other politics for that matter. Sometimes I reference other relevant historical works as a means to make formal, conceptual, sensorial, affective or ideological frameworks that cross-fertilize and thus create new meaning.

Chapter Two explores the lived experiences of the amputee as it engages with spatial props. Here, I reorient the very status of the en fleshed limb in art history from the threshold of representation into the world of movement, gesture and form. By doing so, I am particularly interested in how artists offer new constructions of the prosthesis itself, in order to rethink the possibilities of its form in space. I center my discussion in a more unconventional format in this chapter, as my discussion not only touches on one disabled contemporary artist, Carmen Papalia, who explores the spatial territories of various prostheses through the form of the blind man's white cane, but I also analyze how my own body engages with similar creative and critical notions of prostheses through my *Alterpodium*, a custom-made, portable disability object that I use to "perform disability" during international and national conferences, symposiums and lectures. I choose to incorporate my own example here as I believe that my case study fits in very well with the theme and politics of this chapter. In considering the usage of the word "choreopolitics" in this chapter, the term "prosthetic choreopolitics" will be applied, alluding to the politics of movement associated with the prosthesis.

In Chapter Three, I explore how space is experienced from the dwarf perspective, otherwise known as “scale choreopolitics.” I ask, how does the built environment create a “blind” space for the dwarf? How does the dwarf artist prompt and remind us of the experience of their spatial occupation? The choreography of the dwarf body is one that involves bodily action from a distinct and different height perspective as compared to the average height adult population. Given this difference in scale between the dwarf body and the average height adult, I argue that the dwarf spatial and choreographic experiences must be considered, because these experiences are distinctive and separate to those of a moving body that does not have dwarfism. The chapter focuses on the work of two contemporary dwarf artists, Laura Swanson and Corban Walker, who use different conceptual and technical methods in order to re-frame how the dwarf subject moves through space. These artists capture how a unique experience of how their bodies move through space in order to claim spatial agency over public environments that commonly serve “normative” audiences and art works. Specifically, through the design of custom-made installations and objects, they call into question how to look, and offer the viewer the opportunity to re-think the traditional way their own embodiments move through a three-dimensional installation in a gallery or public space.

In Chapter Four, I am interested in how the “sonic choreopolitics” of performance and matter of deafness and hearing impaired-ness occupies space through powerful, transgressive measures. How is and how can space be defined from the perspective of deaf and hearing impaired artists? What are the geometry

and contours of space as experienced through their ears? In this chapter, I will examine the work of two contemporary artists who “perform” their experience of deafness through sound, vision, language and tactility in order to make a voluminous statement about both the limitations and openings that space offers them. These artists include Christine Sun Kim and Alison O’Daniel. Each artist explores how sound might be transformed in politicized ways through their own specificities, similarities and differences in relationship to communication and language. In this chapter, then, I am interested in how the movement of sound across space captures a particularized politics for those who are deaf and/or hearing impaired. My definition of choreopolitics continues to take new and more complex forms in the guise of “sonic choreopolitics.”

Lastly, in Chapter Five, I examine the work of Fayen d’Evie, from Melbourne, Australia, and Wendy Jacob, from Boston. Both artists are interested in new orientations or encounters towards objects and space through touch. Through their individual practices, each artist enunciates a type of haptic activism that suggests that the navigation of space can be experienced through tactility and need not rely on the typically predominant sense of vision. Lepecki’s choreopolitics and Forsythe’s choreographic objects is thus applied to this chapter by considering the politics of the haptic or “haptic choreopolitics.” The sense of touch and the proprioceptive relates to a perception and manipulation of objects that inevitably incorporates movement. In order to touch something or someone, one must move and one must make contact, typically with the hands, from one surface (for example, that of the skin) to another surface. Touching can also

occur, of course, through other parts of the body beyond the hands. Through the movement of touching, one also *feels*, physically, cognitively, and affectively. When these surfaces meet in different circumstances and at various paces and speeds, I argue that an illustration of choreographic objects takes place, and new knowledge is produced.

Chapter 1: *Breaking Out of Concentric Circles:*
A New Dance Between Disability Studies and Art History

Introduction

Why has the disabled body too often been marked by taboo? In general, the word “disability” is typically freighted with negative associations in most Western cultural discourses. Indeed, the word “disability” has a long lineage.¹⁹ In tracing the etymology of the word, Simi Linton states that the basis of the prefix “dis” “connotes separation, taking apart or sundering in two, rooting negativity within its etymology.”²⁰ She goes on to say that disability has now come to be used arbitrarily, although it is a word meant to signify something concrete. For example, even though dominant culture may wish to designate the word to anyone with physical and mental “handicaps,” given that so many people from a wide spectrum of ages, classes, and ethnicities have many visible and invisible impairments that are either congenital or newly acquired, it is hard to affix “disability” to any one particular type of person or group.²¹

Historical definitions of disability were multiple and often contradictory, and reveal the contestation around the label. The Oxford English Dictionary lists the year 1545 as the first time disability was used in application to the inability to

¹⁹ For more information, consult “Disability History Timeline,” *Disability Social History Project*. 2 June 2009. [23 Oct 2011. <http://www.disabilityhistory.org/timeline_new.html>](http://www.disabilityhistory.org/timeline_new.html).

²⁰ Simi Linton, “Reassigning Meaning,” *The Disability Studies Reader 3rd Edition*. ed. Lennard J. Davis. London and New York: Routledge.2010) 234-5. Linton elaborates: “The prefix has various meanings such as not, as in *dissimilar*; absence of, as in *disinterest*; opposite of, as in *disfavor*; undo, do the opposite of, as in *disarrange*; and deprive of, as in *disenfranchise*. The Latin root *dis* means apart, asunder. Therefore, to use the verb *disable*, means, in part, to deprive of capability of effectiveness. The prefix creates a barrier, cleaving in two ability and its absence, its opposite. Disability is the “not” condition, the repudiation of ability.”

²¹ It is important to note that the word “handicap” is considered retrograde and offensive to disabled people. I use this word with quotes for this reason.

learn. In the Western medieval period, people with so-called “defects” were often considered as miracles or prodigies, divine signs from God. The origin of a defect or a deformity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could be human-made, accidental (for example, by injury), or occur naturally at birth, making it a congenital disability. In the early 1900s, “unusual” beings provoked other problematic interpretations. A multitude of disabled figures became associated with abjection, inferiority and weakness in the figures of the freak, monster, midget and cripple. According to Michel Foucault, the middle classes began to regulate the body into various conceptual clusters (of which disability was a part) in order to control and harness the life force of a population.²² In the extreme, eugenic stratification of bodies in Nazism found disabled people, among others, incarcerated and exterminated.²³ As this cursory historical review shows, the status, value and significance of disability is absolutely reliant upon cultural and temporal contexts.

In more contemporary times, the Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA) was a landmark civil rights law passed on July 26, 1990, wide-ranging in that it prohibits discrimination based on disability.²⁴ It acknowledges that “disability depends on perception and subjective judgment rather than objective bodily

²² Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry* 8.4 (Summer 1982): 777-795.

²³ Eugenics, the biosocial movement that was popular with Nazism, advocates the use of practices aimed at improving genetic composition of a population, usually referring to the manipulation of human populations. The movement follows after physiognomy that emerged in the 19th century, which was a classification process that helped to assess a person’s character or personality from his or her outer appearance, especially the face. Disabled people (and other minority subject positions) were marginalized by this process. Physiognomy was popular with the police in criminal profiling. To learn more, refer to Alan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39, Winter 1986: 3-64, and also Robert N. Proctor, “The Destruction of Lives Not Worth Living,” *Deviant Bodies*, ed Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995) 170-196.

²⁴ The ADA is similar to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in that it protects people against discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin and other characteristics, although as Joseph Grigely points out, unlike the Civil Rights Act, the ADA requires that disabled people need to be accommodated only when the accommodation is deemed “reasonable,” which he considers an “absurd legal concept.” Joseph Grigley, “Beautiful Progress to Nowhere,” *Parallel Lines Journal*, In the Ghetto, ed. Aaron Williamson, 2011, 5 Mar 2012 <<http://www.parallellinesjournal.com/>>.

states.”²⁵ In other words, disability must be determined on a case-by-case basis, demonstrating its arbitrary meaning. The goal of the disability rights movement, which emerged prominently across the United States in the 1960s, has been to “reassign meaning” within a sociopolitical analysis of disability.²⁶ There is much work to be done in this area, because there is still a stigma attached to the *idea* of disability.²⁷

Similarly, conventional art history, and even contemporary performance theory, has not accounted for the reality of disabled subjects and their bodies. The ostensible “normative” male and female body, soon became internalized as an aesthetic ideal through art history, which has a lineage going back to Leonardo da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man* (1487) (Appendix: Figure 5) and Le Corbusier’s *Modulor* (1943) (Appendix: Figure 6).²⁸ The iconic image of *Vitruvian Man* incorporates a perfect concentric circle in a thinly-drawn line that represents the

²⁵ Simi Linton, “Reassigning Meaning,” *The Disability Studies Reader 3rd Edition*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (London and New York: Routledge, 2010) 224.

²⁶ Disability as a political movement lags behind civil rights for people of color and women, as disability has not yet established a common cultural language. To be clear, the civil rights and feminist movements realized the fallacy of identifying as homogenous, and soon after recognized the importance of intersectionality. But different “disabled” communities, such as those that are hearing or visually impaired or short-statured, traditionally have seen themselves as independent of each other, and have had difficulty finding commonalities amongst themselves such as societal stigma, even while recognizing intersectionality. They are only now just beginning to forge relationships.

²⁷ Another second movement arose in Berkeley, California, during the 1970s that was focused on the rights of independent living of disabled people. Victor Santiago Pineda says that this was “perhaps the first example of a coordinated effort to use the physical spaces of a city as a battle ground for claiming rights of equal access for disabled persons. On April 5th, 1977, over 150 people with disabilities entered the San Francisco federal building to demand the belated enforcement of Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. Passed four years earlier over President Richard Nixon’s veto, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was designed to prevent discrimination against “qualified handicapped individuals” on the basis of physical access. Under the Rehabilitation Act, disabled Americans were to participate on an equal basis with non-disabled Americans in all federally funded programs. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act served to open up American cities by mandating equal access and thus equally distributing usable and livable space for people with disabilities. Section 504 contained the language that would regulate social inclusion through *spatial accommodation* and physical access for people with disabilities.” Source: Victor Santiago Pineda, “Enabling Justice: Spatializing Disability in the Built Environment.” *Critical Planning*, Summer, 2008, 110-123.

²⁸ It is fascinating that the iconic image of *Vitruvian Man* incorporates a perfect concentric circle in a thinly-drawn line that represents the cyclical and uninterrupted flow of ostensible normal up and down movement that the arms should make at the side of the body; the legs are engaged in similar gestures back and forth, but it especially demonstrates proportion and symmetry, and that a body in proportion and with symmetry is a body that fits within a pristine circle. This is the very circle that Baden breaks through this *Seatbelt* series through his use of concrete blocks and other objects that obstruct the so-called perfect path and force the body to adapt and make an adjustment. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder have also critiqued this oppressive circle through the commission of an artwork by Selene DePackh entitled *Vitruvian Man with CP*, that offers an alternative body inhabiting this space which is placed as the cover art of their book, *The Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015).

cyclical and uninterrupted flow of so-called “normal” up and down movement that the arms should make at the side of the body; the legs are engaged in similar gestures back and forth, but it especially demonstrates proportion and symmetry, and that a body in proportion and with symmetry is a body that fits within a pristine circle. The *Modulor*, in particular, is an anthropometric scale of proportions devised by the Swiss-born French architect. It is based on the six-foot height of an English man with his arm raised. These measurements do not represent the diversity, form, and shape of all bodies, and these measurements translated into architecture and our built environment create barriers for disabled people. These art historical aesthetic ideals of perfection, proportion, and beauty are found in classical sculpture and modernism, and in architecture through the golden section. The golden section is “an average measure conforming to man.”²⁹ Michael Davidson has talked about how for eighteenthth century German art historians and writers Gottfried Lessing and Johann Winckelmann, “a realistic depiction of a ‘misshapen man’ is less important for its verisimilitude than for its demonstration of artisanal superiority. What is clear . . . is that the ability of aesthetics to define affective and sensory response depends on—indeed, is constituted by—bodily difference.”³⁰ Regretfully, the widespread representation of a bodily ideal in *Vitruvian Man* and *Modulor* in art history contributes to ableist attitudes and discrimination against the disabled minority. This is because there is an internalized, almost unconscious assumption of able-bodiedness in art

²⁹ Heinrich Wölfflin, “Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture” in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, Introduction and Translation by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou (California: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), 169.

³⁰ Michael Davidson, “Keywords in Disability Studies: Aesthetics.” *Keywords in Disability Studies*. Eds. David Serlin and Benjamin Reiss (New York: New York University, 2015).

theory and praxis - if the assumption becomes “disrupted” by non-normative corporeal forms, then these forms have historically been rejected, and marked as pathological, diseased, and “other.” While bodily ideals have shifted in art (such as the mannerist bodies of the late sixteenth century, or rococo bodies), the primary narrative of art history still goes back to the Da Vinci/Corbusier norm, and they remain especially dominant in popular culture.

Second, if it isn’t already enough that the spatiality of the disabled body is restricted by the architectures of our everyday world, the so-called “ideal” representations of the body illustrated in *Vitruvian Man* and *Modulor* are also replicated and excluded through bodies in motion, especially within choreography and dance studies. Given the direction of this dissertation, which conflates traditional art historical frameworks into the world of movement, phenomenology and choreopolitics, I wanted to point out that these bodily ideals do not alter or change in other fields, although there are certainly many scholars who work against them, including Susan Leigh Foster, Victoria Marks, Victoria Lewis, Carrie Sandahl, Petra Koppers, and others.³¹ Within dance studies, we see the same redundant and restrictive categorizations of bodies, especially present in the drawings from Carlo Blasis’s *An elementary treatise upon the theory and practice of the art of dancing*, dating back to the early nineteenth century (Appendix:

³¹ There is a prodigious history of disability theater and disability dance companies throughout the world, operating in the past three to four decades with a mix of disabled and non-disabled people at the helm. This self-conscious artistic movement has evolved to where artists and performers combine to create work about their own culture as an expression of who and what they are. In their essay, “Res(Crip)ting Feminist Theater Through Disability Theater: Selections from The DisAbility Project,” Ann M. Fox and Joan Lipkin discuss the nature of feminist theater, and how it must “seek to effect social change through questioning the traditional apparatus of theatrical representation, and by extension, calling attention to the social construction of identities upon which privilege is based.” But Fox and Lipkin also warn of the dangers of the “dramaturgical prosthesis,” where disabled bodies are being reified to make a point about exploitation and marginalization. Source: Ann M. Fox and Joan Lipkin, “Res(Crip)ting Feminist Theater through Disability Theater: Selections from DisAbility Project” in *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Feminist Disability Studies (Autumn, 2002).

Figure 7). Foster points out that in these drawings, we see the “dotted lines running through the limbs [which] seem to indicate the proper geometric relations and proportions among parts of the body.”³² These lines recall the way that da Vinci superimposed the body of an average-sized man in *Vitruvian Man*, to demonstrate the correct proportions and angles and lines of the limbs,³³ while the Blais drawing also indicate ostensible proper geometric relations and proportions of the body. In the case of the Blais figures, Foster continues that, in ballet, the leg demonstrates that the leg should perch at a perfect right angle, and that the arms should create an oval as the arms are raised overhead.³⁴ These figures also “illustrated the vertical orientation of the body with respect to the floor.”³⁵ Foster makes a powerful and astute observation when she states that the ideal geometry created in the relationship between the horizontal floor and the vertical human body eventually became internalized into the corpus itself, placing undue pressure on the body to conform to this horizontal/vertical axis at all times. In other words, this axis dictated that the body must be in a 90-degree angle to the horizontal floor – no more, no less. It was this axis that was absorbed into the flesh and bone of the corpus in order to stipulate correct movement of the limbs.³⁶

It also seemed as if the energy to radiate from the floor of the dance studio radiated into the bodies of the dancers, so that, as Foster says, “the geometric designs of the floor-patterns were transformed into geometric patternings within

³² Susan Leigh Foster, “Choreography,” in *Choreographing Empathy* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 41.

³³ Other dance theorists have followed suit on the Blais diagrams, such as Rudolf Laban who was the pioneer of modern dance in Europe. His books also all offer detailed diagrams on the the language of “normal” movement and choreutics and principles for orientation in space with little room for how the disabled body might fit into this rigid system. See Rudolf Laban, *The Language of Movement: A guidebook to choreutics*, ed. Lisa Ullmann (Great Britain: Plays, Inc. 1974).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

the body,” implying that the body also conformed to the rules of geometry through equal proportions and symmetry.³⁷ Foster’s remarks are interesting in application to the disabled body. The designs in the floor – and in an entire building, including walls, steps, ceilings and more – may not seep so effectively into an atypical body with different proportions and that are asymmetrical, because that body may not be able to easily or “naturally” respond in turn. Rather, in this dissertation, it is the disabled body that seeks to infiltrate into the architectures of this world most radically, because architectures intended for “normal” sized people do not “fit” for disabled people. These bodies and architectures create a discord, like a doorjamb, or a table whose legs topple over the surface of uneven tiles. I argue that these un-perfect situations in the environment are part of the landscape, and our language around “fixing” and “modifying,” be it furniture or bodies, belongs to a medical model of disability. If we consider the social model of disability, which apporions the proliferation of reductive attitudes towards disability to society and not the individual, then we might ask how the disabled body changes or alters the environment to suit its needs better as an adaptation, given the world was not built for complex embodiment. For example, consider how a napkin is placed under one table leg to balance it out and keep it still so it no longer wobbles while seated at the table eating dinner – this is an environmental adaptation, rather than the environment imposing its restrictions on an uneven table leg, with little opportunity for modification. The point is that we cannot assume that so-called standards operate

³⁷ Ibid.

universally towards all tables (and all bodies). Therefore, I seek to find a way in which to break the so-called perfect concentric circles of the *Vitruvian Man* through this empirical turn that relies on adaptation and change. In his *Seatbelt* series, Baden certainly breaks the concentric circles of *Vitruvian Man* through his use of concrete blocks and other objects that obstruct the so-called perfect path and force the body to adapt and make an adjustment, so that there are bumps, waves, and modulations (Appendix: Figure 8).

Disability, Identity & Space: A Choreopolitics

In my application of Lepecki's "choreopolitics" of the disabled body, I aim to literally step beyond simply overwrought portraits into categories that provide much more shades of grey. This crucially means that I am purposefully shifting away from simply thinking about static two-dimensional representations and aesthetics and into the realm of the rich, untapped knowledges that the disabled body inhabits through a dynamic intersection of choreography, movement, and phenomenology. This means that I am suggesting a shift in the semiotic interpretation of bodies, so that disability aesthetics does not simply encompass a literal mimicry between real disabled bodies and figurative works of art, and the affective relations between each of them and the viewer. Rather, this mode of disability aesthetics I suggest incorporates a politics of choreography, so that we consider actions stemming from both the disabled and non-disabled body and how those actions bear on other bodies who react to various stimuli in the various art installations. What are the traces of bodily experiences that the

contemporary artists leave behind, so that other bodies can similarly inhabit those spaces to share in the space of disability aesthetics? Art historian Jennifer Fisher says “without perambulation, an aesthetic experience would be reduced to a static, immobilized view because without the synaesthesia of proprioception and vision there is no third dimension.”³⁸ A new art historical rhetoric based on the disabled body, its movement, its ways of sensing and its lived experiences indeed offers third dimensions and it also expands our definitions of all these terms within the canon of art as we currently know it. Preceding Fisher’s contemporary thinking, the seventeenth century Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza said that “We do not even know of what a body is capable of” and “We do not even know of what affections we are capable, nor the extent of our power.”³⁹ In other words, Spinoza is saying that we haven’t even scratched the surface of knowing our bodies! We know even less about the disabled body. Asking what the disabled body can do helps us to understand what it means to think and be through the variant body. The disabled experience has been a subjugated knowledge, which was a term originally developed by Foucault to describe knowledge and ways of knowing that are left out.⁴⁰ But what if disability could become an epistemic resource and an embodied cognition embedded with politicized consciousness?⁴¹ Or more simply, a way of knowing the world?

³⁸ Fisher, Jennifer. “Tactile Affects.” *Tessera*, Vol. 32, 2002, pp. 17-28.

³⁹ Gilles Deleuze, “What Can A Body Do?” in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 226.

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

⁴¹ Jackie Leach Scully. “Thinking Through the Variant Body,” *Disability Bioethics: Moral Bodies, Moral Difference*, (London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008) 84. She says that embodied cognition is where complex mental processes are founded on the physical interactions that people have with their environment; this is contrasted with the classic or first-generation view of cognition as essentially computational or rule-based. “Thinking Through the Variant Body” in *Disability Bioethics: Moral Bodies, Moral Difference*, (London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008) 84.

The terms “choreography” and “politics” in this dissertation are understood in line with contemporary manifestations of their definitions in performance studies scholarship that includes Lepecki’s sharp interrogation and other scholars like, in no particular order, Erin Manning, Randy Martin, Jenn Joy, Diana Taylor, and Foster, to name a few, or practitioners like Augusto Boal famed for developing “theatre of the oppressed” which offered a platform for the dispossessed voices of society to act on stage and so become empowered through critical reflection. Foster for example, says that choreography “can productively be conceptualized as a theorization of identity – corporeal, individual, and social.”⁴² In his introduction to *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, Lepecki advocates for a broadening of choreography’s meaning, so that it moves beyond a localization of its restrictive application to dance. Foster also similarly advocates for this expansion of choreography to “encompass a consideration of all manner of human movement including...the guidelines according to which protestors have conducted nonviolent direction action.”⁴³ Thus, the very ontology of movement must be destabilized according to Lepecki, where we can no longer attribute any certainty to choreography’s ostensible rules of the game, such as what might be the “correct posture” or the “appropriate form of action.”⁴⁴ This disruption of the flow of dance and “any choreographing questioning of dance’s identity as *being-in-flow*...performs a critical act of deep

⁴² Susan Leigh Foster, “Introducing Choreographing Empathy” in *Choreographing Empathy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁴ Andre Lepecki, “Introduction: The Political Ontology of Movement” in *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

ontological impact.”⁴⁵ While Lepecki goes on to talk of how this disruption marks a “betrayal between dance and movement,” my application of Lepecki’s “choreopolitics” towards the politics of the moving disabled body partially mirrors his efforts, as the disabled body also disrupts a “regular” flow of human movement. Similarly, Erin Manning also talks of the relationship between choreography and politics, and she suggests that the activation of the two requires “devising techniques, in the moving, for an activist philosophy that is ecological and neurodiverse at its very core.” This activism also means “refusing to situate movement in a preconstituted subject; questioning the place of volition in experience; [and] resisting normopathy as a point of departure...”⁴⁶ Manning is especially relevant here for she is one of few scholars I have happened upon so far that rigorously incorporates neurodiversity into her theoretical analyses, particularly autism.

While one of Lepecki’s projects has been to dismantle a whole notion of dance by applying “choreopolitics” to various case studies of contemporary artists, dancers and performers alike, in this dissertation I appropriate his important term in order to dismantle a “crippling” notion of the disabled body that is reductively characterized as “limiting” and “restrictive” in its movement. Indeed, Lepecki’s “choreopolitics” is adopted and applied towards a disabled, or complex embodiment in this dissertation because it offers a very rich framework with which to develop my discussions of the artists. The politics of the disabled

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Erin Manning, “Choreographing the Political” in *The Minor Gesture* (London and Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 129-130.

body in motion is rich and offers new knowledges that have never before considered from multi-modal perspectives. Like myself, Lepecki is interested in the fundamental question that Deleuze recuperates from Spinoza: what can a body do? Lepecki suggests that both “choreography and philosophy share that same fundamental political, ontological, physiological, and ethical question.”⁴⁷ I argue that the movements of the disabled body as discussed through the artwork in this dissertation are “political” because the disabled body is a social and cultural object that carries great stigma and taboo. The disabled body as a moving body with agency is thus a powerful form of resistance and disruption, where it aims to shed reductive associations tied to antiquated ideas of restriction, similar to how Lepecki’s project aims to dismantle limiting associations between dance and movement. Lepecki also suggests that considering choreography through “political thought” is important because it “opens[s] up the possibility to mobilize not only theories but also otherwise politically passive bodies.”⁴⁸ Lepecki’s various studies in this book are remarkable for he examines different choreographic modalities – ranging from stillness, the stumble, the crawl and the topple, amongst others – as a means to rethink normative action and mobility. All of these choreographic forms are enacted by subjects of Lepecki’s analyses quite purposefully, but what is interesting about an application of these forms to the disabled subject is that these choreographic forms are oftentimes simply how disabled bodies move on a daily basis. Sometimes these toppling disabled forms change position, so that they crawl out of a wheelchair instead of rolling through a

⁴⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 12.

space in an attempt to transgress public space, but the point is that the disabled subject is always already a choreopolitical body in motion that carries weight and meaning to Lepecki's term, "choreopolitics."

For instance, what happens if we consider the ambulatory experience of the dwarf, as captured from behind the camera lens? First of all, it is rare that we are "exposed" to the dwarf perspective within art history, especially where it is the dwarf who has the agency by being the one who literally calls the shots on how the camera is being wielded, and who will fall under their radar. In the photographic work of Ricardo Gil, who is 3'8", the heads and upper torsos of average height people are more or less cut out of Gil's frames, where only their lower torsos and legs can be seen, given the remainder of their bodies are not within Gil's focal radius. He says that average-height people were simply out of the frame - sometimes they were included, and sometimes they weren't: "I'm sorry, there's a lot of stuff going on down here, and sometimes average-height people are not privy to it."⁴⁹ The artist was especially interested in using average-sized people as props, as if they could be negotiated or maneuvered on a stage. In looking at some examples, in an Untitled photo by Gil (c. 1990), he has captured a row of average-height mannequin legs wearing various pants and jeans and white socks on their feet stationed in front of a store as he walks along a street pavement (Appendix: Figure 9). Gil snapped the photograph just as a man (also wearing jeans) was quickly walking past. All the viewer can see is the man's walking legs and feet, with black shoes, in motion, and a swinging blurry arm at the side of a

⁴⁹ Ricardo Gil interview with Amanda Cachia, December 11, 2013

torso. The image is a powerful constellation of pairs of legs in Gil's sightline, where both the still and moving forest of body parts work together to exemplify Gil's focal point.

In the next two Untitled photographs, Gil's ex-wife Meg appears engaged in various choreographic activities (Appendix: Figures 10-11). In the first, she is washing dishes in a kitchen wearing formal clothing and talks to an average-height man, and possibly an average-height woman who appears to her right, who is engaged in putting away the dishes. In the second photo, Meg is laughing and waving as she talks to two-average height men in suits with ties. This looks like a formal event again, as Meg also wears another nice dress. Of course, what is distinct about these images is how the focus on is on Meg and her perspective. Meg looks up at the men as she talks to them. We see her eyes and/or her head titling up to adjust her direction of her gaze for better access and to meet the mens eyes, while we imagine that the men look down at her (for we cannot see their heads tilting down, as the upper portion of their bodies are also cut off along the top of the frame). It is clear that Gil has privileged Meg as the main character, and it is her body that we see in full perspective. It is Meg that is centralized while the average-height people are the supporting actors who are, as Gil says, Meg's props to frame her corpus, like Greek or Roman columns. This is quite an atypical composition given that the view of the average-height photographer would have offered a perspective of looking down on people and objects lower to the ground than themselves.

Gil's photos might be said to be in stark contrast to several street photos by the American photographer Garry Winogrand, where either the dwarf or the amputee homeless man is captured from Winogrand's ambulatory perspective as he walked the streets of major cities in the United States, which can be estimated between five and a half to six feet tall (Appendix: Figures 12-13). In David Hevey's key essay, "The Enfreakment of Photography," the author says that "Winogrand consciously or otherwise included disabled people with the specific intention of enfreaking disability in order to make available to his visual repertoire a key *destabilising* factor."⁵⁰ The viewer looks down on these "unmentionables" just as Winogrand did, both literally and metaphorically in a classist, ableist way. Looking down has socially implied distaste, snobbery and judgement, and such a physical gesture places Winogrand's image into the realm of the voyeuristic, regardless of Winogrand's actual intent, or inside/outside relationship with his subjects.

Gil said that initially, when he started playing with his field of view, he did not realize he had something unique to offer in this way. But then it dawned on him that he didn't really know of any other dwarf doing photographs using this strategy. Gil knew that the power behind his own self-portrait was because it was the man himself composing the images, making a statement about his own community, saying, "this is me, this is us." Then it became more complex for Gil and his intellectual investigation and he wanted to learn more about the existence of dwarfs in photography. While on the one hand, Gil will say that his viewpoint

⁵⁰ David Hevey, "The Enfreakment of Photography," in the *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis. (New York and London: Routledge, Third Edition, 2010), 515.

is not especially unique, given it is just his viewpoint, (and after all, what other viewpoint would he use?), on the other hand, his viewpoint is a big deal because rarely do we come upon his perspective in the annals of art history or even contemporary photographic art practices. Indeed, Betty Adelson states that one of Gil's "major accomplishments is his manipulation of perspective."⁵¹ The visual stance of the dwarf means that the average-height person is ironically "reduced" to just their legs, given that is what fills most of their sight-line. In his strategies of re-directing the gaze of the viewer, privileging the dwarf subject, and more generally re-framing depictions of the short statured embodiment through a "scale choreopolitics," I suggest that photographers like Gil significantly depart from the stigmatized status surrounding the dwarf's representations in the work of non-dwarf photographers. This is because the viewer will be made more aware of the movements, perspective and perceptions of the dwarf, as opposed to attracting a historically prevalent morbid and reductive curiosity. Through this example, I aim to illustrate that it is through the lived experiences of the disabled corpus – through their choreopolitics – that we might come to understand the disabled body more intimately and more profoundly.

Choreopolitics and the Role of the Body

Numerous theoretical, practical and even ethnographic analyses of the body in motion have been undertaken within the academy across a number of fields, particularly as it pertains to the "othered body." Indeed, we will find that

⁵¹ Betty Adelson "Art" in *The Lives of Dwarfs: Their Journey from Public Curiosity toward Social Liberation* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 186.

this framework has been taken up in cultural studies, film studies, dance studies, communication studies, women's and gender studies, visual studies and art history. Within art history, I hope to bring in productive comparisons and contrasts with ambulatory genres such as fluxus, happenings, body art and performance art in a bid to trace how the world of movement has impacted art historical discourse since the 1950s onwards. Indeed, Lepecki goes so far as to call this a "choreographic turn" in the artistic landscape, dominated by figures such as Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Robert Morris and Yvonne Rainer. The conflation and intersections of all these areas continue to inspire and motivate in contemporary exhibitions of art, as evidenced by the recent surge of interest in how movement and choreography, as defined by Lepecki, might come to form offer new perspectives in theory and praxis and rotate art history as we know it.⁵²

As part of this rotation gesture, in this section, I question whether the very theoretical methodology of forging allegiances between minority and mainstream categories in art history within the chapters of this dissertation is merely serving to reinforce the normalization of these pre-existing canonical categories. In many of my analyses, I demonstrate that work by disabled artists can be contextualized within established art genres as a means for placing greater transformational value on their work. But what is at stake in employing this comparative procedure?

⁵² For instance, the exhibition *Move. Choreographing You: Art and Dance Since the 1960s* was curated by Stephanie Rosenthal in 2011 for the Hayward Gallery in London, with catalogue essay contributions by Susan Leigh Foster, Andre Lepecki and Peggy Phelan. Important precursors to such projects include exhibitions like *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979*, curated by Paul Schimmel for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 1998. The accompanying catalogue includes essays by Kristine Stiles, Guy Brett, Hubert Klocker, Shinichiro Osaki and Paul Schimmel and was published by Thames and Hudson, UK.

What is gained or lost when I build my critical enterprise on this approach? One potent curatorial example of where my strategy at aligning the work of canonical ostensible mainstream body art/performance art/live art with so-called “disability art” met with some criticism is when the disability studies/performance scholar Carrie Sandahl gave a lecture on my *Flesh of the World* exhibition at the University of Toronto in October, 2015.⁵³ Sandahl said that she felt that my juxtapositions were problematic and uncomfortable, because the politics of disability were emptied and thus lost its power within this new context (and indeed, context is everything). Sandahl offered a definition of “disability art” that was based on the famous “nothing about us without us” slogan that was coined and heavily utilized during the ADA protest and actions in 1990, amongst other pivotal moments during the disability rights movement over the past several decades. Sandahl then gave the specific example of seeing a video work in my exhibition of the deceased amputee dancer Lisa Bufano, who was performing on stage using bright orange prosthetic legs that imitated the look and form of Queen Anne table-legs, and held this up against the exploratory work of the famous Australian artist Stelarc, who uses all manner of creative and experimental prosthesis to challenge the limits and definitions of the body. Sandahl argued that juxtaposing these two works especially was politically and ideologically challenging when we consider the contrasting backgrounds of the artists: on the one hand, we have Bufano who came from a working class socio-economic background and who struggled to make a living as an artist. Bufano committed

⁵³ To watch and listen to the interview in full, visit <http://fleshoftheworld.ca/programming/> Accessed June 15, 2016

suicide in 2013 and questions continue to swirl around the reasons why she took her own life, including assumptions that some of this may have been attributed to her struggles with her lived experience of disability. On the other hand, Stelarc is an acclaimed international artist who continues to enjoy a great deal of public arts funding for his projects as someone who has never beheld a lived experience with disability through his own corpus. Stelarc starts with a body that is a blank slate, so to speak, and then is in a privileged position in which to manipulate it. By offering this example, Sandahl was aiming to ask, who can safely challenge what is human? What are the limits and boundaries of cultural appropriation? Did the Bufano piece lose its political power, where it aimed to showcase Bufano's expertise and beauty on prosthetic dancing legs across a stage, when contextualized against Stelarc's own transformative corporeal engagements with aesthetics and movement? Furthermore, owing to my curation of this exhibition, where I incorporated artists like Mowry Baden, or the 1968 video piece by Bruce Nauman, *Pinchneck*, did I fail to use a critical disability studies approach?

What I would argue is that context is everything. But I would also add that *intention* is everything too. While it is true that the identity of the artist should be and can be ignored when looking at a work of art, and that it is important to take a work of art on its own terms, separate to the identity of its maker, we cannot take this identity (of artist, curator or audience member) for granted, and that it cannot be disavowed or ignored completely. Even my own identity as a privileged disabled scholar and curator is very much highlighted in this dissertation and in all the work that I do as a scholar, so I understand how my own positioning must

be articulated within this argument and framework. But I don't believe that it is useful to continue to create very ghettoizing narrow categories and definitions of which artwork belongs with which exhibition, given that the definition of "disability art" can be construed as one-sided and responding to a limiting set of cultural and political concerns for a small community. Indeed, to discriminate and demarcate boundaries of what is "for or "against" the objectives of disability art is to problematically re-inscribe the categories which I seek to question and break down, both through my curatorial practice and this dissertation.

I argue that there is new knowledge to be had by considering artworks side by side that may confuse the traditional reception and interpretation of those works, including body art from the 1970s and so on. I'm interested in the same questions that Sandahl posed in her lecture: how might disability and art and culture be read or understood in the context of this exhibition (and in the context of this dissertation)? How might other body-based art be informed by the presence of disability art, within an exhibition, or, within this dissertation? Sandahl claims that disability art is emptied of its political dimension and critique and its intent is watered down in my *Flesh of the World* exhibition and in other artistic examples. But she also says that disability is a relational experience that is shared with others, and it is here that I suggest that this engagement should be embraced within an exhibition context. What happens when the body of Nauman rubs up against the body of Aaron Williamson, who gestures and even mocks the performance art of the 1970s in his short video, *Artist Hung on Gallery Wall* (2008)? Or more specific to this dissertation, in Chapter Two, when we consider

Ann Hamilton's images in juxtaposition with Carmen Papalia's performances, how do they each depart, contribute or complicate one another's practices? If the works lose their original meaning, why is that a bad thing when new meaning can be found instead? Isn't this the role of the curator/scholar/artist as provocateurs and producers after all? The point of the strategy I propose and use is to offer generative political dimensions when we see them in conversation with one another. I believe that these material object relations considered in an exhibition or in this dissertation allows the viewer and/or reader an opportunity to trace a lineage of one work to another, and a development in performance practice and politics that demonstrates how disability was either neglected or embraced by artists, subconsciously or consciously. I want to encourage the viewer/reader to consider this work from a new lens and produce a reading that was perhaps more complex and more multi-dimensional and two or even three-sided than perhaps a previously one-dimensional reading that is typically to be found in the art history canon, or within organized communities with specific political objectives in mind. This is especially the case when artists encourage the audience member to directly participate themselves in these acts of movement, which move beyond the confines of representation. In this way, perhaps the reader/viewer can trace different methodologies and approaches to the body, and none are more valid or "correct" than the other – they simply come from a multitude of perspectives and backgrounds. As Sandahl offers in her same lecture, "disability art and culture enriches and complicates the avant-guard's focus on the body (where the body was used as a site of anti-representation)...disability and illness experiences raise

the stakes on the body as metaphor and flesh.”⁵⁴ Indeed, we might even be able to argue that “disability art” and “body art” are more alike than we think, given they both ostensibly use the body as a source or departure point for questions around representation. “Body art” has a bearing on embodiment as the flesh apparent in “body art” operates as a key tool for communication regarding the body’s being-in-the-world.

Part of what we might discern in contextualizing the art of earlier generations of ostensible “mainstream” artists who belong to the canon in contrast to those occupying the margins and who offer revisionist art practices is that experimentations of, and with, the body are actually much more variegated and diverse than we were previously led to believe. This idea is complicated even further when the argument I make here about choreopolitics extends representation from static, two-dimensional or three-dimensional form into form that carries and provides knowledge as it *moves* in space and time. It becomes more complicated still when a lived experience of disability is attached to this: Sandahl says,

“I remember in particular being frustrated with certain endurance artists. Terry Galloway and I had been planning a video parody of endurance art that, instead of some made-up endurance task (like Chris Burden in the locker), we’d show disabled people we knew who were living endurance art. We had a friend, abandoned by her PA, for instance, unable to get out of bed for two days when she rolled over and got wedged between her bed and the wall not able to reach the phone or know when someone might come help. The unacknowledged privilege of certain body artists just pained us.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Carrie Sandahl email with Amanda Cachia, June 6, 2016

⁵⁵ Carrie Sandahl email with Amanda Cachia, June 15, 2016

I agree with Sandahl's notion of unacknowledged privilege and seek to acknowledge this that here in this dissertation. However, by putting work by "privileged" able-bodied artists alongside those who identify as physically disabled, the reader will also be able to question the nature of this privilege, along with questions around agency, body-centered assumptions, entitlement, power and control, authenticity, and the possibilities and limits of certain bodies over others. The key difference is that while many non-disabled artists "disable" themselves through their art in order to gain a new perspective through this new physical modality, disabled artists use the script of their daily negotiations with their corpus to influence and inspire their art.

Behavior & Performance, Phenomenology & Disability Studies

Phenomenology has a recognized place in disability studies and art history discourses as it feeds into and forms critical part of historical theories of embodiment. My claim here, like that of fellow disability studies scholars, is through the lived experiences of the disabled corpus (as mentioned in the Introduction) – through their phenomenology – that we might come to understand the disabled body more intimately and more profoundly. In this section, I would like to acknowledge the work of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who developed his ideas on phenomenology based on the early twentieth-century tradition of phenomenology originally conceived by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl and his student Martin Heidegger. Their central idea was that we as humans are embodied entities, and Merleau-Ponty's ideas flowed from this,

where he called the body a “grouping of lived-through meanings which move towards its equilibrium.”⁵⁶ Merleau-Ponty’s work moved beyond empiricism and Cartesian dualities, such as mind/body or normal/abnormal, where he developed a philosophy based on how knowledge is produced through bodily experience, emphasizing the “primacy of perception” and embodied perception. Through Merleau-Ponty, we understand that the lived body is not objective, as though it is being looked at from the outside by others, but rather the body is experienced through a more interior or internalized view, and it is the “vehicle for seeing” in the more expansive sense. To describe how the presence of a human body, phenomena and space interweave and immerse in the world, Merleau-Ponty created the phrase the “flesh of the world.” He believed that consciousness, experience and thought lay in the merger of flesh and of world.⁵⁷ A human being lives in an environment and is a part of it; he or she does not gaze at the world as at a display or something that is distant from her. He or she touches things and regards them. In such a manner he or she is seizing them, they are becoming a part of him/her.

Merleau-Ponty’s text, *The Structure of Behavior* (1983) offers astute analyses of concepts such as “nature,” “normal,” “form” and “behavior” – some of the words that correspond with the title of his book.⁵⁸ Merleau-Ponty argues that “physical form” is an object of perception only. It is not the supposed “real

⁵⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1962) 153.

⁵⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible: Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1969).

⁵⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Structure of Behavior*, Paris, France: Duquesne University, Paris, 1983.

foundation of the structure of behavior.”⁵⁹ Further, “perceived objects” or forms change properties when they change position through the lens of vision and perception. There isn’t necessarily any “fact” or “truth” to form. According to Merleau-Ponty, we might surmise that the disabled body, which is classified as pathological and atypical, is a mere human manifestation, a construction of consciousness. Therefore, there is no “truth” to the supposed reductive nature of the disabled form.

Following this, Merleau-Ponty then proceeds to talk about “behaviors.” Merleau-Ponty’s work here is profoundly important to my work in the phenomenology of disability because he is suggesting that there may not be one right or wrong way of behaving. He questions why certain types of behavior are preferred over another. Similarly, we might ask why certain more normative ways of moving, walking, turning one’s head, getting up after a period of sitting down, and so on, might be considered more preferable over other forms. This has consequences for disability because, most often, it is the way that the disabled body moves through space that is considered the least desirable, difficult and imperfect. This is because the disabled body typically takes longer to undertake actions that most others would consider “simple.” Is it true, then, that an objective way of doing things is somehow inherently obvious or mandatory, prescribed to a certain object, form or body? Merleau-Ponty points out that, in actuality, there is no objectivity to a way of doing things, or that there is no one structure of behavior. So is there only one possible way of behaving? This is true only insofar

⁵⁹ Ibid., 144-145.

as humans have predicated that there is a most desirable and so-called best way of behaving (similar to how there might be a so-called ideal way of appearing, in terms of aesthetics), particularly if that behavior takes the least amount of time and takes up the least amount of space. But the “best” way shouldn’t, and isn’t, our only possible solution at all. There are options, which widen the scope for the structure of behavior as enacted through the disabled subject.

In the same text, I was struck by Merleau-Ponty’s discussion around the artist El Greco, who had a visual disorder. Merleau-Ponty’s point is that a visual disorder shouldn’t and doesn’t require an explanation of what might have gone “wrong.” He says that artists are drawn to visual anomalies, and these anomalies actually become something else in the artist’s hands because they provide a platform for another “profile of human existence.”⁶⁰ El Greco is offering a different alternative to what we might perceive as natural, because as Merleau-Ponty explains, his visual disorder was “profoundly integrated into his manner of thinking and being that it appears finally as the necessary expression of his being much more than as a peculiarity imposed from the outside.”⁶¹ His bodily “accident of nature” became infused with “metaphysical meaning.”⁶² Through El Greco, we may no longer see the body in terms of “abstract patterns of biology and psychology.” The body is no longer autonomous – it is effected and affected by other bodies, spaces, and especially disabilities, which infuse our definitions of the body, normal and nature with new meaning. All of this dynamic thinking

⁶⁰ Ibid., 203

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

opens up the possibilities for the disabled person and their supposedly reduced, imperfect, slower capacities. The capacities of disabled people bring with them subjugated knowledges that need to be prized open and explored, where we continue to ask the question, what are the phenomenological and sensorial experiences of one who is blind, deaf or has dwarfism tell us about corporeal perceptions? Merleau-Ponty's discussion on the structure of behavior suggests that there are myriad structures for a plethora of behaviours, and disabled subjectivity forms one critical part of this framework. Key in this notion of disabled subjectivity is accounts and narratives of their lived experiences.

Connelly and Craig call for the phenomenology of lived experience as part of an emerging site of inquiry within academic disciplines and indeed, I have encountered numerous similar methodological approaches using phenomenology by many scholars working in disability studies and other inter-related fields in the humanities including art history, such as Joseph Grigely, Georgina Kleege, Simi Linton, and Miriam Winance, amongst others. In the instances of the work by these scholars, and how they utilize phenomenology to describe practice and/or works, they actually deploy phenomenology to describe the experiences of their own bodies – their bodies are the works, the objects, and the subject all at once. They are interested in sharing with the world their own embodied experiences of the world as conceived through their own eyes, so to speak.

For example, deaf artist and visual studies scholar Joseph Grigely offers numerous personal accounts of his experiences as a deaf artist, such as a discursive and embodied account of his frustration around the challenges of

sourcing compatible American Sign Language interpreters during his participation in art exhibitions, conferences and lectures.⁶³ Of course, Grigely is also an artist who frequently uses sound in his many installations that offer the viewer/listener an account of Grigely's embodied experience of sound from a deaf man's perspective. Grigely lost his hearing as a child and often creates sound installations based on his memories of sound in conjunction with sound as perceived through hand-written notes and his own imagination. Georgina Kleege is a blind scholar of English literature who has published several books regarding her everyday encounters as a blind person.⁶⁴ Kleege's accounts around her experiences with visual art are especially interesting, as Kleege grew up in an artistic household with both parents being artists. S. Kay Toombs is interested in the lived experience of disability also from a phenomenological perspective as a person living with multiple sclerosis. She argues that the lived body provides important insights into the "disruption of space and time that are an integral element of physical disability...a phenomenological account of bodily disorder discloses the emotional dimension of physical dysfunction."⁶⁵ She places emphasis and preference for her body as she lives it in the world which "represents my particular point of view *on* the world," rather than thinking about her body "as an object among other objects *of* the world."⁶⁶ She further distinguishes that through this particular type of account or recording, the lived

⁶³ To learn more read Joseph Grigely's "Beautiful Progress to Nowhere" at <http://www.parallellinesjournal.com/article-beautiful-progress-nowhere.html> Accessed March 9, 2013.

⁶⁴ Georgina Kleege, *Sight Unseen* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

⁶⁵ S. Kay Toombs, "The Lived Experience of Disability" in *Human Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Intersubjectivity as a Practical Matter and a Problematic Achievement (Jan., 1995), 10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

body is not objective, as though it is being looked at from the outside by others, but rather the body is experienced through a more interior or internalized view, and it is the “vehicle for seeing” in the more expansive sense.⁶⁷ She says that the body is the center of orientation, and thus it should be *here*, rather than *there*. It is the body in which we locate and engage with the world, and the artists I discuss in this dissertation bring participants back to this realization again and again. They remind us of the interstices, porousness, sensuousness, and the fabric of our bodies, the ability of the flesh to give and receive, to mark inside and outside.

Film studies scholar Vivian Sobchack also provides a foundation and a pathway for this type of discourse, where we come to understand the world through her point of view as one who is an above-the-knee amputee. Like Toombs, she considers it essential that we move from merely thinking about the body to feeling what it is to be in a body – my body or your body. She continues that “the lived body provides the material premises for meaning – giving ethical gravity to semiotic and textual production and circulation...this corrective [to prioritizing lived experience] is critical to a culture in which vision dominates our sensory access to the world...”⁶⁸ Sobchack, here begins to weave in how the phenomenology of lived experience is particularly important in the critique of ocularcentrism. She believes that our culture places a reductive emphasis on vision particularly in relationship to body image which usually determines how we make “sense” of the world. As a result, visible culture has stripped the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 187.

sensorium down to a very limited and superficial two dimensions. In order to rid ourselves of images, according to Sobchack, we must “flesh them out.”⁶⁹

There are many other contemporary scholars who critique and re-mould phenomenology towards new political ends, such as the work of, in no particular order, Iris Marion Young, Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed, Amelia Jones, and Elizabeth Grosz. Sara Ahmed works with Merleau-Ponty and Husserl to unpack and destabilize perceptions around queer orientations, which is a similar project to how I seek to find what is useful about disabled orientations. For Ahmed, typical orientations must be broken down, because like Merleau-Ponty’s behaviors, there are common internalized assumptions about how one is orientated in the world, specifically as it relates to sexual orientation, ie. heterosexual orientation is considered ostensibly normative, while homosexual orientation is not. Ahmed thus places importance on the knowledge to be gained from our homosexual orientations given that the body comes to be defined by continually only prescribing to one form or type of orientation (that of the heterosexual). What Ahmed’s work brings to bear in my discussion here is that she talks about bodies as being informed and made up of not just our endowed, fuller spectrum of the senses, but that “what gets near [our bodies] is both shaped by what bodies do, which in turn affects what bodies can do.”⁷⁰ Bodies and their multi-sensorial contact with objects – whether it be a wall, a foot-path, a blindfold, a walking cane or a mound of debris—are integral parts of thinking and learning about the capacities of the body. In the work of the artists in this dissertation, then, I will

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Objects, Orientations, Others*, (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006) 54.

demonstrate how they are presenting the body as a sponge, a surface, and a horizon of experience simultaneously in their engagements with objects.

In conjunction with the work of Sobchack, Ahemd, and others, there is also the phenomenology-driven work of the scholars who sit at the intersection of disability studies and performance and theatre studies, particularly Bree Hadley, and as previously mentioned, Petra Kuppens, and Carrie Sandahl. Kuppens, particularly, has long been influenced by Merleau-Ponty, and has utilized Merleau-Ponty's work in many of her readings of disability-based performances.⁷¹ Kuppens is also an artist as she is Artistic Director of the art collective entitled *Olimpias*. *Olimpias* engages in cross-genre participatory practices where they address and engage with audiences directly, thus Kuppens is very interested in drawing out heightened awareness of complex bodily schemas within and amongst her participants. Directly drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Kuppens states, "the body of the self... is a body schema, a conglomerate and palimpsest made up of action maps and visual cues, vague sensings and acute memories."⁷² Through intersubjective exchanges of bodies, Kuppens has been very prolific at offering direct anecdotal narratives of what happens to disabled bodies when they, for example, gather underwater (in her series of *Salamander* projects from 2014-2016), and she captures first-person accounts through both the written word, photographs and videos. Kuppens is especially motivated by somatic experiences that register within the interiority and exteriority of the

⁷¹ For more information, see Petra Kuppens, *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

⁷² Petra Kuppens, "Monsters, Cyborgs, Animals: Crashes, Cuttings, and Migraines," in *The Scar of Visibility: Medical Performances and Contemporary Art*, (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 136.

disabled body as a type of dramatized, choreographed extension to lived experience.

Bree Hadley makes special mention of the particular mode of how the lived experience of disability is portrayed by contemporary British disabled performance artists such as Katherine Araniello, Noëmi Laikmaier and Aaron Williamson that is critical for my own methodology and strategy. She says, “when people with disabilities turn to performance as a political practice, they tend to avoid...autobiographical narratives about diagnosis, crisis, overcoming and cure. Though popular on the main stage, these are, it seems, the stories others would tell about disabled people, not the preferred mode when they work as instigators of their own performances rather than interpreters of other people’s well-made plays about them.”⁷³ Hadley is suggesting that contemporary disability performance artists, in a similar vein to the scholars and artists I have already mentioned, work towards dialogical, physical and sensorial accounts of the lived embodied experience that avoid casting their bodies into reductive stereotypes with the medical model of disability, where their bodies are considered “catastrophes,” and removed from the public sphere. Indeed, instead, there is an emphasis on the contingency of a disabled person’s bodily sensation and perception at transforming meaning within a disabled person’s own reclaimed narrative that carries more agency. This resonates with Merleau-Ponty’s concepts of phenomenology and embodied perception.

⁷³ Bree Hadley, “Introduction: Performance and the Public Sphere,” in *Disability, Public Space, Performance and Spectatorship* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 9-10.

Although his work does not sit at the intersection of performance studies and disability studies, Lepecki too, is impacted by the work of Merleau-Ponty, albeit far less significantly. Lepecki recalls Merleau-Ponty's depiction of bodily perception as a double movement through a choreographic lens: both inward, perceiving itself, and outward, perceiving the world. As one has thoughts and ideas, one also simultaneously feels the concrete underneath one's shoes as they move through the world.

Phenomenology has also influenced many other fields of inquiry where there is a relationship between intellectual ideas and material things, such as architecture, which has relevance to this dissertation given its concern with the politics of the moving disabled body within space. Architects have found Merleau-Ponty's ideas useful because the philosopher claims that we understand our external world through a process of discovery and experimentation in space. Within this space, or a "structured arena for action," there is a constant interplay between perception and action that impacts how architects think about and design buildings.⁷⁴ A phenomenological application to architecture would therefore focus on the central role of the moving body in the perception of architectural space, which may include "sensory qualities of light, sound, temperature and materiality" which can be thought of in Merleau-Ponty's terms as a kind of "primordial language."⁷⁵ One example of this, discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, is how architect Hansel Bauman applies a phenomenological approach to

⁷⁴ Jonathan Hale, *Merleau-Ponty for Architects (Thinkers for Architects)* (Kindle Locations 243-246). (New York and London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2017). Kindle Edition.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

the classrooms of Gallaudet University in Washington DC, where he considers deaf embodiment and how the deaf body engages and interacts with space based on vision and vibration. Phenomenology in architecture therefore provides a discourse (and less a design prototype or methodology), where architecture can be described and dictated by the lived experience of embodied building users, instead of an ostensible “universal” subject.⁷⁶

I am aware of the critiques that have been leveled towards phenomenology, where it has been accused of being conservative as it assumes a “universal” subject, and that all bodies can behave in certain ways that are known to be categorically true. However, I believe that Merleau-Ponty, for the most part, is an exception to this type of assumption, given his close attention to variations in “form,” “behavior,” “normal,” and “natural.” His approach towards such terms will be useful to me in this particular project, particularly as within his various case studies, he allows for letting the experiences speak for themselves from the perspectives of the experiencers. My project will not and cannot critique the entire offerings of phenomenology, as it is only this slender portion of phenomenology’s work that interests me here. Specifically, some of Merleau-Ponty’s and other’s phenomenology becomes very useful to my project because of their inquiry towards atypical embodied knowledges, which ultimately exposes and interrogates pervasive, deeply-embedded mainstream ideologies that exclude disabled experiences.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Within the following chapters, the reader will consider artists engaging with Merleau-Ponty's "primordial language" of objects or concepts, where such engagements are always taking place in spaces where disabled bodies don't typically "fit." The cultural geography of disability is tied to the challenges of negotiating ableist architectures from a disabled perspective, where the artists react to the spaces around them. Given public spaces and places were not designed for the disabled body, we might therefore not only come to understand the phenomenology of the interiors and exteriors of the disabled body itself as a discrete unit based on the lived experience, but we will also come to understand what happens to this disabled body within a physical and identifiable geography. The application of phenomenology in architecture would therefore suggest that it is a field that is amenable and open to the disabled body's spatial experiences, and that the disabled body's lived experience in space can inform, impact and transform discourse and offer new knowledge. For example, it is possible that our geography will be turned upside down for refreshing phenomenological perspectives of what was not so "out of the ordinary" before in our everyday pathways, journeys and passages.

Foucault, Choreography, Disability

While I acknowledge the importance of phenomenology to the work of, firstly, disability studies, secondly to the concept of the lived experience, and thirdly to the work of the artists in this dissertation, I would also like to point out that Lepecki's scholarship, in which this dissertation centrally gravitates, is

actually indebted to the work of Foucault from the 1970s. The French philosopher contributed much towards discourses of relations of power, and how the individual played a pre-assigned role, or performance, within these relations across social and cultural structures, in addition to offering in-depth analyses on punishment, discipline, psychiatry, and sexuality. Lepecki finds good use in Foucault's work because he considers the scholar's work as "that which creates concepts that allow for a political reframing of the body."⁷⁷ Indeed, this mirrors my project where I assign Lepecki's "choreopolitics" with new meaning in application to the disabled body, and where I suggest that the moving disabled body is a political project by virtue of how it challenges normative ideas of motion. Lepecki says that Foucault's scholarship (in addition to the work of Deleuze and Guattari) "is a philosophy that understands the body not as a self-contained and closed entity but as an open and dynamic system of exchange, constantly producing modes of subjection and control, as well as resistance and becomings."⁷⁸ Lepecki finds Foucault's framing important because he finds direct connection with the idea of rethinking the subject through the body with the work of choreography. It is choreography that therefore finds correlation with Foucault's critical theory and philosophy, because choreography, or "choreopolitics," shares the same fundamental objectives regarding a questioning of the political, ontological and physiological assumptions and possibilities of the body.

⁷⁷ André Lepecki, "Introduction: The Political Ontology of Movement" in *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

For the exact same reasons, Foucault's scholarship has a place within disability studies discourse. Shelley Tremain's edited collection of essays, *Foucault and the Government of Disability*, is one of the prominent texts in the field that aims to deepen Foucault's applicability to disability studies.⁷⁹ In general, Foucault called to question the ostensible "naturalness" of the modalities, structures and systems in which we operate in the world, and disability studies rely on this questioning as a frame of reference to "scrutinize a range of widely endorsed practices and ideas surrounding disability, including rehabilitation, community care, impairment, normality and abnormality, inclusion, prevention, genetic counseling, accommodation, and special education."⁸⁰ Foucault's theories provide reasons for how and why the disabled body has become medicalized and divided from others, as it was owing to a classification system that sought to manage and control social anomalies, ranging from the physically impaired, insane, handicapped, mentally ill, retarded, and deaf. The power of the modern state was thus based on this complex and ever-expanding web of social control that was the basis of how power was enforced, impacting the disabled population who fell outside the state's definition of "normal." Tremain states, "A Foucauldian approach to disability would hold that the governmental practices into which the subject is inducted and divided from others produce the illusion that they have a prediscursive, or natural, antecedent (impairment), which in turn provides the justification for the multiplication and expansion of the regulatory

⁷⁹ Shelley Tremain, *Foucault and the Government of Disability* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

⁸⁰ Shelley Tremain, "Introduction: Foucault, Governmentality, and Critical Disability Theory," in *Foucault and the Government of Disability* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 2-3.

effects of these practices.”⁸¹ In other words, the category of impairment exists in order to legitimize government practices in order to maintain control and discipline.

It follows, then, that Foucault’s work should also address how social institutions impact the actions of the body and the “implications that these actions have on the way in which a person is constituted as a subject.”⁸² For example, Michael Sullivan provides a compelling example of how people who have sustained spinal-cord injuries in a rehabilitation unit are victims of practices of subjectification. He deploys Foucault’s theories of state normalization practices to demonstrate how institutional and therapeutic techniques of rehabilitation actually reinforce how a body is being produced into a “paraplegic body-subject.”⁸³ Medical practitioners contribute to this subjectification process, because they lock the paraplegic bodies into these prototypical roles that already have prescribed roles to play within this medical model of disability. In this instance, Sullivan sets out to show how some of the residents in the rehabilitation center actually defy and resist this objectivation. Here, we see how the movement of the paraplegic body is classified as a restriction that must be fixed or corrected within sanctioned spaces that keep other “normal” bodies at a safe distance. The paraplegic’s bodily movement is considered not normal, so the state’s response is to try and endow it with a so-called fuller spectrum of movement, which may include walking, sitting upright, or bending etc. The many artistic examples

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸² Martin Sullivan, “Subjected Bodies: Paraplegia, Rehabilitation, and the Politics of Movement,” in *Foucault and the Government of Disability*, (ed.) Shelley Tremain (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

⁸³ Shelley Tremain, “Introduction: Foucault, Governmentality, and Critical Disability Theory,” in *Foucault and the Government of Disability* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 14.

demonstrated in the upcoming chapters of this dissertation therefore illustrate how the disabled body's movement in public space defies mainstream society's expectations of movement, because the movement is atypical, it is unconstrained and refuses to be restrained and categorized, and challenges ideas of normal movement in the first place.

Lepecki describes Foucault's triangle of power – sovereignty, discipline, and government, as a choreography. He equates this system of command with a type of “choreographic scoring” or marking where “obedient, disciplined and (pre)formatted bodies” are made to “technically and subjectively fit to produce and...reproduce certain staged images conveyed by an authorial will.”⁸⁴ He goes on to say that part of the character of dance, however, is that it allows for a certain element of spontaneity and freedom, because the moving body is not always predetermined in its direction, flows, steps, angles or shapes, at any given moment. Lepecki says that owing to dance's improbable character, where a certain outcome may not always be desired by those in power, this means that the state has an even greater will to control than ever before, as enunciated by Foucault. It is for this reason that choreography is attached to a politics, for it is the politics of uncertain outcomes of bodily movements that can no longer be controlled. The moving disabled body breaks out of these constraints and categories as their performing bodies are a display of a disciplined body gone loose. Through this movement, they are “negotiating their participation within a

⁸⁴ André Lepecki, “Introduction: Dance and the age of neoliberal performance” in *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), 17.

regime of obedience for the sake of bringing an art piece into the world.”⁸⁵ The stage of the streets, the gallery or museum, or any other public space, therefore becomes “a site for investigating agency, compliance, the force of imperatives, and the capacity to collectively surrender oneself, as dancer, to an outside force.”⁸⁶ Moving disabled bodies demonstrate many such acts of defiance and agency throughout this dissertation, working against their pre-assigned nature, or what is considered natural.

Choreographing Empathy? A Disabled Economy of Suffering, Wounding, and Retribution

As the chapters unfold, there are also many examples of how disabled bodies/artists subject themselves to an economy of suffering and objectification through performative acts in order to achieve new insight for the non-disabled viewer regarding the disabled plight. The goal of some artists might be explicitly or implicitly to overturn normative conventions that force the able-bodied viewer to experience normative constraints imposed on the disabled subject, such as having to crawl through small spaces (in the work of Corban Walker), inflicting on the viewer a form of assault and injury that reproduces the artist’s own feeling of victimization by these norms (such as the use of loud voice by Christine Sun Kim), or impeding the viewer, forcing her/him to stubb her/his toe or to stumble over a curve on a temporarily blinded walk through public space in order to gain a heightened sense of space through sound, touch and smell (such as in Carmen

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Papalia's *Blind Field Shuttle*). Such work might be theorized within a framework of transgressive art, or art that aims to shock through an aesthetics of discomfort. Kieran Cashell advocates that transgressive art aims to "invalidate the principles of institutional aesthetics," in line with Tobin Siebers' conception of "disability aesthetics" which is a departure from classical standards of beauty and perfection in art.⁸⁷ Cashell argued that transgressive art moves away from the conventional notion of Kantian aesthetics where a mode of disinterestedness and disengagement must be deployed in order to appreciate art. In other words, an engagement of aesthetics is sanitized of desire. Cashell offers numerous artist examples ranging from Paul McCarthy to Orlan where he suggests that these conventional understandings of aesthetics are upended through their practices, as they require an audience to become ethically and morally engaged. As Cashell states, "because ethical judgement is institutionally considered to be anathema to aesthetic appreciation, such art can be identified as paradigmatically transgressive precisely because the reaction it provokes is a *moral* reaction."⁸⁸ Cashell goes on to engage in detailed ethical analyses of various artworks, including the large marble sculpture *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (2005) by British artist Marc Quinn, that was erected in Trafalgar Square in the center of London, which elicited a mixed response from the public and the press. The art historian's analytical approach to the work was a balanced one, where he acknowledged the moral and ethical problems associated with Quinn's own subject position compared to that

⁸⁷ Kieran Cashell, "Introduction: The Incompatibility of Aesthetics and Contemporary Art" in *Aftershock: The Ethics of Contemporary Transgressive Art* (New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

of his subject, Alison Lapper. Born with phocomelia, Lapper is an artist in her own right. Cashell argues that the transgressive nature of the work was a success given that “the viewer is made to feel guilty for adopting an unethical disinterested attitude towards people with disabilities” owing to the public nature of the work.⁸⁹ He then emphasized that contextual aspects must be taken into account when considering arts ability to elicit moral and ethical reactions from the public.

I’d like to suggest that the artists I discuss in the chapters of this dissertation might also be held with the same regard – indeed, their works embraces a mode of “disability aesthetics” as coined by Siebers, but their work is therefore transgressive for the fact that it departs from the disinterested engagement with a work of art within conventional Kantian aesthetics. Their work is also “choreographing empathy” through a disabled economy of suffering, wounding and retribution which also subscribes to Cashell’s approach towards an ethical and moral analysis towards art that does this very thing – transgress, by eliciting a strong emotional and even visceral reaction from its publics.

To offer more contextualization, in Eliza Chandler’s article, “Sidewalk Stories: The Troubling Task of Identification,” the scholar says that she “falls” literally and symbolically into disability when she trips up and over the sidewalk. Chandler says that it is the act of falling that identifies, recognizes and marks her as disabled for those who watch, and “this process of identification hurts. It fulfills the public’s expectancy of and for disabled bodies as

⁸⁹ Ibid., 50.

stumbling...unpredictable.”⁹⁰ But what happens when disabled bodies fall into these public spaces and places without shame, but rather with intention and purpose and transgression within a given sanctioned context? In this dissertation then, I argue that a disabled performative choreopolitics provides us with a new *politicized* reorientation to space that activates our moral and ethical sensibilities, because, while an economy of psychological and physical pain and objectification through a disabled perspective fulfills our expectations of the “suffering” disabled person, it simultaneously gives them agency over, and through, this ostensible suffering and wounding. Suffering and wounding evolves both ontologically and epistemologically in the hands of the disabled artists in this dissertation, as they readily embrace a complex constellation of vulnerability, frustration, anger, revenge, vindication, power, control and assault. While it may be true that the economy of “suffering” and/or “wounding” is already a well-known methodological tool employed by contemporary performance artists ranging from Chris Burden to Marina Abramovic, the word “suffering” has a different perceptual and ideological dimension when we attach it to a disabled person, because the disabled body is always already associated with the stigma of shame. It is thus the disabled artist’s challenge to upturn and employ violence, wounding and pain radically and differently to that of non-disabled performance artists, and Bob Flanagan is a good example to consider given how he often flagellated his body in intense performances, which was already marked by cystic fibrosis.

⁹⁰ Eliza Chandler, “Sidewalk Stories: The Troubling Task of Identification” *Disability Studies Quarterly*, Volume 30, Number 3, 2010, <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1293/1329> Accessed March 16, 2014

Through working closely and intimately with suffering, disabled artists are both acknowledging the weight of such terms when they become so affectively associated with the corporeality of their person, while also turning that word into one that is generative. Wounding, and suffering come to be associated with the disabled identity as a means for rebellion, transformation, and more. This is because we have rarely understood violence and suffering inflicted upon an artist's body where that artist's body was always already in an ostensible state of suffering and victimization. By this I mean that Burden and Abramovic are non-disabled artists and come to their performances with normative bodies (this unacknowledged privilege that Sandahl references) that are then desecrated through purposeful, self-inflicted acts. They start from a bare canvas, so to speak.

On the other hand, we might say that the body of the disabled artist already comes with the mark of violence, they start from "scratch" because their bodies are scarred, disfigured, and distorted, which is the antithesis of classical aesthetic categories of beauty and perfection. While it is true that this might then beg the complex question of who is disabled and who is not, where we might conclude that, for example, Hannah Wilke is disabled given she famously documented her body in various stages of cancer treatment, I am especially interested in what happens when the marked, disfigured body adds more fleshy layers by self-inflicted acts of disfigurement from the perspective of disabled *and* non-disabled artists, whilst also attempting to share and impose this violence with and onto others. Towards the conclusion of her article, Chandler says, "let us trip

up in the cracks and dwell in the liminal spaces of disability.”⁹¹ This thinking recalls Lepecki’s choreopolitics of “stumbling” which encourages us to rethink this typically undesirable way of moving. Instead, “stumbling” offers new knowledges, empowerment and agency through a positive identification with disability. Through the work of the artists in this project, we might observe that there are more productive and generative stories to be told and shared in such spaces as a means for gathering new knowledge, solidarity and ultimately inspiring political change. I argue, then, that the artists in this dissertation are offering new ideas, techniques, approaches and philosophies because it is rare that we see purposeful suffering and objectification of the body from the disabled phenomenological perspective.

An undercurrent of my work will be a difficult question I must continue to grapple with: what is the potential, or goal, even, of the empathetic response of the wounded disabled body that, as art historian Amelia Jones says, “gives such wounds the potential to move and change us”?⁹² How can the congenital/acquired wounds on top of performative wounding, congenital/acquired scars layered with performative scarring, congenital/acquired marks in combination with performative markings, and congenital/acquired scratches in tandem with performative scratchings of the exteriors and interiors of the disabled body, have the true potential to transform, as manifested through phenomenology itself? A number of questions arise...How are these choreopolitical experiences of

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Amelia Jones, “Performing the Wounded Body: Pain, Affect and the Radical Relationality of Meaning,” *Parallax*, 15:4 (2009), 51.

disability meant to be received by the viewer? This suggests a goal in which bodily experience will somehow re-program consciousness, but what form does this re-programming take? Is the temporary experience of constraint or assault enough to challenge or even change ableist viewers' perceptions of disability, in an art world where this type of negative experience for the viewer is already normative and readily practiced by non-disabled artists? Is it possible that the projects practiced by the disabled artists in this dissertation function in some other way for able-bodied viewers that is less predictable, or that actually works against the artists desire to sensitize them in some way? What is the relationship between these forms of aesthetic activism and rebellion and formal disability rights struggles? Is the hope, or assumption, which newly sensitized able-bodied viewers will now be more likely to support these struggles or challenge ableist conventions because a compassionate response is being activated through wounding and pain? How do these works function differently for a disabled viewer? What are the cognitive and affective operations that occur in response to these various provocations and actions? I am interested in offering a complex account of how such works might offer a form of transformation in the viewer beyond merely de-centering his or her normative ideas.

In Susan Leigh Foster's 2011 book, *Choreographing Empathy*, the scholar offers a definition – to “choreograph empathy” “entails the construction and cultivation of a specific physicality whose kinesthetic experience guides our

perception of and connection to what another is feeling.”⁹³ If I am to insist on the generative framework that an empirical turn towards complex embodiment promotes in art practice, then empathy must be a part of this conversation. Certainly, this is what was occurring in the work of Mowry Baden discussed in the opening passages of the Introduction. Rather than simply have his viewers gaze upon his work as impassioned yet distant onlookers, instead, Baden has his audience directly immerse themselves into his work, so that they experience movement within specific parameters and geometries. Foster describes this choice in the following way: “Instead of casting one’s self into the position of the other, it became necessary to project one’s three-dimensional structure into the energy and action of the other.”⁹⁴ Many of the artists I discuss in this dissertation aim to do just this, where they invite an experience of what it is like to imagine another’s experience without presuming knowledge, and without being accused of relying on imitation practices which also carries unacknowledged privilege. They also participate in a discourse around alternate physicalities that have historically “contributed to a formation of a specific experience of the body and of subjecthood” that marginalized the disabled body.⁹⁵ Foster continues that “choreography, kinesthesia, and empathy function together to construct a certain corporeality in a given historical and cultural moment...it is possible to argue for the existence of corporeal epistemes that participate in the production of knowledge and the structuring of power.” In this dissertation, these corporeal

⁹³ Susan Leigh Foster, “Introducing Choreographing Empathy,” in *Choreographing Empathy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 2.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

epistemes focus on largely under-developed motions of the disabled body that seek to achieve empathy and to use Grant Kester's phrase, a "compassionate recognition of difference."⁹⁶

Processes of Social Change

Postwar art of the 1960s and 1970s has long had a commitment to politics, given how it was directly influenced by the civil rights movement, anti-war sentiment and actions against the Vietnam War, racism, the women's rights movement and feminism, and the gay rights movement, which were all occurring simultaneously at this time. Modernist art history incorporates accounts of the various rights movements. These movements have only recently been written into mainstream art history given their status as anti-disciplinary and radical, falling outside of acceptable and recognizable conventions of art dominated by straight, white, able-bodied men. These movements also occurred against the backdrop of late capitalism, with a concentrated focus on the explosion of consumerism and technology as had never been witnessed before, and the expansion of the art market and cultural institutions. There was also an atmosphere of great experimentation with sex and drugs in this time, which in turn promoted an atmosphere of experimentation in art practices, greatly impacting the genesis and evolution of "body art." While "political art" is not unfamiliar territory embedded within narratives of earlier periods of art history, I choose to pinpoint this particular highly energetic moment to begin my discussion, because these specific

⁹⁶ Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011).

movements influenced and paved the way for the disability rights movement. This flourished in the 1970s, shortly after the other movements were already fully-fledged and making much progress.⁹⁷ Indeed, during the famous Americans with Disabilities Act protest in 1990, where disabled activists symbolically got out of their wheelchairs and climbed up the steps of the Capitol building in Washington DC, to bring awareness regarding the very slow progress of this legislation being passed, one of the House Representatives at the time stated to the crowd that had gathered that “What we did for civil rights in the 1960s we forgot to do for people with disabilities.”⁹⁸

All of these important movements appealed for solidarity by means of a shared aspect of personal identity. The collectives and community-building that gave rise during this time sought to develop specific agendas towards social change through common interests. Waves of corporeal grass-roots activism and protest characterized the urgent nature of these movements. Claudia Mesch outlines how these particular movements that gave rise in the 1960s and 1970s to overturn social, political and economic inequalities continues to productively galvanize cultural and artistic participation today, and that it preoccupies the current concerns of many minority groups in the contemporary moment.⁹⁹ Mesch also said of the actions at this time that “the sit-in or street protest increased in

⁹⁷ For more information on the disability rights movement, see texts such as Doris Zames Fleischer and Frieda Zames’ *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation* Updated Edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), Paul K. Longmore’s *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003) and Fred Pelka’s *What We Have Done: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), amongst others.

⁹⁸ William J. Eaton, “Disabled Persons Rally, Crawl Up Capitol Steps: Congress: Scores protest delays in passage of rights legislation. The logjam in the House is expected to break soon,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-03-13/news/mn-211_1_capitol-steps Accessed June 17, 2016

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

popularity, [which was] based on actual physical participation at a particular place and the performance of those attending...”¹⁰⁰ The physicality of these movements is what interests me, and how this has been transferred over into the work of contemporary disabled artists.

The idea of breaking out of *Vitruvian Man*'s concentric circles, both in theory and praxis, along with the development of my thinking around the disabled body, and how it could shift from the world of representation into the world of movement, was thus inspired by the striking image of arguably one of the most powerful actions fulfilled by the disability movement on March 12, 1990, where, images of dozens of disabled people crawling out of their wheelchairs in Washington DC were broadcast to media outlets all over the world (Appendix: Figures 14-15). Indeed, the disability movement was literally projected as one that physically and radically *moves*. These images were captured by the photographer Tom Olin, who has become an important figure in the disability rights movement for his work as a “social documentarian” and for his “tireless advocacy spanning three decades.” Olin’s then eight-year-old niece Jennifer Keelan was one of the activists who left her wheelchair to crawl the steps and who especially attracted media attention owing to her young age.¹⁰¹ As the wheelchair-less bodies hauled their forms up the stairs of the United States Capitol, this iconic scene became the ultimate performative disabled act in public space, in order to “dramatize the

¹⁰⁰ Claudia Mesch, “Introduction” in *Art and Politics: A Small History of Art For Social Change Since 1945* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 8.

¹⁰¹ Rebecca Gross, “#ADA25: Disability Rights through Tom Olin’s Lens,” National Endowment for the Arts Art Works Blog, <https://www.arts.gov/art-works/2015/ada25-disability-rights-through-tom-olins-lens> Accessed June 17, 2016

barriers confronting them” both physically and metaphorically.¹⁰² As Lennard Davis says, “the gritty look of the crawl brings out the power of activism in the face of power.”¹⁰³ The activist, grassroots group, ADAPT, formed in 1978, was fighting for new policy, for what was to become the Americans with Disabilities Act, ratified by George H.W. Bush in 1990/1991. Even though the legislation, which was endorsed by Bush, had broad backing, it had been moving at “glacial speed.”¹⁰⁴ By crawling up the stairs, the subaltern body became literalized and personified as “lower” class in this act of societal disruption. Rather than remaining locked in their stationery positions low to the ground, the disabled subject became mobilized literally and metaphorically in order to radically transform and subvert marginalized positions. They developed new voice and language to challenge the oppressor and mainstream discourses of “normal” and “abnormal.” In their act of animalistic, insect-like mobility, they effectively transported their identities into a radical sphere of equal participation, citizenship and agency and, at the same time, they called attention to their lowly status as their crawl through public space became spectacle, making it impossible for people to avoid staring. The disability rights movement therefore made “great strides in resisting the devaluation of disabled persons by insisting on legislation that protected them against discrimination, secured equal opportunities in housing

¹⁰² William J. Eaton, “Disabled Persons Rally, Crawl Up Capitol Steps: Congress: Scores protest delays in passage of rights legislation. The logjam in the House is expected to break soon,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-03-13/news/mn-211_1_capitol-steps Accessed June 17, 2016

¹⁰³ Lennard J. Davis, “The Capitol Crawl” in *Enabling Acts: The Hidden Story of How The Americans With Disabilities Act Gave the Largest US Minority Its Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 191.

¹⁰⁴ William J. Eaton, “Disabled Persons Rally, Crawl Up Capitol Steps: Congress: Scores protest delays in passage of rights legislation. The logjam in the House is expected to break soon,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-03-13/news/mn-211_1_capitol-steps Accessed June 17, 2016

and employment, and mandated a built environment that would be conducive to freedom of movement for all kinds of physical impairments.”¹⁰⁵

In a present-day context, wheelchair users continue to understand and utilize the effects of radical, brazen displays of their bodies in public space. A wonderful and recent example is when a Bolivian disability activist group decided to suspend themselves with rope off a viaduct in Cochabamba in February 2016 (Appendix: Figure 16). They were protesting against government authorities as they wished to demand a higher rate of monthly financial compensation and support towards disabled people, and to also raise awareness regarding the mistreatment of people with disabilities in South America at large.¹⁰⁶ The dramatic effect of seeing these wheelchairs hanging off a bridge emphasizes how such spectacle waged by the disabled body creates attention in order to elicit social change, along with the disabled body crawling, and other such ostensible radical acts of movement, as I will uncover in more detail in the upcoming chapters.

My discussion here about embodied types of movement, whether fast, slow or still also raises another important trajectory in this dissertation. All the artists in my upcoming analyses offer a multitude of approaches to choreography and thereby challenge what choreography means in the first place. This is similar to Lepecki’s original project where he too set out to challenge the terms of

¹⁰⁵ Nancy J. Hirschmann and Beth Linker, “Disability, Citizenship, and Belonging: A Critical Introduction” in *Civil Disabilities: Citizenship, Membership, and Belonging*, eds. Nancy J. Hirschmann and Beth Linker (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 2.

¹⁰⁶ For more information, visit <https://www.rt.com/news/333945-wheelchair-hanging-bridge-protest/>, <http://globaldisability.org/2016/02/28/999>, and <https://medium.com/disability-stories/bolivian-disabled-activists-suspend-themselves-from-a-bridge-in-stunning-protest-tactic-9bfabacc6946#.b9riqv7rs> Accessed June 17, 2016

choreography and its relationship to dance. For instance, in Chapter Two and Three, I suggest that it is the act of looking, which involves movements of the head (up, down, sideways) in combination with rolling motions of eyeballs that rotate in various directions, is not only a form of choreography, but also a version of “choreopolitics” because of the way that the eye and the body engages with objects and subjects in a politics of space. In Chapter Five, choreography is very much tied up in the rawness of the senses, in relation to how the body moves in response to touch and the haptic. As the chapters build on the richness and complexity of “choreopolitics,” I strive to expand on definitions of movement itself through the disabled corporeality and sensoriality.

The internalizing and externalizing forces of what constitutes ostensible normative movement, which have developed with mainstream society and culture over centuries, continues to place restrictions on the disabled body. I hope to demonstrate that the ostensible restrictions of the disabled body, through its musculature, gait, height or scale, mobility, limbs (or lack thereof), hearing and vision (or “lack” thereof) is really a problem with language and the discourse within which the disabled body is frequently placed. The language of the disabled body has inadvertently become a language of restrictions under ironic conditions, given that it is a corpus that in and of itself operates under this oppressive system. This dissertation aims to foreground and problematize this ontology and genesis of restriction, held up against disabled subjectivity.

Raw Sense: Formless & Anti-Form

The title of my dissertation, “raw sense,” implies a rawness of bodies that are stripped of assigned behaviors, movements and senses that are considered normative. To be raw, according to some definitions, is to be natural. Thus this phrase offers a tension to the presuppositions of “natural” and how this terminology is assigned to certain bodies and not others. The state of being physically raw also means that body parts and limbs, and the skin, have been bumped, bruised and abraded – worn out, rubbed off, corroded. Here again, these corporal states and stages of the body in motion are characteristics apparent in performance art practices, in activist demonstrations, and in the lived experiences of the disabled body. This rawness of the body is made complex by the actions of the body in motion, or even the body as a still subject, unable or undesiring to move from one platform to another, with or without assistance, in collaboration with other bodies and other objects.

An essay by Rosalind Krauss entitled “Horizontal” has offered some rich possibilities to the ideas presented in this dissertation, as the art historian ponders the notion of “formless” or *informe* through the work of artists like Jackson Pollock that resonate with movement, position, and complex embodiment. In this essay, Kraus speaks of the significance of the “horizontal,” saying,

“the floor had become a production site [for the production of work by Jackson Pollock] that was set in direct opposition to the vertical axis of the easel of the artist’s studio, or the wall of the bourgeois apartment, or the high-cultural ideals of the museum. But the product of this horizontal site was cultural nonetheless in

that it continued to be a representation...the horizontal plan [therefore] might be understood as an axis at variance with the vertical orientation of the canvas...”¹⁰⁷

Krauss goes on to describe how these ideas were previously sketched out by Walter Benjamin and Leo Steinberg, and in my upcoming chapter on the work of Laura Swanson and Corban Walker, I also mention how these notions were examined by Rudolf Arnheim.¹⁰⁸ Krauss here was particularly interested in thinking through how Jackson Pollock worked in opposition to the ostensible “nature” of the verticality of looking and producing art from the upright body. She states, “Pollock wished to strike against form, and thus against the axis of the human body. But equally in the name of the unconscious, Pollock needed to strike against culture...The floor, Pollock’s work seemed to propose, in being below culture, was out of the axis of the body, and thus also below form.”¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Pollock forced his viewers to look down given the axis of the image had now changed (Appendix: Figure 17).¹¹⁰ All these ideas have a striking connection to the disability activism just described in the previous paragraph. The now wheelchair-less activists crawled along and up the Capitol steps on that March day in 1990, challenging the ostensible normative idea of how a body is meant to move in a vertical, and implied, “polite” position. Similarly, Pollock also provided provocative food for thought within the world of art production, as he

¹⁰⁷ Rosalind Krauss, “Horizontalities” in *Formless: A User’s Guide*, eds. Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, New York: Zone Books, 1997, 93.

¹⁰⁸ For more information, see Walter Benjamin, “Peinture et graphisme,” *La Part de l’oeil*, No. 6 (1990). 13, and Leo Steinberg, “Other Criteria,” in *Other Criteria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

¹⁰⁹ Rosalind Krauss, “Horizontalities” in *Formless: A User’s Guide*, eds. Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, New York: Zone Books, 1997, 94-95.

¹¹⁰ It is important to recognize how the “performance” of Pollock’s gestural markings was constructed through the photography of Hans Namuth, as critiqued by Amelia Jones in “The ‘Pollockian Performative’ and the Revision of the Modernist Subject,” in *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

moved the easel from the upright position so that the canvas was placed directly on the ground, where he developed in infamous paint-splatter technique by crouching over it with his brush, and looking directly downwards. Each of these horizontal acts – both the crawling bodies and Pollock’s hunching over the land-locked canvas – forced viewers, standing in their vertical positions, to look downwards to observe what was taking place, each shattering the ideal of a correct form and viewing position, and ultimately suggesting that the axis of the human body need not subscribe to a so-called standard for movement. The term *informe* was first developed by George Bataille in a brief essay where he suggests that *informe* functions to “bring things down in the world.”¹¹¹ While Krauss applies Bataille’s work here to Pollock and his horizontality in painting, I additionally apply *informe* to the topic of this dissertation based on its notions of destroying fixed categories in art and celebrating the “debased,” which has readily been associated with the disabled subject. The *informe* and “debased” in Bataille and Pollock’s world, which take on these qualities and characteristics of radicalism, is therefore worth noting if we associate its revised angles, positions and movements with the complex embodiment of the human body.

Other artists have also explored the “debased” land-locked body through performance, such as William Pope. L’s *The Great White Way* series, which began in the 1970s and continues to the present day, and Valie Export’s *Bodily Configurations* from 1972-76 (Appendix: Figures 18-19). In one iteration from Pope. L’s series, he wears a superhero costume with a skateboard strapped to his

¹¹¹ George Bataille, “Formless,” in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. and trans. by Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 31.

back. The work symbolically challenges the reductive idea that a minority subject cannot be a hero. In Michael Davidson's words, the work illustrates "problems of public access that link poor, minority, and disability communities. Although he is not visibly disabled himself, Pope constructs his art out of the obstacles faced by nonnormative (racialized, sexed, disabled) bodies in instrumentalized environments."¹¹² Pope L. physically and metaphorically reduces his body to ground level to rearticulate his inferior positions within class, gender, racial and ableist hierarchies, but his liminal position might also give him an advantage – to finding the gaps in-between pavements, or to marking out his own territory through stealth recognition like a sly, slithering snake. In one version from Export's series, entitled *Heldenplatz 1* (1982), the artist lies prone on her stomach, very still and very straight, across a set of steps in a public plaza in Germany. It is as if her body is a ramp offering access to wheelchair users, but her work is also a "performative monument" that eschews conventional framing, physically and ideologically, much like the ideology of the disabled body and *informe*.¹¹³

There are also other artistic examples from an explicit disability perspective: predating the ADA action, in 1972, Japanese film director Kazuo Hara released the film *Goodbye CP* as a means to demonstrate how people with cerebral palsy are normally discarded in Japanese society and treated like second-

¹¹² Michael Davidson, "Nostalgia for Light: Being Blind at the Museum" *Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2008), 144-145.

¹¹³ For more information on "performative monuments" and a detailed discussion on Export's *Bodily Configurations*, see Mechteld Widrich, *Performative Monuments: The rematerialisation of public art* in the ReThinking Art's Histories series edited by Amelia Jones and Marsha Meskimmon (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2014).

class citizens (Appendix: Figures 20-21).¹¹⁴ The film maker used a deliberately harsh style in his film making technique: the film is grainy, black and white while the sound is out-of-sync which is oddly in synch with a type of aesthetics around “abnormality.” What is particularly arresting about this film is how the opening sequence captures a man with cerebral palsy, named Yokota Hiroshi, as he slides out of his wheelchair on one corner of a public intersection and begins to crawl through the pedestrian-crossing on his hands and knees. His act of passing is disruptive, disturbing, frightening and transforming as he challenges societal taboos on the visibility and invisibility of disabled bodies in public. Rather than be embarrassed by such the ostensible unusual way of walking across a pedestrian crossing, the motion Yokota Hiroshi is deliberate and purposeful. Hiroshi gets out of his wheelchair, as crawling for him is faster than using his wheelchair with wheels. This also challenges our assumptions around speed, capacity and movement between flesh and machine.

Fast-forward to similar present-day actions, as expressed in the documentation of the living intervention/performance, *One Morning in May* (2012), by British artist Noemi Laikmaier (Appendix: Figure 22). On the 28th of May, Lakmaier set out from Toynbee Studios in Tower Hamlets towards the City of London, hoping to reach one of London's most iconic buildings, the “Gherkin.”¹¹⁵ Lakmaier has made a choice to discard and abandon her wheelchair temporarily, while she circulates and sometimes rolls her body in and around a familiar route of London on hands and knees, and occasionally stops for breaks to

¹¹⁴ To watch the film, please visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaM_iBvXCgg Accessed March 17, 2014

¹¹⁵ To watch Noemi's performance, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPGoaBMH60s> Accessed March 17, 2014

rest her deteriorating body and observe bustling city life. This normally easy one mile stroll was a slow and exhausting test of endurance. Smartly dressed in business attire she crawled through the everyday street life of London, her clothes getting increasingly dirty and torn. After seven hours she crossed the border from the Borough of Tower Hamlets to the City of London, and at the end of her arduous journey, her business suit now torn and soiled from the grime of the city's worn streets, she has a cigarette to commemorate its conclusion, exhausted yet satisfied.

Hara and Lakmaier's work can be linked to a broader history of protest in avant-garde art practices, where protest has been both loud and silent, still and moving. Hara and Lakmaier's work can be firmly ensconced within the trope of the protest march, which occupies space in the public domain to call attention and to invoke response and action towards social and legislative change. In this contemporary moment, in work like Lakmaier's, or historically, through progressive documentaries like Hara's, art activism is mobilizing through the "noise" of her body as it bumps, scrapes and grinds across the weathered London concrete pavements, curbs and gravel. Lakmaier and Hara's subject, Yokota Hiroshi, manipulate their bodies across normative public space and architectures in an unconventional, even taboo, mode of choreography, in order to make their message loud and clear. This gives the viewer the opportunity to examine the tension between the forgotten and all-too-visible reminder of the disabled person without a wheelchair. This is because one cannot help but notice Lakmaier and Hara's subject in their contorted, exhausted and spectacular shapes, moving

painfully and traumatically, as witnessed by many passers-by who stare at them with puzzlement and confusion. Their moving corporeal interventions are their brazen political public speech.

All of these ideas are rich in my application of Forsythe's notion of "raw sense." In essence, perhaps one could say that "formless," "anti-form," "raw form" and *informe* are interchangeable phrases and terms for they have equivalent and similar meaning. They all suggest an opposition against this ostensible normative physical stance and positioning, against verticality. They open up the structure of verticality to suggest that moving on the horizontal plane can produce radical productive and generative knowledges and forms. Indeed, parallels can be drawn between the paint-splattered actions of Pollock on his floor-mounted canvas alongside the ADA protestors crawling bodies across the steps of the Capitol Building. To be horizontal, whether crawling, paint-splattering, falling, bending, twisting or lower to the ground by virtue of stature such as those bodies with dwarfism, is to be disruptive and deviant. One might surmise that artists like Pollock and Morris, and art historians and critics like Benjamin, Steinberg and Arnheim, understood that alternative positionalities could be considered as a disruption to traditional modes of looking and perception, and can be therefore seen as progressive precursors to some of the disability-based work produced by artists I discuss in this dissertation. Indeed, it can be said that the turn against mimetic representation in canonical art history, considered by Krauss, described here, and others, can be considered in terms of a confrontation with the very representational structure that produces disability. In other words, much of avant-

garde aesthetics provides a useful framework for understanding how disability might emerge in a work without it appearing in strictly figurative, or even metaphorical formats. The canonical art historical framework of “formless,” “anti-form,” “raw form” and *informe* might then productively speak to a disabled epistemology of movement, or a choreopolitics.

Conclusion: Enabling Movement Towards Change

In this Chapter, I have provided a cursory history of the disabled body’s actions within disability rights actions. The seminal disability rights ADA protest of 1990 on the steps of the Capitol Building in Washington DC was an iconic choreopolitical project that offers a provocative jumping-off point in which to engage in contemporary movement and performance-based work by both disabled and non-disabled artists in the following chapters. This chapter has also illustrated the connections between art history and the history of dance and choreography in terms of their equally marginalizing attitudes towards the disabled body. Performance art from the 1960s, and indeed the entire systemic apparatus of dance and choreography assumes able-bodiedness, so I have laid out the stakes of my claims in this dissertation through my approach towards Lepecki’s choreopolitics. My application of these rhetorical tools will become more clear as I move through each of the chapters. I have emphasized how an acquired knowledge of the way that a particularized disabled body moves through the world can provide new insight and perspective – literally, and also through a social justice perspective. Because the moving disabled body is a political project,

where they seek to reclaim space that *fits* their bodies better, and even reclaim movement itself, transforming ideas of ostensible normative ways to walk, sit, crouch etc., an economy of suffering, wounding and retribution comes into focus as I examine their work. In order to achieve empowered inter-subjectivity, the always already marked disabled body is marked in new and radicalized ways to point out circumstances of their lived experience that a non-disabled public typically take for granted or do not wish to acknowledge.

Chapter 2:

Prosthetic Limbs: White Canes, Podiums & Other Spatial Props

Introduction

What contributions do the expanded, creative prostheses make towards choreopolitics? How is the prosthesis a “choreographic object,” according to Forsythe’s definition? What is the spatial experience of the corpus as it becomes entwined with various forms of prostheses and other similar multi-modal props? On many occasions throughout art history, it has been de rigueur for artists, ranging from the Surrealists to contemporary and avant-garde practices, to especially use the overarching prosthesis as an overblown metaphor, as a means to convey pathos and other associated affective qualities in representational forms, because it suggests a body that is “broken.” This stems from the function of the prosthesis, which attempts to make the body whole, which in turn implies the assumption that the “whole” body is better than the sum of its parts. While the artists rely on the metaphor of the prosthesis to convey this pathos of whole versus broken, they do not necessarily pay attention to how these forms might find expanded dialogue with the lived experience of the prosthesis user or amputee embodiment, or more generally the disabled body. Within the specific context of the prosthesis then, and how it is metaphorically used within mainstream contemporary art, the concept remains, ironically, at arm’s length, creating a type of discontent within a politicized disability studies framework. Wrapped up with this lived experience of the disabled corpus (whether amputee,

prosthesis user or otherwise) is how space is considered and navigated from their perspective. This chapter is thus not only an attempt to provide a new rhetorical framework around how we might consider challenging these overwrought metaphorical constructs by a dialogue with the lived experiences of the amputee as it engages with spatial props, but it also reorients the very status of the en fleshed limb in art history from the threshold of representation into the world of movement, gesture and form. By doing so, I am particularly interested in how artists offer new constructions of the prosthesis itself, in order to rethink the possibilities of its form in space.

I offer work in more unconventional fomats in this chapter, as my discussion not only extensively pivots around the work of one non-visual learner and contemporary artist, Carmen Papalia, who explores the spatial territories of various prostheses, but I also analyze how my own body engages with similar creative and critical notions of prostheses. I choose to incorporate my own example here as not only do I believe that my case study fits in very well with the theme and politics of this chapter, but also because I have much to share regarding my own lived experience as a person with dwarfism. Spatial experiences of dwarfism offer a subjugated knowledge, like other forms of disability, and this chapter seems like an opportune time in which to bring this into focus, particularly given there are sparse accounts of the spatial experiences of dwarfism within art historical discourse. These case studies illustrate alternative accounts of bodies intermingling with prostheses or other props. Artists like Papalia, and myself as scholar and curator, transform traditional

understandings of the actual prosthetic object through this lived experience of disability, either directly, through our own bodies, or indirectly, through other bodies that Papalia works and collaborates with. I offer these case studies that deepens and expands metaphor, to consider how the prosthesis can become a more complex spatial embodiment in the hands of disabled practitioners. I discuss their work within the discourse of disability studies as I attempt to bridge the gap between mainstream art historical discourse and disability studies to highlight the generative intersections that occur. The “aliveness” of lived experience is what interests me here – the alert, sensorial body that engages differently. I therefore suggest that this chapter also makes a contribution to the politics of space, the politics of movements and particularly to the evolving discourse of choreopolitics.

As outlined in detail in the Introduction, the term “choreopolitics” is a portmanteau word that fuses the sound and meaning of the words choreography and politics, as coined by writer and curator André Lepecki.¹¹⁶ Critical in the creation and meaning of this important word, Lepecki’s idea was that politically passive bodies may become mobilized through manifold movement, in juxtaposition with an engagement with other bodies, objects, surfaces, and environments. In considering the usage of the word “choreopolitics” in this chapter, the term “prosthetic choreopolitics” comes to mind, alluding to the politics of movement associated with the prosthesis as a type of “choreographic object,” which I will attempt to discuss at great length.

¹¹⁶ André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

Conventional usage of the prosthesis within art historical genres and periods can be categorized with the construct of the “narrative prosthesis,” which is a term originally developed by disability studies scholars David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, who state that the disabled body is often inserted into literary, or in this case, visual narratives as a metaphorical opportunity.¹¹⁷ The disabled body or character is used as a type of crutch or supporting device that allows the narrative to take a turn or a new direction, but often the relationship between the story itself and the disabled body is one based on exploitation. “Through the corporeal metaphor,” Mitchell and Snyder articulate, “the disabled or otherwise different body may easily become a stand-in for more abstract notions of the human condition, as universal or nationally specific; thus the textual (disembodied) project depends upon –and takes advantage of– the materiality of the body.”¹¹⁸ One might argue that not only do artists unknowingly tend to use the disabled corpus as a metaphorical crutch, as Mitchell and Snyder outline above, but artists also especially tend towards using the material object of the prosthesis as a popular signifier – to characterize a reductive rendering, or for illustrating other fantastical metaphors and symbols. Through this particularized characterization of the human form, unfortunately, the outcome of this is that the disabled body typically becomes a stand-in for reductive notions of the universal or normal human condition – the disabled body as the failing, deviant, and wrong

¹¹⁷ David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, “Representation and Its Discontents: The Uneasy Home of Disability in Literature and Film,” *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

member of mainstream society. In this case, the prosthesis literally embodies all these qualities, and much more. For instance, many contemporary artists tracing back to the Surrealists frequently conflate the uncanny with the freak, which most often summons associations of disability. The Surrealists' and contemporary artists' usage of the narrative prosthesis is prolific, which means the rendering of disabled corporeality is extraordinarily limited, biased, and strained.

In light of these models, the problem with representations and metaphors of disabled embodiment, such as the prosthesis, is not in the representations themselves but in this very framing of disability in our culture, in line with Millett-Gallant's thinking.¹¹⁹ These social constructions and perceptions of disability reveal and create limited thinking steeped in centuries of oppression towards this minority. In our acts of viewing and interpreting works of art, both historical and contemporary reductive assumptions and stereotypes about disability are deeply entrenched within a pathologizing discourse, given the lack of critical engagement with real, everyday, lived experiences of disability itself. Change and progress must be made within such ideological thinking and misperceptions, and visual culture is part of the process of challenging these misconceptions. Millett-Gallant suggests that it is important to find complexity, nuance, and slippage in signification – that a work of art and an interpretation of it is both potentially degrading and liberating.¹²⁰ In other words, we must seek to add more dimensions and layers of meaning in contemporary representations of

¹¹⁹ Ann Millett-Gallant, "Enabling the Image," *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art*, New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

disability or works that allude to disability within a certain spatial zone of lived experience, rather than a distant and convenient metaphor. If the prosthesis, in both visible and invisible forms, was re-fitted to support and brace new types of figurations of material and imagined subjects, we might be able to consider new ways of being in the world. In turn, this re-fitting provides an enhanced understanding of cultural anxieties around the disabled body with an acknowledgement of its potential power and agency.

In curator and scholar Katherine Ott's experience, in scholarly literature, she says that "prostheses usually perform cultural work unrelated to the practicalities of everyday life...Prosthetic devices, as social objects with a complex set of meanings in the daily lives of people, have rarely, if ever, been understood as part of vernacular material life."¹²¹ Ott, along with several other scholars who fully or partially work within a disability studies context, such as Tiffany Funk, Sarah S. Jain, and Vivian Sobchack, try to provide alternative historical, cultural and embodied perspectives as a corrective to the vogue for prosthetics as found in psychoanalytic theory (Freud, Lacan, Silverman) and contemporary cultural, science and technology studies. Ott makes particular mention of how the prosthesis is also used reductively as "a synonym for common forms of body-machine interface" most explicitly in conversations around the cyborg and Donna Haraway's scholarship.¹²² While the fusion of technology (in the form of prosthesis) and body is one that ends up displacing the material body,

¹²¹ Katherine Ott "The Sum of Its Parts: An Introduction to Modern Histories of Prosthetics" in *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives: Modern Histories of Prosthetics* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), 2.

¹²² Ibid.

Ott argues that these assertions “hardly begin to comprehend the complex historical and social origins of prosthetics.”¹²³ Jain corroborates Ott’s work by suggesting that equally and importantly, little work has also been executed on the “everyday social, economic, and semiotic mediations that occur between persons and objects in the technologically infused spaces of life...”¹²⁴ Jain is particularly interested in the deployment of the prosthesis trope as it applies to broader human-technology relationships, especially within factory labor practices, mass production, and marketing. Tiffany Funk, like Jain, also seeks to break down what they call a “prosthetic aesthetic,” and agrees that “much of current art historical theory depends upon predominantly psychoanalytical readings of the prosthetic to illustrate certain trends in contemporary artworks,” she feels that such writers largely ignore the “common usage [of the prosthesis] to denote the physicality of technological devices and cybernetic body augmentation and its social effects” but makes no mention of the day to day real-life experience of embodied experience as an amputee.¹²⁵

All of these scholars ask, what does it mean to be a prosthesis user? Vivian Sobchack is a single above-the-knee amputee and scholar formerly working in film studies at the University of California in Los Angeles. She provides a more intimate, practical tale around her experiences as an amputee and prosthesis user in her essay “A Leg to Stand On: Prosthetics, Metaphor and

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Sarah S. Jain, “The Prosthetic Imagination: Enabling and Disabling the Prosthesis Trope,” *Science, Technology & Human Values*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Winter 1999, 31-54.

¹²⁵ Tiffany Funk, “The Prosthetic Aesthetic: An Art of Anxious Extensions” http://criticalinformationva.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/funk_tiffany-prosthetic.pdf Accessed January 4, 2013

Materiality.”¹²⁶ Sobchack maintains her confusion around why so many scholars find the prosthesis such a seductive object. According to her scholarship, the prosthesis has become “extraordinary” so she endeavors to “both critique and redress this metaphorical...displacement of the prosthetic through a return to its premises in lived-body experience.”¹²⁷ Like myself, Sobchack is not interested in intervening in any flights of the artistic or scholarly imagination and deny artists freedom or mobility to explore the prosthetically-enhanced body. Sobchack says that “perhaps a more embodied ‘sense-ability’ of the prosthetic by cultural critics and artists will lead to a greater apprehension of ‘response-ability’ in its discursive and artistic use.”¹²⁸ In other words, it would be nice to see more creative metaphorical and literal constructs of disability that are explored from within, for example, the spatial experience of an amputee, or what it is like to use a prosthesis or to feel a phantom limb.

Part of the challenge with dismantling the reductive use of prosthetics is dismantling the binaries with which its representation is mediated, ranging from self/other, body/technology, first world/third world, beautiful/ugly, perfect/grotesque, male/female, global/local, West/East and so on. Sobchack claims that the literal and material ground of the metaphor of prosthesis has been largely forgotten, if not disavowed, although I would go further to question any direct, personal interactions with the materiality of the amputee/prosthetic

¹²⁶ Indeed, my decision to incorporate the case study of *Alterpodium* was much encouraged by Sobchack’s essay and her choice to incorporate her own personal spatial experience of her amputee embodiment into her larger narrative.

¹²⁷ Vivian Sobchack, “A Leg to Stand On: Prosthetics, Metaphor, and Materiality” in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 206.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 207.

experience is very common in the first place.¹²⁹ Apparently the world of the prostheses has hidden powers in artistic discourse that elide any actual complex and logical ground for real users of them. Ultimately, Sobchack claims that the true scandal of the metaphor is that it become fetishized and “unfleshed-out” so that the prosthesis instead becomes an uncomfortable “floating signifier” or catch-all word for a broad discourse on technoculture or the abject, obscene and traumatic.¹³⁰ It is here that I hope to “en-flesh” the narratives of the limbs through the contemporary work of Papalia, and myself. I argue that the discomfoting effect of “immobilizing” disability in art history is the product of an *uneasy fit* of narrative prosthesis itself.

For example, an artist like Matthew Barney’s symbolic use of prostheses – an important everyday practical tool in the disability world in order to assist amputees with, ironically, mobility and therefore independence – demonstrates how a practical, everyday tool for amputees gives uninformed metaphor to interior emotional and psychological states in contemporary art. Matthew Barney is an important contemporary American artist who is known for producing grand, elaborate film works and sculptural installation combined with performance, photography and drawing. One of Barney’s most ambitious works is his *Cremaster Cycle* series. Barney has worked with model and double amputee elite athlete Aimee Mullins in *Cremaster 3* (2002), and literally turns her prostheses into an art (Appendix: Figures 23-24). I was drawn to this work as I wanted to learn why Barney was interested in working with Mullins in particular.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 208.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 209.

Apparently, he had offered to work with her as he wanted her to wear special prosthetic legs as part of her costume for her various characters in the film. These prostheses included a pair of transparent glass legs designed by Alexander McQueen (as an “extension” to the fairy tale of Cinderella’s glass slippers), cheetah legs, and transparent glass man-of-war tentacles. Barney was also interested in the symbolism that Mullins’ body could evoke as one who is an amputee. Specifically, he wanted her to appear in a scene in the film where she was actually not wearing prosthetics at all. As Mullins has said in an interview about her role in the film:

“He saw this as a way to express the Masonic theory that you have to lose your lower self in order to reach a higher level. I guess the literal interpretation of that would have been for me to sit on the sled without any limbs below the knee, but that would have been very difficult for me because it’s very, very intimate. We had a long dialogue about what we could do instead, and Matthew came up with the idea of making the legs look like jellyfish tentacles because they’re not a human form and they’re clear. It worked for me because I don’t feel so bare where there’s something between me and the ground.”¹³¹

Like Marquard Smith who has written about Mullins’ role in this film, I believe Barney was grasping for metaphorical opportunism by working with an amputee in order to evoke Masonic beliefs.¹³² Barney’s request seems de-humanizing and fetishistic, given his fixation on having impractical prosthetic legs fabricated for her, recalling Vivian Sobchack’s amusement that prostheses are somehow now

¹³¹ Marquard Smith, “The Vulnerable Articulate: James Gillingham, Aimee Mullins, and Matthew Barney” in *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*, edited by Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 64.

¹³² Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra, *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005).

magical, and endowed with power.¹³³ Barney has gone one step further here than simply rehearsing the magical properties of the prosthesis, given the prosthesis now takes on similar presentation and function to that of a relic: it becomes a sculpture/artwork in and of itself, and sits on a pedestal in a museum, to be admired and prayed to.

Further, Mullins' comment about this aspect of working with Barney also reveals how vulnerable she was feeling about Barneys' request to "use" her embodiment for the sake of art. Such an important comment by the amputee model is critical to my argument as it is pointing towards the simultaneous subjugation and objectification of Mullins' embodiment for the sake of art. Where Mullins' prostheses became literal works of art to be reified and considered as precious objects, her embodiment as one who is an amputee was considered by Barney as fragmentation, symbolizing "loss." Even if Mullin's loss was going to symbolize sacrifice according to Barney's narrative in the film, the artist obviously wasn't attuned to how this might effect Mullins in real life – both physically and emotionally. Even though Mullins and Barney negotiated and compromised on what would work for the film, I argue that Mullins' still ultimately made a sacrifice for Barney's vision and made herself vulnerable and exposed to a reveal that she may not been entirely comfortable with. Mullins has also often talked about how difficult it is to stand still while wearing impractical prosthetic legs, so in the film we can observe her tottering around, seeming imbalanced and on the brink of toppling over. Such instability is the antithesis of

¹³³ Consider the film, *Avatar* (2009), where the main character's avatar replaces his paralyzed legs and gives him power and superhuman abilities.

the seeming gracefulness of her glass “Cindarella” legs which are meant to evoke romance, fantasy and eroticism. But her instability is the shared reality of daily life for many amputees. This is likely not obvious to the regular lay person watching the film unless they had/have direct experience with amputees.

Ideally, Barney’s narrative trajectory would have taken a different path or integrated added layers of complexity with Mullins’ own personal narrative in order to give the model some agency. In her interview, Mullins reveals how vulnerable she feels in real life without her prosthesis on.¹³⁴ Such insight is rarely a part of the discourse around prostheses, if not in visual art representation but especially in rehabilitation, where amputees are expected to be determined and strong in order to “overcome” their “deficiencies.” Mullins’ comments shed light on the grey area between the inanimate and the animate – the moving flesh, as well as the wood, metal, leather, plastic and other materials that make up the prostheses. Aside from giving Mullins more agency in expressing her true attitudes around the phenomenology of her prosthetic leg, her intimate insights around what it might feel like for one who is an amputee could powerfully inform art practices in the future.¹³⁵ As much as Barney employs the prosthesis in his work, a lived experience of the prosthesis, such as Mullins is not incorporated directly or explicitly into his narrative. While there *is* a persistence of the representation of disabled people and their contributions in art history, as disability is an integral part of the human condition, disability is still not fully

¹³⁴ Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra, *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005).

¹³⁵ There is no shortage of detailed insight on Mullins’ experiences as an amputee as can be seen and heard in countless interviews, including her TED talks from 1998 and 2009.

integrated into mainstream art historical discourse. Surely a prosthetic visualized on Mullins body in this vein, beyond just a marker of fetishism and eroticism, will provide us with other kinds of worthwhile prosthetic practices.

What *is* the signification of the metaphor of the prostheses within the context of contemporary art? The prosthetic symbolizes disruption – it is the body in chaos, the body fragmented and broken. The prosthetic is a symbol of loss. A limb – a leg, or an arm, or even an ear or an eye, a finger or a toe that is lost is surely indicative of a gap, creating a space for something that is missing. In her seminal essay, “The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity,” art historian Linda Nochlin has outlined that while she does not wish to propose some “grandiose, all-encompassing theory of the fragment,” she still believes that it should be grounded “on a model of *difference*.”¹³⁶ (her italics). She also acknowledges the dual marvelous/horrific function that the fragment continues to have on art work, and traces its lineage in different periods and movements in art history, starting with paintings, drawings and sculptures from the French Revolution, through Impressionism, Surrealism and more modern art practices of Louise Bourgeois, Robert Mapplethorpe, Robert Gober, and Cindy Sherman. Even though Nochlin argues that the fragment assumes new transgressive forms in the practices of these contemporary artists, such as the notion that the body is hardly unified or unambiguous, she still excludes any discussion around the intersections, and the impact of this rupture for disabled subjectivity.

Amputee, prosthesis user and scholar Steven Kurzman brilliantly captures

¹³⁶ Linda Nochlin, “The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity” *The Twenty-Sixth Walter Neurath Memorial Lecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 56.

how the signification around the prosthesis has been metaphorically displaced: “Artificial limbs do not *disrupt* amputees’ bodies, but rather reinforce our publicly perceived normalcy and humanity...Artificial limbs and prostheses only disrupt...what is commonly considered to be the naturally whole and abled Body.”¹³⁷ In other words, using the metaphor of the prosthesis to connote loss, trauma or abjection indicates ablest thinking in an ablest world. Disability is indeed a social construction and this has a long lineage.¹³⁸

It is worth here briefly turning to the origins of the word “prosthesis.” Emerging from ancient Greek, it was ported into the English language in the sixteenthth century in the context of linguistics. Its root “pros” translates as “adding, furthering, advancing, giving additional power”) and so emphasizes the prosthetic as an addition to, rather than the extension of an existing word.¹³⁹ Therefore the prosthetic gives power to that which is missing, so it is possible that the literal definition of the word lends itself to a suite of metaphorical constructions that have little or no basis in everyday prosthetic experience in the life of an amputee. Indeed, based on the definition, it implies that losing an arm or a leg is considered traumatic, and thus the prosthesis as a kind of “savior” that is endowed with a power in its ability to fill in the gap or loss. Like the word

¹³⁷ Steven L. Kurzman, “Presence and Prosthesis: A Response to Nelson and Wright,” in *Cultural Anthropology* 16, No. 3 (Aug. 2001), 374.

¹³⁸ This history is also very similar to the social construction of blackness in art history. Kobena Mercer says, “...the social construction of blackness creates a condition of polyvocality in which visual signs of identity and difference are invested with a multitude of contradictory meanings and antagonistic values...once ‘black’ is understood not as a category of identity given by nature, but as a subject-position historically created by discursive regimes of power and knowledge in the social domain of ‘race,’ then the goal is to explore how art produces a signifying difference in the cultural codes of reality.” Kobena Mercer, “Tropes of the Grotesque in the Black Avant-Garde” in *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures, Annotating Art’s Histories Series* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 138. The one-sided, limited use of “grotesque” across black and disabled subjects shares a similar history and a similar desire for disruption and to “talk back.”

¹³⁹ Tiffany Funk, “The Prosthetic Aesthetic: An Art of Anxious Extensions” http://criticalinformationva.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/funk_tiffany-prosthetic.pdf Accessed January 4, 2013

“disability” itself, the word “prosthesis” is also freighted with certain connotations in Western discourses. But again, also like the word disability, even though dominant culture may wish to designate prosthesis and its so-called grotesque associations to anyone with physical and mental “handicaps,” given that so many people from a wide spectrum of ages, classes and ethnicities have many visible and invisible impairments, that are either congenital or newly acquired, it is hard to affix “prosthesis” to any one defined signifier or experience, as is often the case. Ultimately, the status, value and significance of prosthetic metaphors is absolutely reliant upon entrenched cultural perceptions that must be destabilized. I will use this chapter to consider the nuances that slip in and out and between the various usages of the prostheses, and how a “prosthetic choreopolitics” might be shaped by new layers of corporeal complexity that have never been considered before. I ensconce my case studies within a lineage of performance art and institutional critique through a comparison of works by Robert Morris, Ann Hamilton and Andrea Fraser to illustrate both a trajectory and evolution of these genres, with a distinct new “prosthetic choreopolitics” in mind.

Carmen Papalia’s Multi-sensorial Cane Prostheses

What imaginative and metaphorical opportunities can be affixed to current standardized usages of the prosthesis within contemporary art practices if we consider the prosthesis in new forms like the cane? How do artists with impairments use object body extensions as “choreographic objects” in embodied, performative acts? How can the performance of prosthetics by disabled and non-

disabled artists shed light on experiences of the disabled body, both for performer and audience? Miho Iwakawa talks of how philosopher of phenomenology Maurice Merleau-Ponty introduced “the innovative idea that the body ‘extends’ an object, for example a cane for the blind, so that it literally becomes a part of the body.”¹⁴⁰ In Merleau-Ponty’s theory of embodiment then, objects or entities in the spatial field – devices to extend or replace the senses – mediate the experience of the self and world of the person who uses them. Such bodily extension and scrambling of senses offer counter embodiments and complex embodiments, in view of disability studies scholar Tobin Sieber’s thinking. I suggest that the cane is a type of prosthesis, similar to how a body extends itself into the cane, and an amputee’s body extends itself into the prosthesis. By examining other bodies that require prostheses through the lens of a disability politics, I offer an expansion of the very vocabulary of “prosthetic choreopolitics” and an example of Forsythe’s “choreographic object” in action.

Originally hailing from Vancouver, Canada, non-visual learner Carmen Papalia’s *Long Cane* (2009-2011) project is a comical mobility device – a walking cane – that, when used, draws attention to the user as an obstacle (Appendix: Figures 25-26). Papalia developed the idea for what he calls his “performance object” in 2009 (or what Forsythe calls the “choreographic object”) because he didn’t feel comfortable with the institutionalization of the white cane as a symbol or semiotic for blindness or blind people, although he also

¹⁴⁰ Miho Iwakawa, “The Body as Embodiment: An Investigation of the Body by Merleau-Ponty,” *Disability/Postmodernity: Embodying Disability Theory*, Marian Corker and Tom Shakespeare (eds.), London and New York: Continuum, 2002.

acknowledges the cane's power for offering him personal access. He speaks of his ambiguity towards the cane in the following passage:

“On one hand, it was a tool that promoted my access and mobility. It showed me things and made my map a whole lot bigger. On the other hand, it institutionalized me. It was a symbol that was connected to an institution that wanted me to be a certain kind of blind person—the kind with huge sunglasses. The kind that was either a piano tuner or a masseuse. The kind that walks a certain way on a predetermined route, and that talks a certain way about his blindness... But the white cane, with all of its problems, did promote my access. I was guaranteed a seat on the bus. I had the power to make dense crowds of people part like red seas. I could pass for a Paralympic athlete. I could talk my way into museums and movies. I was a focal point.”¹⁴¹

These feelings of ambiguity continue when Papalia further remarked that the white cane was a lightning rod for attention, and that the cane separated him from his peers and identified him as different, therefore creating a hierarchy, reinforcing the binary of ability and disability, and marking and organizing bodies in a Foucauldian sense.¹⁴² The artist recognized the distance that the cane was creating between his body and other bodies on the street – the cane tended to push people away, as they would often jostle to scurry out of his way and avoid bumping into the cane. At the same time, Papalia recognized how he enjoyed the power to be had as one who wields the cane on public streets, and that he controlled the cane that caused his fellow pedestrians to act in a certain manner. Papalia's *Long Cane* project was his response to the revelation that he felt about the power to be had as a blind person. The artist's manipulation and emphasis on the length of the white cane is what makes this project distinct and interesting.

¹⁴¹ Carmen Papalia, “A New Model for Access in the Museum,” *Disability Studies Quarterly*, Special Issue: Museums and Blindness, Vol. 33, No. 3 (2013), <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3757/3280> Accessed January 13, 2016

¹⁴² Amanda Cachia interview with Carmen Papalia, June, 2014

According to the National Federation for the Blind, while the length of a white cane varies from person to person, and can be adjusted to individual preferences based on the length of stride, walking speed and reflexes, a general recommendation is that it should reach somewhere between the armpit and the nose. Papalia's *Long Cane* is twelve feet in length, and is thus more than double the height of the artist. When one observes images of the artist as he walks along Commerical Drive in Vancouver, it is very obvious that the cane is too long. This is because as, Papalia describes, his reach is now of Herculean proportions, given it "extended across an entire span of sidewalk."¹⁴³ In the various documentation images of Papalia's various sojourns with this *Long Cane*, people are conspicuously absent from the sidewalk. It is difficult to tell whether this is because of the nature of the areas in which he was walking, or the time of day when people did not tend to gather, or because the *Long Cane* was actually working at getting people well and truly out of the way (at least out of reach of the camera lens), although Papalia did describe that Commerical Drive was a densely populated neighborhood full of cafes, dogs and hippies. None the less, the images offer us scenes of Papalia confidently concentrating on his gait and his route, *Long Cane* held sturdily and defiantly ahead of him amongst deserted streets. The goal of the *Long Cane* was to make the force field bigger, where it exaggerated the distance between himself and other bodies to occupy public space with more agency. The exaggeration of the length of the cane also meant an exaggeration of space that Papalia's body occupied on the sidewalk. It also then

¹⁴³ Carmen Papalia, "A New Model for Access in the Museum," *Disability Studies Quarterly*, Special Issue: Museums and Blindness, Vol. 33, No. 3 (2013), <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3757/3280> Accessed January 13, 2016

exaggerated the dramatic reaction of other bodies upon encountering the extra long cane attached to Papalia's now empowered body, which the artist characterized as a 40-foot monster of sorts.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, the artist was now a "real force to be reckoned with."¹⁴⁵

Although Papalia enjoyed reveling in his new-found power through *Long Cane*, he also recognized that his work had a literally "pointed" antagonistic quality. He says, "I wanted to become an obstruction for others because I was faced with so many obstructions."¹⁴⁶ Papalia's everyday experience of negotiating both habitual and new routes in cities old and new typically involve much negotiation of other bodies, objects, and architectures. Oftentimes, owing to being in a new place as he carves out new routes, or because something in his regular environment has changed, such as a fallen branch, he bumps or trips into things that make contact with various parts of his body, such as the tips of his toes inside his leather shoes, or his calf, his shins, knees, his waist, hands, elbows, arms and knuckles, even his head. Sometimes, in the case of inanimate objects and surfaces, this contact is forceful and painful, while other times the contact is a soft brush or a slight twinge. Of this frequent experience of pain, Papalia has said that he "learn[s] to navigate the city by simply bumping into it. It [is] a long and painful game of pinball that end[s] with the high score of me gathering a sense of place."¹⁴⁷ In the case of other bodies, the contact becomes much more affective in nature, where reactions elicited from both himself and others ranges from the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Carmen Papalia, "Bodies of Knowledge: Open Sourcing Disability Experience," *Journal of Cultural and Literary Disability Studies*, Vol. 9, Issue 3, 2015, 357-364

embarrassed to the empathetic to the nonchalant to the rude. I have often walked as a personal guide with Papalia through many different environments and international cities, including Vancouver, San Francisco, New York, and Dublin. Papalia is comfortable with asking for an arm or an elbow to guide him through a space as a substitute for his white cane, especially if his relationship with a person is familiar. Given my short stature and Papalia's 5'8" height, I usually jut my elbow out at a particular angle so that Papalia can reach it at the point where his hand naturally falls to the side of his torso. Sticking my elbow out in this way is not very comfortable for me, but I enjoy the relationship that our bodies inhabit side by side as we walk together. In a sense, Papalia is offering me a window into his ambulatory world, which is often enlightening. Indeed, from this point of view, I am able to observe Papalia's encounters with objects, other bodies and buildings. Papalia's use of my body as a replacement for his cane in no way guarantees an elimination of his bumping and/or tripping, but it does offer another insightful illustration of how the modality of a "choreographic object" might come into play, given that the way our bodies move side by side offers a new constellation of choreography.

Through *Long Cane*, the artist had a desire to obstruct the pathway of others given he was constantly obstructed himself. Apart from the act of obstructing, through his antagonistic performances, Papalia was hoping that his prosthesis as performance object would generate productive dialogue about disability and the negative significations associated with the cane. Further, the artist wanted to challenge the standardizing of any prosthesis attached to a

disabled body, such as a cane for blind people, arguing that a prosthesis can be personalized, radical and powerful. Papalia was hoping that his fellow pedestrians would become more self-aware of any discomfort they might express towards disabled people through their body language and gestures. In this context, Papalia's fictive prosthesis brought with it comical and guerilla qualities that can be seen as a radical form of trespass that both immobilizes and destabilizes entrenched assumptions around access for disabled people.

Blind Field Shuttle: Close Your Eyes and Take it All In

After some time, Papalia realized that his antagonistic intentions behind the *Long Cane* were not necessarily useful to furthering a desired dialogic relationship with his audience – he was pushing people, literally, further away, rather than offering them a safe space in which to engage in productive conversation about the causes he was passionate about. Papalia found socially engaged art practice appealing, and pursued a Masters of Fine Art degree at Portland State University, working under artist Harrell Fletcher. During his time in graduate school, he replaced his *Long Cane* with a long chain of people instead, so that his inanimate object became an animate one, and so that he could “open source” the sensorial experience. The long chain of people here becomes another sort of prosthesis, as Papalia's body, along with the other bodies in the human chain, form one part of the group of persons to make one whole. The goal was to have relationships of trust and explorations of the senses unfold as the artist led walks with members of the public in *Blind Field Shuttle* as part of his experiential

social practice. This work became a non-visual walking tour where participants toured urban and rural spaces on foot. Forming a line behind Papalia (which Papalia remarked was a type of accordion – another choreographic object), participants grabbed the right shoulder of the person in front of them and shut their eyes for the duration of the walk.¹⁴⁸ Papalia then served as a tour guide – passing useful information to the person behind him, who then passed it to the person behind him/her and so forth. The trip culminated in a group discussion about the experience. As a result of visual deprivation, the goal was to have participants become more aware of alternative sensory perceptions such as smell, sound, and touch, so as to consider how non-visual input may serve as a productive means of experiencing place. Papalia’s intention in developing a non-visual experience, both in the walking tour itself and the documentation of that work, was not to simulate the experience of blindness for the viewer / participant, but to show one of the many overlooked entry points to experience – a gesture that works against visual primacy.¹⁴⁹ Papalia has executed the walk in many different cities, including Portland, San Francisco, New York and Columbus.

Through his *Blind Field Shuttle*, I am interested in how Papalia uses “extensions” in similar kinds of ways that have synthesis with Merleau-Ponty’s theorizing about phenomenological knowledge. Papalia’s cane “leads” a new kind of sensorial and prosthetic experience for a group of participants, as they rely on under-used senses but they also rely on the prosthetic extension of Papalia’s cane

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Carmen Papalia, artist statement, 2012.

and the shoulder of the person in front of them. They must learn to walk again under entirely new circumstances with an alternative set of tools, not unlike the experience of an amputee walking with new legs. The long chain of people walking one after the other is a type of prosthetic extension into public space, as they feel their way along and around the streets, curbs, sidewalks and pedestrians. Sensorial possibilities are expanded by the expansion of the prosthesis itself as it is loaded with phenomenological opportunities, let alone imagined and metaphorical ones as often seen in contemporary art practice as discussed in the Introduction. The prosthesis in this context is endowed with knowledge and guidance: it is practical and mainstream as it comes to be useful for people with limited experience around prosthesis. In other words, prosthesis can become a shared, communal experience much like the objectives of socially-engaged art practice itself.

What follows is a detailed description of several walks that Papalia gave at California College of the Arts (CCA) in San Francisco in 2012. I had invited Papalia to lead several walks as part of a round-table conversation that I initiated and hosted at CCA entitled *What Can a Body Do? Investigating Disability in Contemporary Art*, held on February, 2012.¹⁵⁰ Papalia led three walks from 2-5pm, and in that time, approximately 60 people from the college participated, ranging from students to faculty members (Appendix: Figure 27). The walk was included in the syllabus for an *Embodiment* class being co-taught by Julian Carter, Hilary Bryan and Aiden Gleisburg, and they asked the students to submit written

¹⁵⁰ For more information, visit documentation of the round-table here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtSTRj2s9H8> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKwkawC-Zxw> Accessed January 12, 2016

responses to their experiences of the walk on small colorful index cards. This is an outline of several of the anonymous student responses:

“Putting our hand on each other’s shoulders and shouting whenever there was something up ahead helped me to feel secure but also more connected with myself. Having all these thoughts run through my mind like ‘Where am I?’ or ‘Will I fall?’ makes me realize how much of my body relies on sight. After the tour I wanted to keep exercising these sorts of things to become more aware of myself, my body and my embodied ‘soul.’”

“I found my senses becoming more aware. For example, I heard a car passing very near me, but also, I felt it as my clothes moved according to the car’s speed passing by. It is something I would not be able to feel normally... it was a mind opening experience about the potential of my senses.”

“The person I entrusted [in front of me] had a fuzzy coat and heeled boots that clapped along loudly as we walked. I closed my eyes and the world went away...I stumbled along, stepping on my partner’s shoes, trying to listen to the directions and trying not to open my eyes in panic. This feeling subsided and I felt my need to see lessen, and my need to hear and feel grow.”

I really enjoyed being conscious about the different colors that my eyelids filtered in. The sun and the trees made a beautiful dance of shadows and colors. I felt two splashes of something on my left arm. My eyes opened for less than a second and I thought I had seen a bird poop but I wasn’t sure, but I knew that in any case I would have to wait till the end of the walk so I spent the rest of the time wondering if I had my whole arm covered in poop or if I even had poop on my arm or if it was part of my imagination.

“The most notable experience I felt while participating in the walk was the difficulty of physically moving while being sandwiched between forty or so bodies and having to rely on the movements of these people in order to move myself.”

These comments reveal that for most of the students, the walk was about experiences of acquiring new sensations outside the paradigm of vision: for

example, what the bird poop feels like on one's arm (and not knowing for certain if it is poop or not), which in turn demonstrated how that individual was relying on the ostensible "truth" of her vision to solidify that it was in fact bird poop. The experience was also about space, or being confined by other bodies, or how clothing felt and sounded through the fuzzy coat and heeled boots. In this context, interest in the other senses became more urgent. The imagination was also sparked. The students were able to grasp new ways of orienting themselves in a familiar environment that became dynamically unfamiliar through the walk.

I have participated in many of Papalia's *Blind Field Shuttles* in various cities (this is distinct, and set aside from, being his personal guide), starting with Portland in 2012, followed by Oakland, then San Francisco, also both in 2012. Oftentimes the walks for me entailed an element of fear, as the sounds to emerge from nearby cars whizzing by amplified once my eyes were closed, making them seem closer to me and more threatening. Papalia's goal of having his participants pay more attention to their surroundings through other senses such as sound were certainly effective for me through my observations of the traffic. Also, as my inappropriately heeled feet would feel, or painfully bump and trip its way down and then up curbs, indicating the crossing of a street, I would always be worried about being hit by a car and that our group would be safe. The bigger preoccupation I had, however, in my time entrapped within the unwieldy human chain, was simply holding on. Given my 4'3" stature, my length of my arms meant that they typically landed squarely in center of the back of the person in front of me, instead of their shoulder. I imagine that the shoulder was a much

more comfortable landing pad for the arm, because it meant that the weight of the arm could rest at a horizontal position of two persons of the same stature. In my case, my arm was thrust upwards at almost a 90 degree angle, and after some time walking in the human chain, it became painful keeping my arm at this angle, and especially at holding on as the person moved. I would have to clutch onto the person's jacket, sweater or shirt (depending on the season in which the walk was conducted) in a bid to keep the chain intact, and oftentimes, I would have to break the chain as the pace of the person was too fast for me, given the length of stride covered more distance than my own on the footpath. My personal observations here offer how Papalia's human-composed prosthetic cane actually offered a unique and individual prosthetic experience for every person on the chain. Indeed, Papalia himself was the "lead" prosthesis for the chain.¹⁵¹ My own prosthesis was one that would often fall off, and involve pain after some time. As I was unaccustomed to "wearing" this prosthesis on my body, there was a great deal of anxiety but also curiosity that formed part of the temporary event. One might argue that this affective response (through pain, anxiety etc.) was also what Papalia was trying to achieve, in addition to his dialogic interest in expanding the conversation around sensorial experience of familiar and unfamiliar urban environments. While Papalia had an interest in shedding the antagonistic obstructions for his audience through the *Long Cane*, the *Blind Shield Shuttle* did not necessarily avoid this problem. It seems clear that the "prosthetic

¹⁵¹ Papalia's prosthetic chain resemble Pieter Breughel's painting, *The Blind Leading the Blind* (1568), where subjects follow each other with one arm on the next one's shoulder, and John Singer Sargent's *Gassed* (1918-1919), a famous painting of World War I soliders blinded by mustard gas, each holding on to the next in a line.

choreopolitics” that Papalia had developed through these two works was characterized by antagonism, pain and obstruction along with an arousal of the senses and curiosity.¹⁵²

Papalia’s engagement with the shape and format of the cane has continued to evolve in the past several years. In 2013, Papalia participated in an artist residency at the Grand Central Arts Center at California State University in Santa Ana, Los Angeles. Papalia decided to abandon his white cane, and replace it with the Great Centurion Marching Band from Century High School in Santa Ana, which developed a sequence of repetitive sounds that would effectively act as a guide for the artist as he traversed the unfamiliar streets. Entitled *Mobility Device* (2013), the marching band would follow Papalia as he walked through the streets of San Ana (Appendix: Figures 28-29). They would carefully watch his movements, and bellow on the trumpet or blow on the horn to indicate to him when he was about to cross a street, or step over a sidewalk or turn a corner. Papalia had collaborated with the band on developing a sonic repertoire of sounds that would be indicative of different types of objects that would be mutually understood by all parties as the walk took place.¹⁵³ While there has been a sensorial transition of the cane here, where it is no longer tactile but offers sonic qualities instead, human bodies are still very much a part of the project, along with other types of objects. In this case, it is the instruments that elicit the sounds that become Papalia’s cane, and Papalia relies on these bodies and their

¹⁵² Indeed, on other walks I’ve been on, I know of other people who have injured themselves by tripping or falling because they didn’t receive adequate instruction of what was around them.

¹⁵³ To learn more, visit the following article by Carolina A. Miranda, “Leading the Blind: A Marching Band Helps An Artist Navigate Santa Ana,” *KCET ArtBound*, May 30, 2013, <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/orange/carmen-papalia-grand-central-art-center.html> Accessed January 14, 2016

accompanying sounds. He is hands-free, so to speak, and relinquishes all control by giving it over to the marching band to be his guide. Papalia is no longer the guide for others. What is interesting about this version of the cane, and reminiscent of his past versions of canes, is that in the video documentation of the work produced by the Grand Central Art Center, one of the students also expressed a fear of the possibility of Papalia injuring himself, or even getting killed; the students in the band were now very aware of their role as the prosthesis for Papalia and the responsibility that this entailed.

Following this, in 2015, I invited Papalia to contribute a new work for a group exhibition I had curated entitled *The Flesh of the World* for the University of Toronto.¹⁵⁴ The artist produced a seventeen-minute video, entitled *White Cane, Amplified* (2015), which offers a continuation of his experimentation with subversively transforming the shape and functions of the blind man's white cane through sound, as he did in *Mobility Device* where he innovatively deployed the noises of the marching band (Appendix: Figure 30). Instead, in *White Cane, Amplified*, the artist relies on sound by using a megaphone, or a bullhorn, to navigate a busy urban street in Vancouver. The work then takes on a collaborative and performative function when he calls out to passers-by and introduces himself as blind, and asks them to please help him cross the street. Here, the artist takes control over the cane, for rather than letting the cane speak for itself as a visual and symbolic device, instead, Papalia strives to acquire agency by aurally positioning and announcing himself within the urban landscape, becoming

¹⁵⁴ *The Flesh of the World*, curated by Amanda Cachia, <http://fleshoftheworld.ca> Accessed January 14, 2016

vulnerable and resolute all at once. Papalia is back to touching an object, but the object guides Papalia through sound that resonates across the atmosphere into the ears of other bodies (he hopes), rather than being guided by sound upon the cane's encounter with objects in the environment around him. Here, Papalia's reliance on other bodies to help him navigate through space is much riskier, given the possibility of no-one actually helping him. In other words, there is a risk that his body will remain immobile instead of mobile. Indeed, as we observe in the video, for the most part, there is barely anyone to take the artist from point A to B around as he undertakes his journey. The only people we ever see leading him across a busy intersection are, eventually, two young boys who are clearly curious about Papalia and his embodiment.¹⁵⁵ Occasionally we see a car zoom by. Papalia also felt ambivalent about labeling himself "blind" through his megaphone to passersby, as he feels so strongly about calling himself a non-visual learner instead. This was also a big aspect of the risk attached to this work, and Papalia admits that he felt as though he had to call himself "blind" as that was a more recognizable term for the layperson, or average pedestrian, so to speak. The problem with this, however, is that if Papalia has succumbed, in a sense, to the labels that society is familiar with, ironically pandering to their levels of comfort and accessibility, what was the point in replacing the white cane with the megaphone in the first place? Papalia has replaced the cane for the megaphone, but it was only to aurally amplify his conflicted signification as a blind man instead of visualizing it. Indeed, Papalia had hoped to turn up the volume on the

¹⁵⁵ It is interesting that it is children that ultimately take up Papalia on his cause, rather than adults, but whether this is merely circumstance or speaks to larger issues around the trust/mistrust of children versus adults is difficult to discern.

problematic associations the weight of his white cane carried, but the amplification only serves to reinforce rather than necessarily disrupt or transform. Perhaps Papalia, in his development of this new prosthesis in the form of the megaphone, might have been able to offer an alternative choreopolitics in his journey through speech and footpath that offers more agency. Undoubtedly the artist will continue his creative explorations of the cane as a unique prosthetic device in more complex forms over time. Indeed, he has been working with students at Olin College of Engineering on a new sonic cane, which I mention in the next section in conjunction with *Alterpodium*.

It has been a delight for me as both a scholar and a curator to witness and be intimately involved in the concentrated trajectory of Papalia's cane over the past four years. The artist's particularized engagement with first, other bodies, as a type of prosthetic extension, and second, with a longer and insidious cane, recalls the work of a not-too-distant previous generation of artists who similarly experimented with the body's relationship to objects and other bodies as an extension to their own corpus. These artists include the likes of Lygia Clark (discussed in Chapter Five), Ann Hamilton and Rebecca Horn. I'd like to briefly discuss Hamilton's work here as a means of tracing a trajectory of performance-based work involving a dialogic, affective, and physical relationship between bodies and objects in the field of art history and contemporary art, but especially to consider how Papalia's work both dovetails and diverges from past practices. The important questions here are, how does Papalia's work build upon the work of Hamilton, for example, and what new knowledges does he offer us? How can

we understand space, gesture, form and movement differently – in explicit contrast to Hamilton – with the knowledge that Papalia is a non-visual learner? How does the corporeal experience of his blindness, navigating in a visual world, contribute towards our evolving understanding of “prosthetic choreopolitics”? My juxtaposition between the work of Papalia and Hamilton aims to offer much nuance here, elaborating and building on a more complex idea of “prosthetic choreopolitics” and how all of these artists contribute to new definitions of encountering space differently. In sum, Papalia’s work builds on the vocabulary already profoundly generated by artists like Hamilton.

American artist Ann Hamilton’s seminal work with body and object is what especially excites me in relationship to Papalia’s practice. Like Papalia, Hamilton’s work is engaged with an interest in the empirical knowledge generated from multi-sensorial qualities, and how those qualities might be aroused, denied or extended through her own body as a tool for exploration and performance. In the period from 1984 and 1993, Hamilton, who herself does not identify as blind or visually impaired, produced a series of sixteen small black and white photographs of herself posing with various objects that have special resonance with Papalia’s projects. Hamilton is creating a relationship with her objects in an attempt to literally objectify her own body – her body becomes object through this exchange with other objects, mingling the animate with the inanimate. Hamilton was interested in gleaning live, tactile, visceral, face-to-face experiences in a media-saturated world, leading to an embodied knowledge. The shapes and forms that her body created in dialogue with the objects was unusual,

absurd, comical and exciting, and art historians often compare this early work with some of Bruce Nauman's similar video-based explorations from the 1960s and 1970s. Some examples from Hamilton's series include *untitled (body object series) #1-chairbody*, 1984/1991, *untitled (body object series) #stoveeye*, 1984/1993, and *untitled (body object series) #megaphone*, 1986/1993 (Appendix: Figure 31). I have selected these particular three photographs from the series carefully in order to offer connections between her and Papalia's work just described. In Hamilton's *untitled (body object series) #1-chairbody*, we see the artist dressed up a spiky tooth-pick suit, hunched over as a wooden chair which is also enveloped by toothpicks, and that sits on her back. It is clear that Hamilton is straining by the weight of the chair. In *untitled (body object series) #stoveeye*, Hamilton has used the shielding of a stove-plate burner to create an improvised viewfinder, where, with one eye, she stares through the hole in the middle of the small piece of equipment, glaring back at the viewer. This funnel-like effect offers us a concentrated window into Hamilton's eye, whilst simultaneously restricting her vision of the world out there given she is only using one eye, instead of two. Finally, in *untitled (body object series) #megaphone*, we see a side profile of Hamilton sitting on a chair, and opposite to her, just a short distance away, rests an extremely large megaphone on top of a wooden table. Encased within the megaphone and Hamilton's body, a large forest of crumpled paper is propped up and abutted dramatically between her body and the object. Hamilton's face is actually completely obscured and covered over by the paper, blocking her vision. This last photograph, especially, has obvious connections to Papalia's *White*

Cane, Amplified, as we see two bodies who are engaging with the same prop, the megaphone or the bullhorn, although the megaphone in each case comes in different sizes and is made up of different materials. Hamilton's megaphone has a different purpose compared to Papalia's too, as she's using hers for dramatic effect, as a tool stripped of its original purpose. where Papalia is using the megaphone as a functional device for his ambulatory journey on a Vancouver street, and as an expression for his identity.

Interesting given the nature and context of this essay, curator Sarah J. Rogers has described how the effect of Hamilton's esoteric contact with her objects is disabling – at one point in her catalogue text that accompanied a solo show of Hamilton's work, Rogers wrote about the series, and (perhaps problematically) described Hamilton's "bushhead" image as a "blind, deaf, and speechless agricultural mutant."¹⁵⁶ Still, in the three images listed above, we might agree with Rogers' statement, given in one instance, she is weighed down by the chair on her back, impairing her movement, while in the other instances it is her normative vision and her voice-box that is now impaired to some degree. However, Rogers continues to say that while Hamilton has denied the original functions of her body through these juxtapositions, the artist is also suggesting "a new kind of mobility."¹⁵⁷ It is this sense of exploration around multi-sensorial forms of mobility – a delicate choreography between body and object – that connects the work of Hamilton and Papalia so powerfully. Hamilton was

¹⁵⁶ Sarah J. Rogers, "How does the body become object?" *The Body and the Object: Ann Hamilton 1984-1996*, Columbus, Ohio: Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, 1996, 13.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

obviously keen to undo the normative functions of her body, be it vision, hearing, and touch through her connections with these objects, yet she also wanted to recreate these functions in more complex forms. Similarly, Papalia's work revolves around undoing normative perceptions of pre-dominantly vision, but also the other senses, through an encounter with both objects and human bodies in multiple configurations. Yet, he also offers pathways, both literally and metaphorically, where we can traverse new ground for how the sensorium might be imaginatively and literally activated.

The central difference between their practices of course, which I have already alluded to, is the fact that Papalia enters these creative experimentations as one who is visually impaired – he is literally blind. Hamilton creates temporary visual impairments with the aid of her objects, whilst Papalia embodies the same impairment and lives with it on a daily basis. These experiments diverge when we consider how each of their bodies inhabit space, and how they initially enter into their works with a completely unique set of narratives owing to their ways of knowing the world. They may be seeking similar goals in the conversation around multiplications of the sensorium, but I argue that Papalia extends Hamilton's ideas because he is able to offer a particularized account as a non-visual learner that has never before been considered in contemporary art practice. While both artists are certainly enacting a specific “prosthetic choreopolitics” through their experiments, the artists approach the act of the objectification of the body alternately. As we already understand, Papalia is attempting to de-objectify his body through his various complex works, given his rejection of the semiotics of

the white cane and how it marks his body. He turns to other objects, bodies and the sensorium in a bid to move away from simplistic reductions of his body as blind subject. Hamilton literally “objectifies” her body in her various engagements as a way of enlivening a disabled space in order to learn about what knowledges it can offer herself and her audience. Considering Papalia’s work against the work of Hamilton offers an rich trajectory of this genre of performance art, and how Papalia’s practice makes a very distinctive imprint.

The Spatial Performance & Politics of the Alterpodium

The *Alterpodium* is a custom-made, portable disability object, “prosthesis” and “choreographic object” that I use to “perform disability” during international and national conferences, symposiums and lectures. Podiums, like other architectures of this ableist world, are often inaccessible to my 4'3" stature. While most architectural accommodations for atypical bodies are created for seamless, even invisible integration, the *Alterpodium* amplifies its structural workings, elongating and emphasizing the user’s opportunity to create an alternate, provisional world in public. To this end, the title of the disability object, *Alterpodium*, is a departure from French curator Nicholas Bourriard’s portmanteau conception of *Altermodern*, that contextualizes global art-making practices with an emphasis on individuality, singularity and autonomy as a reaction against standardization.¹⁵⁸ I offer my podium as yet another form of prosthesis that implicitly critiques objects within the built environment with only

¹⁵⁸ Nicholas Bourriard, *Altermodern*, London: Tate Publishing, 2009.

one body type and size in mind. Similar to the semiotics of Papalia's white cane, that marks his body as blind, my body is always already marked by the visibly obvious clue that it is short statured. When my body encounters other objects and other average-sized bodies, my short stature becomes even more noticeable, as one is able to compare and contrast the scale difference. This is particularly the case when my body encounters average-height podiums at conferences and other academic events in which I am to give public talks. Here, I literally have an audience watching my oftentime awkward encounter with the podium, as I must negotiate and maneuver around the podium in order to "fit" it better. My body must adjust to its height, width and depth in order for me to be seen and heard.

Although I do not rely on the podium as if it was a well-used limb to navigate space in the same way that Papalia uses his cane on a daily basis, or in the way that an amputee has a particular relationship with their prosthetic leg or arm for mobility, I have and must continue to have frequent encounters with the podium which I consider as a type of prosthesis in my professional and academic life that warrants attention. This attention comes in the form of a choreopoliticized intervention to the space between my body and the podium – I reduce space, so that rather than my body making the height adjustment to reach the podium with the aid of a steep-stool or similar device, it is the podium that reaches down to me. This directional change from up to down, rather than down to up, offers a blue print in how the environment can be modified to suit the needs of an individual body, as even universal design can never actually "universally" meet the needs of all bodies, no matter how egalitarian it tries to be. Further,

while my description of the podium as a “prosthetic” might be considered as more of an “accommodation” – a technological device that allows the disabled body to access space/facility, rather than the prosthetic function of replacing a body part – this prosthetic metaphor is not entirely out of place as it “fits” within a literature that expands “prosthetic” to refer to a wide range of technologies and infrastructures. Adjusting and altering the language from “accommodation” to “prosthetic” also suggests a shift in the power dynamic because “accommodation” condescends in its suggestion that the non-disabled person or persons must pander to the atypical or even inconvenient circumstance of the literal and behavioral “misfit” of the disabled body. Alternatively, “prosthetic” connotes empowerment. While an “accommodation” is also wrapped in important embodied exchanges of physical and emotional care and support, wherein it relies on (sometimes successful, sometimes unsuccessful) interpersonal flow between bodies, the “prosthesis,” as applied to the *Alterpodium*, suggests an independent solution without the necessity of relying on any given situation or environment. Rather, the *Alterpodium* turns to other creative types in order to find solutions that can then be radically and temporarily dropped into academic contexts in order to make declarative statements.

I first began to think about having my own podium built when I was completing my Masters degree in Visual and Critical Studies at the California College of the Arts (CCA) in San Francisco from 2010-2012. I wanted to deliver my thesis presentation from a custom-built podium to make a layered point about the symmetry and asymmetry of dwarf bodies that were appearing in the artwork

by Laura Swanson that I was presenting in my Powerpoint (more on Swanson's work in Chapter Three). Images of innocuous every day objects, one tall and one short, side by side, were mirrored by what occurred next on stage: to the surprise of the faculty and my peers sitting in the audience, in April, 2012, I wheeled my podium out from the back of the room where it was sitting quietly in hiding, and placed it directly next to the average-height podium that sits permanently to the left of the stage.¹⁵⁹ There, radically, one next to the other, the podiums made a powerful statement about how bodies fit or do not fit within or against certain objects. I was taking matters into my own hands by creating a podium that fit *my* body rather than having to resort to the trusty step-stool in order for me to peer over the top of the podium's ledge so that I could see the audience or so that they could see me.

My first podium was made from wood, and has red wheels for easy movement, although the red wheels also give my podium character, and some spunk (Appendix: Figures 32-33). This podium has enough room for my laptop, my script and a water bottle – all the tools necessary for a conference presentation. It also includes a small light to ensure my script can be read with ease in environments, such as large lecture halls, where the lights are turned down. The podium was designed and executed by several former CCA graduate students, Shawn Hibacronan and Adrian Segal, who were recommended to me by the artist Allison Smith. I met up with Shawn and then Adrian a number of times prior to the inaugural performance in April 2012. They took measurements and

¹⁵⁹ To see the debut of *Alterpodium* on stage at California College of the Arts, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL3Jop1Ezv0> Accessed January 21, 2016

we made selections for wood, style, and shape. The College paid for 50% of the costs for the podium through their Office of Students with Disabilities. So the podium was a great success, and people in the auditorium at CCA that day in April immediately understood the podium without my having to explicitly mention it during my presentation. The podium was there as a statement about bodies and the built environment, and this was enough.

Once I graduated from CCA, and started my PhD at UCSD in Fall, 2012, I realized that my podium would have limited use. Even though I was enthusiastically invited to use my first podium once during a conference at UCSD in April, 2013, organized by Professor Lisa Cartwright, I knew that my podium was going to remain grounded in San Diego. While the podium was portable, it was too heavy to take with me across the country. Despite its small size, it was certainly too large to pack into a suitcase. So in summer, 2013, I approached artist and researcher Sara Hendren to see if she would be interested in a special commission to design and produce a second, more streamlined version of my podium. Hendren started to think about designer Victor Papanek's Nomadic Furniture from the 1970s—Papanek was a pioneer in thinking about ecologically but also socially sustainable design, and this stool in particular caught her eye: it's designed to snap together with ease, to assemble and disassemble at will, to be nomadic—but it's also possible to make four of these out of one standard piece of plywood (Appendix: Figure 34). Hendren worked with a design-build team at a laser-cutting and 3D print workshop in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she lives, to modify this same concept for a podium: one with few parts, that wouldn't

require fancy hinges or complicated assembly, but that would also fold up in a compact manner and be transportable for all my travel needs as a professional and a scholar. After a lot of thinking through possible iterations, Hendren came up with this design: sturdy legs that hold together by friction, and enough surface area to hold all my supplies. The podium consists of two simple pieces that snap together in the form of a three-foot podium. The design collapses easily for transport and requires no hardware. This kit-of-parts makes it possible for me to literally perform this prosthetic technology, pointedly building the disability object in front of an audience before I begin to speak from it, and thereby questioning the myth of neutrality in everyday furniture. The podium's materials both exploit the benefit of a portable, lightweight system of parts for easy travel and the durational, performative aspects of its assembly at each site of use.

Indeed, I wanted this podium to have a performative, temporal register as well: that was as important as the design. So in Winter 2014, at a symposium at the Abrons Art Center in New York, we tested out the cardboard prototype but also its performative qualities: I was slated to speak on a panel, and I asked Hendren to carry my cardboard podium to the front of the room when my name was announced. In silence, she brought this kit of parts to the front of the room, assembled them together, and then I addressed the audience with this adapted environment (Appendix: Figures 35-36). Instead of my embodiment being adapted to the architecture, the architecture provisionally, temporarily, came to me. Once again, my third performance with the podium was well-received and easily understood. One of my fellow panelists at the event, the well-known British

actor and entertainer Matt Fraser, suggested that I consider the double entendre of the title of the podium – the ALTARPodium – AR instead of ER – which is the religious table that is used for offerings in ceremonies and rituals. In this context, it was me who was making an offering or a contribution to disability politics through and over my special “altar.” Alternatively, I might also embody a priest giving his sermon over my short-statured pulpit. Interestingly, during the Q&A after my presentation, many people expressed that I should consider using the cardboard prototype as my finished version of the podium instead, as they felt that there was something about its grunge aesthetic that seemed to be in synchronicity with the insidious tactics of the podium as a political tool and weapon.

Despite this feedback, I proceeded to invite Hendren to fabricate the final version from plywood so that I have a number of choices when I present. I often equate this to the athlete and model Aimee Mullins, mentioned earlier, who describes her enjoyment at having the flexibility to choose from a host of prosthetic leg options from her wardrobe each morning as she gets ready for her day. Mullins can even choose which height she wants to be, as her custom-made legs come in different sizes. I rather like knowing I have a number of podiums to choose from, that, while not necessarily offering different sizes in the same vein as Mullins’ legs, do offer me different colors, shapes and materials that might compliment my outfit on a particular day or for a particular event. So in Fall, 2014, Hendren was hired as an Assistant Professor of Design at Olin College of Engineering in Boston, and she decided to invite me to visit one of her design and engineering classes so that I could talk to her students about my request. My

proposal was taken up as a class project, and students could have hands-on experience at designing a unique object whilst also increasing their awareness and sensitivity towards disabled bodies (Appendix: Figure 37).

Over the course of four months, a group of four dedicated students, Morgan Bassford, Adriana Gartes, Katherine Maschan and Mary Jean Morse, would email and Skype with me to discuss the various options, where they used Hendren's original cardboard prototype as a jumping-off point for the new version. They sent me a number of designs for how the podium could open and close, and they also sent me a listing of materials that would be both lightweight and durable (Appendix: Figures 38-39). The students also worked to ensure that the podium's dimensions fit exactly into my suitcase, so that I could pack the collapsed podium into it when I travel. The original idea was that when I commute to my event or presentation, I could take the podium out of the suitcase and pack it into another bag that could be either conveniently wheeled or carried over the shoulder as though it was a laptop. The final result that the students were able to deliver to me was a collapsible black podium made from carbon fiber, which indeed offers both durable and light-weight properties (Appendix: Figure 40). Carbon fiber is a material commonly found in motorcycles and aerospace equipment, and the students enjoyed the idea that my podium was a launching pad for my own version of a cutting edge trajectory through space, much like the motorcycle or the spacecraft. I am still looking for a bag in which to carry the podium to presentations and the like, although it certainly fits into my suitcase

perfectly.¹⁶⁰ The making of *Alterpodium*, re-constituted as a class project, was indeed a success, and it has since spawned what Hendren now calls the *Design For One* series.¹⁶¹ Hendren has been assigning various projects to her students in her “Investigating Normal” class that call for unique objects to be designed for users with individual needs and abilities. As a side note, my collaboration with Hendren caught the interest of Papalia, and in the Fall of 2015, he visited with a new group of students at Olin College so that they could develop a new sonic cane for Papalia.¹⁶² Thus far, the students have come up with over 400 ideas for the artist’s new object, and they plan to complete the cane by May or June, 2016.¹⁶³

After several years of experimentation and deliberation, I finally have a real working customized podium to use. However, I am still deliberating on if I should use the podium as a covert, guerilla strategy, where I would set it up without the consent of the conference or panel organizers prior to the delivery of my paper, or if I should give them notice of the podium’s existence in advance. How dramatic do I want my dramatic entrance to be, and who is my message meant to be targeted towards? These variables will likely shift and change each time I present depending on the nature of the conference. On the three occasions where I have used the podium thus far, in Vancouver, Baltimore, and Washington

¹⁶⁰ For more information on the project, see <http://ablersite.org/2015/05/26/update-alterpodium/> Accessed January 21, 2016

¹⁶¹ For more information, see <http://ablersite.org/2014/08/28/an-alterpodium-design-for-one-series/> Accessed January 21, 2016

¹⁶² For more information on the project, see <http://ablersite.org/2015/09/15/carmen-papalia-at-olin-925-29-and-more-collaborations/> Accessed January 21, 2016

¹⁶³ Apart from the sonic possibilities of his new cane, to be considered by the Olin College student designers, Papalia has also expressed an interest in the evolution of a cane that actually protects his body from pain, particularly his knuckles that often graze brittle surfaces and shear off a layer of skin, causing them to bleed. This circles back to the conversation around an element of pain to Papalia’s practice that he is now attempting to eliminate rather than cause, especially in the bodies of others as a form of antagonism.

DC, I have set the podium up before the audience filters in to take a seat to hear the talk(s), in collaboration with the organizers (Appendix: Figure 41). This was mostly because I was simply suffering from stage fright, and didn't want to appear clumsy with setting up the podium, given I am still not very comfortable with setting it up efficiently and elegantly. Also, within each of these contexts, I was almost always "preaching to the converted" given the nature of the events were disability or design-related. In other words, the audience had an expectation of the nature of my topic, and already understood the prosthetic choreopolitics that the *Alterpodium* was offering. On the other hand, in the absence of the performing podium, where I set it up in front of everyone's eyes, it seems as if an explanation of why it is there in the first place was desired, as people would ask questions about it at the end of my presentation, or they simply saw it as an accommodation on behalf of the institution in which I was a guest speaker. They missed the critical intervention of the podium in the spirit of its making. Another question circles around the meanings behind who is setting up the podium in front of an audience's eyes – should it be me, or someone else? In the scenario where Hendren set up the podium for me in New York, this might have been read as an average-height person literally bending to the will of the differently-abled performer, getting down on her legs to unfold the podium and literally offer access to the short-statured individual where access was not made available previously. Or it could also be seen as pandering to that individual, offering sympathy when none is required or especially desired. Additionally, seeing the podium wheeled or unveiled on stage and propped up next to the average-sized

podium is also important, so that people are able to see the contrast of space and scale in front of their eyes, like the contrast between the dwarf body and the average-height body itself. The point of the *Alterpodium* may not be so effectively made if it cannot be held up against the very object and its accompanying norms it seeks to critique. Other considerations that remain now revolve around the color of the podium, as the black of my current Olin version is at risk of fading into the black background and flooring of a standard stage, taking on an unintended camouflage quality. Part of the mimetic or mirroring effect of having two asymmetrical podiums side by side might also be about matching the colors of the objects themselves, to intensify the message being made.

I am currently working with LA-based designer Hugo Pilate, who is developing the next and fourth iteration of my podium in collaboration with Sara Hendren. Pilate is a research strategist and maker who obtained his design training in Los Angeles, Tokyo, and Paris. Pilate's "Sensorial Prosthetics" series are of particular relevance and intersect with *Alterpodium* very well, as they are fictional devices designed to enhance the face of a person born without particular facial features. Even though Pilate claims these designs are based on a fictional world, in reality people have congenital and/or acquired facial anomalies that require facial reconstruction and/or plastic surgeries. Pilate's interest in this series is, according to his website, to "blur the line between wearable devices, medical devices, and jewelry."¹⁶⁴ He has developed the following objects to augment

¹⁶⁴ Hugo Pilate, n.d. "Sensorial Prosthetics," <http://hupilate.co/post/110646312356/sensorial>, Accessed May 14, 2016.

possible absences on the face: the “Date Finder,” which is an artificial nose that enables the user to pick up on various pheromones and hormones released by people around them; the “Augmented IV System,” a wireless display which visually interprets the nutrients in consumed food for those who do not have a mouth; the “Dot Radio,” which is a bone-fixed radio antenna so that an ear-less user can temporarily tune into the news every morning; and “Olfactive Pixels,” a device that interprets as smells the video input recorded by its camera so as to help with navigation, recognizing friends or other points of interest. Pilate has been working on the fourth version of the podium throughout 2016 and plans to deliver the final executed project at the end of the same year. His goal was to replicate the design and shape of the podium, but improve on the podium’s durability through an alternative selection of material and glue to seal off the lightweight carbon fiber edges. Pilate also hoped to develop an easier step-by-step process to open and close the podium so that I feel more confident and elegant in revealing and assembling the object in front of surprised audiences.

The Lecture-Performance as Institutional Critique

I am now interested in thinking about the theoretical implications of the “performing podium.” What does my engagement with *Alterpodium* offer prosthetic choreopolitics? Architect Alberto Perez-Gomez says “Vitruvius speaks of the architecture of the theater as a cathartic event, not as a mere “building” or

aesthetic object.”¹⁶⁵ We also might consider architecture as a “vision of life towards a new social contract,” which many artists in the twentieth century have explored, such as Marcel Duchamp and his iconic urinal, where a utilitarian found object became high art.¹⁶⁶ Perez-Gomez continues to say that “architecture as performance privileges the importance of expression in the entwinement of use and form, drawing meaning that is essentially embedded in particular cultural practices.”¹⁶⁷ My personal expression through the podium draws a powerful statement about the place of disabled bodies within the cultural practice of normative architectures. The other generative theoretical connection is how my podium might form part of the discourse around institutional critique. How does my podium-performance – which replaces the lecture-performance – interrogate what constitutes knowing? Instead of any artistic or curatorial practice that might be used as a conceptual device to analyze institutionalized forms of knowing, it is my podium that becomes the practice and the methodology for deconstructing institutionalized forms of objects and architectures. Inextricably tied to this is how the podium is also able to comment upon relationships of power that are inherent to its very shape and form, and it also offers a form of empowerment to the dwarf subject, who is often excluded from the ability to engage equally with normative architectures of an everyday world.

Understood as one of the key contributors to institutional critique, contemporary artist Andrea Fraser speaks of how a reflexive engagement with a

¹⁶⁵ Alberto Perez-Gomez, “Architecture as a Performing Art: Two Analogical Reflections” in *Architecture As a Performing Art*, Marcia Feuerstein and Gray Read (eds.), England: Ashgate Publishing, 2013.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

site implies “both our relationships to that site and the social conditions of those relations.”¹⁶⁸ It was in 1989 that Andrea Fraser performed her most famous piece, *Museum Highlights* (Appendix: Figure 42). In this work, Fraser took a group of unsuspecting visitors on a mock tour through the Philadelphia Museum of Art under the guise of a fictional museum docent named Jane Castleton. As explained by James Trainor, Fraser was “expertly mimicking the public face of the museum while simultaneously deconstructing it[.] Fraser came to specialize in deadpan parody, revealing the structural biases, social prejudices and economic underpinnings of established cultural institutions.”¹⁶⁹ I’d like to suggest that the critique I offer through *Alterpodium*, along with its prosthetic choreopolitics, finds its lineage in the work of Fraser and those before her, given the similar nature of our performances, and how we embody and inhabit a critique in public space around institutional bias and prejudice. The “lectures” delivered by myself and Fraser do not directly offer this critique dialogically, but rather the message is expressed through the exaggerated actions of our bodies “speaking” for themselves – Fraser through the over-the-top flailing of her arms as it points to various objects, accompanied by her deadpan monologue explaining their wondrous virtues, and mine as it marches to the stage and unwraps the podium in magician-like showmanship. While Fraser critiques the museum, I critique the system at large – the architectural system, and the system of the built environment.

¹⁶⁸ Rike Frank, “When Form Starts Talking: On Lecture-Performances” in *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry*, Issue 33 (Summer, 2013), 4-15.

¹⁶⁹ James Trainor, “Andrea Fraser: Pat Hearn Art Gallery/Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York” exhibition review, *Frieze*, Issue 66, April 2002 http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/andrea_fraser/ Accessed January 21, 2016

Fraser's predecessors in the world of institutional critique include figures like Fred Wilson, Hans Haacke, Joseph Beuys, Dan Graham and Robert Morris. In 1964, dressed in a suit and tie, Morris delivered a lecture, entitled *21.3*, in front of a New York audience in which he lip-synched a recorded version of himself reciting an excerpt from an essay, *Iconography and Iconology* (1939 and republished in 1955) by the famous art historian Erwin Panofsky (Appendix: Figure 43).¹⁷⁰ Through the performance of this lecture, which Morris used as a medium for his work, the artist questioned the art establishment and all its mechanisms, including the very conception of artwork itself. Morris' piece formed a key component of the Lecture Performance sub-genre, which meditated on the relationship between art and knowledge. The Lecture Performance emerged in the 1960s as an off-shoot from performance art. I juxtapose this performance by Morris against the performance of my podium to illustrate how similar work is being achieved by both projects. The performance of the lecture is offering an implicit critique to the audience regarding conventions in art, and in my case, the built environment at large. However, it is also understood that conventions in art history, whether existing in the built environment (for example, through the form of inaccessible art museums, such as when works of art are hung too high on a wall for me, as they are out of my eye's comfortable reach) or otherwise, remain disabling to people with atypical bodies. Like Morris and his contribution to institutional critique, my *Alterpodium* aims to change the social conditions of knowledge production and the relations to that site. Through

¹⁷⁰ Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013, 76.

performing the podium, I demonstrate the failure of architecture, and how society's disregard of disabled bodies is tied up with the apparent disregard for how our built environment might instead serve a range of bodies. The context in which knowledge is produced around my podium provides rich new possibilities and viable alternative options for architecture that might not otherwise be considered if the podium wasn't made so visible through its discursive design and its careful placement on center stage.

What is also interesting to compare between the performance by Morris in 21.3 and my own podium is the actual physical gestures that were executed – the choreopolitics. Morris had scribbled notes into his script that provided direction for how to position and angle his body during certain points in the lecture, according to art historian Eve Meltzer. She says that Morris had written “right hand on stand,” “fold arms,” “finger in collar” and “slow shift of body left” in his notes in order to imitate a presumably more authentic impersonation of a well-respected and established art historian.¹⁷¹ Meltzer continues to note how Morris had coordinated his choreographic art historian-like movements so that they were deliberately out of sync with his original recording, rather than being in sync.¹⁷² Through his unsyncopated delivery, Morris was also trying to disrupt the status quo and art history itself in very subtle ways. As Morris was executing a choreography that seemed as if his lecture performance was nothing out of the ordinary, other clues around his body language suggested to the audience that perhaps something else was occurring here, in a similar manner to Andrea

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

Fraser's performance. I'd like to suggest that through the ordinary delivery of my own lectures and discussions as an up-and-coming scholar, I am both fitting into the status quo within the expectations of the profession and the field at large whilst simultaneously disrupting its conventions through the choreopolitical gestures of the performative *Alterpodium*. Each step of my journey onto an academic stage, wheeling the podium from one point to another point, where it lands next to the average-size podium, tells a story of difference, while my speech is characterized by convention demanded by the rhetoric within the discipline. Indeed, I also dress professionally, as Morris did in suit and tie, in order to embody the look of the art historian, according to societal and cultural expectations. Through the manner in which both Fraser and Morris executed their performances, the performance of *Alterpodium* offers a generative off-shoot to the discourse of institutional critique that incorporates the language of disability studies, prosthetic choreopolitics, and alternative art histories.

Conclusion: A Leg, Cane, or Podium to Choreograph On

In this chapter, I have made a case for how the use of the prosthesis in contemporary art demands a more rigorous, nuanced reading than those that have previously been undertaken. Part of this new reading involves incorporating and examining work by disabled artists (or curators and scholars, in the case of *Alterpodium*) where *embodied* experiences of the prosthesis, and amputee embodiment more generally, can inform the imaginative and metaphorical constructs of it, such as the prostheses as an intervention in public space, or as a

mobile sensorial device exchanged within a socially-engaged art experience with a group, through Papalia's white cane. To use prosthesis-specific language, I believe it is critical for contemporary artists and critics to begin to re-think and *re-fit* the prosthesis within new frameworks and to make *adjustments* within a framework of complex embodiment. While I am not suggesting that non-disabled contemporary artists completely abandon their imaginative use of the prosthesis, I do think it necessary that they bring into their representations a more informed, sensitive, and responsible framing that supports complex embodied disabled *and* able-bodied experiences. However, I want to once again acknowledge that the readings on these various approaches will always remain charged territory.

The power of allowing a mainstream audience to encounter alternative multi-sensorial works discussed in this paper also lies in the possibility to be destabilized by the disabled body, with which an ostensibly normative audience may be unfamiliar. These spaces offer profound capacity for change, evolution, transformation and movement, both literal and metaphoric, and ultimately, might possibly garner new form through destabilization. They impel us not simply to look at bodies, but to contemplate what it is to *live* our bodies through the phenomenology of the amputee body. Katherine Ott suggests, it is the “material ‘stuff’ that most clearly conveys ideologies of body ideals, body politics and culture” – the “stuff” that becomes visceral, meaningful and ever more powerful the closer we get to seeing, hearing, touching, smelling or even digesting it.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Katherine Ott “The Sum of Its Parts: An Introduction to Modern Histories of Prosthetics” in *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives: Modern Histories of Prosthetics* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), 5.

I hope that my analyses here of the work of Carmen Papalia, and my *Alterpodium* as a form of “prosthetic choreopolitics” supports my quest to integrate such disabled and non-disabled embodied readings into not only the production of art making itself, but in the writing and scholarship of curators, art historians, critics and art educators. Ideally, my future visits to an art museum will be where I can see a display by Matthew Barney that is juxtaposed against work by Carmen Papalia that destabilizes previously entrenched notions of prosthesis and its accompanying popular metaphors in both historical and contemporary art, to provide a provocative new constellation of ideas and configurations. Perhaps with such innovative curatorial displays that shed new light and transform standardized misperceptions, to borrow from Vivian Sobchack’s appropriate essay title and idiom, the prosthesis in contemporary art will finally have a leg to stand on, or indeed, a cane or a podium in which to choreograph from.

Portions from Chapter Two appear in Amanda Cachia, “Alterpodium: A Performative Design and Disability Intervention,” in *Design and Culture: Journal of the Design Studies Forum*, Volume 8, No. 3, 2016 . I am the sole author of this publication, and I wish to thank Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group for granting permission to reproduce these excerpts in this dissertation. The original source of publication for this article can be found here:

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Chapter 3:

Re-Sizing Dwarfism: Cutting Ocular Space in Half

Introduction

How is space experienced from perspectives of people with dwarfism? How do artists with dwarfism prompt and remind us of the experience of their spatial occupation? This chapter explores the work of two contemporary artists with dwarfism, Laura Swanson and Corban Walker, who use different conceptual and technical methods in order to chart, comment and reflect on how the dwarf subject moves through space. These artists capture unique ambulatory experiences of their bodies in order to claim spatial agency over public environments that commonly serve “normative” audiences and art works. Specifically, through the design of custom-made installations and objects, they call into question how to look, and particularly offer the viewer the opportunity to re-think the traditional way their own embodiments move through a three-dimensional installation in a gallery or public space. In this chapter, Lepecki’s “choreopolitics” turns into a consideration of “scale choreopolitics.” The choreography of the dwarf body is one that involves bodily action from a distinct and different height perspective as compared to the average height adult population. Dwarfism is a condition that affects only 1 in 40,000 people, and there are over 500 different types of skeletal dysplasias. Given that the average height of a dwarf is approximately four feet, this typically puts the dwarf body on an equal plane with children and people in wheelchairs. The dwarf body is an adult body that is then considerably shorter

than the average 5'8" man or woman. Given this difference in scale between the dwarf body and the average height adult, I argue that the dwarf spatial and choreographic experiences must be considered, because these experiences are distinctive and separate to those of a moving body that does not have dwarfism. I claim that considering the lived, spatial and choreographic experiences of the dwarf body is valid and important, because there are few instances where this has actually been narrated, recorded or captured in art criticism. Like the larger argument being made in this dissertation, I aim to illustrate how an examination of the movements of dwarf bodies offers a unique choreopolitics as a means towards instilling social change. The artists' works offer experiences that shed light on complex embodiment in a bid to politically re-orient the viewers' perceptions of disabled subjectivity that is rarely addressed in contemporary art theory and praxis. For instance, the experience that I have as a person with dwarfism as I move through a gallery space and observe an art exhibition, as discussed in the Introduction, is one that is typically filled with obstructions, gaps and absences. Most objects and architectures are inaccessible to my stature given the world is built to meet the needs of average height people, so my view of the world at 4'3" is different than that of someone who is average height. The point of this chapter is to then ask, what exactly is that view from the height of a dwarf? What does one encounter at this height as one moves through public space? What new knowledges can these views and movements bring to bear on our spatial experiences that have never been considered before, and why are they important? The artists in this chapter offer such accounts of their choreopolitical movements

through space, and their narratives provide revised accounts of their bodies with agency, that intend to bear sharp contrast to reductive, one-sided representations of the dwarf body that have typically appeared in visual culture.

Indeed, the dwarf has often been a marginalized subject in the history of contemporary art, labeled as deviant, pathological, freak and “other,” so this chapter attempts to present the strategies that Swanson and Walker employ in order to resist reductive meanings, and offer alternative interpretations of the dwarf. They challenge dominant culture’s perceptions of scale, size and proportion as they inscribe their works with their experience of space as people living with the condition of dwarfism. In doing so, they adjust and destabilize an often reductive representation of the disabled body as they move towards complex, embodied forms. Thus, the artists move away from problematic figures such as the midget or the freak as portrayed within historical and contemporary Western visual discourses, particularly in popular culture, the entertainment industry and canonical art history. Like freaks or monsters, cyclops, giants, centaurs, and hermaphrodites within Greek mythology, dwarfs too were simultaneously seen as objects of horror and fascinating wonders because their bodies were ambiguous and marked with difference.¹⁷⁴ Humans are curious about what looks different, yet at the same time, they take comfort in knowing they are not like the “other” because they are acutely aware of the stigma associated with living inside such bodies. Dwarfs in particular instill the fear of never growing up in people’s minds, and for this reason, they have historically tended to be viewed

¹⁷⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, “Intolerable Ambiguity: Freaks as/at the Limit” in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996) 57.

in relation to the single fact of their visible height difference. Dwarfs are to be pitied or feared by a non-dwarf dominant culture because they have not “grown up” into adults. They are considered inferior in intellect, ability and normality. On the other hand, the fairy tales always attribute huge dexterous and creative gifts to dwarfs.¹⁷⁵

In her historical overview, Adelson also turns to the representation of dwarfism in art history. She acknowledges that “long before any writing appeared about dwarfs, they could be found in art work created in every culture and in every time period” ranging from Egyptian stone carvings and sculptures to Greek vases, ceramics and prints in Asia, and Indian stone reliefs.¹⁷⁶ The ancient Greeks believed dwarfs possessed magical qualities and elevated them to almost god-like status. Their divine origin was thought to be reason for their atypical bodies. Early on in her study, Adelson remarks that there are very few respectful portraits of dwarfs. And what of dwarf artists? While there have undoubtedly been a number of accomplished dwarf artists throughout history, often the dwarf artist remains marginalized, or simplified within the pathologized binary of heroic or tragic as in the case of Henri Toulouse-Lautrec. Dating earlier back than Toulouse-Lautrec however, Leslie Fiedler points out how in 17th century Renaissance paintings

¹⁷⁵ One observes dwarfs in popular culture and fictionalized as Munchkins in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) (fig. 3.5), as Oompa Loompas in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) (fig. 3.6) as Mini-Me (*Austin Powers* movies in 1997, 1999 and 2002), and annually appear as elves during Christmas recitals and holiday movies. Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) is perhaps the most iconic animated portrayal of the dwarf. In these portrayals, the dwarf is simultaneously alien and distant, sensationalized, eroticized and entertaining in their difference. In the screen versions of these tales, the dwarfs all dress alike in cute costumes (note the bright orange faces of the Oompa Loompas). Without a sense of the dwarfs’ individuality, viewers are prevented from recognizing them as living, breathing human subjects. Dwarfs are de-individualized by the virtually identical costumes, wigs and makeup, and any particular identity becomes lost. They become essentialized in subservient roles, meaning that in the public imagination, the essence of the dwarf moves to one that is patronizingly dressed in a cute, strange or threatening costume, with a high-pitched voice and little intelligence. Is it any wonder that, according to Betty Adelson, “among the daunting obstacles that all dwarfs face are omnipresent stares, comments, and often ridicule”¹⁷⁵ in addition to heightism?

¹⁷⁶ Betty M. Adelson, “Art,” *The Lives of Dwarfs: Their Journey from Public Curiosity Toward Social Liberation* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005) 139.

such as the canonical *Las Meninas* (1656) by Diego Velázquez, dwarfs were strategically placed to serve “as foils to set off the grandeur and magnificence of their benefactors” (Appendix: Figure 44).¹⁷⁷ The painting shows a large room in the Madrid palace of King Philip IV of Spain, and presents several figures, most identifiable from the Spanish court. The Infanta Margarita is surrounded by her entourage, including chaperone, maids of honor, bodyguard, two dwarfs, and a dog. Just behind them, Velázquez portrays himself working on a large canvas. The painting represents the oldest mode of visualizing the dwarf, the “wondrous” genre that capitalizes on extreme physical difference, particularly, miniaturization, in order to elicit amazement. By contrast with average-sized children and adults, or with “animal pets who were their rivals,”¹⁷⁸ the diminutive scale of the dwarf was defined for their master’s attention and amusement. This is a condition that still persists in visual culture today. In addition, Infanta Margarita is placed in the center of the painting, while the dwarf and the dog are at the side. This indicates hierarchy of status and importance.¹⁷⁹

In further tracing how *Las Meninas*’ “wondrous” portrayal of dwarfs evolves into the modern era, the sideshow looms especially important. For example, a black and white photograph from a 1930s sideshow book depicts both an over-sized and miniaturized body side by side (Appendix: Figure 45).¹⁸⁰ They both stand in front of what looks like a circus tent. The dwarf man sits between

¹⁷⁷ Leslie A. Fiedler “Dwarfs: Changing the Image,” *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978) 70.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁷⁹ For more information, see Michael Davidson, “The Rage of Caliban: Disabling Bodies in Modernist Aesthetics,” in *Modernism/modernity*, Volume 22, No. 4 (November 2015): 609-25.

¹⁸⁰ Sourced at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, WI.

the legs of the giant figure, his stature falling half-way up the giant's legs, to emphasize the contrasting size between the bodies. Both stand with hands at hips, looking proud and confident to show off their bodies. In her book, *Extraordinary Bodies*, Garland-Thomson's caption for the image reads, "By juxtaposing the very large with the very small, freak exhibitions created wondrous giants and midgets."¹⁸¹ Another example, although this time using the "extreme" form of the "giant" can be seen in the 1979 Diane Arbus photograph, *A Jewish Giant at home with his parents in the Bronx, N.Y.C* (1979) (Appendix: Figure 46). The enormous man's parents stand next to him in their family home to emphasize the difference in stature.¹⁸² The three people in the image are confined to the small living room, to further accentuate the son's "freaky" large size. The mother and father, half his size, peer up at the son, almost afraid, as he looks down on them, shoulders hunched. It is an odd juxtaposition, as the giant seems out-of-place beside them, a foreign, intimidating body that looks awkward.¹⁸³ This trope of displaying extreme body-size difference side by side persisted for many decades, and continues until the contemporary moment. The spatial gap created between bodies here was meant to objectify the bodies of the dwarf and the giant, and to titillate for entertainment, but in the work of Swanson and Walker, a more critical focus

¹⁸¹ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson "Theorizing Disability: Feminist Theory, the Body, and the Disabled Figure" in *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹⁸² Leslie A. Fiedler *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978); Betty M. Adelson, "Art," *The Lives of Dwarfs: Their Journey from Public Curiosity Toward Social Liberation* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005) 139; and Ann Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

¹⁸³ For an interesting account of Arbus' work in relation to disability, see this essay: Frederick Gross, "Madness, Disability and the 'Untitled' Series," *Diane Arbus' 1960s: Auguries of Experience* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012) 133-156.

on this spatial gap in scale difference becomes an empowering metrics, as the reader will learn within the upcoming paragraphs.

Other portrayals in a contentious art history often showcase the dwarf in one of two tropes: the dwarf as exotic nude, or dwarf as circus clown or performer, which I discussed in some detail in the Introduction through Arbus and Fellig's photographic depictions. Adelson says that a "remarkable number of photographs have been of clowns, reinforcing the image of dwarfs as clowns in the minds of the public."¹⁸⁴ The two images that Adelson examines include Mary Ellen Mark's photograph, *Twin Brothers Tulsi and Basant (Great Famous Circus, Calcutta, India)*, (1989) and Bruce Davidson's *Jimmy the Clown* (1958) (Appendix: Figures 47-48). In both of these photographs, the viewer will see the dwarf on the circus grounds, in what looks like grim conditions. In the Marks photo, twin dwarfs are dressed up in gorilla costumes, a device used by the circus to emphasize the dwarf's animal-like status in the community, and to accentuate their historically-subservient role as entertainers and laughing stock. One twin has taken the head-piece off, and stares back at the viewer with a dejected expression, while the other brother stands off to his side in full garb, head-piece and all. Adelson goes on to describe Marks' experiences capturing images of the twin brothers and their circus colleagues, which she cites as being one of the best experiences of her career. Marks also talks of the beauty and ugliness to be found in the circus, and that she wanted to demonstrate to viewers that these circus characters are victims by portraying them in a sympathetic, caring light. While the

¹⁸⁴ Betty Adelson "Art" in *The Lives of Dwarfs: Their Journey from Public Curiosity toward Social Liberation* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 167.

effect of the oppositional gaze that one of the twin brothers brandishes is important to Marks' strategy, does this offset the context in which the image is shown, ie. that of the circus? While the viewer may sympathize with the angry dwarf in the circus, the viewer may also understand that the dwarf is perpetually confined to the circus, distinguishing pathology from normalcy, and keeping the freak at a distinct distance from the so-called average subject. A remarkable similarity in composition may be detected in Bruce Davidson's image of *Jimmy the Clown* (1958), who inhales a cigarette with one hand, while gripping a bunch of wilting roses in the other. While Jimmy does not look back at the viewer in protest regarding his glum circumstances, as demonstrated in the Marks photo, he does gaze off into the distance, his facial expression bearing antithetical traces of any stereotypical qualities attributed to the merry comportment of a clown. Like the guerilla twins, Jimmy is alone, and his exaggerated clown make-up only serves to accentuate his sadness, marking a too-easy transition of his character portrayal into his real-life role as a servant to mockery and jest.

In a contemporary art context, in the performance piece named *The Midget Gallery Goes to Frieze*, (2006), by prominent Polish artist Katarzyna Kozyra, five "midgets" with signs and mini-projection screens attached to their backs, who wear matching "munchkin-esque," traditional Polish folk costumes, attempt to squat within an exclusive art fair in Regents Park, London to sell "real art" (Figures 49-50).¹⁸⁵ "Midget" is generally considered an offensive word by people of short stature and also within the LPA. Additionally, the word recalls putting

¹⁸⁵ Katarzyna Kozyra, *The Midget Gallery: A Guide to the Art System and Art Market*, ed. The Midgets and Hanna Wroblewska (Warsaw: Studio Blok, 2009).

little people on display and hence associations with the traditional “freak show.”¹⁸⁶ While Kozyra has developed a practice based on issues of identity, human nature and transgression, all within an important framework of controversy and confrontation, I fault her ethical choices within this performance. *The Midget Gallery* attempts to critique power within the art world, and I appreciate her struggles, but it positions short statured people in a retrograde manner. Ultimately her use of short-statured people as props is exploitative – she garners controversy and attention by infiltrating her “unusual protestors” into an art fair. Such a representational strategy perpetuates the notion of atypical bodies as untoward outsiders. The artist wields this exploitation at the Frieze Art Fair, considered to be one of the most prestigious, high-profile events in the contemporary art world. What’s more, making a spectacle of the dwarf body occurs at an acute level of exposure, which is highly damaging for artists who identify as disabled and seek respect and equal opportunity in this same art world infrastructure.

In their strategies of re-directing the gaze of the viewer, privileging the dwarf subject, and more generally re-framing depictions of the short statured embodiment through an encounter with “scale choreopolitics,” I suggest that Swanson and Walker significantly depart from these stigmatized representations in art history. This is because the viewer will be made more aware of the

¹⁸⁶ The following excerpt from the LPA website explains why “midget” is an offensive word: “In some circles, a midget is the term used for a proportionate dwarf. However, the term has fallen into disfavor and is considered offensive by most people of short stature. The term dates back to 1865, the height of the “freak show” era, and was generally applied only to short-statured persons who were displayed for public amusement, which is why it is considered so unacceptable today. Such terms as dwarf, little person, LP, and person of short stature are all acceptable, but most people would rather be referred to by their name than by a label.” *Little People of America*. “Frequently Asked Questions.” 5 Mar 2012. <<http://www.lpaonline.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=84634>>.

psychology of the dwarf, as a means to encourage the compassionate, empathetic involvement of the viewer, as opposed to attracting a historically prevalent morbid and reductive curiosity. Art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau says that there is an important duality in the ethics and politics of photographic criticism especially, where an insider position might convey a more personal involvement in the “truth” of the subject matter, as opposed to an outsider perspective that might convey a detached observation of subject matter, which is treated as mere object and spectacle.¹⁸⁷ Troublesome photographer/subject relationships have often left behind traces of controversy around power, control and moral and ethical responsibility, leading to stigmatization of the subject at hand. If I am to use Solomon-Godeau’s duality theory as a jumping-off point, then I’d like to trace a distinctive, more complex choreopolitics at the hands of the dwarf artists discussed in this chapter, where a new discourse around intersectional identity and complex embodiment can be found. If we examine the power and agency held by Gil (discussed in the Introduction), Swanson and Walker, viewers may come upon different perceptions of dwarfism that have received scant attention in art history and criticism. These readings may shed light on, in Solomon-Godeau’s words, the “inside” of the dwarf, and certainly their spatiality.¹⁸⁸ The viewer may come to know the dwarf differently through their revealing encounters with other bodies, objects, surfaces, and architectures and through an oppositional gaze, which cannot otherwise be understood from a non-dwarf perspective.

¹⁸⁷ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Inside/Out” in *Public Information: Desire, Disaster, Document* (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1994).

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Throughout my discussions of the work of Laura Swanson and Corban Walker, I will reference other artists represented in various periods of art history who were also invested in forms of spatial politics as it intersects with bodies, performance, sculpture, and architecture, particularly Marcel Duchamp, Robert Morris, Marina Abramovic and Ulay, and Gordon Matta-Clark. I am especially interested in highlighting Matta-Clark's work in this chapter because his progressive and radical architectural installations resonate with Swanson and Walker: each of the three artists demonstrates(-ed) a commitment to activism through spatial experiences in the built environment. Matta-Clark's famous "cuts" to abandoned buildings have been described by art historian Pamela M. Lee as "violent" and even as a "virtual dismemberment of the human body."¹⁸⁹ The artist was trying to confront the logic of both artistic and architectural production by breaking it apart, literally and also conceptually, but he was also trying to get his audience and his viewers to physically and spatially engage with the innards of a building in kinaesthetic ways, much like Swanson and particularly Walker. Through the "ocular" cuts that Matta-Clark created in these dilapidated buildings, that caused "dramatic shifts in scale and [a] vertiginous mode of address," he was able to destabilize a typical ostensible "aesthetic" experience.¹⁹⁰ As I will demonstrate in my analyses, the work of Swanson and Walker follow suit in this intention to destabilize a certain viewing position, however, in the case of Walker, he cleverly bases this experience by drawing on the scale of his own body with

¹⁸⁹ Pamela M. Lee, "On Matta-Clark's "Violence"; Or, What is a "Phenomenology of the Sublime?" in *Object to be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000), 114.

¹⁹⁰ Pamela M. Lee, "Introduction: Gordon Matta-Clark and the Question of "Work"" in *Object to be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000), xiv.

dwarfism. One might also describe Walker's installations as violent, for he aims to cause adjustment and even discomfort to the viewer's corpus as he or she witnesses his work. Certainly, as the reader will learn, both Swanson and Walker utilize the Matta-Clark-like splitting, cutting, dissecting actions to similar effect, in their bid to reorient perspective and the standard nature of looking and experiencing space. I hope to build on the legacies of artists like Matta-Clark by illustrating how Swanson and Walker expand, complicate and deploy the work of generations of artists before then, by especially invoking a "scale choreopolitics." Ultimately, I will suggest that the disability aesthetics - and geography - that the artists lay out in this chapter is one that sets an important new agenda within contemporary art practices and architectures, where their unique user perspectives of space should be applied to, as Aimi Hamraie puts it, "a theory of body-environment relations focused on social justice."¹⁹¹

I also want to continue to acknowledge the complexity of the artists relationship with "identity politics," particularly with the word disability. They're interested in moving beyond the label without being overly didactic or political in their intent. As Walker outlines:

"My work is not so much categorized in that way [in terms of disability] . . . it's kind of developing in a way that's *beyond* . . . and it's releasing into other fields . . . it isn't really about trying to break the ceiling. [The work] is very personal to me in terms of who I am and how I'm recognized and how or where . . . I perceive what's happening in this building or in or around me. But I don't necessarily just confine it to . . . my disability. I like to keep it open

¹⁹¹ Aimi Hamraie, "Designing Collective Access: A Feminist Disability Theory of Universal Design." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 4. 2013, Special Issue: Improving Feminist Philosophy and Theory By Taking Account of Disability. <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3871/3411> Accessed October 28, 2013

. . . this is really about showing a good piece of work.¹⁹² It's not so much about I'm trying to make a point or something."¹⁹³

Building on this, Swanson says:

"I would say that my work is less about myself and my experiences and more about the way that people engage with me. So it is presenting my body and putting it out there and saying "This is my height," or "This is my height in relation to somebody else's." But it's also really pointing at the fact and trying to engage the viewer into telling them that I know that these are their thoughts when encountering me or encountering difference, and what can we do to get *beyond* that?"¹⁹⁴

Walker's and Swanson's comments point to many similarities, as they each want to move beyond the labels, but they strategize differently: Walker is taking a direction that is trying to "release into other fields," while Swanson is "putting it out there" in a more confrontational way, as the reader will learn in the upcoming paragraphs.

To Conceal is to Reveal: Body-Object-Relations in the work of Laura

Swanson

Laura Swanson is a Korean-American artist whose practice has been influenced heavily by her everyday experiences as a short-statured person with achondroplasia, which is the most common form of dwarfism. Over the past decade, New York-based Swanson has become known for her examination of the behavior of looking at physical difference and dwarfism, working across various

¹⁹² British artist Yinka Shonibare has said the exact same thing. See Yinka Shonibare, "Whilst It Might Be Desirable to Have a Named Category . . .," *Parallel Lines Journal*, In the Ghetto, ed. Aaron Williamson, 2011, 5 Mar 2012 <<http://www.parallellinesjournal.com/>>

¹⁹³ Corban Walker, Personal interview, Venice, Italy, 2 June 2011.

¹⁹⁴ Laura Swanson, Interview with Amanda Cachia, Sept 19, 2011

media including drawing, installation, photography, and sculpture. Four feet tall in stature, the artist often depicts herself in both inviting and disrupting portraits, where she attempts to conceal herself in order to simultaneously resist and call attention to the viewer's gaze. Swanson's work confronts and twists the relationship between subject and viewer to question bias toward the sameness and size of bodies, expectations of portraiture, histories of looking at difference, and assumptions when encountering people with disabilities in everyday life. In the artist's practice, where she aims to resist reductive meanings stereotypically associated with representations of people with dwarfism in art history, photography, and popular culture. Her work can also be framed within a history and theory of looking and the oppositional gaze, which I claim in this chapter is a form of "scale choreopolitics" as it pertains to the dynamic spatial and optical interplay of looking back and forth. The act of looking from the dwarf perspective using the head, the eyes and the directional movement of the body is tied into my unique definition of "scale choreopolitics" and movement in the upcoming analyses of Swanson's work.¹⁹⁵ The complex choreography of the oppositional gaze, first put forward by critical race theorist and activist bell hooks, is where the traditionally passive marginalized subject, who is objectified under a white, male gaze will instead return that gaze to claim agency.¹⁹⁶ Rosemarie Garland-

¹⁹⁵ Many of the upcoming works to be discussed were included in a solo exhibition of work by Swanson that I had curated entitled *Resistance* as part of the ReelAbilities Film Festival at the Jewish Community Center in New York in Winter 2016. The choreographic act of looking and pivoting to look was exacerbated by how the work was displayed in this project, as it was hung at an average-sized height on the wall, making it completely inaccessible for people with dwarfism, who were part of the target audience for the show and so had to strain their necks to see the work properly. Given that the gallery were legitimately concerned about children touching the work owing to its location in a public hallway, the onus was on the gallery, curator and artist to come up with an alternative, especially in the context of a disability film festival.

¹⁹⁶ Bell Hooks, "The Oppositional gaze: Black female spectators" in *Black looks: Race and representation*, Boston: South End Press, 1992.

Thomson has also focused on the power of the gaze, particularly as it is oppressively directed towards disabled bodies.¹⁹⁷ Swanson's work offers a visual play on the complexities of redirecting this gaze. By continuing to conceal her body to the viewer, Laura Swanson's humorous and poignant works in *Resistance* question our habits and motives behind looking at difference.

Anti-Self-Portraits (2005-2008), is the first in Swanson's portrait series that begins to grapple with the complexity of the gaze (Appendix: Figures 51-54). In each photograph, the artist has partially obscured or covered over her face and body in different domestic scenes, denying permission for the viewer to make eye contact, but also to shield and protect Swanson herself. Her attempt to hide her body is paradoxically humorous and poignant. By conspicuously denying her identity to the viewer, Swanson's photographs go beyond an examination of representation in portraiture by questioning the desires behind wanting to look at difference. In each image, the artist performs her first choreopolitical move by obscuring or covering over her face, drawing attention to the fact that she is denying something from her viewers, namely, an ability to make direct eye contact and study the atypical features of her face. In one photograph, we see her standing in a hallway, almost completely covered from head to thigh by a large brown coat attached to a coat hook on a wall. In another, a large, red-and-white-checked bedroom pillow covers her entire body as she sits on a bed. In what has become one of the artist's most iconic images to date, we also see her face and upper torso covered by shaving cream as she rests in a bathtub in another

¹⁹⁷ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How we look*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

photograph. Adding to the complexity of how her body engages with objects, in another photograph, we also see Swanson's face and neck shielded by an album cover of a 1960s female singer, as she stands in a living room. Swanson calls these her "faceless portraits" or "anti-self portraits" where she wants to hide in plain sight. Through these images, Swanson counters the long history of exploitation of people with marginalized bodies to be looked upon as a human curiosity. She states that *Anti-Self Portraits* "is a response to the problematic images that [invite the public] to gawk at otherness – images that continue to stigmatize many groups of people."¹⁹⁸ The artist denies her identity through ambulatory concealment and thus questions the conventions and expectations of portraiture that typically allow the viewer to gaze upon the open face of a posed sitter. She does this through humorous and theatrical staging of her body as it engages with various objects, quickly dismissing the suggestion that her body might be passive in these images. *Anti-Self-Portraits* is actually the antithesis of this, as Swanson performs her body in rather inviting contexts and guises in order to playfully control the exchange of looking. For this reason, according to Kelly Inouye, Swanson is in fact managing to reveal an "inside." Swanson may be desiring to hide, shield or protect herself from prying, gazing eyes, yet she actually reveals more about how she feels through her act of concealing, than if she had employed the common trope of the oppositional gaze. Inouye says, "it is simultaneously more and less revealing than most portraiture in what it tells us about her internal fears and fantasies, while never fully allowing us to see her. As

¹⁹⁸ Laura Swanson, *Mellon Creative Resident Interview: Laura Swanson*.
<http://blogs.haverford.edu/mellon/2013/09/10/lauraswanson/> Accessed November 18, 2013.

a result, we connect with her in a very personal way without even knowing who she is.”¹⁹⁹ The viewer is thus also invited to connect with her in an intimate way, without necessarily having to see her face.

Swanson’s empowering strategy in using make-shift masks to hide her identity and her facial expression from the viewer has been utilized throughout the history of photography, where we see countless images of the ostensible “other” wearing masks. The trope as choreographic object is evident in work ranging from Diane Arbus to the contemporary artists Joel Peter-Witkin and Danica Dakić. Millett-Gallant makes reference to Judith Butler’s theorizing on the use of masks, arguing that, in its varied choreographed routines, the “masked subjects invite, block, and mock the viewer’s gaze.”²⁰⁰ To put this in context, she discusses Arbus’ photograph entitled *Masked Woman in a Wheelchair* (1970), which features a woman sitting in her wheelchair (Appendix: Figure 55). The mask becomes more than just a costume piece, for it acts as a device for shielding the physiognomic information attached to viewing her face, therefore also deflecting reductive readings or associations of her countenance and her wheelchair-bound person. As Millett-Gallant says, “the face is considered the visual marker of who one is, and facial features are common targets of exaggeration and manipulation...”²⁰¹ The mask that this woman wears, in addition to the creative masks wielded by Swanson in her anti-self portraits, symbolize agency for the subject at hand, given they do much to prove that identity is fluid, dynamic and

¹⁹⁹ Kelly Inouye, “Selfless” at Mark Wolfe Contemporary Art, San Francisco, *SFAQ International Arts and Culture*, <http://www.sfaqonline.com/2013/06/selfless-at-mark-wolfe-contemporary-art-san-francisco/>. Accessed November 18, 2013

²⁰⁰ Ann Millett-Gallant, “Exceeding the Frame” in *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 137.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

unpredictable, and that we cannot rely on the simple judgement of a facial expression, or even an empowering oppositional gaze. Just as Arbus' *Masked Woman in a Wheelchair* takes the oppositional gaze one step further by gazing back at the viewer in hiding, so too does Swanson's performative and bodily acts reverse the normal tropes of portraiture.

I will add that Danica Dakić's video, *Isola Bella* (2007-2008) also works in similar ways in respect to the trope of the mask. In this video, the artist worked with the residents of a facility for the mentally and physically disabled in a town outside of Sarajevo. Enlisting the residents as participants, they wear Victorian paper masks, which range from Marie Antoinette to Carmen Miranda to Caesar to a Native American chief, thus allowing them to hide their real identities, where they can role-play and re-invent themselves (Appendix: Figure 56).

The mask can also be wielded by a photographer in yet even more complicated ways. For instance, in *Dwarf from Naples* (2006) by Joel Peter-Witkin, the artist has presented the viewer with a nude portrait of a female dwarf with achondroplasia who wears a white-cloth, elephant-like mask (Appendix: Figure 57). She wears long black gloves on her arms, and holds up a short wand or conductor-style baton, and stands in a studio supported by other props, such as a skeleton head lying on its side, and groupings of vegetables suspended from the ceiling. Her posture and her body language might speak to the dwarf's erotic mastery over her environment and her own atypical corpus, which on the one hand, might be construed as empowering. On the other hand, by masking her face, Peter-Witkin is providing the viewer with uncensored choreographic viewing

pleasure of the dwarf's nude form, free of guilt in what normally would entail making an affective connection based on the details of a facial expression. The photographer precariously straddles between bestowing agency on his subject, and yet consigning her to the same voyeuristic, normative gaze, as many others have done before him.

In *Uniforms* (2014-2015), a series of drawings, portraits, and life-sized mannequin figures, Swanson offers a different approach to Witkin (Appendix: Figures 58-64). She is depicted wearing seven uniforms altered to fit her body. The artist's choice of uniforms traditionally fully cover the body for functional reasons or cultural significance and they include garments for a fencer, welder, shaker, plague doctor, and beekeeper, in addition to a burqa and all-black apparel covering head to toe, which is what one would conventionally wear in a time of mourning in Western social and cultural contexts. She chose to dress in these specific uniforms as they offered this maximum coverage of her body, which illustrates the desire for ultimate privacy and agency. Through *Uniforms*, Swanson examines whether a reduction in scale can transform iconic uniforms into visual amusement when worn by a body with dwarfism. She asks, "In their respective contexts, like an adult male welding in a workshop or an adult woman wearing a black dress and veil at a funeral, would anyone question the utilitarian or cultural value of their uniforms? So if a short-statured adult, such as one with dwarfism, was seen wearing the same uniforms, does it transform into a humorous

costume?”²⁰² Swanson finds it compelling that a simple shift of scale could change something from serious and significant to entertaining and illogical.

While Swanson’s uniformed mannequins are set up on pedestals against a standard white gallery wall, or float in two-dimensional space as drawings on white paper, the photographs of the artist dressed in these same uniforms are a striking contrast. This theatrical series experiments with idealistic clichés found in portraiture, most often seen in editorials and in commercial promotion, or taken for special occasions including the high school senior portrait. Referencing both contemporary portraits and Romantic-era paintings of a figure set against a dramatic landscape, Swanson digitally composited herself wearing the uniforms in front of images she found on Google by searching for “epic landscapes.” By appropriating these visual conventions in the *Uniforms* portraits, she examines the ways in which art history, photography, and popular culture have established idealistic notions (such as beauty, power, and prominence) as the standard practice in portraiture. Swanson further complicates the desires and expectations of the portrait by depicting her own idealized reality – one in which an atypical body is protected from the gaze through the atypical strategy of wearing uniforms that shield the entire body.

In Swanson’s latest work, *Rare Sight* (2016), the artist utilizes another choreographic object - “smart privacy glass” technology, which turns glass from transparent form into opaque. The glass has been used as part of the frame of a new self-portrait of the artist as she appears in her daily life and dressed in

²⁰² Laura Swanson interview with Amanda Cachia, 2015.

ordinary clothes. For the majority of the time, the technology of the glass has been adjusted to remain on the opaque setting, so that Swanson's portrait cannot be seen, but on several occasions throughout the day, her portrait will emerge and remain fully visible through the now-transparent glass for several minutes. She has timed the ratio of when the glass is opaque versus transparent according to the frequency and exposure an average-height person might have a random encounter with a person with dwarfism on the street. While this work continues Swanson's engagement with the dynamics of concealing and revealing, in this piece, she instead relies on the statistics of the rarity of encountering a person with dwarfism in everyday life for the so-called average person to dictate the occasion of the conceal/reveal choreographic moment. The title, *Rare Sight*, suggests that the odds of actually coming across a person with dwarfism are few and far between, and that this might point to why bodies with dwarfism continue to be subjected to staring, and other invasive optical behavior from strangers.

Swanson's continued interest in reframing the choreographic composition of people with dwarfism by using her own body fed into another previous series, *Hope, NY*, (2011-2015), which began as a personal collection of anti-selfies that she created for her friends and family on social media (Appendix: Figures 65-66). All of the images in this series were taken in places where the artist has lived, visited, or worked, as indicated by the title, which is a portmanteau-like expression combining her former and current residences of Hope, RI and New York, NY. She used aspects from *Anti-Self-Portraits* to amuse her friends and mock the "selfie" which has become a ubiquitous format of immediate self-

expression activated through our mobile phone culture. Art historian Derek Conrad Murray has said that the selfie is “popularly regarded as a shallow expression of online narcissism...yet it flourishes as one of the most effective outlets for self-definition.” By drawing on a critical history of feminist representational politics, Conrad Murray suggests that the selfie is in fact a “politically oppositional and aesthetic form of resistance.”²⁰³ In the case of *Hope, NY*, Swanson once again resists the conventions of portraiture by humorously undermining the present-day phenomenon of the selfie. We find resistance, certainly, but also in the somewhat loaded term, hope, as the title spells out. Through the agency that the “selfie” offers, Swanson attempts to evade prying eyes, yet once again, her act of concealment is a revealing one, and moves beyond the common trope of a straight-forward oppositional gaze that implies that making eye contact is essential in order for the oppositional gaze to be implemented and thus effective.

The other fascinating and critical component to Swanson’s *Hope NY* series is the very poignant demonstration of how Swanson’s body fits, or rather doesn’t fit into our public environment, namely the architecture of the public restroom. In six out of the 30 images that comprise the series, we see the reflection of Swanson’s forehead along the bottom of the bathroom mirror that comes in different shapes and sizes, and which all hang on a wall in various restrooms.²⁰⁴

Judging by the placement of where Swanson’s forehead meets the bottom edge of

²⁰³ Derek Conrad Murray, “Notes to self: the visual culture of selfies in the age of social media,” *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 2015, Vol. 18, No. 6, pp. 490-516.

²⁰⁴ Other short-statured artists are similarly creating photographs of their interactions with inaccessible mirrors in public restrooms, including Santiago Forero (on his website <http://santiagoforero.com>) and Claire Cunningham (on social media).

the mirror, the mirrors are obviously installed at a height that would be comfortable for an average-height person. But clearly the mirrors are not accessible to people like Swanson who are of short stature, or even children and people who use wheelchairs. In some of the images, we can barely make out the top of Swanson's head and hair, while in others, the mirrors are lower, as we can see the top half of Swanson's face, where her eyes look down as we assume she is washing her hands at the sink. The images are clever and humorous, but the repetitious nature of seeing Swanson's head essentially cut in half contributes to my argument and drives home her point, which maintains that through concealing, Swanson reveals. In other words, through the repetition of Swanson's pose as it engages with the mirror in the restroom in various public places and spaces, she imposes a profound message that is impossible to ignore. These works are very different to the *Anti-Self Portraits*, because Swanson is not using an independent object to cover over her face. Here, even though these images are just as carefully staged as her previous series, it is the everyday unaltered built environment in *Hope NY*, which reveals Swanson's tautology of body-object-relations.

We come to understand that Swanson's physical and spatial relationship with the built environment is one that involves barriers and interruptions. It is only a portion of Swanson's body that is literally and visually revealed, but the portion that remains hidden from our eye – the rest of Swanson's face and her upper torso, which is what we would expect to see reflected back to us if the body belonged to an average-height body, is concealed. This concealment is not owing

to Swanson's actions - in fact Swanson had no choice in the matter, given how the architectures of restrooms and their accompanying decors are designed with little consideration for how these objects might be made accessible to a greater diversity of body shapes and sizes. The irony to the public restroom as a site of investigation by Swanson is that owing to the ADA in 1990, restrooms were legally obligated to design public toilet cubicles that were spacious enough to accommodate a person in a wheelchair. One would then assume that if a toilet cubicle was explicitly made to be ADA-accessible, then surely mirrors in this space would follow suit.²⁰⁵

Here I want to make a connection between Swanson's anti-selfies and the work of Gordon Matta-Clark. In particular, Matta-Clark's *Conical Intersect*, 1975 shares powerful visual characteristics with Swanson's *Hope NY*, as splitting and fragmentation in architecture dominate across the two scenes (Appendix: Figure 67). Matta-Clark's work, known as "building cuts," focuses on how the interiors and exteriors of domestic and public architecture can literally be broken down, where he chainsawed holes, cuts, and craters into walls, ceilings and floors so that inside and outside could become folded into one seamless zone of perception.

This is especially the case with *Conical Intersect*. Matta-Clark was granted

²⁰⁵ Similarly and interestingly, and this time from a male dwarf perspective, in photographer Ricardo Gil's *Restroom Portrait*, the artist looks back into the camera in an oppositional gaze as he stands next to a male urinal that is too high for him, given his 3'9" stature (Appendix: Figure 68). Gil literally cannot reach his penis into the urinal so he can urinate. The template for urban design is based on the ostensible "average" height of a person who is six feet all, thus this image reminds us of the many inaccessible features in the environment that prohibit the full and equal participation of dwarfs. Gil plays with a type of three-way oppositional gaze, where the viewer will look at Gil, the urinal and back at Gil again. Gil's gaze seems to be saying, "Look at this ridiculous situation!" *Hope NY* also makes a wonderful connection Gil's photographs discussed in the Introduction, where he instead and also violently cuts the bodies of average-height people in half in order to demonstrate his particular view of the world from the perspective of his 3'9" stature. While Swanson illustrates bias embedded in our built environment through the somewhat violent "cuts" across her head, Gil demonstrates the reality of his viewing position. A conjoining of Swanson's head and Gil's torsos activates a playful show and tell between the two artists that says much about a unique dwarf "choreopolitics."

permission to cut spherical cones into a disused building in Paris next to the Centre Pompidou as part of the ninth Paris Biennale. The artist cut a torque of spiral knots through two buildings that were connected in the abandoned space given over to his creative project, and he used hammers, chisels, and bow saws to cut the building walls, floors and ceiling.²⁰⁶ The art historian Pamela M. Lee talks of how Matta-Clarks's cuts created a sense of confusion in the architectural orientation of the space and it was "interrupted to such degree that even a sense of vertigo was produced for the observer inside the building."²⁰⁷ All of these ideas are very important if we apply them to Swanson's *Hope NY* series, where we see her body cut off by the inaccessible height of public architecture for her dwarf stature. While Matta-Clark disrupts architecture through mark-making, creating a disrupted embodied sense of space, movement and opticality for an able-bodied viewer, Swanson's work points out that her embodied existence (body, vision and hearing) is always already disrupted by architecture and space on a daily basis, and this is part of her lived experience with disability. Swanson makes these architectural and so corporeal cuts apparent through her photographs, which may not have been noticed before by visitors who go to bathrooms and take their ability to look into a mirror unrestricted for granted. It is very interesting that the conical shape that Matta-Clark bore into the building literally replicates a cone of vision and a reference to optics, which revealed his symbolic political message regarding the ability to make visible what was invisible before in public space,

²⁰⁶ Pamela M. Lee, "On the Holes of History," in *Object to be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (London and Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000), 171.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

and to consider how shifting material conditions continually effect the built environment. Matta-Clark creates a window or an opening, a large peep-hole, if you will, into the politics of space. Through Swanson's *Hope NY* project, demonstrating how her body is framed within public restroom facilities, we might discern that she too shares the same objectives as Matta-Clark.

TOGETHER together

In this section, I now turn to Swanson's sculpture and installation work to illustrate how she is contributing to a "scale chorepolitics." I will focus on *TOGETHER together*, where Swanson placed a series of three paired objects on display in the small space of the Radeke Garden at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum over a period of six months (Appendix: Figure 69). The objects included a pair of lampposts, a pair of ficus trees and a pair of garden carts. The series includes all three pairs of objects can be seen through the glass doors: the two carts are at the foreground, the two ficus trees in the center of the glass doors, and the two lampposts in the background. The next image is a detail of the lampposts. During the six-month period, viewers had opportunity to see the work through fall and winter only. People could see these objects only at a distance during certain times of the year through locked glass doors. Swanson also selected objects that she knew would match the design and style of the New England garden, giving the garden a historical feel, particularly manifested in the lampposts. Even though this is a three-part installation and must be considered as three parts of a larger whole, I am mostly interested in the ficus trees given the

analogy I would like to make between this work and *Imponderabilia*, which is a seminal performance piece by Marina Abramovic and Ulay from 1977.

So within this portion of Swanson's installation, to the left of the white wooden doorway stands a 4-foot ficus tree, while to the right of the doorway stands a 6-foot ficus tree. The base of each tree is placed inside a woven basket. A welcome mat covers the floor below them. The trees' leaves are sunlit, revealing many shades of green. The leaves and branches sprout from a central brown wooden stem that splits off in two directions at the base. Inside the doorway, and up a cracked marble step, one finds a closed glass door with a shiny brass handle and a horizontal strip of shiny brass on the threshold. Outside, on either far side of the trees are tall, white columns. The colonial-style building, composed of neat horizontal rows of red bricks, serves as a backdrop to the trees. The trees appear to be placed in an un-peopled, peaceful setting. The leaves show no sign of movement, no rustle from the wind. All is calm. It is only the welcome mat and the cracked marble step that convey a sign of human presence. The mat contains dirty markings from the soles of feet stepping up and down, back and forth, into and out of the building. I would like to direct the reader's attention to how Swanson has placed these unassuming ficus trees on either side of the doorway. Despite evidence of human movement between the trees, they are unassuming and draw little attention. Passersby probably don't even notice the trees at first glance.

This is quite unlike the iconic performance piece, *Imponderabilia*, by Marina Abramović & Ulay, which I will now use as a departure point for the ficus trees. In this work, the nude bodies of Ulay and Abramović stood face to face,

body to body, uncomfortably close, in a gallery doorway (Appendix: Figure 70).²⁰⁸ People were confronted with the choice of entering the museum through this doorway flanked by Ulay and Abramović's naked bodies. Then, if they did indeed decide to enter, they had to pass through these bodies and decide which way to face – either toward the male or the female. All of these actions were videotaped. *Imponderabilia* was a work intended to draw attention to the participants, as they inadvertently became part of the performance. Abramović and Ulay were interested in the reactions from the people, and in the decisions they made as they passed through these nude bodies. When nudity appears in public – an uncommon experience – it tends to produce unease. The artists capitalized on this notion by calling the work *Imponderabilia*. An imponderable is defined as a factor that is difficult or impossible to estimate or assess. The artists also left a text on the wall facing the entrance that read: “Imponderable. Such imponderable human factors as one's aesthetic sensitivity/the overriding importance of imponderables in determining human conduct.”²⁰⁹

The title also suggests how points of view can be undecidable. It is clear that in this piece, viewers were unsure how to react because there was a deviation from the usual etiquette in the museum space informed by a general consensus of what is considered “normal.” In an interesting choreopolitics, many visitors chose to face Abramović's nude body, possibly because women's bodies are somehow

²⁰⁸ The performance was originally held in a gallery in Bologna, Italy. It ran for approximately 60 minutes before it was shut down by police. For more information on this work, refer to Kristine Stiles, Klaus Biesenbach, Chrissie Iles *Marina Abramovic* (New York: Phaidon, 2008) and Klaus Biesenbach *Marina Abramovich: The Artist is Present* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art), 2010.

²⁰⁹ Rachel Douglas, “‘Imponderabilia,’ Marina Abramović & Ulay, 1977.” *Art 129. An Exploration of New Media*, 22 Feb 2011. Web blog. 20 Feb 2012. <<http://artonetwenty-nine.blogspot.com/2011/02/imponderabilia-marina-abramovic-ulay.html>>

less threatening than the nude male body. Visitors passed through the bodies quickly, avoided eye contact with the artists and rarely looked back after passing through. This study of public reaction to an unusual positioning of bodies exposed how people's social reactions are ingrained. These instincts also shape the people who enter because their decisions define their own personas, or at least define who they appear to be. While many see this work as the staging of sexual difference, the artists considered it a "negation of the general idea of man and woman in an effort to create a more complicated notion of sexual difference."²¹⁰

Similarly, Swanson's installation *TOGETHER together* complicates the notion of scale. But it is important to acknowledge the first obvious critical difference between the two works. While *Imponderabilia* uses actual human bodies, the different heights of the ficus trees (one 4' and the other 6') represent different versions of reality as they stand in for the representation of Swanson's dwarf body of 4' in juxtaposition with the body of her "average-height" partner.²¹¹ While Abramović and Ulay's performance was about conventions around nudity, Swanson's work is about the conventions around stature. Just as people felt nervous, embarrassed and anxious in dealing with the nude bodies of *Imponderabilia*, similarly, people react awkwardly when it comes to looking at bodies of atypical size. Just as people may behave in one way toward the front of a female nude body and another way toward the front of a male nude body, they react in one way toward a body that is tall, within "average" adult range, and

²¹⁰ Kristine Stiles, Klaus Biesenbach and, Chrissie Iles, *Abramović* (New York: Phaidon, 2008) 76.

²¹¹ Trees (and lampposts and lampstands) easily lend themselves to the human form. The tree, a living organism, in appearance so closely resembling the human figure, is a central element in Guisepppe Penone's work. Many of the procedures he adopts in creating his works are based on the act of relating different entities and forces, hence on traces or memories of the contacts between them.

another way to a body with dwarfism. Upon interaction with the dwarf body, people do not know where to choreographically look – they avert their gaze, or simply stare.

But because the trees are objects and not bodies, the work by Swanson does something different than Abramović's and Ulay's. *TOGETHER together* functions to resist representation. Typically, people would barely notice the unassuming trees suggestive of a “normal” and dwarf body, as they pass through the door, in and out between garden and museum, unlike noticing the impossible-to-overlook nude bodies that must be passed in *Imponderabilia*. The trees (and lampposts and carts) do not announce themselves as art works, so only after reading the curatorial text for *TOGETHER together* does a viewer's response emerge. On second glance, the viewer will look at the trees and pick up on the difference in size and one might assume that the smaller, 4' tree is a younger, undeveloped tree, a seedling, while the taller, 6' tree is full-grown. Quickly visitors learn that these trees mimic the bodies of two adults of different stature.

So while Swanson could have done the same thing as Abramović and Ulay, using the figure to make her point, she chooses instead to make the viewer slowly aware of biases toward size, symmetry and asymmetry using these found objects. Our biases are revealed to be absurd. People may ask questions about this installation, such as, “Why would someone buy two ficus trees of different sizes?” Even when it comes to objects, we are compelled to want to keep them symmetrical. But Swanson answers with another question: “Why can't we have asymmetrical trees (or lampposts or carts)?” Further, her work moves beyond

Imponderabilia's articulation or de-articulation of sexual difference. Ulay's and Abramović's bodies still both conform to idealistic notions of perfect, average bodies: identical in so-called average height, white and thin. On the other hand, Swanson questions the perfection of the body by challenging a sense of symmetry – bodies may not be identical in height, or even weight and skin color.

In turn, the ficus trees also assume a physical relationship. The short tree and the tall tree stand proximate, side by side. The title of Swanson's piece, *TOGETHER together*, is based on what people say when looking at Swanson and her partner walking down the street or when meeting them side by side for the first time. "Oh, are you two *together* together?" (This is an embedded insult, meaning, "Oh, are you two in a relationship?") Often it surprises people that two differently sized bodies could be involved in a romantic relationship. Note that Swanson has put the first word in capital letters, and the second word in lowercase. The capital letters for the first word represents the emphasis on the word being vocalized more slowly or more loudly, but they also could suggest scale – big letters and small letters, side by side, like the ficus trees, lampposts and garden carts. Swanson transforms the insult.

Even further, people make assumptions of how two people should look when they're in a relationship. In *Imponderabilia*, we can observe that Abramović and Ulay's faces are close to one another. They "naturally" and choreographically line up and approximately see "eye to eye." This is symmetry. But Swanson also disrupts this notion. In a romantic and sexual relationship between partners of differing scales, eyes and other body parts may not meet squarely at the same

height when they are standing, but why can't eyes look directly into a partner's breasts and up at the face, or vice versa, facing a penis and looking up to meet the gaze? I've heard countless stories from my male dwarf friends who have danced with average-height women at discos and parties where their faces are at the level of the breasts. None of them complained! Asymmetrical bodies also bring into question the possibility of asymmetrical genitals. To be explicit, Swanson's pairing stirs up taboo questions that people would love to ask, but social etiquette stops them from doing so: "How do two differently sized bodies have sex?" Or "How can their genitals reach, or even fit?" Or more curiously, "What would it be like to have sex with a little person?"

Why is considering the differently sized trees in such contrast to considering bodies? Can the example of the ficus trees be carried over to human bodies, encouraging us to look beyond the associations of the dwarf body as strangely "other"? Instead, looking at the ficus trees, we realize that even though they are of different scale, they are fundamentally the same. The trees remove our trained eyes from bodies, where perceptions are ingrained, to enable us to see pathways for reassessing our assumptions.

The act of looking at Swanson's installation places certain physical and conceptual demands on the viewer. First, viewers must be sensitive to the notion of anthropomorphism. In other words, they must bring certain notions with them to project onto the work and take from it. They need to be willing to undertake a process of metaphorizing, and through this, move into Swanson's political orbit. Even though Swanson's ficus trees are "normal," they are ever-so-slightly

anthropomorphized by means of minimal intervention: as mentioned, one 4' tree and one 6' tree. They have been placed on either side of the doorway, somewhat like caryatids. While the trees may seem less noticeable as they are similar to the greenery in the Radeke Garden, therein lies their power. Through their “common” character, they challenge the viewer to look at objects with a second glance – differently. Swanson says:

“I guess I’m just trying to see if people can notice the anthropomorphic relationships between these two objects, because I think what happens with people who have a different physical – whether it’s stature or whether it’s any kind of physical impairment – their bodies tend to be objectified, or their difference tends to be objectified. And so [I] was thinking about how people are objectified in their everyday life from just walking down the street. I was trying to see if I could, in a way, objectify these objects and add just the difference of height or the difference of size to these objects to get people to notice that these are kind of human in a way.”²¹²

Swanson’s work proves that objects can be objectified like humans. As I suggested earlier, people automatically and habitually purchase pairs of mirror-like objects for their gardens – “matching” or identical lampposts or chairs, for example.²¹³ The objects take on human qualities in that they are subjected to the same types of assumptions about symmetry that humans are. In sum, Swanson’s work contributes to a “scale choreopolitics” through both the dynamics of choreopolitical optical and corporeal movement, and with great humor and

²¹² Laura Swanson, Interview with Amanda Cachia, Sept 19, 2011

²¹³ This notion of mirroring has an interesting connection to Swanson’s *Hope NY* series, which she herself engages with inaccessible mirrors that reflect a disproportion in scale and a disruption of bodies, given Swanson’s forehead and face are literally cut in half.

poignancy, she questions our habits and motives behind looking at difference, along with our unquestioned desire for sameness, symmetry and proportion.

The Corban Rule: Rearticulating the Body in the Gallery

Mid-career, contemporary Irish artist Corban Walker's work often relates to architectural scale and spatial perception, utilizing industrial materials such as steel, aluminum and glass, drawing on minimalism to highlight different perspectives in relation to height and scale. Like Swanson, Walker also has achondroplasia. He is four feet tall and creates his sculpture stacks in direct proportion to his body using the "Corban Rule," a precise mathematical calculation he devised, wherein he uses his own height as measure of his art. Sarah Hanson writes, "Using his physical stature as a starting point, he multiplies and morphs the dimensions of his works to make manifest the normally invisible systems that govern our movements."²¹⁴ Walker says that while he isn't concerned with making direct representations of his own embodiment, he is engaged with creating formal experiments informed by it. In other words, he remakes his environment in proportion to his own measure. Walker thus often creates his own symbolic *Vitruvian Man* through his sculptural installations and this spurs viewers to think about the built environment in different terms. Walker's rule of four feet differs from da Vinci's rule of six feet because Walker's rule accounts for another scale and proportion in the physical anatomy. This suggests that da Vinci's six-

²¹⁴ Sarah P. Hanson "A Pavilion in the Making: Behind Ireland Representative Corban Walker's Destabilizing Venice Biennale Installation," *Modern Painter*, 1 June 2011, <http://205.234.169.45/news/story/37795/a-pavilion-in-the-making-behind...walkers-destabilizing-venice-biennale-installation/> Accessed June 26, 2011

foot rule as a standard measurement of human height is actually not standard at all. As Brian O’Doherty says, “Walker’s *Vitruvian Man* ends up questioning the spectator’s habits, conventions of viewing, and ultimately his or her self-image.”²¹⁵ Walker plays with scale and jumbles it. In Walker’s own words,

“A lot of the work is informed directly by how one enters a room, how one situates oneself with a space or how one approaches an object. I think that really comes from the direct contact I have with the spaces around me. How I fit into or don’t fit into places. Therefore a lot of the work involves realigning the viewer’s line of vision which otherwise may often be taken for granted. What I do through the work is offer an alternative sense of relationship, a frame of perception directed through my eye, as it were. By doing this you automatically turn things askew and create an unfamiliar environment out of something that was previously ordinary or mundane. Things may then take on an off-putting or disorienting aspect in relation to established norms or expectations.”²¹⁶

The word “askew” plays a key role in Walker’s work. Typically, the definition of “askew” means a position that is not straight or level, or wrong. I suggest that Walker is changing the meaning of the word askew so that “wrong” turns into “different,” and “unfamiliar” is disorienting because one is forced to look at objects, and therefore disabled bodies, in a new way. If askew is not straight, or level, what position can that be? From an etymological perspective, askew had origins with the wry or crooked eye, or even with drunkenness.²¹⁷ All these associations have a relationship with how our vision is altered and the outcome is seeing the outside world differently. This is the goal of Walker’s work.

²¹⁵ Brian O’Doherty, *Corban Walker: Irish Pavilion/Venice 2011* brochure, Culture Ireland/Arts Council, 2011.

²¹⁶ Corban Walker interview with Mick Wilson in *Corban Walker: 1994/1995/ 1996/ 1997* (Dublin: Dogbowl+Bones, 1997 n.p.

²¹⁷ Douglas Harper, “askew,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 10 Oct 2008, 4 Mar 2012 <http://www.etymonline.com>

For example, Walker has talked about how he tries to get viewers to bend, crouch, twist or turn as they encounter his works from new positions. In one of his first major installations, *Trapezoid* (1997), which was developed in the earlier stages of his career, the viewer will see several rows of stainless steel wire lines strung from one side of a gallery wall to the other, suspended approximately four feet above the ground (Appendix: Figures 71-72). Then upon walking to another section of the gallery, the lines will begin again, and repeat themselves, threading from one side of the room to the next, using the standard dimension of four feet as an elevation point from the ground, reaching up to the lowest row of the steel lines. Walker is using his height as a measuring point for the elevation of the lines, so that he is disrupting the average-height viewer's spatial flow as they walk through a gallery space. In other words, the average height is forced to duck, bend, or crouch under the lines in order to get past, as these lines block their normally five or six foot line of sight bound up inside their typically-scaled embodiment.²¹⁸ Through this, Walker provides a point of view that is atypical. The viewer has to bend down in this installation. Walker wants to focus on drawing people downwards, closer to the ground, into a dimension equivalent to the "Corban scale." As Walker is four feet tall, he usually has to crane his neck to look up at people's faces or reach up to shake someone's hand in his everyday reality, so through this work, he is reversing the physical choreographic power dynamics of bodies looking at one another, so that Walker literally brings people down to his level instead of the discomfort he feels in looking up all the time.

²¹⁸ <http://www.corbanwalker.com/> Accessed August 17, 2016

Robert J. Kruse says that the “‘staturization of space’ reinforces the dominant preference for able bodies of average height.”²¹⁹ So Walker wanted to capture a reversal of this staturization of a gallery space for visitors, through *Trapezoid*. As the name implies, the artist is hoping to ensnare the visitor into this throng of lines, disrupting their smooth path so that they are forced to consider an alternative perspective in viewing space at a different scale – a re-staturization, achieving spatial disorientation for the average height visitor.

Walker disembodies the gallery frame through this disruption in space by the effective use of lines, therein claiming spatial agency in a domain that usually privileges the average-height viewing position, where paintings are hung at a so-called universal and standard eye-level. Walker’s work might find nuance with art historian Rudolf Arnheim’s theories that gesture towards some of the consequences to emerge based on the fact that within visual situations, “the viewer creates a decisive center,” and thus this is an idealized viewing position that affects everything around him or her.²²⁰ How and what is seen by a viewer depends on their spatial position and their orientation towards an art object or event. For example, if a viewer is looking at a ceiling decoration, we might assume that they were positioned at a far distance to the work, looking up at it by titling their head, thereby having perhaps a detached experience of it, as Arnheim presupposes that distance decreases attraction. Arnheim goes on then to explain that an awkward contradiction may arise when this small ceiling decoration is

²¹⁹ Rober J. Kruse II, “Placing Little People: Dwarfism and the Geographies of Everyday Life” in *Towards Enabling Geographies: ‘Disabled’ Bodies and Minds in Society and Space* (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 2010, Kindle Editions.)

²²⁰ Rudolf Arnheim, “The Strongest Center and its Rivals” in *The Power of the Center: A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1982), 16.

painted to look as if it is a wall instead, creating an illusion. The viewer will then feel disoriented, because they are not looking head-on as they would look at a wall, but upwards, and may find an urge to correct or remedy the atypical viewing situation.²²¹

Arnheim then goes on to say that when paintings or objects are seen head-on within the vertical dimension, they are seen well because they are viewed at a comfortable distance. He says this comfort is disrupted when works of art are engaged along the horizontal plane, because “this is the dimension of most of our actions in space.”²²² If our feet “get in the way of our eyes,” it will cause a strange optical situation, because:

“the eyes are meant to look forward, to scan the environment in search of whatever shows up vertically as friend or foe. For the eyes to look down, the head or body has to bend, and even then the object underfoot cannot be viewed perpendicularly. It will be seen at an angle and therefore distorted, and that angle changes continuously as the person, engaged in his business, moves across the floor. The viewer’s eyes are too close to encompass and analyze any extended horizontal pattern as a whole. Different portions present themselves in the visual field as the viewer changes position.”²²³

Indeed, Arnheim’s discussion fits squarely within the realm of visual and optical sensations experienced by the dwarf, who is positioned at an alternative height from the average-height person and gazes upon different portions of the visual field in comparison to others. Arnheim also perfectly describes Walker’s strategy and therefore his spatial agency in *Trapezoid*, for Walker is already aware of the

²²¹ Ibid., 17.

²²² Ibid., 13.

²²³ Ibid.

spatial disorientation that ensues when one is forced to look downward, bend, crouch or twist in order to look upon a fixed object or move without visual or physical obstruction. By forcing his viewers to encounter some discomfort, or at least, temporary distortion, the viewer will come to learn and be reminded that the geography for disabled people is part of their daily reality, as distortion is encountered every day.

Arnheim's discussion and Walker's ontological and phenomenological artistic disruption of the white cube thoroughfare recalls a similar model set up in *First Papers of Surrealism* (1942), which was the exhibition organized by Andre Breton, for a gallery in New York. T.J. Demos argues that the exhibition was a "unique response to the avant-garde's geographical, political and historical displacement."²²⁴ The exhibition was infamous for Marcel Duchamp's use of string, which spanned the gallery in every direction, producing a space that hindered the viewer's ability to get up close to the paintings and view them (Appendix: Figure 73). Indeed, Duchamp was imposing a forceful hand, or as Demos calls it, an "ineluctable mediation between viewer and object."²²⁵ The string became a barrier, and in this act of confusion, a connection could be made with the geopolitical dislocation that could be felt during an era of wartime. Demos insists that this condition of displacement "suggests a new way to comprehend developments in installation art during the war years, different from conventional art-historical genealogies..." Installation was concerned with the meditation between objects, viewers and surrounding space, and placement,

²²⁴ Demos, T. J. "Duchamp's Labyrinth: First Papers of Surrealism" 1942. *October*, Vol. 97 (Summer, 2001), 94.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

location and contextualization now became wrapped up in the destabilizing forces of displacement.

Just as Walker seeks to think about how the work of installation can articulate and map an alternative navigation of the experience of complex embodiment, Demos asked, “How did the work of installation define, analyze, negotiate, or compensate for the condition of displacement” in that era?²²⁶ The writer continues to provide a historical context for the surrealist-based exhibition, suggesting that “homelessness” was already an important quality bound up with the movement, tied to oppositional politics that refused to think about the home as the primary site of ideology. It is here that the Surrealists attacked “normativity” in some ways, which was connected to capitalism, patriarchy and nationalism at that time. Surrealists therefore sought to attack the framed painting on a gallery wall, or, as demonstrated by the notorious lines of string in *First Papers of Surrealism*, to disrupt the frame of the gallery space itself. The installation became a site of disorganization and disorientation and an acknowledgement to the sensitivities of displacement, so that a new clarity might be achieved.

In Duchamp’s act of countering perspective with the immobilizing string, where the “lack of compositional and perspectival logic assaulted the visual mastery and centering functions associated with [normative] perspective... which is normally facilitated by frames,” I argue that this work provides a historical context in which to situate the work of Walker most powerfully. Duchamp’s installation was completely set up and reliant on the visitor’s physical and

²²⁶ Ibid., 95.

conceptual engagement with it; so too does Walker's work rely on a performative aspect of body participation, in order to make meaning and enact the spatial agency of dwarfism. Duchamp purposefully forced viewers to struggle to get to the art through the string, while Walker also physically interferes with – or alternately offers – opportunities for inhabiting bodily space differently. We may discern here a distinct “anti-architecture” taking place, or an effective spatial agency, connected to a choreopolitics of scale.

Demos reminds the viewer of space's neutrality. He associates the string with agency by distracting and rupturing reception. Through the lines of string or stainless steel, the ideal of the framed painting is now negated as there are now additional conceptual and multi-modal layers to consider. The viewer is forced to reflect on the physical context and “their own participation in the production or experience of any meaning in the encounter with art objects.”²²⁷ This is precisely the axis in which the work of Walker spins, as his work provides encounters with a public in order to remind them of the falsehood of the supposed neutral nature of gallery spaces. The aesthetics of disability, then, renders meaning through Walker's installations depending on the literal frames of view that the artist sets up within the gallery. The viewer, the object and the space are all related and especially, implicated, in this triad of meaning. Just like Duchamp's string in *First Papers of Surrealism*, the string used by Walker is enlarged to architectural proportions across this public spatial context, which comes to determine the institutionalizing and phenomenological forces of space. Duchamp displaced any

²²⁷ Ibid., 116.

notion of experiencing art “normatively,” and Walker also dispels normative encounters with space through the lens of dwarfism. Duchamp both negated the gallery’s traditional function and reinforced its presence as a readymade frame, while Walker shatters normative frameworks through dwarf subjectivity.

This is where Gordon Matta-Clark re-enters the conversation, this time through his iconic *Splitting* installation from 1974, which was where the artist used a chainsaw to cleave an abandoned two-storey house in New Jersey evenly into two parts (Appendix: Figure 74). The building was scheduled to be demolished, but not before Matta-Clark decided to turn it into a sculptural installation, where he could raise provocative questions around binaries such as interior versus exterior, public versus private and violence versus enlightenment.²²⁸ The last binary is especially interesting in application to Walker’s work, as we see that, as described in Chapter One, Walker is participating in the economy of suffering and retribution as he wants his audience members to forcibly adjust their movements through public space in *Trapezoid*, where they have to lean over or shimmy, limbo-style, underneath his rows of taut string to get from one side of the gallery space to the other (Appendix: Figure 75). Matta-Clark’s split in the New Jersey home is Walker’s split in the gallery space, cutting space in half in a physical and metaphorical act to claim agency in space. While Matta-Clark’s position as a non-disabled artist differs from Walker’s commentary on space from a dwarf perspective, both are connected through their architectural experimentations in shifting the dynamics of space and perception,

²²⁸ Pamela M. Lee, “Introduction: Gordon Matta-Clark and the Question of ‘Work’” in *Object to be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (London and Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000), x.

upending conventional pathways for movement. Such shifts – uncomfortable and even violent as they might be for the audience member, are important in helping to enlighten and transform assumptions around ostensible normative ways of passing through space.²²⁹

A second example of how Walker gets viewers to bend, crouch, twist or turn as they encounter his works from new positions can be observed in *Zip* (2004) and *Mapping #4* (2000) which are composed of tubes of L.E.D. lights zig-zagging in a corner, and elongated glass plates propped up against two adjacent walls set into a corner respectively (Appendix: Figures 76-77).²³⁰ In these works, Walker again provides a point of view that is atypical. For instance, a viewer has to look upwards in these installations, which is different from their more typical viewpoints of looking downwards and looking straight-on in the way that most average-height adults experience when gazing upon sculptures set about in a room in a gallery or museum space. While Walkers' previous works focused on drawing people downwards, closer to the ground, into a dimension equivalent to the "Corban scale," in *Zip* and *Mapping #4*, people now extend their gaze toward the ceiling. He says "Through my work I look at myself in an environment where normal-sized people have no difficulties navigating. I question and explore both my inclusion and exclusion from this world."²³¹ The glass plates from *Mapping #4* are thick, and measure as high as the ceiling, but the plates are also quite

²²⁹ Indeed, Stephen Walker's monograph on Gordon Matta-Clark's work is sub-titled "Art, Architecture and the Attack on Modernism" so Walker also acknowledges the violence of the artists work and points to its metaphorical connection to an attack on art and culture. For more information, see Stephen Walker, *Gordon Mata-Clark: Art, Architecture and the Attack on Modernism* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

²³⁰ <http://www.corbanwalker.com/> Accessed June 8, 2013

²³¹ Michele Horgan, "Walker's wonder world," n.p. n.d.

narrow. They fill the space and lean at various angles around the room, including corners. Viewers' shifting perception of the space is an essential aspect of the work as they move around the room. Walker is interested in how different kinds of bodies negotiate the spaces around his works. Like minimalism, his work is internalized through an externalized subjectivity. Public space is not neutral. As viewers walk around the work, they can look through the structure and at the reflective surface as it interacts with light and shadow. Based on the assumption that the way we look at things is affected by the height and width of our bodies and all of our senses, the point of *Zip and Mapping #4* is for viewers to focus on their embodied vision.

Spinoza sought to determine the nature of the body's encounters: how bodies were composed or decomposed, their combatibility or composability. Michael Hardt observes that in Spinoza "a body is not a fixed unit with a stable or static internal structure. On the contrary, a body's internal structure and external limits are subject to change. What we identify as a body is merely a temporarily stable relationship."²³² Bodies are in motion and rest, in union and conflict, always. Just like the structure of *Zip and Mapping #4*, a body is a temporary assemblage of coordinated elements. In his acts of assemblage, Walker teeters these glass lights and panes into a precarious zig-zag to problematize the representation of the dwarf body. This opens the door for viewers to re-think the aptitudes, functions and perceptions of the dwarf body and contributes to a "scale choreopolitics."

²³² Michael Hardt, "Spinozian Practice." *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1993), 92.

Please Adjust

Simple, elegant, skeletal frames of a sculptural installation, composed of repeating square stainless steel bars, create 176 cube structures that interlock and stack on top of each other to a height of 12'. *Please Adjust* was Walker's 2011 installation at the Venice Biennale in Italy, which functioned site-specifically (Appendix: Figure 78). The floor on which it sat was lit dramatically in the darkened space of the Istituto Santa Maria Della Pieta in Venice by a string of large lights suspended from the ceiling. The work responded to the materials, surfaces and architecture of its environment. For example, the multiple square shapes of the sculpture imitated the pattern of the Pavilion's tiled surface. The background is composed of two walls: one is hidden in the dark, containing luminous blue-covered windows and a set of brown doors, whereas the one jutting out from the right-hand side contains a doorway and a large sheet of illegible text. To the left of the sculpture was an archway entrance into another unknown space. The room stood empty apart from the presence of the sculpture but there was much movement!

Focusing on the grid in *Please Adjust*, Walker uses a structure that has been employed many times in two- and three-dimensional form by artists ranging from Sol LeWitt to Agnes Martin. For example, LeWitt's *Cube construction* (1971) is a simplified open structure made up of cubes that are the basic building block of this minimalist artist's work (Appendix: Figure 79). His modular sculptures were usually constructed in aluminum or steel, and bodily proportion was often fundamental to his units depending on the scale of the work. Martin's

Tremolo (1962) is typical for her minimalist style: a square monochrome canvas, layered with gesso, overlaid with hand-drawn pencil lines and thin layers of oil and acrylic paint (Appendix: Figure 80). But in *Please Adjust*, Walker upsets the stability of the grid evident in LeWitt's and Martin's work. The sculpture turns kinetic and theatrical as the twinkling lights bounce off the steel, illuminating some boxes while others remain in the shadows. This random on/off glow of the square assemblage pulsates with electric energy. It feels alive. The dizzying and dynamic intersections of the steel are completely scrambled, creating a labyrinth of intermingling shapes. The elegant arrangement of the shapes is complex as there is no rhyme or reason, nor pattern to it. Disorder reigns within order. On the surface, the work may seem restrained or controlled with its geometric units, but upon closer inspection, there is a countervailing instability or an element of chaos. Further, while the steel material itself is strong, *Please Adjust*'s construction method is precarious. This sense of fragility is enhanced by fact that the structure is temporary and changes shape and form every time the work is installed in a new venue. Maxwell writes that "the slightest human intervention could transform it, and the work could never be built in the same way again. The interlocking cubes depend on each other for stability but a change in placement will result in a new configuration."²³³ I'd like to direct the reader to the importance of this destabilizing quality of *Please Adjust*, for it illustrates the conceptual destabilization of disability that is core to my dissertation argument.

²³³ Eamonn Maxwell, "Please Adjust." *ILLUMInations: The Venice Biennale* (Verona, Italy: Studio Fasoli, 2011) 381.

As a title, *Please Adjust* reads as formal and polite, but if it ended with an exclamation mark (!) its meaning would change. Declarative and intense, *Please Adjust!* loudly calls for readjusting one's thinking about differently-sized bodies. It is a title that, in my opinion, while restrained on the surface, underneath bursts with indignation. Though this work seems to have no relationship with bodies or humans as it is void of corporeal imagery, a viewer learns that this is not strictly the case. A curatorial wall text explained that parameters for the grid include multiplications and divisions of the number four – Walker's own height in feet. The stainless steel bars come in lengths of 12 or 16 inches, using four as their primary measurement. The number of cube structures, 176, is the sum of 44 multiplied by four, a new interpretation of the "Corban Scale." His body is therefore a unit, module or standard for his work, rather than the typical non-disabled one. In this way, *Please Adjust* demonstrates Walker's experience as a man with dwarfism, navigating a world that has been mapped out for the non-disabled. Eamonn Maxwell says, "Given that the premise for architecture and the related design is the 6' man, Walker has to constantly adjust to fit into what is determined as normal. With this work, he is asking the viewer to *please adjust* [the title of Walker's work] to his viewpoint on the world," and to also take action and move!²³⁴ I also want to point out how Walker emphasizes that it is not necessary to know about his stature in order to interact with the work. After all, recalling Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (1968), the author must be removed from the center of the origin of a work. Barthes therefore critiques the

²³⁴ Eamonn Maxwell, "The Line Begins to Blur," *Corban Walker: Ireland at Venice 2011* (Ireland: Culture Ireland/Arts Council, 2011) 19.

author because this figure contains, limits and tames meaning.²³⁵ With this in mind, what other ways does meaning accrue? Considering Walker's work within the context of contemporary art, the relationship between *Please Adjust*, minimalism and phenomenology suggests one way.

Walker acknowledges the influence of minimalism on his practice, referring to figures such as Carl Andre, Donald Judd and Robert Morris. Walker's work takes on many of the principles and aesthetics of this 1960s movement, which emerged in New York as a reaction against abstract expressionism. The aim of minimalism is to remove the artist's presence as much as possible and foreground the viewer's experience of the space around the work in the most uninflected, abstract manner.²³⁶ It was at this time that Merleau-Ponty's *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) had a decisive influence on minimalist artists. Recall that Merleau-Ponty's philosophical position was directed against the Cartesian dualism of mind versus body. The artists claimed that when one encountered one of their works, Merleau-Ponty's theory of embodied perception came to life. In other words, subject, object and space are intertwined and interdependent. Looking at a work of art is not simply a question of vision, but actually involves the entire body.²³⁷ Claire Bishop gives an example of how a person may encounter a work by Robert Morris, such as *Untitled (L-beams)* (1965) informed by a chapter from Rosalind Krauss' influential book *Passages in*

²³⁵ Graham Allen, "The Death of the Author," *Roland Barthes* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) 74.

²³⁶ For a more complete account on minimalism, refer to Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and David Joselit, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011).

²³⁷ Claire Bishop, "Introduction: Installation Art and Experience," *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London and New York: Routledge: 2005).

Modern Sculpture (1977) (Appendix: Figure 81). Bishop articulates that two phenomena are taking place here: first, viewers become aware of the relationship between themselves and the space around them. This is usually a gallery space, and can include features such as the proportions of the gallery, its height, its width and the color of light. Second, the work throws viewers' attention back onto how they partake in processes of perception. In other words, viewers become more aware of their own bodies as they circum-navigate the sculpture.

Robert Morris' work allows the viewer to redirect attention to external considerations instead of any psychological absorption. Citing *Untitled (L-beams)*, Krauss argues that perceptual experience precedes cognition. In other words, even though the viewer may know that each of the three beams is identical in scale, they each appear quite different depending on the position of both the work and the viewer. Each L-beam takes on a different character based on the angles from which it is seen, levels of sunlight, depth of shadows and varying intensities of color within the shades of grey. Based on such thinking, Krauss argues that during this interdependent exchange among space, object and viewer, the viewer becomes destabilized.²³⁸ Bishop carries this further by asserting that installation art implicitly presents multi-perspectives. Installation art has also come to be associated with emancipatory liberal politics and in opposition to the rigid notion of seeing things from just one point of view. All of this parallels the complex experience of Walker's *Please Adjust*.

²³⁸ Rosalind Krauss, "The Double Negative: A New Syntax for Sculpture," *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1977) 266-7.

It is important to consider that Walker's work has metaphorical qualities that are atypical of minimalism. Robert C. Morgan says, "Walker's work maintains a curious balance by holding forth a rigorous conceptual understanding of space and, at the same time, inciting the possibility of allegorical influences."²³⁹ Walker's installation compels the viewer to think about scale, size, proportion, transparency and light, navigating the sculpture in multiple forms and ways. The viewer is "freed" to think about the body from multiple vantage positions and points of view. Additionally, just as Bishop and Krauss describe the de-centered perceptual experience of viewing a work like that of Robert Morris' L-beams, *Please Adjust* relies on constantly shifting states of being through these lines of flight.

Please Adjust suggests broader implications for the stratification of disability and atypical bodies within mainstream society and visual culture. The work's multi-perspectivalism links to an emancipatory rejection of a single, overarching and stable point of view. I argue that its lines of steel function to represent an ability to think beyond existing structures. *Please Adjust*'s amassing of disordered cubes turns geometric order into its opposite as if to dislodge normative society's binary relationships such as man/woman, disabled/non-disabled, black/white etc. Experiences that disrupt strict distinctions and refuse a single, authoritative view possibly work in similar ways. Just like the structure of *Please Adjust*, a body is a temporary assemblage of coordinated elements.

Assemblage is an artistic process going back to the cubists, who created three-

²³⁹ Robert C. Morgan, "Corban Walker: Mapping Space 4," *Glass Quarterly*, Winter 2000.

dimensional or two-dimensional artistic compositions using found objects. In this act of assemblage, Walker teeters skeletal cubes into a precarious tower to problematize the representation of the dwarf body.

The size of the *Please Adjust* means that it engulfs every shape and size of human being. At certain times of day as viewers circumnavigate the work, they are able to see their own reflections in the surface of the steel as light streams into the surrounding space, through the glass windows on either side of the building. Only the viewer remains opaque. Walker talks about how the building itself (an Italian church converted into a gallery) echoes the transparent quality of *Please Adjust*. The work's transparent, reflective qualities suggest how it is possible to look at bodies from multiple vantage points and that there is no one single point of view or one single way to look at a body, disabled or otherwise. The installation seeks to allow transformational states from mapped to unmapped, from structure to destructure to restructure. The advantage of seeing this installation is that it compels one to adjust one's thinking about how Walker conceptually and physically perceives space at his height. There is synthesis in thinking about the function of windows and light here, and the desire to transform: the ability to see inside and outside, through interior to exterior, to reveal then conceal, all in league with the lines of flight. As viewers walk around the work, they can look through the structure and at the reflective surface as it interacts with light and shadow (Appendix: Figure 82). Based on the assumption that the way we look at things is affected by the height and width of our bodies

and all of our senses, the point of *Please Adjust* is for viewers to focus on their embodied vision.²⁴⁰

Corban Walker's Venetian installation acts as a set of aggregated, conceptual pivots with which to think about the intersections and functions of bodies in space, making room for the incorporation of the disabled body. A pivot in architectural terms is a point of rotation in a lever system. I imagine there are pivots running through each corner of the layers of steel bars in *Please Adjust*, interlocking the cubes into a grid. This rotational quality of the pivots allow for this very adjustment of the steel bars to give the structure new form every time it is installed. Walker's pivots become symbolic of rotating bodies that can move, change and evolve in many directions, shapes and forms. Ideally, this vision widens the capacity for political change, as viewers re-think the aptitudes, functions and perceptions of the dwarf body and the disabled experience. Walker's installation activates the spaces of the Istituto, and gives a resonating "body to the process of political assemblage" and change as articulated by Hardt.²⁴¹

Conclusion: Pivoting Dwarfism Anew

In the contemporary art work of Laura Swanson and Corban Walker, a new "scale choreopolitics" of space is configured, that is expressed through

²⁴⁰ Like Walker, artist Eva Hesse pushed beyond the boundaries of minimalism by contradicting some of its principles. For example, in *Accession II* (1967), from the outside it looks like a typical minimalist work, similar to the work of Donald Judd or Robert Morris. But on closer inspection, one sees that the interior of this square form bristles with thousands of protruding tubes, giving it a more organic appearance, like a coating of fur or hair. Hesse has developed a means of shifting found materials, such as steel in *Accession II*, into embodied, organic form.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

atypical, non-normative experiences for the viewer through the power of cuts that rupture, interrupt and decentre. Most critically, Swanson and Walker's works powerfully contribute to a theory of body-environment relations, where dwarf subjectivity can offer new experimental modes of thinking and being through art, architecture and space that is never neutral, always political, and always dynamic. There can no longer be an assumed "average" or normative uniformity in how to engage or respond to a work of art when we remember all the variegated forms of knowing and being in space; just as there can be no one universal design in architecture or single-point perspective to buildings and public spaces. These artists disrupt any certainty of an aesthetic or spatial given, by revealing that the juxtaposition between bodily relations in space is much more heterogeneous than typically assumed. The participant conditions of both artists and audiences are now mediated and individualized through psychological, sensory and social modes that do not claim homogeneity or standardization. Rather, making work based on corporeal complexity offers a form of critical artistic practice centered on experiential engagements with viewers that insists on revealing the particularities of different embodiments-in-space. In these processes the potentialities of material space are also opened up, to re-orientation and radical interpretation.

Despite the complexities of the positive or negative readings that might be construed in examining the representation of the dwarf in both historical and contemporary forms of art, the fact remains that within this history, rarely do we come upon depictions of dwarfs as interpreted through a dwarf lens. Even less do

we come upon focused scholarly attention on work that has been or is being executed by dwarf artists, so through my study in this chapter, I hope to fill in some of these spaces in art history, addressing the unique mode of perceiving dwarfism through the dwarf perspective. John Tagg speaks of how critical this determinate space becomes, given it opens up conversations around the nature of power “which [is] brought to bear on practices of representation or constitute their conditions of existence.”²⁴² Given that recent art criticism has begun to prize open the legitimacy of the dominant/insubordinate power relations in static representations, it is at this juncture that Tagg argues, we create this very space for acknowledging that power is no longer uniform, unified, general and only “emanating from one privileged site.”²⁴³ The criticality of this space therefore “exposes a rift...in the general conceptions of representation on which they rest.”²⁴⁴ It is through the work of Swanson and Walker that an awareness of this rift becomes more pronounced than ever before. By noting the counter strategies of looking and moving that Swanson and Walker propose, we may also witness their effective “unmasking” of any prescribed “truth” of an ideology that is meant to convey reality. Beyond the oppositional gaze, the radical counter-strategies and intersectional, compositional, spatial and multi-modal devices that Swanson and Walker offer begins to chart liminal, unplotted space, thereby finally opening up the possibility for the dwarf to find a new stature in art history.

²⁴² John Tagg, “Introduction” in *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 21.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter 4: *Voluminous Territories:*

Deaf and Hearing Impaired Occupation of Physical & Audible Space

Introduction

How does the sonic choreopolitical performance and matter of deafness and hearing impaired-ness occupy space through powerful, transgressive measures? How is and how can space be defined from the perspective of deaf and hearing impaired artists? What are the geometry and contours of space as experienced through their ears? In this chapter, I will examine the work of two contemporary artists who “perform” their experience of deafness through sound, vision, language and tactility in order to make a voluminous statement about both the limitations and openings that space offers them. These artists include Christine Sun Kim, who was born deaf, and Alison O’Daniel, who was born hearing and then became hard of hearing as a child and currently uses hearing aids in both ears. Their views towards deafness and hearing impairment in relation to sound are shaped by their unique capacities. Each artist explores how sound might be translated through their own specificities, similarities and differences in relationship to communication and language, and their multi-media practices are comprised of prints, drawings, sculptures, videos, performance, and film installations.

In this chapter, my definition of choreopolitics continues to shift and take new and more complex forms in the guise of “sonic choreopolitics.” As discussed in the Introduction, the term “choreopolitics” is a portmanteau word that fuses the

sound and meaning of the words choreography and politics, as coined by writer and curator André Lepecki.²⁴⁵ Critical in the creation and meaning of this important word, Lepecki's idea was that politically passive bodies may become mobilized through manifold movement, in juxtaposition with an engagement with other bodies, objects, surfaces, and environments. In this chapter, then, I am interested in how the movement of sound across space communicates a particularized "politics" for those who are deaf and/or hearing impaired, illustrated by the works of the artists to be discussed. One of the goals of this chapter is to disrupt the mainstream preconceived and stereotypical ideas of the deaf experience, which typically assume that they live a life of total silence, where they retain little to no concept of sound. This disruption is mainly achieved through the work of the first artist I discuss, Christine Sun Kim. On the contrary, deaf studies scholars Carol Padden and Tom Humphries state that deaf people actually know a lot about sound, and sound informs and inhabits their world just as much as the next person.²⁴⁶ Through their artworks, the artists I study aim to explode the myth of a silent deaf world, and they challenge just how "inaudible" sound really is through their own visceral experiences of the sonic. They develop a type of trespass within the territory of sound, given that they re-imagine the agentive capacity of those not normally "permitted" equal access to it.

Furthermore, sound is a medium in which these artists feel creatively comfortable:

²⁴⁵ André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

²⁴⁶ Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, "The Meaning of Sound." *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture*. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1988.

sound is not just a medium that they experience on a daily basis, but they also carve out a relationship with the medium through their practices. Through their constant multi-sensorial encounters with sound, they produce new knowledge. Even more than this, this chapter asks, what does deafness, or gradations of hearing, in both embodied and conceptual terms, add to the soundscape of contemporary art? Does it offer us something new, does it provide us with new knowledges that have never been explored previously? How and why is it important to add deafness and non-hearing modalities into the mix? As I begin to analyze each artwork in detail throughout the chapter, answers to these questions will become more clear.

Music theorist Joseph N. Straus has discussed how the concept of “deaf hearing” may seem like an oxymoron. He says, “hearing does not necessarily involve a one-to-one mapping of sense perceptions onto a single sensory organ; rather, hearing can be a much more multi-sensory experience.”²⁴⁷ The distinction between the deaf person and the hearing person in their relationship to sound is the extent to which deaf people use senses other than the auditory to understand what they are hearing. Sound is felt and sound is seen. Indeed, the artists’ “deaf hearing” in this chapter often involves sensory input from a variety of sources, and is not simply confined to the ears. Straus has emphasized how music cognition traditionally reinforces “normal hearing” and how hearing people make sense of music. But Straus proposes a new model: what he calls “disablist

²⁴⁷ Joseph N. Straus, “Prodigious Hearing, Normal Hearing, and Disablist Hearing,” *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

hearing.”²⁴⁸ How might people whose atypical bodily, psychological or cognitive abilities differently make sense of music? This new model offers an alternative to “normal hearing” that usually prevails over all other types of musical perception. What is particularly ground-breaking about what Straus articulates is the possibility of a generative intersection or exchange between what he calls “normal hearing” and “deaf hearing” across various subjects, which is in keeping with what Friedner and Helmreich suggest. In other words, a deaf listener can learn to hear “normally” just as much as a hearing listener can learn “deaf hearing.” The key is that hearing is about *apprehending* and not an essential attribute to bodies.²⁴⁹ Similarly, both sign language and the spoken word are about articulations, which operate in much the same way that a work of art does – they are all expressions offered in different mediums and formats and each mode and each subject has something to offer the other.

Another aspect to this “politics” is the politics of deaf identification. The term “Deaf culture” uses a capital ‘D’ as a means to formally capture the set of learned behaviors of deaf people, who have their own language (sign language, of which there are many all over the world), values, rules, and traditions. Story-telling was an important means of information-gathering in Deaf culture (it continues to be), particularly in older times when access to broadcast media and public communication was curtailed for deaf people owing to Oralism. It is important to share the stories of those involved in this chapter, and how they are identify with deafness or hearing impairedness, and even to the stigmatized word

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

“disability.” I do this not only in following the footsteps of disability studies, which values the disclosure of the lived experience of disability in order to find commonalities, strengthen identity and build voice within a community, but also in the tradition of Deaf culture, where people always like to learn information about each other so as to build connections. I share these stories not as a means to over-emphasize artists’ backgrounds that might seem separate to, or irrelevant in relation to the work itself, but rather as a means to provide an important context and connection to the work discussed in the chapter. These stories and the art itself do go hand in hand, because the stories are embedded in the artwork and vice versa. In turn, Deaf culture and Deaf community builds the basis for Deaf activism which aims to fight against deaf oppression. This oppression is enacted by a hearing culture that typically misunderstands the experience of the deaf person (such as the myth of a silent deaf world), and where a deaf person experiences discrimination in their everyday life, such as the failure of a hearing person in learning how to communicate with a deaf person, in hiring a deaf person for a job, or even in the lack of comprehension towards American Sign Language, which is oftentimes stigmatized and not even considered to be a “legitimate” language that has its own set of variations, dialects and phonologies.

The two artists discussed in this chapter each have a different relationship to deafness because they each have different experiences of deafness, hearing and sound. Including two artists in this chapter who have these vastly different experiences with deafness and hearing is intentional, as I feel it is important that readers create new perceptions, experiences and translations of sound from

multiple aural positionalities, from both deaf and hearing cultures. My approach ensures that I avoid perpetuating any kind of inclusive/exclusive binary, so that all artists get to have a “voice” about perceptions of silence in respectful, passionate and intelligent ways. I also want to complicate our ideas around how we might perceive the experience of deafness – can only the deaf person speak of and about themselves, and can others do so too? Is there a right way or wrong way to do that, and who decides? This echoes my discussion from the Introduction. These are very difficult questions. Historically of course, marginalized groups and communities were never given permission to speak for themselves, and steps had to be taken in order for these groups to find agency and voice, so that they could resist their limited societal positions.²⁵⁰ I was especially curious to learn how a hearing person might explore silence from a deaf perspective through “deaf eyes.”

For this reason, in 2014-2015, I curated an exhibition entitled *LOUD silence*, which was held in two different venues in California: Grand Central Arts Center at California State University Fullerton, followed by gallery@Calit2 at the University of California, San Diego. The exhibition offered the opportunity for viewers to consider definitions of sound, voice, and notions of silence at the intersection of both deaf and hearing experiences. I wanted to bring greater attention to deaf politics within a contemporary art context. Curators have infrequently turned their attention to the deaf experience, and even less so towards experiences of sound from both deaf and hearing artists, so I saw this as an

²⁵⁰ There are many resources in which to learn more about the representations of Deaf culture through a Deaf voice, such as the *History Through Deaf Eyes* exhibition presented by Gallaudet University http://www.gallaudet.edu/history_through_deaf_eyes/about_the_project.html and the history of the *Deaf President Now* movement, also at Gallaudet University, http://www.gallaudet.edu/dpn_home.html Accessed August 20, 2014

exciting opportunity to explore new terrain. How can an exhibition be used as a platform in which to start a conversation about misperceptions of the deaf, Deaf culture and ASL and language in general? Is there a usefulness in presenting contrasting ideas about silence and the deaf world, as opposed to one homogenous, ostensible universal belief? Should artists be held accountable if their ideas on deafness don't necessarily conform to a wider politics on Deaf culture? It made sense for me to delve more deeply into Deaf culture, especially given my own personal identification with disability. And yet I was keenly aware that curating this exhibition doesn't necessarily give me authority over Deafness, simply because I identify as disabled. It is also important to acknowledge that there is much contestation around how the Deaf community might associate with the disability label, so I caution to lump these two words together as if they were seamlessly interchangeable. To many people, they are not, and rather than resist this, I believe it is important to keep working through it, and ponder the complexities and challenges that come with terms that continue to mark, label and categorize.

The notion of a desire for the deaf to possess and inhabit space is already well developed in the Deaf community, particularly through the innovative notion of "DeafSpace" as developed by Hansel Bauman, who is an architect at Gallaudet University in Washington DC. Bauman's work developing "DeafSpace" involves a customization of the built environment that advantageously utilizes the rich sensory world of the deaf person, where vision and touch allows them to engage with the form, space, light and material of architecture. Through this sensorial

vocabulary, a deaf person acquires a unique spatial awareness, orientation and psyche.²⁵¹ While Bauman's enlightened and intuitive understanding of the embodied spatial awareness of the deaf subject in his application to architectural design is important to my work here, given that the artists I discuss are exhibiting this awareness as illustrated by their artworks, my suggestion of a voluminous territorialization of space is more focused towards the temporary and spontaneous, the ephemeral and the existential, and even the guerilla. Bauman's work is primarily focused on dwelling spaces, and environments that one inhabits on a daily level that one may be compelled to call "home." In the context of the work discussed here, the artistic happenings occur primarily in the space of the gallery as a host venue. Within this space, as I describe in the paragraphs to follow, we will see depictions such as a two-dimensional space where drawings on a sheet of paper illustrate ambulatory scores, or three-dimensional objects that embody both conceptual ideas and literal floor space. Deaf space is also, of course, inhabited by sign language, which is a physical language of gesture and form. We will see how American Sign Language takes up space in more complex ways in this chapter's discussion of Christine Sun Kim's work, but there is great work being done in this category at the intersection of language, sign, poetry, and sensorial performance in the practices of other artists ranging from Francisca Benitez to the ASL poetry troupe Flying Words Project consisting of Peter Cook and Kenny Lerner.

²⁵¹ Hansel Bauman, "DeafSpace: An Architecture toward a More Livable and Sustainable World" in *Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes For Human Diversity*, H. Dirksen, L. Bauman and Joseph J. Murray (eds.), Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, 375-401.

I have also spent some time considering how the work of deaf and hearing impaired artists might be placed or positioned within the practices of sound art in general in the contemporary art discourse. Some of their other contemporary peers across several generations within the genre might include artists like Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, Ann Hamilton, Susan Hiller, Wendy Jacob, Cristian Marclay, Chistof Migone, Steve Roden, and Stephen Vitiello, amongst many others. There are also other deaf artists who experiment with the versatility of sound as a representation of the visual, or sound as sound, even when you cannot necessarily hear it, such as Joseph Grigely and Aaron Williamson. Williamson, especially, extends this chapter's idea of sound inhabiting space in the choreopolitical sense, given his embodied sonic performances in gallery spaces, the streets and other public locations around the world. It wasn't officially until the 1980s that sound art became a distinct category. Prior to this time, from approximately the 1940s-1970s, experimental music practices can be traced through the work of figures like John Cage, La Monte Young and Tony Conrad. Many visual artists of the period, within the movements of Minimalism, Fluxus, and Happenings, were profoundly influenced by their compositions, including Robert Morris, Andy Warhol, Walter De Maria, Jasper Johns, Allan Kaprow, Nam June Paik, and Bruce Nauman, to name a few. All of these artists were influenced by and, in turn, influenced, dancers and experimental performers such as Simone Forti and Yvonne Rainer.

As demonstrated in my discussion of several work in my previous chapters, unfortunately there are also examples of contemporary art works that

demonstrate a lack of awareness regarding Deaf culture, the sensitivity and agency embedded with deaf sound, and even the complexity of American Sign Language. For example, in the video works, *Singing Lesson 1* (2001), and *Singing Lesson 2* (2003) by Artur Zmijewski, which captures a group of hearing-impaired male and female teenagers practicing ecclesiastical music in a Warsaw church, the artist problematically expropriates deaf subjects in order to sensationalize the oddness of deaf voices and how their sound comes off as out of tone and unpleasant aesthetically to so-called normative ears (Appendix: Figures 83-84). Zmijewski's use of his subjects has been heavily criticized and questioned. In a review of Zmijewski's practice, Ken Johnson stated that the artists "comes across as a kind of puppet master who uses people less sophisticated than himself as marionettes in a game whose point they may not fully understand."²⁵² What would happen if this experience of deaf sound was explored through more nuanced experience? This nuance doesn't necessarily have to come from an artist who embodies deafness and who has a personal lived experience with deafness. However, in the case of Grigely, the artworld has had the opportunity to reflect on his personal lived experience of sound that is punctuated by stops, gaps, and "white noise" as he communicates with a predominantly hearing world, through his sound-based installations, musical scores, and more. Indeed, I argue that the artworld is in need of more work like Grigely's in order to canonize new narratives around deaf and hearing impaired experience that have received little attention in historical and contemporary practices. I will return to Grigely later.

²⁵² Ken Johnson, "An Artist Turns People Into His Marionettes," *The New York Times*, November 29, 2009 http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/30/arts/design/30zmijewski.html?_r=0 Accessed February 29, 2016

I argue that the artists in this chapter extend the notion of “deaf gain” through their practices. Originally coined by the deaf British performance artist, Aaron Williamson, the idea of “deaf gain” is to consider what is actually gained by the state of deafness, instead of focusing on what is ostensibly lost. The state of deafness itself is defined by a sense of loss through the framework of normalcy, where ableist society sees hearing as a prized possession. Christine Sun Kim acknowledges the power of hearing through the language she applies to the audist world, such as the notion of hearing as “currency,” give the social value that hearing has, and “ghost,” given that sound is a commodity that she cannot audibly grasp – it remains invisible to her, so to speak, or transparent. Here, she cleverly translates the typically ocular qualities of the ghost form into a striking audible mode, given it is the audist world that remains elusive to her, rather than the visual one. This major paradigm shift of definitions of deafness from loss to gain first thrust forward into deaf and disability studies rhetoric by Williamson and now supported by others, such as the authors of the large volume, *Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes for Human Diversity*, Dirkson, Bauman and Murray, offer a powerful conceptual position in which the work of the artists in this chapter gravitate. Kim, Martin and O’Daniel’s actions and objects, as expressed through sound, vision, and matter, offer articulate illustrations of this empowering neologism in Deaf Studies, disability studies and mainstream contemporary art histories in general.

In the many recent chronologies, anthologies and assemblages of writings about sound art theories and practices, I was unable to locate any contributions of

deaf and/or hearing impaired artists and how these contribution might fit into the discourse. Rather than search for any direct and striking parallels between the physical condition of hearing and/or deafness and its associated political outcomes through sonic form amongst practitioners, I prefer to focus on certain conditions or precursors for the work to be discussed in this chapter that revolve around the conceptual, epistemological and ontological. This is not about raising any concern about a possible ableist versus disablist dyad prevalent in the canon of art history or even sound art, and more about considering how historical practices associated with sound and politics have offered a critical template for work by younger generations of artists who turn to the creative use of the sonic. I am especially interested in practices of the sonic that inhabit space through experimentation, in a bid to reorient the senses and formulate new definitions and discourses. In other words, I seek to uncover a new, driving notion of “sonic choreopolitics,” in particular historical practices and works that may offer exciting discoveries regarding the contemporary sound art to be discussed in this chapter. Many of the works which I reference are not even necessarily or strictly part of the nascent sonic turn in modern or contemporary art discourse, and fall more in line with art history’s rhetoric around the expanded field of sculpture, explored at length by art historians like Rosalind Krauss.²⁵³ I now turn to a detailed analysis of the work by each of the artists after introducing relevant work by predecessors as suggested above.

²⁵³ Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field” in *October*, Vol. 8 (Spring, 1979), 30-44.

Ambulatory Scores, Existential Silence and Acoustic Architecture

Deaf from birth, Christine Sun Kim turned to using sound as a medium during an artist residency in Berlin in 2008, and has since developed a practice of lo-fi experimentation that aims to re-appropriate sound by translating it into movement and vision through performance. While growing up, Kim perceived sound as a form of authority and without realizing it, the artist was never at ease nor in complete control of sounds she made. She states, as a child her parents would teach her ‘sound etiquette’: “They [her parents] would tell me: be quiet. Don’t burp, drag your feet, make loud noises.”²⁵⁴ She was still expected to abide by the conventional norms of sound. She continues to say, “I was disciplined to handle sound with delicacy and good manners: curbing my self-noises and avoiding making ‘harsh’ sounds like feedback. I grew accustomed to this, ignored the politics of sound, and didn’t bother questioning the hearing people’s ownership of sound – all simply because I did not have access to it.”²⁵⁵

As she grew older, she acquired two languages, American Sign Language and English, and she became aware of her relationship with sound, at which time she began to use question the “ownership” and control of sound and how much value it carries in this society. Thus Kim considers herself to be a culturally deaf person with utmost respect towards American Sign Language. Kim’s reception of language is shaped by sign language interpreters, limited subtitles on television, written conversations on paper and emails. These modes have naturally led to a loss of content and a delay in communication, which greatly influences the way

²⁵⁴ Selby, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqJA0SZm9zI> Accessed August 20, 2014

²⁵⁵ Christine Sun Kim, 2013: TED transcript

she perceives reality and experiences the world.²⁵⁶ Kim says, “Despite the fact that I cannot access sound directly, I perceive ideas surrounding the concept of sound as intriguing, hierarchical, and authoritative—the society clearly privileges auditory communication over other forms. Hence, I have embraced sound as a medium in my work because it gives me the most direct connection to society at large.”²⁵⁷

Now splitting her time between New York and Berlin, Sun Kim eventually turned to the possibilities of sound as a visual, physical and conceptual medium through tactile experiences in 2008, after being inspired by the rising sound art scene in Berlin during an initial artist residency there. Since then, Kim’s practice has evolved into an intersection of performance, works on paper, and sound installations. Kim eventually partially turned away from relying heavily on tactility to translate her experience of sound, especially through vibration, given she feels that it has become somewhat of a cliché in the deaf and hearing world. Rather, the artist is now more interested in the concept of borrowing people’s voices, or leasing other people’s voices through dynamic collaborative exchanges with other artists, musicians and composers in a bid to expand her own voice. The artist is very transparent about how much she relies on others who can mediate her voice into accessible forms, especially when much of the hearing world in which she communicates does not share an understanding of American Sign Language. While Kim has a strong sense of her own voice inside her body, she also intuitively understands how she must manage it. Padden and Humphries

²⁵⁶ Christine Sun Kim, www.christinesunkim.com, 2012

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

make reference to this idea, where they say that voice is a technology and an object for cultivation.²⁵⁸ Through a complex constellation of sound transmission via technology, instruments, and other voices, Kim is able to identify and articulate her own voice, sharing her experiences and vision.

Kim has acknowledged that she does not like to be called “disabled” in many interviews, and denies that work is even “political” and yet her work does want to engage with a rejection of the myth that a deaf world is a silent one, sometimes through acoustically violent forms.²⁵⁹ In 2012, I curated a group exhibition entitled *What Can A Body Do?* for Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. Kim participated in a sound performance at the opening reception on October 26, 2012. The performance was composed of her very loud voice projecting, blowing, whimpering and murmuring into a microphone, accompanied by the sounds she created using various objects around her, such as her fist banging on the wall, swinging and sliding a microphone through the air and along the ground, and the tick-tocks from a metronome.²⁶⁰ All of these sounds were recorded and played back through a set of subwoofers and speakers. Round wooden boards filled with globs of freshly poured paint and clumps of powder sat on top of the equipment. *Speaker drawings #1-#10* (2012) were then created once Kim placed quills, nails and cogs onto the paint and powder-drenched boards (Appendix: Figures 85-88). Objects and materials commingled, and danced across the boards to the vibrations of subwoofers and

²⁵⁸ Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, *Inside Deaf Culture*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

²⁵⁹ One example is her interview for *What Can a Body Do?* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ivcf2YCedtE>. Accessed December 13, 2012

²⁶⁰ To watch (and hear) parts of Christine’s riveting performance in addition to an interview with the artist, please visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ivcf2YCedtE>. Accessed December 13, 2012

speakers beneath that were being fed Kim's recorded sounds. The ten wood board *Speaker drawings* were then hung up on the walls of the gallery space after Kim's performance (Appendix: Figures 89-90). Along with drumhead, subwoofers, paper, objects, and wet materials, the end results come out as physical and visual records of sounds. She combines these various systems in an attempt to open up a new space of authority/ownership and rearrange hierarchies of information.

While Kim has recently turned her attention away from visual markings as a record of sonic experience, I continue to be fascinated with her riveting performance on this one evening three years ago. This is because I felt that Kim's performance mobilized sound in an aggressive, forceful act of inversion. As one observer to the performance astutely observed,

“During her live performance there were many times the feedback got so loud, audience members covered their ears or made uncomfortable facial expressions...Kim used her voice box to create a sound that, for me, sounded like something between anxious humming and screaming. The sound made me feel nervous; I could imagine hearing it from another room and wanting to run in and check if everyone was okay. I felt on edge at this point in the performance because the sounds that were being created evoked panicky feelings in me; as an audience member I was experiencing stress... in using her own voice [as a deaf person] to create sound, Kim is defying social norms and stretching both herself and the audience outside of their comfort zones. One might perhaps describe her performance as deviant.”²⁶¹

I will never forget the image of a young girl's reaction once Kim's loud ambulatory sounds hit her ears – her arms reached quickly up to her ears to cover them as temporary earmuffs, to reduce the decibel level as a form of protection.

²⁶¹ <http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/exchange/christine-sum-kim-silence-discipline-and-mediated-viewings-art>, Accessed December 13, 2012

Her eyes were wide (Appendix: Figure 91). Other older audience members around eschewed similar compensatory gestures.

I suggest that Kim's piercing noise through her voice and feedback "violated" sound because she consumed it and claimed it as her own, whilst simultaneously tormenting and playing with sound as though it was, in fact, an invaluable commodity (instead of one with "currency" as she claims). She then spat the sound back into the ears of the many people sitting up close to her during the performance, causing a very real physical and mental agitation for her audience members. It was a powerful, radical and visceral embodiment of primitive actions engaged by the figure of "other" (a deaf performance artist) who uses sound to achieve her own objectives regarding authority and control. In one of the evocative patterns or markings produced on Kim's *Speaker Drawings*, the red paint looks like blood smattered across the board after her vomiting or regurgitation of sound in her performance. Kim's corporal marks reminds me of the prints of bodies left behind by Yves Klein's nude women in his high profile anthropometric performances where the women were "living paintbrushes" that used their corpus to roll and smear blue paint on large sheets of paper against a backdrop of chamber music in 1960, or Janine Antoni's *Loving Care* performance from 1993, where she mopped up the floor of a gallery using her hair as makeshift brush which was soaked with brown hair dye (Appendix: Figures 92-93). Kim's alternative "aurality of violence" offers a transformative yet uncomfortable space where the "other" can enact "revenge" on the innocent, "untrained" ears of her audience. Brandon LaBelle talks of how acoustic violence is when "sound comes

to threaten by imposing an abusive volume onto the everyday.”²⁶² He says that acoustic violence in the form of loud noise manifests itself in everyday sonic culture through music that insensitively pulsates through a neighbor’s wall, or the blaring of police sirens that form part a cityscape late at night as one tries to sleep.²⁶³ LaBelle questions what might the “hard moral frame” might be when acoustic violence is enacted upon a hearing subject, given that the outcome of the violence is a form of suffering and pain. A physical reaction to loudness within specific embodied experiences of hearing form an integral part of the body’s relationship to sound, even if one cannot “hear” sound in an ostensible normative context. The act of hearing and the slippage between knowing and not knowing the physical limits of hearing involve and excite the whole bodily organism to a point of unrecognizability. A deaf person’s means of transmitting an intangible phenomenon into a tangible product measure this translation of their moments of unrecognizability. Thus, Kim’s performance here challenges the conceptual, physical, linguistic associations of music, sound and silence, and because it offers how aural experiences can be complicated by numerous perceptions, particularly the deaf one.

Using voice in this way, Kim carved out a “space” in which to be heard on her own terms, and she politically recuperated “voice” from the common assumption that not only must deaf people’s worlds be completely silent, but that deaf people are also “mute” and so unable to communicate at all, or unable to

²⁶² Brandon LaBelle, “Home: Ethical Volumes of Silence and Noise,” *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*, New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2010, 2013, 80.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

reason.²⁶⁴ The artist's voice is then a form of cultural transmission turned on its head, and voice becomes an empowering agency. Voice as used by deaf artists calls into question the "natural" or "self-evident" nature of speech-based communication model.²⁶⁵ Michael Davidson has talked about how the literal use of speech and vocalization in deaf performance has elicited a certain kind of scandal and those who therefore employ scandal use it to critical ends.²⁶⁶ Davidson goes on to define "scandal" to mean "the eruption of speech" which "challenges the conventional opposition of signing and speech and allows for more complex, hybrid combinations."²⁶⁷ If scandal has a relationship to appropriate usage of voice in certain contexts and by whom, then voice must have a noble, yet contested pedigree, according to Davidson. Voice is a modality that combines notions of expression and being heard. If we understand the artists' voices in this context as a powerful form of metaphorical acoustic transgression, because they cross a line into the hearing world in which they have historically not been welcome, how might it contribute to the broader territory of acoustics? Brandon LaBelle suggests that the very process of "acoustic territorialization" involves the "disintegration and reconfiguration of space" and that this becomes a "political process."²⁶⁸ He continues that acoustic territories are characterized by being "multiple, cut with flows and rhythms, vibrations and echoes, all of which

²⁶⁴ Michael Davidson, "Living Deaf Hearing," in *LOUD silence* exhibition catalogue, curated by Amanda Cachia, gallery@Calit2. San Diego: University of California, 2015.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Michael Davidson, "Hearing Things: The Scandal of Speech in Deaf Performance" in *Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011), 81.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Brandon LaBelle, "Introduction: Acoustic Territories," *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*, New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2010, 2013, xxiii-xxiv

form a sonic discourse that is equally feverish, energetic, and participatory.”²⁶⁹

Within each sonic materiality, LaBelle suggests that there are new “micro-epistemologies” that open up “specific ways of knowing the world.”²⁷⁰

Ultimately, LaBelle says that it is through the critical encounter with violence and suffering where we have an opportunity to reflect on “flows of power.”²⁷¹ Kim confronts and dislocates assumptions and associations of deaf culture through her own powerful version of acoustic violence. The essence of Kim’s choreopolitics is where loudness symbolically takes on physical dimensions, for her loudness has a volume that can be measured – it not only takes up space, it completely envelopes it, and ultimately transcends it.

When I worked with Kim for the second time, for another smaller group exhibition I curated, *LOUD silence*, I included four of Kim’s conceptual drawings in the exhibition. These were *As Mezzo As Possible* (2013), *Slur Version of Piano* (2013), *A Noise Without Character* (2013) and *Rehabilitating Silence* (2013). The drawings are an expression of Kim’s interest in capturing the spatiality and movement of American Sign Language that she says often overlaps with other grammar structures like English.²⁷² Kim also considers her drawings as manifestations of how information is being processed inside her head, as it is a medium in which she works through and formulates concepts of the meanings of silence. Kim executes what she calls these scores or transcript drawings, which combine musical symbols and puns. While the artist has tried to capture the

²⁶⁹ Ibid., xxiv

²⁷⁰ Ibid., xxv

²⁷¹ Ibid., 82.

²⁷² Christine Sun Kim, 2013: TED transcript.

spatiality of ASL on paper, she also likens this process of putting down ASL on paper to the challenge of trying to entirely capture a musical note on paper, which is often impossible.

The inspiration for the oxymoronic title of my exhibition *LOUD silence* was, in fact, one of Christine Sun Kim's drawings of the same name, not included in the show itself. In *loud silence* (2013), the artist inserted two subtle degrees of music dynamics: mezzoforte (mf) and mezzopiano (mp), which references a stylistic or functional mode of executing a musical score (Appendix: Figure 94). In the case of these particular dynamics, mezzoforte translates to moderately loud, and mezzopiano indicates moderate softness. "Moderate" is the key word, because the dynamics are relative and do not indicate specific volume levels. Kim has crudely described her rendition of moderately loud as "annoying like a loud motherfucker" while her moderately soft is "soft enough to pass as loud silence." Just as the dynamics of music are open to interpretation – they are not absolute – so is Kim's creative descriptions around her experience with such terms. Kim's unique experience of sound as a person who was born deaf further widens the possibilities of what this nuance of sound and silence could be. In other words, how can sound be determined within multiple modalities, as an instrument for altering our particular modes of perception and reception of it? How can Kim's "annoying like a loud motherfucker" and "soft enough to be loud silence" send sound and silence in new directions? Kim's work offers a new spectrum for experiencing sound, where it is visual, physical, conceptual, existential, spatial, hyper and itinerant. Kim's profane language in application to notions of loudness

suggests that she is interested in delivering a type of “attitude” towards her audience. For Kim, it seems as though the audible state of “loudness” is one that can embody qualities of rebellion and transgression, which I liken to a punk on the street who swears and spits at passers-by. Kim’s attitude is important because it is wrapped up in her politics, and one might even say that her vocalizing/spitting action is also connected to her particularized sonic choreopolitics that I aim to now illustrate in this chapter in the discussion to follow.

First, there is much to be said about the historical precedents for Kim’s powerful work that address both the physicality and visuality of sound, particular through the format of a musical score. Kim’s scores clearly belong to the lineage of Fluxus scores, which had a bifurcated purpose: to instruct, but also to act as stand-alone conceptual objects. Fluxus was an international network of artists to emerge in the 1960s that espoused an anti-art sensibility, and they often staged experimental performances in order to radically expand definitions of art. Anna Deuzeze sums up the Fluxus score well when she says that “each fluxus score always implied many scores – not only the many other scores created by the same artist, but also scores created by others, and always the infinite number of new performances and interpretations of the score by each new reader.”²⁷³ Like the Fluxus scores, Kim’s scores offer this constant opportunity for an audience

²⁷³ Anna Deuzeze, “What is a Fluxus Score? (Some Preliminary Thoughts)” in *Fluxus Scores and Instructions: The Transformative Years “Make a Salad,”* Jon Hendricks, with Marianne Bech and Media Farzin (eds.), Selections from The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit, Museet for Samtidskunst, Roskilde, Denmark: 2008, 25.

member to reimagine the space and movement of sound from one note to another, and from the artist's idiosyncratic perspective and their own.

The work of musician and composer La Monte Young is especially of interest here, and it is his scores, which predate many of the Fluxus scores (he was briefly part of the movement), that share many aesthetic and conceptual qualities with that of Kim's. This especially applies to Young's *Score for Composition 1960 #7*, 1960, which was part of a larger suite of approximately fifteen compositions (Appendix: Figure 95). Considered part musical, part theatrical and part conceptual, Young attempted to challenge and redefine notions of sound and hearing, and also to reconsider the relationship between performer and audience. In *Composition 1960 #7*, we see the notes B and F on a staff, which is an open-fifth chord, with instructions underneath stating, "to be held for a long time." Young was attempting to sustain sound over a longer interval in order to give the listener an opportunity to hear aspects of the notes that might not be noticed normally during a regularly-paced score of multiple and varied notes.²⁷⁴ The sound of one or two notes modulates and varies over time, and never actually stays consistent. In other compositions, such as *Composition 1960 #5*, the score requires that the performer turn a butterfly loose into the audience, in order to hear the sounds of a moving butterfly across space. As observed by art historian Brandon Joseph, this composition has a distinctive Cagean influence as it relates to his seminal *4'33"*, where Cage encouraged his audience to consider the sounds

²⁷⁴ Keith Potter, "La Monte Young" in *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 51-52.

of silence.²⁷⁵ In Young's *Composition 1960 #5*, he was suggesting that sounds from nature that we might take for granted, such as that of the flapping wings of a butterfly, could be music, or musical.

In considering the work of Young as it pertains to Kim's work, a strong through-line is the notion of a score as a conceptual object, set apart from its function. Kim has often spoken of her great interest in the conceptualization of sound and scores in recent interviews and presentations.²⁷⁶ Then of course, there is the unique aesthetic composition of text, musical notation, and instruction and/or statement across both of their scores – original lexicons that may or may not be legible to a composer or otherwise. The simplicity of their ideas also bears a striking similarity – few words convey a powerful idea, as their humble pages are full of symbols rich with semiotic associations. Most critically, Kim and Young are tied together through their interest in undoing standardized notions of sound through an expression of the score and/or instruction. While their political orientations differ, their overall emphasis in unseating notions of sound remains potently analogous. However, the very important contribution that Kim makes to sound art and contemporary art discourse in general is not to be missed here, for while she dislikes emphasizing and essentializing her deafness at the expense of all other aspects of her practice, it is the individual and subjective experience of deafness through sound that contributes to a new critical pathways for listening, or rather unlearning how to listen in conventional ways, as Straus has previously

²⁷⁵ Brandon W. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (A "Minor" History), New York: Zone Books, 2008.

²⁷⁶ One good example is Jeppe Ugevig's interview with the artist, entitled "Sonic Identity Politics with Christine Sun Kim," in *Dismagazine*, <http://dismagazine.com/blog/80643/sonic-identity-politics-with-christine-sun-kim/>. Accessed August 17, 2016

described. Kim complicates Young's compositions through her additional ingredients of American Sign Language, facial expression and other gestures layered on top of musical notation, which has never been done before in history of sound art.²⁷⁷

For example, in *As Mezzo As Possible* (2013), the letter "P" glides along the top of the paper, appearing very small at first on the left hand side, and then as it repeats and moves along the paper as indicated by the >>greater than/less than<< symbols, as it grows larger and larger, and eventually doubles and then triples once it nears the edge of the right hand side of the sheet (Appendix: Figure 96). The letter "P" is the musical notation for quiet dynamics, as "P" means "piano" and it directs a performer to tone it down, and thus we might guess that as the "P" moves along in scale, it grows louder and louder in its quietness. This reading might disrupt our usual associations between scale and loudness, where uppercase, large and bold letters could typically indicate a higher integer of sound, as opposed to smaller letters being quieter, softer, or indeed, toned down. In music, "mezzo" means half, and the artist describes this idea of cutting the "P" in half again and again until quietness becomes impossible to hear, and silence becomes louder and louder as the small "p" turns into a big "P." Kim's reversal of this association is in keeping with the title of the exhibition itself, *LOUD silence*, which also grammatically enunciates a particular politics through the ironic play on words. As the artist has said, she is still trying to determine what silence could

²⁷⁷ Kim has also developed other complex performance works based on the notation of facial expression. In *A Choir of Glances* (2014), she instructed her choir of "glancers" to use facial expression through one-word text directives on her iPad. This work is interesting to consider in sharp contrast to the work of Zmijewski's *Singing Lessons*, as while Zmijewski sensationalizes use of "deaf voice," Kim offers a revised consideration and definition of the modality of "singing" through facial expression, gesture, and "glancing."

mean from her unique point of view, because she was raised with the hearing world's definition of silence, with which she does not identify with. This of course already debunks many of the hearing world myths that equates a deaf world to a silent world, as Kim's ostensible silent world is actually full of her experience of noise. Kim's drawings then offer us a rich semiotics of silence through the visual form, where it is the mark of a crayon creating renderings on the surface of a paper that becomes the artist's voice in this instance, but here, silence is also very much conceptual as it is existential. It is a thing that moves from one side of the page to the other, it has lively form and shape, despite its two-dimensionality. Indeed, this work is offering a sonic choreopolitics owing to its ambulatory nature.

Silence also glides and silence also slides down the page, as can be seen in her drawing, *Slur Version of Piano* (Appendix: Figure 97). Of this work, she says, "Slur is a note sliding or transforming into a different note without separation, like passing over. I thought a lot about all different kinds of silences, like a P sliding or transforming into another P."²⁷⁸ Another important aspect of the drawings is how Kim tries to capture not only the spatiality of the hands moving in American Sign Language, but also facial expression. While the language of hand-shapes is very important in ASL, so is what is being expressed on the face, and through the body itself. Kim tries to capture these emotions by matching them with the musical notation piano metaphors. For instance, Kim says, "each grammatical/syntactical element correlates to a key: placement, facial expression,

²⁷⁸ Christine Sun Kim, interview with Amanda Cachia, July 22, 2014.

handshape, repetition, and so on. Taken together, these aspects form a word or concept.²⁷⁹ Kim puts emphasis on the importance of studying her own vocalization because she enjoys the idea that her voice is coming from an internal space. In looking at the same drawing once again, *Slur Version of Piano*, we might then imagine two simultaneous actions: that of the physical gesture of hands moving, to indicate ASL, symbolized through the bold, dark and smooth line, but also that of a throat or a mouth (internal and external), where the lighter wavy line interlaced over the bold line might illustrate the undulations of tone or frequency (sound) or juggling movement of voice box or lips on the face, as indicated by the phrase in brackets in her title “(Not so Continuous Glide).” The appearance of the upper case and lower case “P” musical notation at each end of the sonic pathways once again suggests this passing and transforming of notes from ASL into music notation and vice versa, as Kim states.

In *A Noise Without Character*, Kim has drawn three sets of empty music staves that consist of only four horizontal lines instead of the traditional five lines that make up a standard staff (Appendix: Figure 98). Kim’s lexicon is revealed through this absence of the fifth line, as she transforms the staff into a tracing of the physical movement of the word “stave” in American Sign Language, where the four fingers of the hand on its side move from left to right to illustrate the effect of horizontal lines, as if to imitate the look and form of the physical

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

properties of the staff itself.²⁸⁰ There are not enough fingers on a typical human hand to convey all five horizontal lines, as the thumb would not successfully contribute to the look and effect of the staff owing to its proportion and geometry, but ASL uses this sign none the less to communicate the meaning of the word. Underneath the three sets of four-line staves, Kim has written the following text: “A friend once described silence as a noise without character – there is a nearness to it.” Through her friend’s description, Kim is attempting to get closer to a working definition of what silence means to her, in both a qualitative and physical sense. Ultimately, the artist believes that sound and music will open up into unknown spaces if we think about sound as exempt from signifiers, as independent of cultural references, such as those that we find in musical scores. Everything that has previously been learned, must be unlearned, as is the case in her own practice where she overthrows all conventions around sound etiquette from her childhood that so imposed and controlled her, in order to subvert such restrictions.

Lastly, in *Rehabilitating Silence*, Kim continues to use the repeating motif of the “P” musical notation, this time in the structure of what resembles a family tree (Appendix: Figure 99). The upper case text along the bottom left hand side of the image reads, “Attempts to rehabilitate silence’s public image.” Kim said of this work, “sometimes people try to impose their idea of silence onto my work,

²⁸⁰ Christopher Willes, “Christine Sun Kim Explores the Politics of Sound: Silence as Oblivious As Ever,” in *MusicWorks* magazine, Issue 123, Fall 2015, <https://www.musicworks.ca/featured-article/sound-notes/christine-sun-kim-explores-politics-sound> Accessed December 20, 2015

and I believe there is a need to rehabilitate silence's reputation."²⁸¹ A generic, mainstream conception of silence might be a space where nothing can be heard at all, which is often likened to what a deaf experience must be like. I believe it is this myth that is constantly read onto Kim's life experiences, which is why she is attempting to rehabilitate silence, at least from her perspective as a deaf woman. In the drawing, the "P" notation begins as a solo character at the top of the family tree, but then grows into two underneath on the next level, then to four on the level after, then eight, and finally sixteen, suggesting a doubling reduction of volume each time it grows a new layer or level. The use of the less than symbol < is used once again to indicate an adjustment of volume from quiet to very quiet to very, very quiet and so on, and it is also directional and ambulatory, from one very quiet volume to the next. While the amount of "P" symbols grow in their representation on the page, the sound actually decreases according to the meaning of the symbol, creating a push/pull effect. Kim has deployed her usage of the "P" notation very similarly here to how it was captured in *As Mezzo As Possible*, where there is a contrast from what the associations one makes between repetition, scale, and volume. Visual references do not necessarily equate to sonic measure, and Kim playfully experiments with these ideas.²⁸²

Christopher Willes has talked of how accessing Kim's drawings can impose difficulties for some viewers, as to begin to understand her drawings and her unique lexicon suggests that one must have a basic knowledge of American Sign

²⁸¹ Christine Sun Kim interview with Amanda Cachia, July 22, 2014

²⁸² I also want to acknowledge the popularity of idiosyncratic musical scores as developed by other deaf and/or hearing impaired artists. These include Alison O'Daniel and Joseph Grigely.

Language and musical notation.²⁸³ Willes says that this aspect of Kim's work is not unintended, as this very notion of exclusion and inaccessibility is one the artist must negotiate on a daily basis as a deaf woman living in a hearing world.²⁸⁴

While the artist touches on this feeling of exclusion in a subtle manner, one might also be able to empathize with Kim's situation if one considers the frustrating challenges that one must face when traveling in a foreign country and when one cannot speak the language. Wrapped up in all of this is a sense of alienation as the ability to be understood and to speak freely is limited, blocking circuits of information flowing from one platform to the next. It is thus not coincidental that Kim plays with a reversal of access, blocking certain pathways of knowledge that might only be available to a privileged few, and those who are typically marginalized. And certainly while Kim and others often have access to translators, information is often lost in this process, which offers both frustrating and interesting possibilities for generating knowledge.

One might also notice another type of language at play in Kim's drawings that is arguably more accessible to a mainstream audience, which is mathematics. Kim's clusters of symbols across the page superficially look as though they could be complicated algebra equations and problems. On a more philosophical level, the similarity of Kim's lexicon with mathematics is not too far off, as Kim's often speaks of how sound carries value and is a form of currency. In Kim's more recent drawings entitled *Available Spaces for Composers* (2016), she has now

²⁸³ Christopher Willes, "Christine Sun Kim Explores the Politics of Sound: Silence as Oblivious As Ever," in *MusicWorks* magazine, Issue 123, Fall 2015, <https://www.musicworks.ca/featured-article/sound-notes/christine-sun-kim-explores-politics-sound> Accessed December 20, 2015

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

turned a lexicon of architecture that might be considered as two-dimensional maquettes or models for the spaces that she references, such as a bedroom, bathroom, studio, kitchen and stairway (Appendix: Figures 100-101). While Kim retains the four-line motif of the ASL-version for the word “score,” in these drawings, she uses the motif to spatially map the interiors of these familiar domestic and public spaces as discrete clusters to explore the intersection between language and space and how this is manifested in both the private and public realms. Here, Kim’s work also now starts to evoke the architectural work of Bauman discussed earlier, who designs Deaf space with many openings which privileges vision at both far and near distances for the quick and effective transmission of ASL. Kim’s visual architecture may allude to utopian spaces for other composers, but she also builds her own idealistic worlds in these drawings.

In 2015, Kim developed a work that was especially influenced by composer Alvin Lucier and his “I am sitting in a room,” a landmark work originally recorded in 1969 and recently recorded once again by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2014 (Appendix: Figure 102). In this piece, Lucier had recorded his voice reading a text out loud, which he would play back into the room and record, and repeat this process over and over again, until eventually, each iteration of the sound of his voice became muddled and incomprehensible. Through this technological process, Lucier was attempting to smooth out the irregularities of his stutter, so he says in his famous speech, rather than point out any physical facts of the nature of how sound and voice can drastically change according to the mediated sonic frequencies of the architecture of a room.

Deriving from Lucier's work, in the recent one-night only project, *4x4*, displayed at Andquestionmark in Stockholm, Sweden in January, 2015, Kim offered another compelling example of a sonic choreopolitics, this time in three-dimensional form, where the physical movements within the gallery space, generated by vibrations carried through sound emerging from four subwoofers, demonstrated her revised mastery, power and control over the sonic (Appendix: Figures 103-104). Four gigantic, oversized subwoofers, acting as stand-ins for human bodies, were overturned and laid on their side for maximum vibrational impact between surfaces. They inhabited each of the four corners of the white cube gallery space. The sound to emerge from each of the subwoofers was recordings of voices of people that have a cultural significance to sound. These were the voices of artists with whom she had collaborated, and they included artist Tony Conrad, musician Matana Roberts, deaf designer Jeffrey Mansfield, and Robert Cohn, who was the entrepreneur who developed voicemail.²⁸⁵ Kim had asked each of them to perform one of four songs she developed based on the texts she uses in her score drawings as previously described above. The press release for the exclusive showcase, according to Kim's website, stated, "A song is played, you can feel it, but it's not really there... The inaudible sound is leaking through the building, too big to be detained in the space. The silence is physical, permeating the rooms, the objects, the bodies. It becomes the sound."²⁸⁶ The architecture of the space became the primary conduit of the sound, as it was

²⁸⁵ Christopher Willes, "Christine Sun Kim Explores the Politics of Sound: Silence as Oblivious As Ever," in *MusicWorks* magazine, Issue 123, Fall 2015, <https://www.musicworks.ca/featured-article/sound-notes/christine-sun-kim-explores-politics-sound> Accessed December 20, 2015

²⁸⁶ <http://christinesunkim.com/performance/4-x-4/> Accessed January 5, 2016

detected through the eye by the rattling of windows, and felt through the body by thumping vibrations of walls and floors. The sound could not be heard through the conduit of an ostensibly normative eardrum, given that Kim had turned down the frequency of the voice recordings to below thirty-five Herz, which is outside of the normative audible range. While the audible became inaudible, the bass frequencies to emerge out of the very large subwoofers meant that the gallery visitor was able to feel and see the voices, rather than hear them. Kim had orchestrated a very customized tuning process according to the acoustics of the room, where the recordings activated the sonic choreopolitics of the architecture. For example, according to Willes, “at the end of each song, a seven-Herz sound made the front window rattle, signalling the beginning of another song. At the end of the entire song cycle, a tone sweep appeared, signalling the finale, which Kim describes as “a short explosion that can be felt everywhere [across the gallery space].” In this way, the room itself became an instrument for enacting proximities to the silenced voice of another.”²⁸⁷ The room also became an instrument for enacting this particularized choreopolitics, where the movements that were generated through a highly attenuated manipulation of volume, sound and vibration offered Kim a space in which she was able to regain control over her so-called typical space of “lost” sound, or deafness as typically considered as a loss according to the mainstream perceptions of a hearing world.

The connections between Lucier’s work and that of Kim are important in a number of ways here, including the ideas around how our listening is conditioned

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

by our environment. Willes makes an important observation regarding the major difference between Lucier's and Kim's work, being that while Lucier allows the natural acoustics and frequencies of the room to change his voice through technological recording devices, Kim utilizes other creative voices to powerfully shift the landscape of the room through the subwoofer technology of vibration, which in turn bounces off other bodies that inhabit the space as they engage with her installation.²⁸⁸ I will add to this that Lucier uses his own voice, while Kim leases the inaudible frequencies of voices of others to speak on her behalf, where she opens up a literal and imaginative playful space for all their voices to collide within her specific experience of the sonic. The word "lease" is not a neutral term here, because we commonly associate the word lease with renting, which is associated with paying for a space in which to live. There is a value and a currency attached to a lease, so once again we see how Kim's claims around the value and currency of voice are emphasized in this work.

What I would also add to these observations is one which I don't believe has been mentioned previously in a discussion between the work of Lucier and Kim, and it is important from a disability studies perspective: both artists share an atypical complex embodiment that they both each explore through the sonic arts – in the former, that of stuttering, as filtered through voice, and in the latter, that of deafness, as (un)filtered through the eardrum. The information to be emitted from each of their unique bodily sensations is transformed and reorganized through mediated sonic form to find an alternative platform of sonic projection. While

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

Kim uses the voice of others to speak for her, Lucier attempts unsuccessfully to smooth out his voice in order to become more comprehensible, but he actually becomes more incomprehensible as an end result. Brandon LaBelle offers an interesting analysis on Lucier's stutter, which he argues is still actually inexplicably discernable amidst all the muddling noise of his recordings of recordings.²⁸⁹ He says that trying to squash out Lucier's stutter was a falsehood and an impossible feat given it is the very heartbeat driving the piece.²⁹⁰ Set apart from all this however are lingering questions around why Lucier would have wanted to make his stuttering voice smooth in the first place, and why Kim necessarily needs to lease the voices of others to speak for her? Disability studies would posit that Lucier's "crippled speech" is one "brought into being by the disabling environment created by normative hearing," or a "discriminatory mode of listening."²⁹¹ The field would encourage Lucier instead to actively cripple his speech as a technology of power, rather than turn to technology itself to ostensibly empower and make different his speech. Regarding Kim, while her clever and dynamic process of collaboration with other signature voices who have hearing capacity is exciting, Kim's acknowledgement and recognition of the value and currency of sound in our contemporary world – where she literally turns to powerful voices in the field of sound in order to not only be heard, but I would also argue to gain street credibility and a coolness factor – tends to position her as a conformist rather than an agitator at times,

²⁸⁹ Brandon LaBelle, "Finding Oneself: Alvin Lucier and the Phenomenal Voice," in *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*, New York and London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006, 126.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Caitlin Marshall, "Crippled Speech" in *Postmodern Culture, Special Issue: Voice Matters*, Vol. 24, No. 3, May 2014

where she bends to the power structures of a mainstream world in order to fit in and gain attention. Why not embrace the value and agency in the voice one *does* have (literally and symbolically), rather than focus on altering the voice one *does not* have? I conclude this section with these important ethical questions in mind as a point of reflection, in a bid to complicate the artist's intentions and choreopolitics, sonic or otherwise, that may not always neatly align with that of disability studies. This is wrapped up in larger, and at times, conflicting definitions of complex embodiment that continue to take new shape and form as it encounters one artwork to the next.

Sound-Off/Face-Off

Apart from illustrating movement and choreopolitics in Kim's drawings, scores and early vibration-based work, Kim's turn to choreography in her practice can also be more forcefully examined through her "face opera" performances. *Face Opera* was first performed at the Calder Foundation in New York in 2013, followed by *A Choir of Glances* in 2014 in the School of Art and Art History at the University of Chicago, and again in 2015 for Kim's solo exhibition *Rustle Tustle* at Carroll Fletcher gallery in London, this time using British Sign Language (Appendix: Figures 105-106). Facial expression is a major component of the communication in American Sign Language, and tells the viewer a lot about what the person is feeling and thinking apart from just the arm and hand gestures alone. According to Kim, only 30-40% of ASL is manual production, while the rest is expressed through the choreographic and spatial qualities of the

face and body.²⁹² Kim has adopted the facial expression aspects of sign language in order to conduct a group of prelingually deaf friends to sing using facial movements. The choir is led by a conductor, and each member of the group takes turns in this role, including the artist, evenly distributing the power balance. The conductor always uses an iPad to type in the word that they want the group to facially sing, and they hold up the iPad to the group to read who then follow its command with the corresponding facial expression. Unlike ASL which does use the combination of hand gestures, body movement and facial expression, in these performances, Kim has stripped the use of hand gestures and body movement so that the choir must solely rely on the tools of their face, such as eyebrows, mouths, cheeks and eyes to sing their chords, tunes, and notes based on the iPad instruction from the conductor. This work might be considered as the complete antithesis to that of Zmijewski's work discussed earlier, who expropriates deaf subjects in order to sensationalize the oddness of deaf voices and how their sound comes off as out of tone and unpleasant, aesthetically, to so-called normative ears. Kim reclaims deaf agency in her face opera series of works, where she creatively animates experimentation with deaf voice and notions of deaf singing on her own terms. Facial movement is centered, and the superiority of the voice is now made obsolete.

A separate yet similar extension of Kim's face opera work was *Subjective Loudness*, which Kim performed in 2013 at "Sound Live Tokyo" at Ueno Park Outdoor Stage (Appendix: Figures 107-108). A letter Kim had written was

²⁹² Christine Sun Kim, *face opera ii*, Calder Foundation, High Line Hotel, New York, 2013
<http://christinesunkim.com/performance/face-opera-ii/> Accessed August 11, 2016

projected to the audience onstage, offering them conductor-like instructions for resisting and subverting Ueno's sound etiquette which states that sound should be limited and thus not be higher than 85 decibels. Ueno's etiquette was in the form of a list of sounds higher than 85 decibels that should be resisted, and Kim converted this list into a score created by the audience.²⁹³ Each word was written down and passed around to the audience on small pieces of green paper and when the paper was received, the audience was required to make the noise using their voices and projected them, and consequently the score, into a microphone.

Deaf artist Joseph Grigely has also been fascinated by the construct of the choir. In 2007, he created the video installation *St. Cecilia* as part of a major touring solo exhibition co-organized by the Contemporary Museum, Baltimore and The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College. Grigely's video was co-produced by the Contemporary Art Museum and the Orange County Museum of Art in Newport Beach, California. In this work, Grigely captured video footage of the Baltimore Choral Arts Society Chamber Choir and recorded them singing well-known Christmas songs off their music sheets in a two-channel video installation. The music sheets they used were framed and included with the display alongside the video installation. Unlike Kim's face opera work, Grigely directs the choir to sing, but the lyrics are slightly jumbled so that letters replace words, changing their meaning but also their sounds. Each version of the video differs slightly, so that when one hears the sounds from the lyrics to emanate from each of the pieces, this expectation of

²⁹³ Christine Sun Kim website, *Subjective Loudness*, <http://christinesunkim.com/performance/subjective-loudness/>, Accessed August 11, 2016

what, for example, *Silent Night*, sounds like, is confused even further. In order to hear the soundtracks of both versions of the lyrics simultaneously, one must also choreograph one's body spatially within the gallery space directly under a speaker in front of one of the screens for the sound to be activated, so the viewer must also work and so become embedded in the communicative exchange. Familiar lyrics are made strange, and instead Grigely strives to offer a multiplicitous aural experience that he argues mirrors the reality of any mode of communication in the pre-dominantly hearing world, as there are always gaps and information that is lost. In her essay about Grigely's work, Irene Hofmann also says that "these slips in language explore errors of perception, as evidenced by mistakes in close-captioned texts, the mishearing of song lyrics or misunderstandings of speech."²⁹⁴ Indeed, Hofmann goes on to say that we have all been there when it comes to tripping up on speech, making up words to songs we hear on the radio, or even botching the national anthem during a football game. Both Kim and Grigely are interested in similar ideas, using a combination of voice, body, facial expression and spatial awareness in order to draw the viewer in.

It is interesting that both Grigely and Kim turn to choirs that belong to classical musical and religious traditions and rituals. I believe that these particular musical and performative mediums offer the most choreographic drama of the human body and face, for deaf and hearing subjects alike. When we hear the incredible and powerful voice of an opera singer as he or she hits the high note,

²⁹⁴ Irene Hofmann, "Cheese and Salad are Here," in *Joseph Grigely: St. Cecilia*, curated by Ian Berry and Irene Hofmann (Baltimore, MD: The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Contemporary Museum, 2007), 94.

part of this experience is watching how their body, face and especially mouth contorts as breath and sound contort, flow and spill from their stomach, lungs, rib cage, esophagus, throat and tongue. This might be akin to the idea that the communicatory package of American Sign Language incorporates movement, manual dexterity through hands and fingers as well as facial expression. Indeed, Grigely has commented on this very fact, studying the choreographic movements of musicians through *St. Cecilia* and also in his series of prints entitled *Songs Without Words* (2007) which recalls his own memories of music as a child and his current relationship to music as a deaf man, fascinated with way music “looks.” In this series, Grigely clipped images of singers and musicians from *The New York Times* and deleted any identifying captions, leaving us with an experience of these performances with only their gestures sound and without words. One example is an image of American actress, singer and cabaret star Eartha Kitt, who was best known for her highly distinctive singing style. Kitt’s body language is a powerful portrait: her right arm raised and authoritative, her mouth wide open as we imagine a note piercing through the microphone, fingers spread on her right hand, elbow resting at the waist. All these visual clues aid us in imagining how the music ricochets through Kitt’s entire body, similar to how we imagine a word ricochets through a body and is expunged through the face in Kim’s face opera work.

In the final piece I wish to discuss by Kim, *Game of Skill 2.0* (2015), the artist invites the audience to directly engage in the process of activating and translating sound through movement, similar to Grigely’s spatial intervention with

St. Cecilia (Appendix: Figure 109). In March, 2016, I visited New York City's MoMA PS1 to see the group exhibition *Greater New York*. Kim's work was part of this show. This installation was also part of Kim's solo exhibition, *Rustle Tustle*, at Carroll Fletcher Gallery in London from November 27, 2015 – January 30, 2016. The work aims to engage interactively with the audience in listening, but they must listen under specific conditions devised by Kim which involve choreographed movement of the body in the gallery space as they try and capture the acoustic qualities of its architecture. Strips of velcro suspended from the ceiling diagonally line the gallery within arm's reach (relatively speaking, as I had to stretch quite a bit to access this work), and visitors hold up a technological device custom-built for this installation above their heads and swipe the antennae against the Velcro whilst walking slowly or at a pace that seems to trigger the sounds (Appendix: Figures 110-111). The simultaneous requirement of moving and brushing along the Velcro using a steady hand is challenging and even laborious, and often times it is impossible to synchronize the two actions successfully. It does take patience and effort to eventually hear a smooth transmission of sound, so visitors must be prepared to spend time with the piece. Of course, this is part of Kim's point, as she wants the audience member to struggle with hearing and listening to the jarbled noises being emitted from speakers that are connected to the Velcro technology. Indeed, the jarbled noises sound like feedback from a conflation of radio stations playing on top of one another, although it is actually a text written by Kim regarding her experience of borrowing the voice of an interpreter to communicate verbally. Because the sound

depends on the movement, Kim alludes to the fact that our entire bodies participate in the action of communication, and that talking, hearing and listening is not just confined to the voicebox, or eardrum. Indeed, we already understand that in the d/Deaf world, communicating is very much about movement through American Sign Language, along with facial expression and a complicated grammar and syntax. However, in this work, Kim is also demonstrating her own personal experience of navigating sound as a deaf person in a hearing world. Using *Game of Skill* as a metaphorical embodiment of Kim's own daily visceral experiences in communicating through struggle, patience, and effort with hearing people, she points out that hearing and listening are indeed a skill, regardless of hearing ability. The artist has effectively turned her audience members into, in her words, "human turntable needles," where she manipulates how their bodies must rotate across the gallery platform, when and where they must stop and start, and at which grooves they might pick up a noise or two.²⁹⁵ This work effectively continues to capture Kim's artistic goals as I have demonstrated in earlier works, where she confronts the hearing world with the possibility that listening can be unfamiliar and made strange, and that perhaps the systems that are currently in place in the hearing world are taken for granted because they are assumed as a given. Kim up-ends the status of this system and forces us to learn under a new regime.

²⁹⁵ Carroll Fletcher Gallery, Christine Sun Kim, *Rustle Tustle*, November 27, 2015 – January 30, 2016 <http://www.carrollfletcher.com/exhibitions/45/overview/> Accessed August 11, 2016

Touching Sound and the Theatricality of Sculpture

Los Angeles-based artist Alison O’Daniel grew up hard of hearing in a hearing world. O’Daniel uses hearing aids and lip reads, and is only now just learning sign language. As a toddler, O’Daniel was constantly frustrated - screaming, pinching, kicking. Her parents moved to a two-story house and she began falling down the stairs, alerting them to balance issues associated with her inner ears. At the age of three, she was fitted with hearing aids and her communication frustrations calmed down, but subtly lingered and took different forms. She says,

“Sometimes I feel like my hearing is so fine-tuned that I hear details that others don't notice, like my imagination is opening up to fill in gaps where I'm at a loss. My experience ricochets between enjoying the solitude of muffled hearing-aid-less mornings to deep frustration at people's unwillingness to be sensitive to missing an entire film or conversation or nuances of daily experiences and feeling ignorant and therefore isolated to a perpetual and profound state of observation and wonder. All of these experiences have made me sensitive to sound, to the loss of it, the abundance of it, how it impacts social situations, and the amazing possibilities in the aural world.”²⁹⁶

In my interview with her, O’Daniel told me that she learned interesting things in her ASL class. The teacher was talking about deaf community, Deaf culture and deaf core. O’Daniel told me that I am part of deaf community because I’m studying ASL. O’Daniel is part of Deaf culture because she has a hearing disability. Deaf core are people who are completely immersed in deafness. O’Daniel found this interesting because she has never thought of herself as part of

²⁹⁶ Alison O’Daniel in Shana Nys Dambrot, “Alison O’Daniel: A New Sensibility of Blended Senses” on *KCET ArtBound*, November 15, 2013, <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/los-angeles/alison-o-daniel-the-tuba-thieves.html> Accessed August 20, 2014

Deaf culture. It wasn't until the last five years that she has been actively engaged with people who are hard of hearing and deaf. Relationships exist through friendships she has made, and through her artwork. She said her interest in her hearing began when she was in her 20's. Making her films has also given her more access to Deaf culture and deafness, because she has cast both deaf and hard of hearing people as characters in the films. While O'Daniel feels she is consistently involved in Deaf culture, her world is still most pre-dominantly a hearing one.

Using a collaborative, cross-platform process, O'Daniel makes her work in narrative cinema shot on film and video, sculpture, and sound, and her work also appeared in my recent *LOUD silence* exhibition, where she showcased a new scene entitled *Hearing 4'33"* from O'Daniel's film *The Tuba Thieves*, still in production. The film's title is a response to a string of tuba thefts occurring from L.A. area high schools for the past several years. *Hearing 4'33"* is part recreation of the premier of experimental composer John Cage's seminal "silent" music composition *4 minutes and 33 seconds (4'33")*, which altered the history of music (Appendix: Figures 112-113). The original Cage piece consisted of the sounds of the ambient environment that the listeners heard while it was performed, although the work is commonly known as *4'33"* of silence. Cage rejected such a reading, saying that there is no such thing as silence. O'Daniel's scene builds on the original Cagean ideas of expanding notions of sound, where she takes us through this recreation of the original performance, although also simultaneously controlling sound so that only iconic sounds can be heard, such as the ticking of

the performer's stopwatch (Appendix: Figures 114-115). Perhaps this control of sound reflects O'Daniel's own fractured experience of accessing sound in her daily life, where sound typically controls her, so to speak. Instead, in the film, O'Daniel claims control over the sonic outcomes, much like Kim's attempts to revert the hearing/deaf power dynamics. Then, half-way through the 4'33" performance, an older gentleman in the audience gets up from his seat and leaves the venue to take a walk outside in the forest amongst the fall leaves. It is unclear if he plans to return to the performance or if he has left for good, but O'Daniel's meta-narrative illustrates an offering of more sounds through the man's journey outdoors. In addition, the artist also offers new sonic information through her collaborations with other musicians: she commissioned three composers, Ethan Frederick Greene, Christine Sun Kim, whom she considers a friend, and Steve Roden, to respond to lists of references - poems, images, artworks, architecture, the circular tracks left behind by a Zamboni on an ice rink - in order to create musical compositions. In response to their compositions, O'Daniel wrote the overall screenplay of the film that incorporates real people and events grappling with the relationships between sound and silence. The commissioned soundtracks have also been incorporated into scenes for *The Tuba Thieves*, including the *Hearing 4'33"* scene.

One of the most important elements in this work is that the process of writing the film mirrors O'Daniel's own experience of hearing. For the artist, information is interpreted, misinterpreted, gleaned, and confused, all in an attempt to prioritize the act of listening. This is what the artist attempts to communicate

through her process and artistic outcomes.²⁹⁷ Straus talks of instances where balance is lost and regained in music, and how inversional symmetry and balance could very easily compare to the experience of hearing for a deaf body, and how both have come to be pathologized.²⁹⁸ Inversional symmetry and balance may be characterized by deviation and disruption, and indeed, we might equate this to O'Daniel's own visceral experience of hearing, which has been vacillating through fits, starts, gaps and spontaneous interpretations. Thus, I'd like to examine how the artist demonstrates this through *Hearing 4'33"* as a unique form of choreopolitics.

The premier of the original *4'33"* took place in Woodstock, NY in 1952 at The Maverick Concert Hall. In O'Daniel's recreation of this performance, sound becomes a character in *The Tuba Thieves* as the main characters' stories unfold through a sequence of stolen instruments, purposeful silence, and alternative communication, all bridging the gulf between Sign Language and speech. The original *4'33"* was composed for any instrument and the score instructs the performer(s) not to play any of the instruments for the entire 4 minutes and 33 seconds duration of the piece. Sounds like the wind stirring outside, raindrops pattering on the roof and noises that accompanied talking, rustling and adjusting of audience members during the performance all became more important. Cage was interested in how the artist and composer had no control over the ambient or

²⁹⁷ An off-shoot to this is that O'Daniel's entire process of shooting her scenes in step-by-step fashion over a number of years is a type of choreography in itself, let alone the film editing process itself. O'Daniel likes to display each of her scenes in galleries when exhibition opportunities arise, hence disrupting the chronological convention of presenting a film.

²⁹⁸ Joseph N. Straus, "Musical Narratives of Balance Lost and Regained: Schoenberg and Webern," *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

accidental sounds the audience would hear during the performance, nor did they have any influence or impact on the work itself. Even the sounds of the restless audience waiting for the music to unfold during the debut of *4'33"* were part of this work.

Apart from O'Daniel's interest in "silence" as sound as famously developed by Cage, what is important about this reprised scene is two-fold: first, that the artist chose to record very little sound within the work itself, and second, she also chose to leave out captions of any dialogue or ambient sound. The only access both hearing and deaf visitors were privy to regarding the sound to emerge from her film was via the text that appeared on the wall next to the projection. It listed the sounds in chronological order: audience applause, ticking of the stopwatch, piano lid being lifted and closed, and the sound of the score pages turning. Finally, there is the sound of buzzing insects and the crunch of a man's footsteps in the forest as he walks over brown, orange and yellow leaves as residue from the fall season. The artist spent a long time carefully thinking about these choices. O'Daniel chose to include more obvious sounds, such as the ticking of the stopwatch, but to remove the audio that remains anecdotally famous from *4'33"*, namely the sounds from the audience as they reacted to the performance. The artist decided to instead try to ambitiously capture any missing sound through other devices in her film-making process. O'Daniel's sonic choreopolitics is where she has attempted to substitute sound with other filmic devices, where the sense of hearing has been displaced, and our ability to see sound is required instead: there is a literal uncomfortable shift or movement from one sensorial

mode to another. Thus, while at first it might seem that O’Daniel was making choices that continue to privilege a hearing audience by her minimal inclusion of sound, heightened by the lack of captions that appear to exclude a deaf audience (the text on the wall comes across as after-thought, perhaps), in fact the artist edited the piece so as to emphasize camera movement as a stand-in for the soundtrack. She says,

“Soundtracks provide an emotional guide for cinema. The music often largely stays in the back, but tells the audience how to feel about what they see. I have been trying to figure out how to follow similar tactics...and extend [sound] into other elements of the visual aspect of filmmaking....How can cinematography and camera movement or lighting operate on a similar level that sound and music does? Can it? Can swooping camera movement occupy the same emotional and physical register as a soundtrack would? Can audiences see that kind of camera movement and can they imagine what the soundtrack should be when all you hear is room tone or silence during that movement? How do you not simplify the experience of listening to music in order to express a similar feeling or understanding of what is aurally happening?”²⁹⁹

O’Daniel then powerfully transfers her auditory experience into moving images. The larger narrative has been developed through a format of call and response, like a game of telephone that prioritizes gaps of information and subjective interpretations of information, a process similar to O’Daniel’s experience of hearing, in which she is constantly compensating for lost information. One very noticeable way that the artist achieves this effect is how her film offers a split screen to her audience, where we are watching a scene from two different perspectives at all times. This strategy offers the viewer more visual

²⁹⁹ Alison O’Daniel, interview with Amanda Cachia, July 17, 2014.

information than one normally receives from watching a single-channel installation, as, for instance, we will see the architecture of the building where the performance was held from two different angles, where the camera slides up and along the side of the building, and then up and over the roof, both in close-up, and then in long-range. Or we will see the view of the performer on stage, perched in front of the piano. We see a close-up of him, but we also get to see him at a distance, behind the heads of other audience members all focusing intently ahead on what is about to happen. Indeed, instead of hearing the famous Cagean silence from *4'33"*, we see it through hand and body movement and very literally various points of view. I'd like to suggest that while there is ostensibly lost information occurring here – such as the sound of music sheets as they are being turned by the performer, or the sound of silence itself, at the same time, the artist also gives us these rapid, simultaneous and different views of each object, each action, and so on, within each scene. She offers a different mode of access that might replicate her own daily experience of being in the world. Rather than perceiving this strategy as a compensation for what is “lost,” I am more interested in the idea of alternate realities and what is, in fact, gained, in line with the rhetoric of deaf gain. This is the advantage produced by occupying a different acoustic sensorium, and Davidson suggests that “deaf gain makes possible new aesthetic possibilities and offers a different optic on the ear” or in O’Daniel’s case, on the eye as well.³⁰⁰

In the second half of the film, as I’ve already briefly alluded to, one of the audience members, an older gentleman, who had been watching and listening to

³⁰⁰ Michael Davidson, “Living Deaf Hearing,” in *LOUD silence* exhibition catalogue, curated by Amanda Cachia, gallery@Calit2, San Diego: University of California, 2015.

the Cage performance, decides to get up and leave the room and escape into the beckoning forest. While the reason for the man's departure from the performance is not clear, O'Daniel's choice to closely chart his physical and sonic movements as he aborts the concert and journeys into the woods are important. It is here that the artist offers an elaboration of the "sounds of silence" that enriches the Caguan premise even further, for O'Daniel chooses to place great aural emphasis on the crunching of the fall leaves as the man's feet step across their surfaces, and the buzzing of an insect as it circles around the man's head. He swats at the insect, irritated. As we take in these naturalistic sounds that are from the corporeal vantage points of above and below, we then see the man take off his shoes to walk barefoot in the leaves, so that his proximity to nature and the sounds themselves is made even more intimate (Appendix: Figure 116). Through this man's experience, O'Daniel encourages us as audience members to imagine ourselves, literally, in the man's shoes, or in the man's flesh, so to speak, so that we come to truly appreciate the beauty of the sounds our own moving bodies generate through space, on a daily basis.

O'Daniel has a talent for conveying sensorial effects through the language of cinema, and I want to locate the sonic choreopolitics of O'Daniel's process here within recent film theory discourse as developed by scholar Jennifer Barker. Barker argues that, "particular structures of human touch correspond to particular structures of the cinematic experience."³⁰¹ She continues that there can be shared forms of tactility between both spectator and film, in order to open an intimate,

³⁰¹ Jennifer M. Barker, "Introduction: Eye Contact," in *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2009, 2.

rather than distant, experience with the film being watched.³⁰² Barker's important thinking around an expanded definition of touch, as activated through cinema, that involves texture, spatial orientation, comportment, rhythm and vitality has much to offer by way of O'Daniel's film, for touch is an important manner of being in this scene that senses the world through muscles, joints, skin, tension, balance, velocity, vision, the sonic, and more. Indeed, one does not necessarily have to physically touch the fall leaves underneath the man's feet in order to sense the touch, for we sense this touch through the sound of their crunch underfoot. Barker's ideas would posit that O'Daniel's film illustrates the tactility of the eye, but I would also argue the tactility of the ear as well. Indeed, while Seth Kim-Cohen talks of how "the blink of an ear," here I reference what the ear can touch.³⁰³ O'Daniel's scene offers the viewer a revised and unique multi-sensorial experience of 4'33" that may not have been felt previously when engaging with the original Cagean composition, and her reading is an exciting one for it also opens up new pathways for considering the limitations and openings of access.

As an accompaniment to the film, O'Daniel also created sculptures that translated what she was hearing in *The Tuba Thieves* into form, color, material, and shape, which could then operate as abstract or quasi closed-captions for the scores. Even though there is a connection between both the film and her sculptures, O'Daniel says that the narrative in each medium is completely different, and so she desires to actively force the audience to reconcile with, and

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Seth Kim-Cohen, *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art*, London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2009.

yet be comfortable with, this dissonant experience. Once O’Daniel completes the sculptures, she then tries to find moments in the screenplay that match a sentiment, feeling or emotion that has been captured in her objects, and this in turn becomes the titles for the pieces. O’Daniel says she has never actually put her sculptures into the scenes of her film, as she always saw the scenes and the sculptures as separate and yet parallel streams. The sculptures in the *LOUD silence* exhibition included *Sun Score* (2013), *Steve’s Score* (2013), *Breathing Instruments* (2013), and *Early 30’s* (2013) (Appendix: Figure 117). The artist also used her score of sounds as a way to design her visual sculptural language of shapes including “boxes, hoops, chains, living plants, willowy stalks, [and] cast-off talismans.”³⁰⁴

The juxtaposition and placement of the sculptures on the floor is significant, as all the anthropomorphic objects look into each other as if they were a garden or a choir, yielding energy and sustenance from one another. One of the titles of the works, *Breathing Instruments*, offers a powerful visual association with the physical movement of lungs inside a chest as it breathes in and out, and indeed we may also contemplate the flow of air breathing in and around the positive and negative spaces of the sculptures as they inhabit their spots on the floor.³⁰⁵ In this meditative zone, O’Daniel offers a simultaneous space of movement and stillness, where we might be able to “hear” the rhythm of the

³⁰⁴ Shana Nys Dambrot, “Alison O’Daniel: A New Sensibility of Blended Senses.” *KCET ArtBound*, November 15, 2013, <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/los-angeles/alison-o-daniel-the-tuba-thieves.html> Accessed August 20, 2014

³⁰⁵ Zeynep Bulut, “A Vibration Meant-to Be,” in *LOUD silence* exhibition catalogue, curated by Amanda Cachia, gallery@Calit2, San Diego: University of California, 2015, 46.

shapes and textures of her objects. Her abstract sculptures also offer a non-figurative representation of deaf and/or hearing impaired bodies. They stand clustered as a highly tight-knit group, which, incidentally, might also suggest notions of deaf community, which is a very important social configuration of deafness. The artist activates this embodiment through multi-modal form, as it is not only vision that we must come to rely on for these critical bodily and affective relations. We must negotiate the complexities of how a score of sounds inhabits the “body” of her sculpture through the two-step process of watching and listening (or reading the text) of her film, followed by an engagement with her objects through her abstracting conceptual conflation of matter, sound, affect, and language.

O’Daniel’s sculptures have striking similarity with several sculptures by Robert Morris, namely *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* and *Column*, both from 1961 (Appendix: Figures 118-119). These two works are important on a number of levels. O’Daniel’s sculptures share some of the same formal geometric qualities that Morris’ work has, such as the shapes of a box and a column respectively in the work of Morris, which appear as pedestals in O’Daniel’s works. But what is most important between these works across several generations and time periods is that they inhabit certain conceptual explorations and experimentations attached to the idea of the liveliness of sculpture. The period in which Morris executed these sculptures was a moment in which the performativity of sculpture, including its physical movement, temporal form,

memory and so on, was of great interest to him.³⁰⁶ The very premise of *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* forges a generative connection to that of O’Daniel’s sculptures. As the title of his work suggests, Morris had recorded the sounds created when constructing the wooden box itself, and then inserted this recording inside the box so that viewers could not only see the box on their physical encounter with it in the gallery space, but they could also hear the history of its making. O’Daniel’s work finds an affinity given that her sculptures embody sonic characteristics from the screenplay of her film. Sounds become objects and captions in material form for O’Daniel, where Morris blends sound and object together.

Morris’ *Column* provides another perspective on O’Daniel’s work. Interestingly, this sculpture was used as part of a performance organized by La Monte Young at the Living Theater in New York in 1962. It stood vertically on a stage for several minutes, before Morris repositioned it to a horizontal placement with the aid of string as a guiding device from offstage. This theatricality of sculpture, influenced by the investigations of choreography and movement of bodies through his ex-wife Simone Forti, began a whole new evolution of minimalist work for the artist at this time, such as his iconic L-beams series from 1964-1965. Sculpture for Morris became imbued with human-like qualities, for it could inhabit liveliness and shapeliness as its forms encountered other bodies moving in and around its structure(s) during the moment of encounter at its site. Similarly, and yet differently to Morris, O’Daniel’s particularized sonic

³⁰⁶ Seth Kim-Cohen, *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art*, London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2009.

choreopolitics of her objects offers movement, composition (a score, if you will), and dialogic, multi-sensorial relations not only among the objects themselves, in their specific arrangements on the floor, but also with their audience, who might begin to consider how an embodiment of hearing impaired-ness offers new avenues for listening and hearing.

O’Daniel’s work that was on display as part of the group exhibition, *Siren*, at FiveCar Garage in Los Angeles in the winter of 2016, is composed of verticle textile scores made of morse code translations of closed captions and audio cues from *The Tuba Thieves* (Appendix: Figures 120-121). Some of the scores directly translate closed caption elements into morse code, which is an alphabet where letters are represented by long and short signals of light or sound that was especially popular in the 18th century for radio communication. For example, the word “telephone” is translated into the dots and dashes of morse, while others contain the names of the three composers whom O’Daniel had collaborated with – Kim, Greene, and Roden. In these works, O’Daniel continues to tangentially work with sound through tactile and visual means, while removing the aural component almost entirely.

Skating into Sound

O’Daniel’s *Siren* installation served as an afternote for her solo exhibition *All Component Parts (Listeners)*, at the Centre d’Art Contemporain Passerelle, in Brest, France in 2015. This project included several new scenes from O’Daniel’s ongoing *Tuba Thieves* film, in addition to new sculptures that continue to embody

physical evocations of the score in her scenes. A new component to this project was O'Daniel's large-scale sculptural installation entitled *Luminous Louise (Soundproofers)*, 2015, which consisted of *Soundproofers 1* and *Soundproofers 2* (Appendix: Figure 122). Both of these works are patchwork quilts made from cotton, thread, acoustic sound foam and paper, and were inspired by the work *Luminous Zag: Night*, 1971, by the artist Louise Nevelson (Appendix: Figure 123). O'Daniel was inspired by the musculature of the work, which she said resembled the structure of a musical score and after conducting more research on the piece, she realized that it was based on Nevelson's attempt to capture the frenetic movement of the improvisational sounds of jazz music.³⁰⁷ O'Daniel decided to remake Nevelson's work but to embed new material components into the work to change its static function as purely an artwork into a work that literally absorbs sound. The artist incorporated sound-proofing material into its body so that it consumed the noises in its immediate environment and she enjoyed the idea that she was physically sculpting what is ordinarily an ephemeral and invisible experience – sound – into matter. She also incorporated the features of a quilt into these pieces to suggest the quality of patching together noises as a type of game, which also emulates O'Daniel's own daily experience with sound as a person who wears hearing aids. Lastly, the artist had also incorporated the patterns left in the ice by a Zamboni into these pieces, which is a machine used to resurface smoothed-out ice for skating, in addition to abstract markings in the paintings by Sophie Tauber-Arp, such as *Oval Composition with Abstract Motif*

³⁰⁷ Alison O'Daniel interview with Amanda Cachia, January 26, 2016

(1922) (Appendix: Figure 124).

Thinking about O’Daniel’s sculptures through the theatricality and movement of sculpture evident in Morris and Nevelson’s work becomes all the more meaningful when considering O’Daniel’s childhood background as a competitive ice figure skater. The artist says that she is able to productively bridge the worlds of figure skating and art-making as, through both these realms, she enjoys being able to conjure expression through the body or, as the case may be, through sculpture, which falls outside of verbal language. What the artist found so magnetic about ice skating was how her body would show her what it could do, and her body was able to develop a sophisticated means for communicating through gesture, movement and form.³⁰⁸ O’Daniel imbues her sculptures with similar ambulatory and sensorial qualities evinced through her body as it engages in ice-skating, layering on a specific choreopolitics that is informed by her hearing impairment. In the emotional landscapes of the ice rink and the gallery filled with O’Daniel’s sculptural clusters, the artist widens the possibilities for a particularized occupation of physical and audible space.

The traces and marks left behind by the figure-skating world have continued to feature in O’Daniel’s later works. In the group show, *Book of Scores*, curated by Chaira Giovando for Disjecta Contemporary Art Center in Portland in 2015, the artist set up a live performance between a violinist and a skateboard rider. The skateboard rider wheeled and traced a giant Zamboni pattern that the

³⁰⁸ Shana Nys Dambrot, “Alison O’Daniel: A New Sensibility of Blended Senses.” *KCET ArtBound*, November 15, 2013, <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/los-angeles/alison-o-daniel-the-tuba-thieves.html> Accessed August 20, 2014

artist had replicated on the floors of the Disjecta artspace using material that blended in with the color of the concrete (Appendix: Figures 125-126). Here, the artist was interested in discovering the sounds a skateboard could make, and she was conceiving of the skateboard as an instrument in parallel with the sounds of an actual instrument (Appendix: Figure 127).

In O'Daniel's next major solo exhibition in New York at Art in General in 2016 hosted by the Knockdown Center in Brooklyn, which she considers as a sister project to the presentation in France, the artist again incorporates the Zamboni pattern on the floor of the gallery space. Apart from incorporating more new scenes again from *The Tuba Thieves*, and a live ASL poetry-slam performance accompanied by punk music by Future Punx, King Pussy Face and Wall, *Room Tone* also revisited certain references that O'Daniel had originally given to her collaborators when she asked them to create new musical scores (Appendix: Figure 128). For example, Steve Roden had been given the Zamboni pattern to consider during the creation phase of his score contribution for *The Tuba Thieves*. We have already seen the trace of what the Zamboni leaves behind literally woven into her performance-based work in Portland and the *Soundproofer* pieces in France. Here again, the central work in her *Room Tone* installation was another quilt suspended from the ceiling in the middle of the space that conveys the visual language of the Zamboni. On the floor, jutting off several inches from the ground and extending from one corner of the hanging quilt, O'Daniel installed thin glass tubes of circling and colorful neon lights that also replicated the Zamboni markings. This time, O'Daniel is now also

incorporating her response to the space at hand, which was very large and a bit uncontrollable, sonically-speaking. The artist created her installation to control and effect the flow of sound which would in turn impact hearing and sound absorption. Through the materiality and corporeality of O'Daniel's work in the gallery space, she creates a specific tone for the room. Thus, the exhibition is about housing a formal, physical and functional presence that attempts to absorb some of the sound and so alter the sonic quality of the space.

In technical terms, "room tone" is the sound that is always already present in a space – it is an invisible thing. People don't notice it, and even if you stop and listen you will be unable to hear it, because you're in it, unless the lights in the room have a loud buzz. "Room Tone" is not palpable and so the title of her show is indicative of a subtleness of space that is typically very difficult to discern, yet the artist constantly thinks of this in physical terms during her film-making process and sound editing etc. So O'Daniel's dampening sound quilt interjects with the effect of the room tone in the room. When people saw this exhibition, they were probably not aware of how the room tone had been altered, but the artist insists that it is present and her work is an attempt to shift this sonic experience into both a physical and visual one, as her previous works have already demonstrated. Like the Zamboni pattern the artist had implanted on the floors of the gallery at Disjecta, the artist had also incorporated the repeating motif of the pointy arrow-head to indicate the direction of the machine (Appendix: Figure 129). Given the directional quality of the arrow, it also

functions as a suggestion for how to move in the gallery space, but also the direction and flow of sound, and how sound circulates.

Within the installation, O'Daniel also bifurcated the flow of the neon strips on the ground by the hanging quilt, which the artist equates to how to think about compositions and visual scores. She says that having the quilt cut off the neon in the corner is a visual cue for a shift in tone, or an entirely new tone.³⁰⁹ She also likens this to the interrupted movement of a figure skater on used ice who requires the Zamboni to come in and transform it once again into a glassy surface for future skates. In this sense, the choreography of the Zamboni is a construct that bifurcates the path and interrupts the sharp sounds of blades on ice, like the quilt interfering with the neon strips, which metaphorically shifts chemicals in space. The slate is wiped clean, like an idea waiting to be kindled on a painter's canvas. Similarly, the strips of neon themselves can not only be read as the residue of a Zamboni, but also as a musical score, where the neon indicates a material and visual shift of notes and musical interpretation, much like the bifurcating function of the quilt. O'Daniel's ideas might be extended by the accidental breakage of one of the neon glass tubes during the ASL poetry slam performance event held one evening in April during the run of the show. I visually and aurally witnessed the oblivious man walk straight into the low-lying neon architecture, following by the corresponding shatter of glass. Indeed, the man's involuntary ambulatory connection with the artist's score evoked not only a

³⁰⁹ Alison O'Daniel interview with Amanda Cachia, April 12, 2016

change in the direction of the pattern but also the acoustics of the “room tone” and a jump from one note to another on the score.

Other visual aspects of this installation included triangular-shaped aluminum “tone markers” that were erected on the floor at various points on the Zamboni pattern, which represented numbers from *The Tuba Thieves* screenplay. All the scenes O’Daniel chose to represent in these “tone markers” happened to be ambient scenes and soundscapes rather than being about narrative that contained prominent dialogue, as again she wanted to reference subtle shifts in “room tone” represented in the the actual film installation. Lastly, O’Daniel erected a number of 14” triangles in the space, floating from above with wire attached to the ceiling (Appendix: Figure 130). They visually draw the Zamboni pattern into the space and air, and the effect of the repeating shapes – arrows against triangles against ovals – is also evocative of O’Daniel’s editing software, that deploys this visual language to indicate certain points on a track (Appendix: Figure 131). The triangle, for instance, points out an area of emphasis, which is a formal device like the choreographic pattern on a score, requesting the musician to turn from one moment to the next, and again, in a dialogical exchange, reading, responding and changing, through sound, energy, and movement.

Conclusion: A New Spatial Aurality

This chapter has demonstrated how the sonic choreopolitical work by two contemporary artists, Christine Sun Kim and Alison O’Daniel, offers critical perspectives regarding audist assumptions, where they occupy physical and

audible space with agency, and expand sensorial significations around silence and sound through both deaf and hearing impaired experiences. Sound takes up and moves through space, and Kim and O'Daniel know how to channel, manipulate and direct its flows within their gallery installations and performances. Within the audible spatial politics of their work, we understand that sound and silence can be quiet and loud, physical, conceptual, visual, metaphoric, synaesthetic, tactile, inaccessible and accessible, inclusive and exclusive, captioned and not captioned, and more. Just as Cage's revolutionary, experimental music revealed the limitations of how we listen and what we construe as sound, these artists reveal the limitations to knowing sound solely through the ear or associating silence only through emptiness or quietness. The ear is not the only receptacle for channeling sound, speech and language. The artists remind us that sound should also not be discounted or disregarded in the hearing experience of one who is deaf or hearing impaired, thus elements of sound can still be traced throughout some of the installations. An absence of hearing does not equate to a void relationship with sound. The artists provocatively ask, "what happens when one cannot hear silence or sound through traditional channels? Can silence and/or sound be visual or otherwise?" Sound can indeed be experienced through multiple non-hierarchical channels and modalities. The oppositional aesthetics that might be gleaned serve a reorientation of perception towards the experience of sound, silence, scores, sculpture, performance, space and architecture within the lingua franca of contemporary sound based practices and contemporary art discourse in general. Ultimately, the work discussed in this chapter incorporates more diverse en-

fleshments that are embedded with auralities spanning tones, myriad inflections and multi-modal sensations to give nuanced complexity to “voluminous territories,” voice, and agency across the gallery space and beyond. The artists successfully rattle any normative comprehension of everyday senses of social relations as they offer a fuller spectrum of human experience primarily through the sonic body in motion, and sonic motion in general.

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Chapter 5:

Haptic Activism: Moving Feeling through Tactile Space

“The five senses, as they are commonly studied and defined, are more or less arbitrary localizations of that confused cluster of intertwined senses which constitutes the typical forces of the human machine. I believe that all these forces can be better observed on the epidermic thresholds of our body. For this reason I name Tactilism the cluster of all of these still uncharted senses.”³¹⁰

Introduction

This chapter will examine the work of Fayen d’Evie from Melbourne, Australia and Wendy Jacob, from Boston. Both artists are interested in new orientations or encounters towards objects and space through touch. Through their individual practices, each artist enunciates a type of haptic activism that suggests that the navigation of space can be experienced through tactility and need not rely on the typically predominant sense of vision or the scopic regime. Touch is a much under-theorized and under-utilized pragmatic and sensorial modality in the “visual” arts, and through this chapter, I aim to contribute to a productive discussion around how the hierarchy of the senses might be realigned to allow more space for new knowledges to be generated through touch.³¹¹ Lepecki’s choreopolitics and Forsythe’s choreographic objects is thus applied to this chapter

³¹⁰ F.T. Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. L. De Maria (Milan: Mondadori, 1968).

³¹¹ Scholarship on touch has been explored by art historians and scholars such as, in no particular order, Constance Classen, with her books, *The Deepese Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (2012), and *The Book of Touch* (2005) along with Fiona Candlin’s *Art, Museums, and Touch* (2010), Helen Chatterjee’s edited collection of essays, *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling* (2008), Peter Dent’s edited collection of essays, *Sculpture and Touch* (2014), Mark Paterson’s *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects, and Technologies* (2007), and Abbie Garrington’s *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (2015). Jennifer Fisher also wrote an essay entitled “Tactile Affects” for *Tessera* journal in 2002, pp. 17-28. There have also been exhibitions that have explored the nature of touch, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum’s partnership with the Wellcome Collection entitled *Touch Me: Design and Sensation* (2005) and *Tactical Explorations*, which was a series of public events held at the Northlight Gallery in Huddersfield, UK (2006) as part of a PhD research project.

by considering the politics of the haptic. The sense of touch and the proprioceptive relates to a perception and manipulation of objects that inevitably incorporates movement. In order to touch something or someone, one must move and one must make contact, typically with the hands, from one surface (for example, that of the skin) to another surface. Touching can also occur, of course, through other parts of the body beyond the hands. Through the movement of touching, one also *feels*, physically, cognitively, and affectively. When these surfaces meet in different circumstances and at various paces and speeds, I argue that an illustration of choreographic objects takes place, and new knowledge is produced. Haptic activism is especially important for the type of choreopolitics I wish to uncover in this chapter because of the way that the various complex embodiments represented here engage with this methodology through various artistic practices. Specifically, Fayen d'Evie is a visually impaired artist who integrates art-making, writing and publishing to explore the tactility of text, and the material tactility of books. She is also interested in the slippage into abstraction of pre-braille typography and punctuation and conducts tactile dialogues with individuals to develop new choreographic language around touch and haptic activism. Wendy Jacob's work bridges traditions of sculpture, invention and design, and explores relationships between architecture and perceptual and bodily experience. She has developed a practice focused on vibration and how vibration communicates an experience with space and *of* space itself through touch. In their attempt to engage in a haptic dialogue towards and with objects and spaces, these artists are showing the participants – and us, as

observers – what new possibilities may exist within new tactile orientations towards matter – a type of “tactile choreopolitics,” where tactility is the primarily modality in activating the choreographic quality of objects.

An important question I seek to grapple with in this chapter is what are the implications for the body’s proprioceptive relationship with matter when the body is either blind or deaf? Both d’Evie and Jacob work with a particular audience in mind – d’Evie, who herself is a visually impaired subject, makes work from her own unique embodiment typically with both sighted and non-sighted audiences. Jacob, who does not personally identify as physically disabled, makes work in collaboration with deaf audience. The unique user experiences of deaf and/or hearing impaired and blind and/or visually impaired subjects when engaging with the work of d’Evie and Jacob is important in this chapter because I suggest that the potential for the haptic activism and the “tactile choreopolitics” I propose can be fully understood through these particular constituencies. In other words, deaf and blind audiences can entirely benefit from their engagements with touch because vision and hearing is not a requirement. The manner in which deaf and blind subjects draw knowledge from their engagements with touch may be similar and also entirely different: for example, deaf audiences conventionally experience sound through the tactility of pitch and pace of vibration, while blind audiences can learn about the qualities of objects through feeling their textures, shapes and curves, coolness and warmth. However, these experiences are not mutually exclusive, and experiences of vibration can be experienced by all manner of bodies, alongside familiarizing oneself with the multi-sensorial qualities of

objects. Touch, beyond standard technological interfaces, is also a much under-utilized sensorial conduit in museum exhibitions and curatorial activity at large that can be and should be enlivened.³¹² The tactile and the opportunities that the tactile present are exciting yet under-explored in the art world, but the progressive work that d’Evie and Jacob are engaging in suggests that new pathways are being forged that open up the dialogue and radicalize the hierarchy of the senses. Part of the challenge of this work is that a “lexicon of touch” still does not exist – Spence and Gallace state that we “do not have a recognized set of terms to describe the tactile sensations elicited by various material properties, although there have been sporadic attempts over the years to educate people’s sense of touch...”³¹³ I suggest that d’Evie and Jacob’s work in “haptic activism” might contribute to this much needed lexicon of touch, and that a tactile choreopolitics might also form feed into this same lexicon.³¹⁴

The artists’ work in haptic activism and “tactile choreopolitics” will be analyzed in this chapter by offering an extensive discussion on the critique of ocularcentrism in Western culture as it will contribute to the understanding and significance on how the artists are implicitly attempting to destabilize ocular-

³¹² Many large museums around the world, however, have developed sophisticated “touch tours” of objects in their permanent collections (or tactile replicas when the objects are deemed inappropriate for touch by conservators) that aim to engage the blind community. I am unaware if these tours have ever attempted to use these touch tours to engage both blind and deaf community. For some reason, the experience of touching art remains segregated to the blind community, where vibration and sound and music remains prevalent in the deaf community, through avant-garde contemporary art practice. Resources for touch tours are provided by organizations like *Art Beyond Sight* based in New York.

³¹³ Charles Spence and Alberto Spence, “Making Sense of Touch” in *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, ed. Helen J. Chatterjee (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2008), 30.

³¹⁴ One of the earlier radical advocates of touch was the Italian Futurist F.T. Marinetti (quoted at the start of the chapter), who delivered a talk which was consequently published as an essay in 1921, “Tactilism: A Futurist Manifesto,” where he suggests a lexicon or “scale” based on four categories of touch (re-printed in *F.T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. Günter Berghaus, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006). Around the same period, Carlo Carrà also developed a manifesto entitled *The Painting of Sounds, Noises and Smells* (1913), which “proposed a synaesthetic approach to pictorial representation, and explicitly questioned the power of vision.” Pierpaolo Antonello, “‘Out of touch’. F.T. Marinetti’s *Il tattilismo* and the Futurist Critique of Separation,” in *Back to the Futurists: The Avant-Garde and its Legacy*, eds. Elza Adamowicz and Simona Storchi (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), 38-55.

centric views through their challenging art practices. Rather than thinking about what knowledge is acquired when we cannot see, I am much more interested in what knowledge is acquired through touch. This re-directional focus is important, because I am more interested in considering knowledge to be gained from deploying the acquisition of touch, rather than thinking about knowledge to be gained by the lack or absence of another (in this case, vision). Historically, many artists have been interested in temporarily blinding themselves in order to gain new perceptions of space. Inevitably, they find themselves aware of their other senses once this occurs because they are forced to navigate the world now through touch, smell and sound. It is as if these other senses, once at bay, are now radically released into the world. This experience proves productive for them and has been the source of much artistic experimentation and theorization. I will discuss some of these practices generally in a bid to trace a genealogy of this practice (for example, in the work of Robert Morris, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and Raphaëlle de Groot) but also to chart a transformation in politics because I suggest that d'Evie and Jacob make the practice of “not looking” much more complicated as they work with audiences that are not necessarily sighted (indeed, d'Evie explained to me that she talks of “viewers” when her audiences are sighted, and “beholders” when they are not), and because they begin with the starting point of the haptic, rather than a starting point of “not seeing.” The haptic and the tactile are the center, while vision remains peripheral to the conversation. This is part of the politics – vision is not only funneled towards the bottom-end of the sensorial pecking order by the artists’ and their suggestion that we can

experience much in the world by way of tactile engagement, but they avoid relying on vision (or lack of vision) from the basis in which to move through their ideas. At the same time, it is important to recognize that vision remains a part of the conversation. As d’Evie describes, “I’m not keen on forbidding visual image-making, because I think this actually reifies the image through negation, and also reinforces a visual-blindness binary rather than allowing for complexity, but it remains a conundrum.”³¹⁵

The art historian Panofsky argued that in the Renaissance, artists placed the viewer at the center of painterly worlds they created for their eyes. Artists have sought to disrupt this hierarchical model as far back as Cubism. This discourse of de-centering comes primarily from philosophy and has had particular impact on feminist, queer and postcolonial theory and disability studies, which argues that unified, self-knowing ideology is masculinist, racist and ableist. Such theorists argue there can be no one right way of looking or being in the world because as Aimi Hamraie states, “the exclusion of pathologized bodies from social and built worlds is a construction of society rather than pre-determined by biological lack or excess.”³¹⁶ Renaissance one-point perspective then is ruptured by a denial of any one ideal position from which to look at a work of art. This chapter then, will not only rupture this notion of the ideal position or one-point perspective, but it will also suggest that there are ways to experience a work of art than simply “looking.” This de-centering practice that the Cubists spearheaded is

³¹⁵ Fayen d’Evie email with Amanda Cachia, May 11, 2016

³¹⁶ Aimi Hamraie, “Universal Design Research as a New Materialist Practice” in *Disability Studies Quarterly*, Volume 32, No. 4, 2012, <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3246/3185> Accessed June 8, 2013

made complex in this chapter when it becomes a practice of re-centering – putting a different modality into the center, and pushing an old one out into the margins.

While blind scholar and writer Georgina Kleege suggests that visual studies can be useful for its interrogation of the binary opposition between blindness and sight, I would like to suggest that visual studies must go further than this by also utilizing phenomenological and personal accounts of atypical sensorial experiences and how they can deepen and complicate the spectrum between “total blindness” and “total sight” through touch.³¹⁷ What are the shades of grey (or blue or green or red) in between the mythical perceptions of what “true blindness” is, or “true vision”? What experiences of haptic and tactile engagement and other categories that we don’t yet know about contribute to the spectrum, and contribute to our perceptions about being in the world? I offer that these new points of knowledge give weight to the political objecthood of vision and hearing impairment or blindness and deafness.

Critique of Ocularcentrism

A critique of ocularcentrism could help us rethink the disabled subject in a move away from reductive terms. Ocularcentrism is the longstanding bias toward vision in Western thought and culture. As historians like Martin Jay and David Levin have shown, the ocularcentric tendency goes back as far as Plato or Descarte’s notion that ethical universals must be accessible to the ostensible mind’s eye, and this continues through the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and

³¹⁷ Georgina Kleege, “Blindness and Visual Culture: An Eyewitness Account” in *The Disability Studies Reader* Third Edition, ed. Lennard Davis (London: Routledge, Third Edition 2010), 522.

into modernity.³¹⁸ Jay continues that this attitude believed eyesight was “noble” because the Greeks saw the eye has having superior skills, such as its ability to survey a wide visual field at one moment or similarly, its vast reach of ocular range.³¹⁹ The eye is able to accomplish its tasks of seeing at a greater remove – or distance – than that of the ear to hear or the nose to smell, so it was deemed to hold more objective truth. Art historian Norman Bryson, in his essay, “The Gaze in the Expanded Field,” speaks of Lacan’s approach to the gaze: “vision is menaced...threatened from without, and in some sense *persecuted*, in the visual domain, by the *regard* or Gaze.”³²⁰ The visual domain is thus also implicated in a layered politics that has historically swirled around issues of identity: this is implied in my discussion on disability and the art/artists in this dissertation. So what if the clarity of “truth” was not beholden to vision or the mind’s eye? According to Kleege, many still believe that there really is a right and a wrong way to see and so “be” in the world, even a true and false way. For example, while vision is typically identified with knowledge, blindness is often equated with lack, as demonstrated in idioms like, “I must have been blind not to see the implications,” or “I’ve lost sight of the goal” which characterizes some the entrenched thinking in Western society thanks to the lineage of the Greeks. Kleege says that blind authors and artists have a “desire to represent their

³¹⁸ Georgia Warnke, “Ocularcentrism and Social Criticism” in *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, (ed.) David Michael Levin (Berkeley, California: University of California, 1993), 287.

³¹⁹ Martin Jay, “The Noblest of the Senses: Vision from Plato to Descartes” in *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 23.

³²⁰ Norman Bryson, “The Gaze in the Expanded Field” in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988).

experiences of blindness as something besides the absence of sight.”³²¹ Blind people have simply learned to “attend to their non-visual senses in different ways” and blind people “differ widely in the ways they attend to, use or value these perceptions.”³²²

But what of the world of “visual culture” that places emphasis on the visual, in line with ocular-centric thinking? For Patrizia Di Bello and Gabriel Koureas, art historical analysis has rarely gone beyond an investigation of visually embodied observers. They too, call for an analysis of visual culture where sight, sound, smell, touch and the interaction of all the senses in synaesthesia account for a wider spectrum of bodily experiences and the materiality of a work of art. They talk about how a contribution of “affective economies” will add a powerful contribution to theories that are primarily based on visual and verbal communication.³²³ Artists like Jacob and d’Ewie are countering ocularcentrism so that an alternative regime can be generated. Rethinking vision and its top-tiered place on the sense hierarchy will allow us – and our bodies – to become closer to our other senses. For instance, Merleau-Ponty says “to see is to *have at a distance*.”³²⁴ Sobchack adds to this that while vision is a modality that gives a certain objective sense of ourselves, it is often only partial and ambiguous. We may gain visual knowledge of ourselves, but this is distanced from our consciousness – it is the outside looking in, like the experience of using a mirror to

³²¹ Georgina Kleege, “Blindness and Visual Culture: An Eyewitness Account” in *The Disability Studies Reader* Third Edition, ed. Lennard Davis (London: Routledge, Third Edition 2010), 522.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Patrizia Di Bello and Gabriel Koureas “Introduction: Other than the Visual: Art, History and the Senses” in *Art, History and the Senses: 1830 to the Present*, eds. Patrizia Di Bello and Gabriel Koureas (Surrey, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 1-2.

³²⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” trans. Carleton Dallery, in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 166.

see ourselves, or a digital photograph or a friend responding to us when we ask them, “how do I look?” Thus, we are reduced to two-dimensions. Sobchack argues that such limited knowledge of ourselves is unfortunate because we have “forgotten that we are more than visible body objects”³²⁵ while Nicholas Mirzoeff refers to Derrida’s work and his observation that the relationship between the invisible and visible always threatens to break down. Consciousness has a “blind spot” if relying solely on the eye as the source of all knowledge.³²⁶ Visibility involves a non-visibility or a limitation in that it only gives access to one kind of perception of the world. How can we be at home in our bodies when we are so absent from them sensorially-speaking, relying merely on vision and the gaze? Sobchack turns to Merleau-Ponty to re-dress such absence but she also makes clear that to foreground this “feeling” of the body is not to sentimentalize it, but it is to emphasize aspects of the bodies that are absent – to capture what is missing from the visible in order to expand our current understanding and knowledge of how our bodies exist. There is power to be had in exploring and feeling all aspects of our bodily sensorium within and around our images of them.

To complicate the bias inherently present in vision, in “On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics,” Robert Vischer says that the effect of certain shapes and forms in the environment upon a person’s mood is all to do with muscular and physiological movement of the eye and how the eye responds to certain stimuli. For instance, “the straight line in an oblique direction is initially

³²⁵ Ibid., 189.

³²⁶ Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Blindness and Insight” in *Bodyscape: Art, modernity and the ideal figure* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

experienced as offensive because it requires uncomfortable movements.”³²⁷

Vischer’s commentary suggests that there is no support for the multi-directional insertion of disabled bodies in alternative spaces in the built and natural environment. He says that eye is strained by the “unnatural” movements it is forced to perform upon gazing at a vertical or multi-directional form in space. Vischer continues that the horizontal line is more favorable to the human eye because our eyes are positioned horizontally, reflecting Arnheim’s ideas that were outlined in Chapter Three. He says “the vertical line, on the contrary, can be disturbing when perceived in isolation, for in a certain sense it contradicts the binocular structure of the perceiving eyes and forces them to function in a more complicated way.”³²⁸ This commentary alludes to a tension for the eye as it perceives a disruption to its gaze upon viewing the vertical form, which does not mimic the composition of the eyes side-by-side on the human face.

Vischer’s astonishing claims about disabled bodies, where he favors “regular forms,” and links “regular” human embodiment with art forms, highlights the historically entrenched bias against disabled bodies, for he says that, “in general, we find all regular forms pleasing because our organs and their functional forms are regular. Irregular forms bother us...the eye is pained to find no trace of the laws that govern its organization and movement.”³²⁹ He further links “regularity” with “organic norm” and how the laws that govern symmetry and proportion also fall under this rhetoric. The regularity of the eye desires to see

³²⁷ Robert Vischer, “On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics.” *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, Introduction and Translation by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikononou, (California: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994) 97.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid., 97.

regularity in architectural forms, and by extension, other human bodies. Many assumptions are being made about “regularity” and “normativity” that do not allow any room or representation for marginal complex embodiment. Disabled bodies break the regularity of the eye for their bodies are irregular, misshapen, and composed and decomposed of alternative corporealities. Hence, horizontal symmetry “presents a better effect than vertical symmetry because of its analogy with our body”³³⁰ and disabled bodies are associated with negative effects on the optics of the eye because their bodies are not represented as horizontal in the art practices. Their bodies may zig zag or they may corner, or wrap around walls, or go in different directions, vertical and otherwise. Vischer’s account does not even leave room for the other senses, including sound, let alone the tactile and the infinite possibilities of the haptic. While I understand that I cannot use Vischer’s account as a stand-in for all normative theoretical approaches to the body, I do think that his account provides a provocative antithetical position, despite the challenges of mobilizing such accounts from a markedly different historical period (that of the nineteenth century).

Kleege has discussed how blind and sighted people can actually share “blind experiences” as, for example, when sighted people are “blinded” by certain situations, they tend to negotiate new environments and “feel the presence of large objects even without touching them as ‘atmosphere-thickening occupants of space.’”³³¹ Her emphasis on touch here should be noted. She goes on to provide a

³³⁰ Ibid., 98.

³³¹ Georgina Kleege, “Blindness and Visual Culture: An Eyewitness Account” in *The Disability Studies Reader* Third Edition, ed. Lennard Davis (London: Routledge, Third Edition 2010), 522.

report by Bryan Magee (sighted) and Martin Milligan (blind) who co-authored a book on blindness, where Magee recalls having

“vivid non-visual awareness of the nearness of material objects. I would walk confidently along a pitch black corridor in a strange house and stop dead a few inches short of a closed door, and then put out my hand to grope for the knob...I might knock small things over, but would almost invariably ‘feel’ the big ones. I say ‘feel’ because the sensation, which I can clearly recall, was as of a feeling-in-the-air with my whole bodily self...I suddenly ‘felt’ a certain thickness in the air at a certain point relative to myself in the blackness surrounding me.”³³²

Both Magee and Milligan ultimately believe that the blind develop this type of acute spatial awareness that the sighted also have, but do not develop because they do not need it so much given they have been endowed with vision. The two authors believe that the sighted and blind share a type of sensorial/perceptual experience, but Kleege also notes that this type of sensation is not so easy to classify within one of the five traditional senses. She says, “here, a ‘feeling’ is not the experience of texture or form through physical contact, but an apprehension, of an atmospheric change, experienced kinesthetically, and by the body as a whole.”³³³ She continues that perhaps an alternative or new theory of the senses should be developed where the five traditional senses are essentially multiplied or subdivided into more finite categories of discrete sensorial experiences that can simultaneously be in synthesis or disjunction with each other.³³⁴ With the accumulation of experiences by Jacob and de’Evie and their

³³² Bryan Magee and Martin Milligan, *On Blindness: Letters Between Bryan Magee and Martin Milligan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 97-98.

³³³ Georgina Kleege, “Blindness and Visual Culture: An Eyewitness Account” in *The Disability Studies Reader* Third Edition, ed. Lennard Davis (London: Routledge, Third Edition 2010), 522.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

participants/observers who have many different similar and contrasting experiences to share, I argue that all this testimonial and anecdotal evidence will only add fuel to Kleege's urgent call for this new definition of the senses. Now it's only a matter for the artists, curators and art historians to catch up and re-think representations, where the blind and sighted and the deaf and hearing meet half-way.

To destabilize the "truth" of vision even further, Merleau-Ponty suggested that body image is not still or static, but rather that it is moving and dynamic and Colin Smith adds that the body's "spatiality is not that of objects arranged in space, but a spatiality of situation, the situation of the body in face of its tasks. It is an orientated space."³³⁵ In more detail, Merleau-Ponty said that the body is extended by instruments that it uses in order for new means in which to see, walk or hear, such as the cane for the blind, a wheelchair for those with mobility impairments or hearing aids for those who are deaf. These acquired objects literally become a part of the body.³³⁶ Such bodily extension and scrambling of senses offer counter embodiments. In view of Merleau-Ponty's theory of embodiment, objects or entities in the spatial field – devices to extend or replace the senses – mediate the experience of the self and world of the person who uses them, providing a whole new means of knowing the world, and seeing it beyond merely vision. Smith says that this new body 'image'

³³⁵ Colin Smith, "The Notion of Object in the Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty" in *Philosophy*, Vol. 39, No. 148 (Apr., 1964), 112.

³³⁶ Miho Iwakuma, "The Body as Embodiment: An Investigation of the Body by Merleau-Ponty." *Disability/Postmodernity: Embodying Disability Theory*, ed, Mairian Corker and Tom Shakespeare. (London and New York: Continuum, 2002) 78.

“enables us to make immediate use of the body’s acquired and sedimentary powers and habits, in response to the demands of a new situation. We know how to pick up something without groping all round first. We can incorporate our car into our body image, and know just what gap we can get through. If we play a stringed instrument we learn to relate musical intervals to muscular effort; here the body is auditory and not visual [and so on].”³³⁷

The body reveals itself to be adaptable, flexible, pliable, able to be responsive to new situations and events that feed it an alternative make-up that is marked at a particular integer of the ability spectrum. Smith goes on to say that even within the pure state of vision, we never really know what is upright or what is upside-down because spatiality and orientation is acquired and is never absolute: “There is no level of all levels.”³³⁸

A some-what perhaps tangential or related genealogy of d’Eveie and Jacob’s work can be traced in public performance-based work that involves obstruction of vision as I mentioned earlier, such as Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Aveugle Voix* (Blind Voice) performed at 63 Bluxome Street in San Francisco in 1975, where she wears a white shirt and pants and covers her eyes and mouth with white cloths that bear the words “Aveugle Voix” (Appendix: Figures 132-133). Cha was interested in the miscommunications and translation that occur in the nexus between voice, vision and the tactile and how this also related to the cut off “voice” and “vision” of the objectified female within feminist-based discourse and gaze theory as developed by Laura Mulvey. Documentation appeared in the

³³⁷ Colin Smith, “The Notion of Object in the Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty” in *Philosophy*, Vol. 39, No. 148 (Apr., 1964), 114.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

Blind at the Museum exhibition curated for the Berkeley Art Museum in 2005.³³⁹

Blind at the Museum, in the Berkeley Art Museum's Theater Gallery, which was curated by curator Beth Dungan and artist Katherine Sherwood, asked how blindness might change our sense of what it means to view a work of art, ultimately prompting viewers to imagine new ways of seeing and knowing. Twelve artists participated in the exhibition, most of them blind, and one of them deaf, among them Sophie Calle, the French neoconceptualist artist; the sculptor Robert Morris; and photographers John Dugdale and Alice Wingwall. Rather than thinking about blindness and sight as polar opposites, the artists explored a wide range of optical experiences—peripheral vision, distortion, floaters—along a continuum. The artists emphasized sound, touch, and multisensory expression through a variety of media; they investigated the unreliability of vision and rethought the activities of viewing within the museum. Some offered a meditation on the limits of the optical; others explored the metaphors and stereotypes of blindness; and a few highlighted the embodied experience of visual impairment. Kleege suggested that even though *Blind at the Museum* had offered many typical accessible components to the display — such as ASL interpreters at the conference and for hearing impaired guided tours, as well as audio descriptions at the exhibition and Braille wall labels — what was really important about *Blind at the Museum* was the suggestion that the museum and artistic practice were at a sort of threshold or juncture. Kleege imagined that artists in the future would be inspired by the exhibition to create art that can be experienced by a number of

³³⁹ To view the *Blind at the Museum* website, visit www.blindatthemuseum.com.

different modalities, such as tactility, verbal or sound elements. While many artists have done precisely this, such as installations that create immersive environments, like the work of Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto, or the Happenings of Allan Kaprow, or the Fluxus-based performance by Yoko Ono in 1965 entitled *Bandaged Orchestra*, where members of an orchestra at Carnegie Hall in New York bandaged each other's faces, rendering them partially blind and therefore unable to play their instruments (Appendix: Figure 134), we shouldn't rule out the possibility that additional innovation that will come from artists with vision impairments or other disabilities, such as the blind artists in *Blind at the Museum*, and of course, the work of Fayen d'Evie and Wendy Jacob. Also, *Blind at the Museum* was not so concerned with tactile activism inasmuch as it wanted to promote this greater spectrum of blindness in an attempt to break down the vision/blindness binary that has been presented in art for centuries.

Other important examples where vision and lack of vision remains a central preoccupation of artistic practice is the *Blind Time Drawings* by Robert Morris produced in 1973 (Appendix: Figures 135-136). There were ninety-eight sheets in the original execution. All the other series Morris developed afterwards constitutes one of the largest bodies of works created by a temporarily blindfolded artist. The titles of his drawings literally describe the way in which the drawings were made: with the artist's eyes closed. Morris used a mixture of graphite or powdered pigments and oil, and left prominent markings of his fingers and hands on the paper. Each drawing was based on an assignment of tasks, which were previously defined and written out at the bottom of the sheet afterwards. Some

have called Morris' work a type of "task performance."³⁴⁰ Through this work, Morris was interested in the conceptual and physical outcomes to be gained from a temporarily blind state. He too believes that the West is obsessed with the idea that to know reality through space, place and objects must be analogous to visual perception. Morris started making his *Blind Time* drawings in the wake of Marcel Duchamp's trajectory, where he famously devalued and thus stigmatized what he called "retinal" art, and traditional painting was abandoned.³⁴¹ In his writing on Morris's work, Donald Davidson has suggested that the reason for Morris' long-term interest in the blinding process was his "ambition for, and search to find, a basis for drawing other than straightforward representation on the one hand and the nonrepresentational on the other."³⁴² Kenneth Surin talks of how Morris's vision became substituted for tactility, haptic and proprioceptive awareness, which is what he had left at his disposal during his blindfolded process, and that Morris was curious to learn what happens to vision itself when this substitution takes place.³⁴³ Further, Morris was also curious to learn what happens to the very nature of painting, which typically relies on vision for its ostensible successful execution. Surin says that a process of denaturalization occurs between depiction and that which is depicted, given this sequence is ruptured by the blind state. Surin goes into a detailed discussion on how the foundation of modernism itself might be reconsidered through Morris's work. He says that blind painting

³⁴⁰ Robert Morris, *Blind Time (Grief)*, SPRÜTH MAGERS BERLIN, November 12, 2010 - January 08, 2011, press release, http://www.spruemagere.com/exhibitions/274@@@press_en Accessed August 15, 2014

³⁴¹ Jean-Pierre Criqui, "Drawing from the Heart of Darkness: Robert Morris's Blind Time" in *Robert Morris: Blind Time Drawings, 1973-2000*, ed. Jean-Pierre Criqui, Centro Per L'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, Italy, 2005.

³⁴² Robert Morris, "Writing with Davidson: Some Afterthoughts after Doing *Blind Time IV: Drawing with Davidson*," in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Summer, 1993), 619.

³⁴³ Kenneth Surin, "Getting the Picture: Donald Davidson on Robert Morris's *Blind Time Drawings IV (Drawing with Davidson)*" in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 101, Issue 1, Winter 2002.

“destroys the very possibility of . . . unity and immediacy that are the hallmarks of modernism,” and that we must consider instead what lies beyond modernism.³⁴⁴

Surin’s words suggest that the act of art-making in and through blindness offers both a destabilization of painting, modernism and art history itself, which has much potential for transforming the typically reductive position of the blind subject.

However, it strikes me as interesting that Surin also assumes that within a state of blind art-making, one cannot be equally “unified” or “immediate.” This might only be applicable to those persons/artists who can see, and once sight is temporarily removed from them, they lose this ability to be “unified” and “immediate.” Certainly, from one who is congenitally born blind, or who acquires permanent blindness later in life, language like this may not only be inapplicable, but it can also be untrue. This points to not only how there has been little scholarly attention to the creative marks made by someone who is born blind from birth within art historical discourse (even though I understand Morris did work with someone who was blind during one of his *Blind Time* series), it also points to how our discourses might need to be completely reoriented towards a new ontological framework. Further, the language that is used in some descriptions around Morris’ process references notions of “constraint” and how the blinding process somehow carries with it certain degrees of “pathos” which is problematic.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 165.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

There are many tropes of the “blind man” in art history that serves to offer “enlightening” points of view similar to Morris’ project, and many contemporary artists ranging from Javier Tellez (such as his film, *Letter on the Blind, For the Use of Those Who See*, 2008) to Artur Zmijewski have explored ideas of blindness and touch from a non-blind perspective (sometimes with much controversy, such as Zmijewski’s video *Blindly* (2010) which premiered at the Venice Biennale in 2013). These types of constructs around the “blind man” also abound in art history writing. In her new unpublished book, *the global Work of art*, Caroline A. Jones talks of what she calls a “blind epistemology,” which is a trope that she suggests is a “politics of the partial view.”³⁴⁶ Jones attempts to trace the blindman trope in Western culture, where she talks of how it has been a “philosophical trope, an actors’ category and a tactic of contemporary artists.”³⁴⁷ Jones continues to say that, “Blind epistemology intends to alter the complacent subject; paradoxically, visual art contributes to this transformed “point of view” that might not be a view at all. Contemporary multi-sensorial tactics contrast with histories that find international displays compulsorily visible, and philosophies that invoke rhetorical blindmen for mostly negative reasons.”³⁴⁸ While Jones’ important critical analysis and deployment of the “partial view” are progressive and important for art history, it is still contained with an ocularcentric perspective at its center where it uses the ostensible normative fact of sightedness as a departure point, for Jones begins with the idea of vision and how contemporary

³⁴⁶ Caroline A. Jones, “The Blindman – or, how to visit a world exhibition” from *the Global work of art*, manuscript in progress, 2015, quoted by permission from the author

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

artists play with this “vision” in order to develop more complex understandings of the sensorium. Her binary of blindness/vision is perpetuated and reinforced by the structure of her analysis, similar to how sighted artists such as Morris use the privilege of their vision first to experiment with the other senses. What is missing and necessary for future analysis is how we might begin with a deeper examination of touch and how touch is at a center and how this can be used to bring new knowledge to radically *replace* vision, not *instead* of vision. She also fails to engage directly with blind artists and relies on artists who have considerable profiles in the artworld to support her claims.

An example of how I have attempted to redirect this flow between center and margin and tackle the sensorial regime by exploring touch first is through the work of contemporary Canadian performance artist Raphaëlle de Groot de Groot. Similar to the *Blind Time* drawings by Morris, de Groot sets up various physical and situational constraints—obstructed vision using a blindfold, restrictive wear, covering up the face—as she strives to work outside the purview of vision, in “un-mastery”, such as to instill a state of dispossession, of loss: loss of one’s bearings, loss of control, loss of self-image. From her perspective, to be an artist is to experience one’s limits, to shake up the idea of a static reality, to break the fixed patterns, and to work in a movement that looks for disorientation and accepts discomfort. During her performances, I have been particularly interested in how de Groot has invited the visitors to film her during the performances as way for them to participate in the experience. The artist says of this process that the camera originally simply served to document her blind experiments and serve as

another means of interpretation. But after several performances, the camera became an “extension of de Groot’s eye, turning its gaze upon her to become at once its source and point of impact.”³⁴⁹

My criticism of this process, however, is that while audience members could watch de Groot as she taped various objects, prosthetic legs and arms to her own arms with tape and string, and then move about the space or position herself on a pulley, or pile up objects on her body, ultimately it was impossible for them to be inside her embodiment – to feel the weight of the performance detritus as they accumulated on her body, to smell the stench of the tape against her nostrils or feel the stickiness of the tape against her lips. The artist was not successful at bringing the invisible – or whatever visibility she had – to the surface for the audience, nor was she successful at demonstrating all her other sensorial experiences in the same maneuvers. Thus, the artist resorted to falling back on giving the audience a visual means of experiencing her work in multiple temporal formats – in real time, and digital time, where an individual recording could be played over and over again and shared with a public. De Groot’s eye was not only given over to the audience’s eye, but the audience’s eye(s) became the God’s eye, the seminal Foucauldian panopticon over-seeing all activity, while the artist was unable to return the gaze.

What of de Groot’s other interesting experiences in this journey through a foreign space? How do we access that which is ineffable, incoherent, and that which does not yet have adequate vocabulary to express these perceptions that

³⁴⁹ Louise Déry, “The Exhibition as Exercise,” *Raphaëlle de Groot: En exercice*, Montreal, QC: Galerie de l’UQAM, 2006, 36.

change by the minute, every day? I would argue that de Groot's so-called invented "handicaps" are not handicaps at all, but rather they are alternative modalities that give rise to these new perceptible moments.³⁵⁰ Despite the success of de Groot's work in sharing new orientations within a gallery-based performance series, I am not sure the artist is critically engaging in a phenomenology of lived experience that can be adequately shared with her public beyond merely visual documentation. Is de Groot blind-folding herself in each performance, enacting and seeking out a blind experience as mere spectacle for her audience? Is she further reinforcing blindness as a non-normative, radical alterity, that is somehow removed from daily life? It appears that de Groot is actually sensitively aware of the ethical implications around her practice. She says that sometimes she feels like a tourist or voyeur, being disrespectful and invasive.³⁵¹

In 2016, I curated a group exhibition at the San Diego Art Institute entitled *Sweet Gongs Vibrating* where I aimed to offer a new sensorial template for how a visitor might engage with a work of art. It was my attempt at curatorial haptic activism as I aimed to have the visitor directly touch all works in the exhibition as much as possible. One of the pieces in the exhibition was an eight-minute video study by de Groot entitled *Study 5, A New Place* (2015) (Appendix: Figures 137-140). The artist had created this video for an earlier show I had curated in 2015, the online project, *Marking Blind*, funded by Arts and Disability Ireland. I had

³⁵⁰ I'd like to point out that the language used in the essays of de Groot's *En exercise* catalogue at Galerie de l'UQAM is problematic for its use of the word, "handicaps," as it is a dated term which is also considered offensive to the disability community.

³⁵¹ Raphaëlle de Groot in "The Exhibition as Exercise" in *Raphaëlle de Groot: En exercise* (Montreal, QC: Galerie de l'UQAM, 2006), 34.

asked de Groot to make the video which was motivated by my earlier critique of her work. In the video, De Groot engages in a performative action where she fashions found materials collected in Florianapolois Brazil (during an artist residency) on her head. They gradually completely obstruct her sight as she creates a blind mask over her head. The action is recorded from three view points: one is a capture from the artist's forehead, another is from her hand, and the last one is from a cameraman. The two first are blind view points. There is no eye behind the camera framing the action, as the devices, which also record audio, are strapped directly onto de Groot's body. The study then also becomes one of the beautiful sensorial experience of the actions she is performing on herself - the image and sound recording devices probe this experience up close, almost from within, as if they were parts or extensions of her skin, hands, ears and eyes. Once recorded, this type of "internal" viewpoint allows the artist to see the experience, to look at it as material form. The record can never substitute the lived experience, but in this case, it simulates it. From a subjective perspective the study is also an attempt to measure and qualify (characterize, describe) the difference between the recorded images and sounds from within to the artist's own physical and sensorial memory of the experience itself. She says, "I wanted the viewer to gradually travel between the various view points, be in the eyes that are not seeing but yet visualizing, be in the skin that is sensing and feeling, be in the ears. I also edited it from my own blinded perspective, wanting the viewer to experience blindness through sight."³⁵²

³⁵² Ibid.

The video was a powerful work to include in *Sweet Gongs Vibrating*, but in order to truly achieve the activation of the modality of touch for the audience member that I was seeking in de Groot's work, I asked her if I could include the original found materials that she used to create her make-shift head-mask. The artist then allowed me to place the work as a disorderly bundle on top of a pedestal in front of a projection of the accompanying video (Appendix: Figures 141-142). The projected video literally broke through the flat two-dimensional visual representation on the wall so that we could not only see the physical detritus of what the artist was experimenting with on her face and head, but the viewer could, importantly, touch it. As a gallery visitor engaged with touching the bundle of scraps, I wanted them to explore the varied surfaces of de Groot's papers, ropes, roughly-formed pieces of charcoal, plastic and other materials. If one was hearing and seeing, then one could visually observe how their touching actions mirrored the touching of the same materials taking place by de Groot in the video as she covered her head, and/or one could hear how the crinkle crinkle crunch crunch noise to emerge as a result of hands making impact with crumpled paper were echoed in the sounds emanated from de Groot's same haptics.

Extending de Groot's work in this way was a bid to achieve a heightened level of tactile choreopolitics, and in this chapter, I argue that it is these types of interventions that need to be encouraged as we consider the expansion of the sensorian and haptic activism within our museums and galleries. I will now turn to my analysis of the work of d'Evie and Jacob. Throughout my discussion, I reference the work of Brazilian artist Lygia Clark in order to suggest that d'Evie

and Jacob's ideas flows from, and then expand the conceptual, sensorial and corporal experiments conducted by Clark during the 1960s and 1970s.

3-ply: Writing, Making, Touching

Melbourne-based artist Fayen d'Evie is charting new territory in her radical conceptual approach towards haptic activism in a bid to reorganize museum practices, and to benefit a wider range of audiences, especially visually impaired and blind visitors. It is only in the past several years that d'Evie has been thinking more and more about operating from a primacy of blindness and the instability of vision, which she now considers as a generative beginning for what she does. Blindness plays a key role in two sides of her personal life: in relation to her family, and herself. The artist's step-father, Russell Smith, was an inventor, who invented major reading and writing tools for the blind, and was at the forefront in the technological development of these tools in the 1970s, including sonar glasses, the first talking computer for blind people where one would be able to hear synthesized voices, devices for the first way that a blind person could access the internet using their own device, along with Braille Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs). He worked for a company called Humanware over a 30 year period. As she grew up, she would sit at table while her stepfather developed these things. Leading international figures from the blindness world would visit their home to have consultations as these tools were developed by Smith. One of the repercussions of this upbringing was that d'Evie didn't have a clear division or binary between sighted ways to see the world and Braille or other ways of

engaging with the world – to her, it was all part of one perception. D’Evie acknowledged the big impact that working in this space and context with her father has had on her practice.³⁵³

D’Evie uses the term “complex embodiment” to describe herself. The artist has rapid myopia, which means nearsightedness that is progressing very quickly. The type of contact lenses that d’Evie requires currently do not exist, but their function is the closest approximation of what optometrists can create for her. Her eyes have trouble distinguishing the aberration of light and doctors are not sure if this is a muscular or neurological issue. In addition to this, d’Evie often gets ocular migraines, which can occasionally manifest into a loss of external vision, or a kaleidoscope effect in the vision that does remain through these episodes. D’Evie describes the effect of this in more detail, where it shifts everything, objects change planes, and where there is much shimmering and distances are distorted. All of these experiences opened up a pathway for her artwork in terms of her approach to painting, ways of understanding the world, and haptic criticism or performance. Although it is only relatively recently that the artist has been identifying more publicly with complex vision, she has dealt with the instability of vision and haptic engagement with works - and in the interplay with text - since art school days. The artist realized that contemporary art was a really interesting place to investigate what the technology of blindness means in a contemporary art context. She decided to found 3-ply, which investigates artist-led publishing as an experimental site for the production,

³⁵³ Fayen d’Evie interview with Amanda Cachia, April 10 2016.

transmission and archiving of knowledge. In exhibition settings, 3-ply operates as a shifting collaborative. Current 3-ply interests include: performative publication; decentering authorship; and mobilizing conversation to leverage the creation, mutation and dispersal of texts, which is now converging on d'Evie's focus on tactility. The artist is concentrating on the tactility of text, and opportunities regarding the material tactility of books, and the slippage into abstraction of pre-braille typography and punctuation, and audio-description (performative text) as artistic form.

Remarkably, like this dissertation, d'Evie's conceptual approach is also very much inspired by William Forsythe's theory of choreographic objects. D'Evie purports that Forsyth's expanding definitions of choreography, where it moves beyond merely the corpus, actually reinforces ocularcentrism. However, I'm mostly interested in d'Evie's ideas around how Forsyth's work can be used as a jumping-off point for haptic activism. How can Forsythe's theory of choreographic objects be applied to this? D'Evie believes that artworks can be understood as choreographic objects if we extend our appreciation of the objects beyond merely the standard, yet under-developed lexicon of touch, which typically focuses on texture, temperature, affect etc. d'Evie says, "By conceptualizing a touch encounter as occurring between a choreographic object and a body-in-motion, new interpretive or procedural strategies could arise to expand haptic discourse."³⁵⁴ The lexicon could thus be informed by the way that bodies physically engage with objects through tactility, and the way those bodies

³⁵⁴ Fayen d'Evie, "Repositioning William Forsythe's Choreographic Objects through Blindness" unpublished essay, 2016

then build a generative haptic dialogue around those experiences, especially corporeal encounters characterized by various disabilities. The outcome of this would not only be an expansion of vocabularies in both movement and touch, but also an expansion of access and touch tours in general in the context of the museum and gallery. These experiences could be observed, recorded, documented and discussed in reflections between groups. D'Evie also insists that this new relation between the tactile and the choreographic object should not be confined to reinforcing the physical necessity for blind subjects to make contact through skin, as “new idea-logics for choreographing objects, performances or exhibitions” which can also be inspired by proprioception and echolocation.

This section of the chapter will trace several bodies of work by the artist, beginning with her solo exhibition held at West Space Gallery in Melbourne in 2015 entitled *Not All Treasure is Silver and Gold, Mate...* This will be followed by examining a series of innovative touch tours hosted by the Kadist Foundation in San Francisco in 2016, (the first in January and the second in July), which culminated in d'Evie's participation in a group show entitled *Beyond the Image*, hosted by the V-A-C Foundation in Moscow in Fall, 2016 and a solo show at the Kadist Art Foundation in San Francisco in December 2016.

Through fictional texts and hybrid paintings, *Not All Treasure is Silver and Gold, Mate...* was an exhibition held at West Space gallery in Melbourne in 2015 that reflected on visual assumptions of value in the visual arts and other cultural manifestations that depend intrinsically on visual appearance. This was the first public outcome of a new body of work developed between d'Evie and

several blind collaborators, which considered epistemological and aesthetic opportunities from this perspective. The project included the exhibition of paintings and installations, along with performances and readings by d'Evie and her collaborators, including Janaleen Wolfe and Ben Phillips. Working with blind collaborators. D'evie's undertook parallel investigations on aesthetics and texts, on reading, writing, editing, not just on painting form or a short story or poem but using drafting and editing to look at characters that people take on in life. As d'Evie developed the characters in her performance, it was important to her that blind actors did not have to play blind roles. She wanted to write sighted roles with her collaborators, and stories written over a period of time, with conversations and knowledges of the actors, in terms of those characters. In one story, d'Evie incorporated a Gene Wilder look-alike, and her interest in the actor was inspired by the film, "See No Evil, Hear No Evil" (1989) with Richard Pryor. Pryor used these same glasses in the film that her father had invented. Wilder had also of course famously played Willy Wonka in "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" (1971), and used a cane as a prop and to also navigate space (d'Evie doesn't require the use of a cane but is interested in them none the less).

The paintings in this exhibition were especially provocative and complex and stem from d'Evie's graduate installation at the Victoria College of Arts in Melbourne in 2011. D'Evie's original installation was set up so that visitors had to walk through and around a series of bulletin boards or blackboards. At this time, the artist was creating work for a sighted audience, i.e. these works do not proceed from tactility, but they rely on embodied perception none-the-less.

Materially, the paintings are acrylic spray paint and engraving on dye sublimated prints of base acrylic paintings, sublimated into stainless steel, then collaged over the bulletin boards or blackboards, and sometimes over prints of the base paintings. D'Evie likes to submerge all of this technical detail in the euphemism "hybrid paintings." The instability of vision is engaged both in the embodied experience and in documentation of the paintings. The sublimated prints are only visible by a viewer when light strikes the surface at certain angle (i.e. movement animates the work); and the engraving is directional so that those elements of the composition shift, foregrounding different compositional relationships. In terms of documentation, d'Evie has had five leading documentary photographers in Melbourne try to document her work and eventually give up. As a result, they refuse to document her future work because it is too difficult, and too time-consuming to attempt to deliver an adequate surrogate image. Owing to d'Evie's ongoing degeneration of her sight, she is unlikely to make more of these kinds of works in the future, but she plans to use magnifiers to resolve at least one of the works that she had abandoned in-progress.

D'Evie's paintings are richly evocative of the early relief paintings of Lygia Clark, entitled *Unidades* from the late 1950s (Appendix: Figures 143-144). Clark created a tension in her paintings whereby she was interested in attempting to create both an illusion of infinite space and yet form dialogue with the border or the frame of the painting, or as Guy Brett states, "where the painted panel

meets the rest of the world.”³⁵⁵ Clark purposefully played with optical illusion in these paintings by these pliable suggestions of interior and exterior space, which would simultaneously expand and contract.³⁵⁶ Brett likens this optical effect of space to breathing, which Paulo Herkenhoff describes as a “poetic formulation of space.”³⁵⁷ Herkenhoff continues,

“Clark removes from the plane its character of graphic rhetoric in order to meticulously construct a type of pragmatic reification. This is presented in the world as a body. Constructing the thickness of the plane demanded understanding of corporeality and its material qualities; the relativity between two planes; the corporeal relationship or articulation; its possible lamination; the presence in the real space with its giving touch.”³⁵⁸

Herkenhoff’s description gestures towards the conceptual, choreographic and material synthesis of ideas utilized by d’Ewie. Both artists seek to transform the dynamics of the painting’s surface through the animation of material, form and touch, recognizing that the role that the corpus plays in this animation is just as important as the marks that remain after the brush has been stroked. In the conversation to be had between space, the viewer and the surface of the object or painting, movement between two-dimensional and three-dimensional planes meet, collide, converge, and separate. Other environmental elements contribute to this conversation, be it light, shadow, angle or positioning which respond to the eye of the perceiver as it physically encounters the work (Appendix: Figures 145-146).

³⁵⁵ Guy Brett, “Lygia Clark: Six Cells,” in *Lygia Clark*, catalogue to accompany touring exhibition (Barcelona, Spain: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1997), 22.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

³⁵⁷ Paulo Herkenhoff, “Lygia Clark,” in *Lygia Clark*, catalogue to accompany touring exhibition (Barcelona, Spain: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1997), 36.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Also included in the exhibition were sculptural free-standing wall structures made from wood and other surfaces, particularly Braille. The artist was obsessed with idea that the processes of drafting and editing and text could be intertwined and analogous. For this show, paintings were tactile collages, where different letter-press papers were collaged on top of each other. The artist worked with a letter-press person at Yale Union in Portland in order to develop these pieces. Various abstract shapes and figures on the papers were formed by punctuation, and non-verbal signals, and these were abstracted in all ways, so that, for example, a full stop was a circle. This transition from d'Evie's two-dimensional textured surfaces into three-dimensional textured surfaces also recalls Clark's sensorial and existential experimentations through her *Bichos* (Critters) series from the 1960s, where were sculptures of various scales that engaged with a choreograph of architecture, geometry and the body that seemed to jump right out of the *Unidades* paintings (Appendix: Figure 147). The *Bichos* were intended to complicate *Unidades* as Clark wanted to break the uniformity of geometry and create a more organic experience filled with tension and *informe*. She used different metals such as aluminum and stainless steel with gold and anodized patinas, which also references the base metals in d'Evie's title. *Bichos* were indeed an early example of a choreographic object given that one's encounter with them created new possibilities of space and form, but they also "contained their own movement apart from the viewer's activation of it."³⁵⁹

³⁵⁹ Cornelia H. Butler, "Lygia Clark: A Space Open to Time," in *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948-1988* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2014), 20.

D'Evie was very keen to explore the melding of text and image within her accordian-like wall structure that shares uncanny geometric properties with *Bichos*, and she conducted research on early cave paintings, which she considers a hallmark for the beginnings of touch. According to d'Evie, certain marks within those cave paintings are in our punctuation today.³⁶⁰ Once she got the letter press stock from Yale Union, she started making large-scale paintings, and then cut them up, and collaged them by overlaying textured painting, sand and silicon, and gloss onto their surfaces in a bid to try to understand what it was to have tactility as a compositional quality of a painting. If she wanted to approach a tactile painting for someone to move from one place to another as a type of map or guide, she would use the same kind of circular form, different shapes, but with the same textures, where she would then emboss certain patterns embossed to activate the fingers memory. Despite d'Evie's experimentations with the larger hybrid paintings, she ended up installing smaller text pieces in the exhibitions that she felt happier with. As she made these, over a summer break, she had conversations with Janaleen and Ben on the phone, where they discussed early ideas of characters for the performances and respective experiences and assumptions of value.

D'Evie mentioned how West Space had never actually hosted an exhibition in their space where they had to deal with accessibility issues, which meant that d'Evie's project presented a big challenge for them. Their location is physically inaccessible in a number of ways, and when d'Evie was also told by

³⁶⁰ Fayen d'Evie interview with Amanda Cachia, April 10 2016.

the gallery that she was not allowed to have people touching her work that was directly installed on their white gallery walls, owing to the safety hazard of a possible encounter with heaters also lined along the wall, this is when d'Evie developed the idea for her free-standing structures (Appendix: Figure 148). D'Evie's husband built the structures for her given his background as a cabinet-maker, and the walls were raw ply sanded in the space. The artist decided to leave the dust that had gathered from the sanding on the gallery floor so that the walls had an extra velvety texture for visitors to explore. The structure was also required to be completely solid in order to withstand pushing and leaning from any angle. The artist then used the intermingling of standard gallery walls and wood structure to expand the notion of what a painting is, so in her walls, she created areas of depression, where she then placed collaged and layered pieces of paper that had the appearance of security-grating on doors or windows (Appendix: Figure 149). These papers were powder-coated in white and off-white so that they seemed part of the wall, and yet separate to the wall at the same time. These structures made it difficult to discern where the wall and the artwork began and ended. Apart from providing a rich choreography of objects, the wall structure also operated like a set or backdrop for d'Evie's collaborative performances. D'Evie reported that many visitors engaged with the structure, although at times, people were also very tentative as they seemed afraid to break the protocol of "no touching" in the gallery space.³⁶¹

³⁶¹ Fayen d'Evie interview with Amanda Cachia, June 23, 2016

It was as if Lygia Clark knew this would be the reaction from her participants in her famous *Lovas Sensoriais* (Sensorial Gloves) exercise from 1968, where she asked people to don gloves of different materials such as leather and vinyl to begin and explore the tactile qualities of small balls of different weights, such as ping-pong, tennis, and rubber (Appendix: Figure 150). The key here is that while at first the participants would hold the balls in their gloved hands, eventually, Clark would ask them to remove the glove and hold the balls again with their bare hands, leading them to the rediscovery of touch. Here, the artist gave the participant direct embodied permission, where a simple sign on a wall or a suggestion of touch may not necessarily be enough. Indeed, owing to this reason, d'Evie was inspired to engage in dialogues with people about their experiences, and realized the value in creating a dialogical series of works that would then generate a type of educational log or archive of those encounters (Appendix: Figure 151).

The Levity, The Gravity

D'Evie's idea for a work on tactile dialogues led her to embark on a series of touch tours hosted by the Kadist Foundation in both the San Francisco and Paris locations in 2015 and 2016. Prior to the mid-1800s, tactile interaction was routine for visitors experiencing collections of art, and touch permeated accounts of aesthetic appreciation. As museums of art evolved into conduits for civic education, deferential models of visitor behavior were introduced that entrenched norms forbidding touch. Though originally entangled in nineteenth century

politics of gender, race and class control, these norms transcended their archaic roots, morphing into securitized “Hands off!” policies in gallery settings, and social taboos which involved self-censoring the touching of artworks. The repercussions include tactile amnesia within art historical accounts, and a loss of language to discuss tactile aesthetics. While touch tours for the blind provide a partial exception, such encounters have been treated as exclusive, personal experiences - as protocols to meet baseline access obligations - rather than valued for their contributions to public haptic discourse.

D’Evie’s events in San Francisco, which were held in the months of February, then July, aimed to untangle some of the complexities of the touch tour. The idea of the first event in February, *The Levity, The Gravity* was to reveal how artworks invite a different approach to tactile exploration (tracing, rubbing, reaching, grasping, folding, stroking, swaying), and how we can reimagine the touch tour as an encounter between complex bodies-in-motion, with specific artworks acting as choreographic objects. The workshop opened with a performative essay by d’Evie that foregrounded touch as a generative concept, capable of reframing art historical narratives and opening space for critical and speculative enquiry. Georgina Kleege then led a touch tour of four works from the collection of Kadist Art Foundation that engaged with the politics of space: this included Jompet Kuswidananto’s *Third Realm*, 2011, Juan Capistran’s *From a Whisper to a Scream*, 2005, Adrian Wong’s, *Untitled (Grate I/II: Shan Mei Playground/ Grand Fortune Mansion)*, 2012, and Daniel Joseph Martinez’s *A meditation on the possibility... of romantic love or where you goin’ with that gun*

in your hand, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton discuss the relationship between expressionism and social reality in Hitler's painting, 2005. During the tour, Kleege described and recounted her detailed feeling and description of these objects, and each tour was 2-3 minutes long. Kleege described temperature, textures, shapes, details, incising, sharpness, and softness, and she offered her prior intellectual and conceptual understanding of the image as a background to guide her tactile knowledge, which she then gleaned directly from touching the work. A larger group conversation reflecting on tactile impressions, stories of touch, tactile pedagogy and dialogue, and the radical prospects for haptic criticism then followed after the tour.

The second touch tour, which I attended, was also held at the Kadist Art Foundation in San Francisco in July, and once again was convened by d'Evie alongside Kleege. The workshop brought together individuals with expertise in the Bay Area with an active interest in creating multi-sensory relationships between art and its audiences. With an emphasis on shifting certain modes of "accessibility" to new ways of awakening, the discussion revolved around possible ways that touch tours and other embodied encounters might extend movement vocabularies, perceptual attentiveness, and haptic dialogues amongst diverse audiences. D'Evie began the event with a movement exercise based on the corpus of the octopus. The artist found the octopus to be a provocative starting point, given that it is a body with nine brains, which makes it more than an animal with a complex corporeality, given its eight twirling, furling and unfurling arms – it also makes it cognitively and neurologically diverse. Given that this creature

has nine brains and eight arms, we might pause to question where neurological responsiveness might be located within its system, which in turn might offer more opportunities to think beyond the regular routes that science has come to understand are located within the human body. Thus, d'Evie asked everyone to either sit or stand and begin imagining their arms and legs as if they belonged to an octopus and how those arms and legs might move through a space if it did belong to the body of an octopus.

Following this exercise, Kleege once again took visitors on a touch tour through various objects in the Kadist collection, and this time the artworks included Brody Condon's *Future Gestalt*, 2012, Pia Camil's *Espectacular Cortina*, 2012, and *Pianoiss...issimo (Worse Finish)* 2012 by Christine Sun Kim. Whilst the last workshop seemed to contain much apprehension about the idea of touching the objects during the January workshop (apart from the blind people in the room, who did enthusiastically engage in touch but who then felt as if they were the spectacles of the curious sighted participants in the group), in the July workshop, all hands were on deck, so to speak, and people were happy to glide and crunch their fingers over the fabric surfaces of the objects. One participant, Jill Sterrett, who is the Director of Collections at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art put on a large replica robe from Brody Condon's LARP video work "Mexico Future Gestalt" (2012), originally worn by actors. Much of the conversation rotated around how each of the objects felt under the fingertips, supported by curatorial anecdotes by some of the professional curators in the group, and more factual information about the production of the work and how it

came to be in the collection, narrated by Kadist staff. What I found especially interesting about the event was the juxtaposition of the work by Christine Sun Kim as compared to the sculpture and video installation by Condon. This was owing to the simultaneous complimentary and yet antithetical nature of the conversation regarding the material aspects of the two works, including qualities of color, shape, size, and dimension. Kim's score in the Kadist collection is similar in size, style and concept to the scores I discuss in Chapter Four. In this context of d'Evie's workshop at the Kadist, I enjoyed hearing how the work was described through a blend of audio description, curatorial authority and material components, where Kim's deafness was not immediately foregrounded, but when revealed, did help to shape an understanding of the work through a very detailed tactile dialogue around visual notions of sound from a deaf perspective. Devon Bella, Program Manager at Kadist Foundation, also led a vibrational and sonic interpretation of Kim's score by standing in front of the drawing and clicking her fingers as if to enact the beating of a drum as her eyes skimmed through Kim's family tree clusters of pianoissimo. As the clusters of pianoissimo got thicker and full of more p's, indicating greater degrees of softness, the clicking of Bella's fingers between thumb, index, middle, third and baby finger got subsequently softer as well. After Bella had demonstrated the action, she invited everyone in the workshop to follow suit, and we all lifted our five-digit instruments to make collective noise and vibration to Kim's idiosyncratic language.

D'Evie's tactile dialogues continue to contribute to a trajectory of tactile explorations and events staged by Lygia Clark, such as her interest in colliding

fragments of body parts and objects together, ranging from two hands rolling around a blown up plastic bag containing a little stone *Pedra e ar* (Stone and Air, 1966), or *Desenhe com o dedo* (Draw with your finger, 1966), where a plastic bag filled minimally with water would provide a slippery surface for the finger to create invisible drawings devoid of ink, or *Água e Conchas* (Water and Shells, 1966), where a plastic bag containing water and shells that were divided into their respective halves by an elastic band would be manipulated by the hands to see if the two materials would seep into each other. Clark's work conjoining bodies, such as her famous *Diálogo de mãos* (Hand dialogue, 1966) also comes into focus when considering d'Evie's new work for her upcoming exhibitions in Moscow and in Melbourne in Fall 2016, entitled *Prologues for Handling* (2016). In Clark's seminal work, an elastic Moebius strip tied the participants' wrists, which then automatically embarked on a dialogical exchange as dictated by the movement of the hands. In d'Evie's new work, different casts have been created out of the negative space when two different human hands come into contact, grasping fingers as if in a hand-shake. For this project, d'Evie is collaborating with a group of people with various embodiments as they meld their hand together in a tactile dialogue that d'Evie then captures using a wax form and then later, more permanently, using bronze. D'Evie has been making casts with people that she has already engaged in tactile dialogue with, and who have either: offered specific movement vocabularies to integrate within the shifting *Prologue for Handling* performance; or conversed with the artist about embodied cognition/ complex

embodiment/ touch/ blindness etc. to a depth that has affected her thinking and practice, such as Georgina Kleege.³⁶²

D'Evie's *Prologues for Handling* also intersects with Clark's work, *O Eu e o Tu: Série Roupa-Corpo-Roupa* (The I and the You: Clothing/Body/Clothing, 1967), where a man and a woman wore plastic suits that were lined with different materials in order to evoke ostensible masculine and feminine tactile surfaces for the opposite sex (Appendix: Figures 152-154). A hood, made of the same plastic, covered the eyes of the participants (as Clark didn't consider vision a necessity – rather, it was a hindrance) and a rubber tube connected the two boiler suits acting as a type of umbilical cord. When the man and woman touched each other, they would find small openings in each others' suits which would give them access to the inner lining. From this tactile exchange, they were able to discern the sensations felt by their partner and the discursive limits of their sex, as if performing Judith Butler's theories, where they could literally be probed, prodded, exchanged and transformed.³⁶³ Similarly, in d'Evie's work, one can pick up the bronze object and fit it into the place on the palm where the original cast made. One then have the opportunity to invite someone else to place their palm on the other side of the bronze cast, so that two hands greet as they once did during

³⁶² Other collaborators for this project include Camila Marambio, a Chilean curator who runs Ensayos, and investigates embodied ways of knowing through that project, and who is also a dancer, and trained with Parisian choreographer Myriam Lefkowitz in her *Walk, Hands, Eyes* practice; Sabrina Galaz, a friend of Camila's who is a researcher in radical pedagogy related to child development, including investigating the social imposition on chairs for children as an instrument of political control; Sophie Takách, who is an artist who explores the interaction between human and material forces, how to implicate the observer in the experience of a material event, and how to shift that experience from visual to aural and haptic (she is an identified collaborator for the "Prologues for Handling" performance); and Shelley Lasica, an eminent choreographer who was awarded the 2014 ANAT / Synapse Residency with the Centre for Eye Research, University of Melbourne, where she worked with both sighted and vision-impaired participants at the junction between contemporary dance and scientific enquiry in the realm of proprioception (she is an identified collaborator for the "Tactile Dialogues [Vadim Sidur]" performance.) Information provided by Fayen d'Evie via email dated August 14, 2016.

³⁶³ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

the creation of the original wax cast. As the hands rest against each other, feeling the cool slick surface of the bronze cast in the negative space, one will start to observe, as I did in my engagement with the cast and with d'Evie's hand on the other side of it, that eventually the bronze becomes hot, its temperature raised by the warmth of sweaty palms and beating hearts (Appendix: Figures 155-156). This pseudo-alchemical affect on the bronze is thus a living choreographic object that captures an exchange between two bodies, and it also illustrates how this exchange might speak to a concept of movement beyond standard form. Rather, it is movement and a sensorial exchange that is welcoming of all bodies, blind, deaf, and anyone with an ability or a disability. This work does not discriminate.

The bronze casts will then be displayed on pedestals of varying heights at the V-A-C Foundation in Moscow, which the public will be allowed to touch. The visitor will also be able to choose a place and height for placing the bronze piece in the space to make it as accessible and comfortable to them as possible, so that the body is used in different ways for sharing ideas of movement from individual physicality. In conjunction with this, an audio score will be created that will try and push audio description as a literary and creative form with a special emphasis on the radical description of touch and movement. D'Evie will then hand over the space to the professional Australian dancer Prue Lang, who previously worked with the William Forsythe dance company. Lang will use the environment of the exhibition installation as a starting point for her improvisational dance routine, and during these experiments, an artist friend named Sophie Takash will cast some of Lang and her fellow dancers' movements with wax and raw hyde skins as

a second iteration of capturing tactile dialogues and turning them into choreographic objects.

Bodies in motion as captured through Fayen d'Evie's choreographic objects, ranging from her textured paintings, the Braille wall structures, the wax and bronze casts and how these objects can then be further manipulated by other performative bodies to suit their access needs demonstrates radical haptic activism. D'Evie's innovative tactile orientation towards matter is a tactile choreopolitics where tactility is the primary modality in activating the choreographic quality of objects.

The Feel-Good Vibrations of Wendy Jacob

Wendy Jacob is a Boston-based artist whose work bridges traditions of sculpture, invention and design, and explores relationships between architecture, place and perceptual and bodily experience. The artist is particularly interested in the intimate and somatic interactions we have with objects and architectural space, and she explores these encounters through sculpture, site-based installation and curated events. Her approach to making art is interdisciplinary and has included working with engineers, circus performers, scholars and students. This work includes floors that vibrate with sub-audible sound; tightropes rigged through living rooms; and a series of chairs designed to embrace the sitter. In its breadth her practice has led her to develop collaborations with deaf students in the Arab Emirates to sound recordings of glaciers in the Arctic. Jacob especially uses low frequency sound in installations and organized happenings as she is fascinated by

the modality of vibration. Given Jacob's interest in body and space, she has said it was natural for her to find a way into disability studies. Recent projects have involved collaboration with deaf and autistic individuals.

Jacob's work with vibration and how it becomes accessible to deaf and blind audiences is what I am especially interested in exploring in this chapter, particularly her vibration pieces which featured in three separate exhibitions that I curated and co-curated from 2015-2016, namely *Art of the Lived Experiment* (2015) at the Grand Rapids Art Museum and Urban Institute for Contemporary Art in Grand Rapids, co-curated with Aaron Williamson; *The Flesh of the World* (2015) at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto Art Centre and Doris McCarthy Gallery at the University of Toronto; and *Sweet Gongs Vibrating* (2016) for the San Diego Art Institute. Each iteration of Jacob's work across my three exhibitions seemed to follow on from one another, as if the next stage in a series of studies on vibration and audience interaction. However, with each project, Jacob did respond to a given situation, where for example, Jacob wished to interact with the vibrant jazz musicians in the city for the project in Grand Rapids, while the context of the project in Toronto based on the PanAm and ParaPanAm Games meant that she wanted to incorporate athletes in some way. For the final project in San Diego, this piece was a very personal response to a friend's death. I will use this section to describe each of these projects in detail, naming them as choreographic objects that are activated upon the commingling of voice, touch and technology.

In a *Catalyst Conversation on Art and Science* held at the Broad Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts entitled “Capturing Vibrations” that Jacob gave alongside engineer Greg McDaniel in 2013, the artist focused on what led her to becoming so intrigued by vibration.³⁶⁴ Jacob was inspired by tests on elephants that had been conducted at the Oakland Zoo, where the animals stood on a large plate periodically activated by vibrations.³⁶⁵ The experiments proved that elephants have the same bone mechanisms as humans to detect vibrations, but also that the seismic environment helps elephants to communicate with one another.³⁶⁶ Jacob launched her first vibration-project in 2008 in Washington DC at Gallaudet University, a private university for the education of the deaf and hard of hearing in the United States, when Jacob had taken a group of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) students (where she was teaching at the time) to map out the aural shape of the space to engage the deaf students in the school. She wanted to have both her MIT students and the Gallaudet students consider looking at deafness spatially as opposed to lack of audition. The students attempted to map the conversation between two deaf and two hearing individuals. This experience proved to be a very rich one for the artist, and she has continued to work with that group of faculty and students over the last few years to further their experiments with these ideas. Following this, Jacob then conducted a two-day workshop, where she asked her workshop participants to embed vibrations in

³⁶⁴ Wendy Jacob and Greg McDaniel, *Catalyst Conversation on Art + Science*, Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Cambridge, MA, November 4, 2013. To view this talk online, visit <http://www.catalystconversations.org/11413-wendy-jacob-and-greg-mcdaniel/> Accessed June 28, 2016

³⁶⁵ “Elephants ‘Hear’ Warnings With Their Feet, Study Confirms,” *National Geographic News*, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/02/0216_060216_elephant_sound_2.html Accessed August 9, 2016

³⁶⁶ For more reading on vibration and the body, please see Nina Sun Eidsheim’s *Sensing Sound: Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice* (2015), *Senses of Vibration: A History of the Pleasure and Pain of Sound* by Shelley Trower (2012), and Brandon LaBelle’s *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life* (2010).

different buildings and to test them for resonant frequency in order to make the buildings sing. For example, a big transducer was attached to the underside of a set of stairs going into a big common room, which was the cafeteria at the University. Sounds played through the stairs, and up the railing, and you could even hear the noises by hanging onto the railing as one went up or down the stairs (Appendix: Figure 157). The sound that was fed through the stairs was the Gallaudet student marching band anthem, and one could feel the vibration of a huge bass drum to signal to players about when to do something. What was useful for Jacob to learn through this first experience is that another way of hearing is through bone conduction – so you can feel vibration not just through the cochlear but also through the bones too.

This project led Jacob to develop the installation entitled *Silent Mixer* in 2010 at Cabinet Space in Brooklyn, New York (Appendix: Figures 158-159). Here, Jacob inserted a big subwoofer without the speaker into a raised platform or floor of the space, which played very low frequency vibrations. By sitting, standing, or lying on the floor throughout the three-day event, participants were able to “hear” sound through their bodies, and so they listened through their skin. At night there was a big party and a number of musicians whose work featured in Jacob’s recorded low sounds played their work live as part of the event in sub- and barely-audible performances, and the guests could hear the sounds but also feel them by sitting on the floor. The rule was that participants couldn’t talk at this event, but they were allowed to write notes to each other on yellow index cards and pass them around, which then opened up ways of thinking about

communication. The same yellow index cards could go to several people, or be taken out of circulation depending on the nature of the topic.³⁶⁷

Silent Mixer then led to Jacob's next work focusing on vibration, this time on an international scale. First launching at Artlink in Glasgow in 2013 (Appendix: Figure 160), in Spring, 2013, Jacob went to Sharjah as a guest of the Performance Program of Sharjah Biennial 11, curated by Grégory Castéra and Sandra Terdjman to explore vibration through a PVC weather balloon. The Biennial is located in the United Arab Emirates in the Persian Gulf, next to Dubai. Jacob was one of six invited artists, musicians, and academics to talk about sound in the context of deafness in a program coordinated by "Tacet" with students of the Al Amal School for the Deaf. Jacob's workshop was entitled *Mapping Sharjah*, 2013, and she gathered the students together to go out onto the public streets of Sharjah with recorders with the ambition to map the city of Sharjah sonically (Appendix: Figures 161-162). Jacob said that she was anticipating that the students would pick obvious vibrations from the loud sounds of passing cars or trucks, or sounds and vibrations from air-conditioning units emerging out of windows, but interestingly, the students also picked up sounds and low-frequency vibrations for objects she never would have dreamed of, such as a man sweeping dust in the plaza, which was a very quiet sound. Once all the sounds were collected, they came back to the studio and Jacob feed all their recordings into a tiny transducer the size of a quarter coin, and a big red weather balloon became

³⁶⁷ This practice of passing notes back and forth as a mode of communication captures a major component of the artistic practice of deaf artist Joseph Grigely. For many years, Grigely has created installations composed of all the notes he has used in his communications between himself and hearing people, which he keeps carefully archived. For more information, see *Joseph Grigely: St. Cecilia*, curated by Ian Berry and Irene Hofmann (Baltimore, MD: The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Contemporary Museum, 2007).

the resonant chamber for experiencing the sound, where one could feel the vibrations through the balloon. When sounds played, everyone in the group agreed on what the sounds were, such as the man sweeping sand, and there was no doubt amongst them. Jacob said this experience really changed her idea on what sound was, as she now believes that sound is not entirely aural at all, but that sound is very visual in many ways, as whilst hearing the sound of a man sweep dust off the pavement, there is also the aspect of watching his movement and rhythm of the sweeping action, so that these visual aspect of the sound end up being mapped onto the touch and the feeling of the vibrations that emanate from the broom.³⁶⁸

Jacob's work in Sharjah compelled her to continue exploring vibration through the conduit of the PVC weather balloon once again with her for *Art of the Lived Experiment* in Grand Rapids. Entitled *Waves and Signs (Balloon)*, 2015, Jacob worked with local musicians to offer a unique vibrational compendium that was fed through the six foot balloon by transducers and other pieces of audio equipment (Appendix: Figures 163-164). Jacob was aware that Grand Rapids had a vibrant jazz scene and wanted to incorporate the sounds of jazz music into her installation. Her balloon was installed inside a mid-size gallery space, and during the opening reception of the exhibition, the four-person group of musicians performed with their instruments (saxophone, guitars, keyboard) that Jacob live-recorded and that was immediately sent through the balloon. The added feature

³⁶⁸ Wendy Jacob "Capturing Vibrations," *Catalyst Conversation on Art + Science*, Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Cambridge, MA, November 4, 2013, <http://www.catalystconversations.org/11413-wendy-jacob-and-greg-mcdaniel/> Accessed June 28, 2016

for this particular version of the balloon was that visitors could not only feel the vibrations through the balloon, but the sounds from the musical performance were powerful enough that the vibrations could also be felt through the walls. Visitors crowded around the balloon, reaching out their hands and placing them around the periphery of its surface together, as if a communal group hug, but they also leaned their bodies up against the wall, from many directions (front, back and sideways) to get the maximum vibrational coverage from the event.

Jacob's work with the weather balloon resonates with the performance-based work of Lygia Clark, particularly the seminal piece, *Baba Antropofágica* (Anthropophagic Slobber), 1973, amongst others, where the Brazilian artist invited a group of people to gather round in a circle and wrap a willing participant in cotton thread as she lied on the floor with her eyes closed (Appendix: Figures 165-166). Each person in the group held a cotton reel in their hands, and they would crouch and lean over the woman, and stretch these strands from the spool across, over, and around her body. Eventually, her entire body and face would be covered in a cocoon-like form. At this point, all the members of the group would place their hands on the wrapped human, and wet the thread with a layer of their saliva before attempting to unravel the cotton once again, freeing her form. Clark references anthropophagy in her title and also imitates the action through the performance. It was used as an effective tool of art production in modernist Brazil for "inverting" the colonial power structures between Europe and South America. According to Andrea Guinta, "inversion" is a peripheral strategy that aims to

topple dominant discourse.³⁶⁹ Anthropophagy is the practice of cannibalism, humans eating human flesh, but in this historical context, it was a word denoting metaphor, diagnosis and therapy. The project of inversion in modernist Brazil might be helpfully compared to the contemporary disability rights movement in America because both projects share the desire to break out of marginal, peripheral constructions of their “otherness” which have plagued and so repressed their respective populations for centuries. Each shares critical characteristics as they use the strategies of embodying the “outsider” to challenge social certainties, which attempts to invert similar binaries, such as normal/abnormal, centre/periphery, dominated/subordinated etc. In Clark’s performance, she gestures to anthropophagy through the idea of a communal proposition to share a psychology, where the members of the group vomit life experience through their saliva, whilst the woman wrapped in thread swallows and ingests their offering. Through this act, which Clark admits is unpleasant, the group becomes a collective body.³⁷⁰ Ideas of inside and outside, both literally and metaphorically, and notions of being felt rather than being seen, where the wrapping emphasizes a fuller sensorial awareness, also come into play with this work. Eventually, the idea is that any boundaries previously in place around the psycho-social self will now become dissolved through such meditative sequences.³⁷¹

Similarly, Jacob’s work with the weather balloons clearly emphasizes an expanded spectrum of the senses, where she considers the fact that a more diverse

³⁶⁹ Andrea Guinta, “Strategies of Modernity in Latin America” in Mosquera, Gerardo, ed. *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America* (London: Institute of International Visual Arts: 1995), 66.

³⁷⁰ Guy Brett, “Lygia Clark: Six Cells,” in *Lygia Clark*, catalogue to accompany touring exhibition (Barcelona, Spain: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1997), 28.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

audience (such as those who are blind and deaf) can engage with her practice as advantageous rather than as the primary goal. The senses generated through vibration is what titillates her most here, along with the idea that the senses can fill cavities in the flesh and pores in the skin with new knowledges about space around us. The action of anthropophagy might be replicated in the energy that is passed from one choreographic object to another, from human to object and vice versa, creating a new constellation of movement and corpus simultaneously. Additionally, typically vibration comes from an ostensible inside, such as that generated from a voice box, or the beats of a drum, the string of a guitar, or stomps from feet, and it is Jacob who feeds, spits and even vomits the internalizing forces of vibrations outside, through chambers such as the balloon, into hands again and back inside the body. In this way, it becomes a cycle so that it re-enacts Clark's idea of a collective body through a communal proposition, where all hands come together to gather round Jacob's balloon and partake in the meditation, as they did in *Baba Antropofágica*. Indeed, inversion is also activated here where there is a toppling of the conventional hierarchy of the senses, so that vision no longer dominates, and vibration is given full command to fill the corporeal imagining with a revised being-in-the-world.

The next project that I invited Jacob to participate in was the large-scale group exhibition *Flesh of the World* at the University of Toronto. The Directors of the three galleries housed at the University had invited me to curate a show in conjunction with the PanAm and ParaPanAm Games which was being hosted by the city of Toronto. I then invited Jacob especially to respond to this theme, and

she developed *Waves and Signs (Basketball)*, 2015, an installation consisting of a raised wooden platform engineered to carry vibration, performers, and a video projection (Appendix: Figure 167). Concealed behind the wooden platform were four large, electro-mechanical transducers and two power amps. The transducers were firmly attached to supporting studs and carried vibrational signals through the platform's surface. During the opening, the floor was activated by two sets of basketball players, one pair from the University of Toronto Varsity Blues Basketball Team and the other pair from the Senior Men's National Team with Wheelchair Basketball Canada. Both teams were representing Canada in the PanAm and ParaPanAm Games that same summer. A microphone captured and recorded the vibrations of their basketball as it came into contact with the floor, which had been marked up to imitate the standard template of a basketball-court. The sounds and vibrations of the athletes' movements were carried through the floor, and by standing on both the surrounding area and on the raised platform nearby, visitors were able to "hear" the ball in play through their bodies. After the opening, the recording of these sounds continued to animate through a loop. In lieu of the performance, Jacob projected a short video of basketball players from the Cambridge Rindge and Latin Falcons in Cambridge, Massachusetts onto the wall adjacent to the raised platform.

While very different, Jacobs basketball vibrations remind me of Vito Acconci's famous *Seedbed* piece, which he performed at Sonnabend Gallery in New York over fourteen days in January 1972 (Appendix: Figures 168-169). Whilst also having the physicality of a raised platform and/or ramp in common as

a means to situate choreographic embodiment within the gallery space, both works also responded to vibration. In Acconci's case, he started masturbating as he lay prone on his side underneath the raised floorboards of the gallery upon hearing the creak, clunk and thumps of footsteps across its surface, attempting to dissolve binaries between inside/outside, private/public, fantasy/reality. Jacob similarly is offering a literal frame and platform in which inside (in this case, the vibrations from sounds created by bodies-in-motion in dialogue with the basketball as a type of choreographic object) is being fed into the opposite side of the platform as chamber. As one sits or stands on Jacob's platforms, the vibrations are felt through skin and bone, completing the cycle once again and dissolving binaries and boundaries. Acconci, too, dissolves these boundaries as, I imagine, a visitor was not only able to hear the sounds of Acconci masturbating – panting breath, moaning, rubbing flesh, squirting fluid – but also *feel* it – his orgasm and maybe even his semen – and even visually picture the taboo-filled multi-sensorial scene underfoot.

More recent projects by Jacob continue to demonstrate her interest in vibration in various formats. During the 2015-2016 academic year, Jacob completed a Fullbright Visiting Professorship at the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland. During her time in the United Kingdom, Jacob collaborated with two non-verbal adults named Donald and Nicola at the Cherry Road Day Centre in Midlothian to create a cacophany of vibrations in one of the existing column structures at the Centre. Her new project was supported by the non-profit organization Artlink, an arts and disabilities organization in Edinburgh, who are

interested in making sure that people with developmental and cognitive disabilities are not invisible. Jacob worked Donald and Nicola, who have been going to the same Day Centre for the last 15-20 years. Donald sits in same chair everyday, while Nicola sits in same room everyday. Jacob was curious about their experience of the architecture in their respective spaces, as she figured they were experts on the space they had inhabited for such a long time. Jacob also noticed that caregivers would come and spend focused time separately with Donald and Nicola, usually one hour at a time, and their activities usually involved bringing objects to the table with which they could engage. However, their games didn't ever seem to pay attention to the architecture around them. This activated Jacob to request that they keep sound journals, and over a year, they would write down what they were hearing, when sitting with their caregivers. For both Donald and Nicola, it was the first time that they started listening to the building, which included the sounds of the fans, the coke machine and its cans falling when someone put coins into its slot, and so on. Jacob then worked with a graduate student at the Glasgow School of Art to record some of the sounds listed in Donald and Nicola's journal entries, especially their favorite sounds like the tumbling and rumbling of the washing machine, or the high-pitched singing boil of the tea kettle. Once Jacob had recorded a "best of" collection of sounds, she attached a transducer to the very top of the cast-iron column that holds up the ceiling, so that folks at the Cherry Road Day Centre could feel the vibrations that so fascinated Donald and Nicola (Appendix: Figure 170). While Jacob hasn't given this piece an official title, it is fondly known as the "Singing Column," by

the community at the Day Centre. Jacob said that what is nice about this installation is that it cannot be heard unless one hugs the column, and then has full immersion, because it is quiet otherwise. The other nice advantage about the work is that it can be left on all day, thus canceling the need for an on/off switch.³⁷² Jacob emphasized that Donald and Nicola, even though non-verbal, were the experts regarding the building they inhabit at the Day Centre in ways that other people don't have access, and this is likely why she has always drifted towards atypical bodies to seek new information. She believes that her approach is shifting the topic from disability to being more about expertise.³⁷³ This project also shares uncanny resemblance with another Clark project entitled *Objeto Relacional* (Relational Object 1980), where a male participant laid down on a mattress and donned various bags filled with objects on different parts of their half-clothed body, such as their arms, hands and face (Appendix: Figure 171). Lepecki says of this work and other related pieces that “these bags functioned as connective tissues, extended skin, as participants unfolding and entering into these surfaces become so many limbs and organs of a fantastical construction that was always renewed at each new experiment.”³⁷⁴ Similarly the relationship that the body must have to the column at the Day Centre is as if the limb-like column is part of one's form, offering vibration, meditation and even relaxation as generated by sound.

At the same time as Jacob was completing her Professorship in Scotland, I had also invited her to contribute a new vibrating-based wall piece for my group

³⁷² Wendy Jacob interview with Amanda Cachia, August 4, 2016.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ André Lepecki, “Affective Geometry, Immanent Acts: Lygia Clark and Performance,” *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948-1988* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2014), 281.

exhibition *Sweet Gongs Vibrating* at the San Diego Art Institute from March-May 2016. I had included the word “vibrating” in the title of the show with Jacob’s work in mind, and the artist shipped several transducers that were attached to the interior of a wall in the space where one could feel and faintly hear the pleasurable rhythms and sounds of a cat purring. The piece, entitled *Three threads and a thrum*, 2016, was a very personal one for the artist as it was triggered by the death of a close friend who enjoyed the company of animals, particularly cats (Appendix: Figures 172-173). The purring of a cat made sense to Jacob, and it was a soothing connection to her friend that didn’t say a whole lot but carried a meaningful sign of life none-the-less.

Jacob’s upcoming project will occur in Fall, 2016, at the Johnson-Kulukundis Family Gallery within the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A number of years ago, the architect Hansel Bauman was visiting Boston, and Jacob took him to see the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown Massachusetts. Their original buildings were designed so that one could hear and know precisely where one was in the building, such as nearby windows etc. While there, they took a tour, and they went downstairs to their basement where they uncovered a tactile museum, and a cabinet of curiosities full of an odd collection of things. Jacob reported that there was a rocket next to a shark next to the tower of babel and so on, and that all of these objects were there for the students to touch in their extensive process of

hands-on learning.³⁷⁵ Jacob was particularly captivated by all the architectural models of famous buildings around the world that she found in the basement, ranging from the Tower of Babel to the Parthenon, a Cape Cod cottage, to a Catholic Church (Appendix: Figure 174). The scale models were built between 1935 and 1938 as part of a Work Projects Administration (WPA) funded project to provide blind students with tactile tools for learning.³⁷⁶ During the depression in the 1930s, the WPA was a way of getting people back to work, and people built big murals in banks or post offices, or bridges made out of stones, which were typically very labor-intensive. She has decided to borrow a number of these now mostly unused and threatened models from blind schools across the country to include in her new project, and will place them on accessibly-scaled pedestals throughout the gallery. So far, she is working with Columbus School for the Blind, Ohio State School for the Blind, Perkins in Watertown and the Kentucky Historical Society. The models are now abandoned objects stashed away in closets of these schools, and were close to being thrown away, so Jacob felt that these choreographic objects could be reconstituted for gallery audiences to engage both sighted and blind people alike. Jacob will ensure that the buildings will be accessible to the careful and supervised touch by an attendant within the gallery space at Radcliffe, therefore honoring the form in which these choreographic objects were once used. Jacob's interest in these models also aligns with Clark's brief experimentation in the construction of architectural maquettes created in the

³⁷⁵ Wendy Jacob interview with Amanda Cachia, August 4, 2016.

³⁷⁶ For more information on this method of tactile pedagogy for the blind, please see David Serlin's "Learning at your Fingertips," *Cabinet: A Quarterly of Art and Culture*, Issue 39, Fall 2010, 70-73.

1950s and 1960s, such as *A casa do poeta* (The poet's house, 1964) (Appendix: Figure 175). These models demonstrated Clark's changing interests, which shifted from representation into spatial constructs and corporeal experiences.³⁷⁷ While Clark's maquettes may not have offered as much rich tactile learning opportunities as those that Jacob will include in her project, they both demonstrate an interest in spatial relationships of scale, shape, and form and the conflation of interior and exterior surfaces.

In conjunction with these tactile models, Jacob will activate the walls of the gallery so that visitors will feel architecture on two different scales through that of the little models on the one hand, and the height and width of the life-size gallery on the other hand. Through these walls, Jacob will bring in the weather that provides context for the buildings as a type of atmosphere by working with a student from Emerson College who will record the daily conditions of the weather in the immediate area and feed this into a subwoofer embedded into the walls. Jacob was affected by a radio weather forecaster in Scotland who would report on daily shipping conditions related to wind and temperature, and who had a voice without emotion. The title of the show is *Calm: Smoke Rises Vertically*, 2016, which is a title that is inspired by the Beaufort Wind Scale, which is an empirical measure that relates to wind speed observed in sea and land conditions. The ambition of the Beaufort scale is to create clear and accurate records of changing weather conditions. The conditions range from dead calm to raging hurricane. "Calm. Smoke rises vertically" describes winds blowing at less than one knot. In

³⁷⁷ Zeuler R. M. De A. Lima, "Ceci N'Est Pas Un Mur: The Architecture of Organic Lines," *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948-1988* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2014), 74.

this exhibition, the weather conditions become a spoken report, a description of locally observable conditions. By putting weather report in the walls, the vibrations will contribute to the climate of room itself, both through description and through the physicality of sound waves. The buildings inhabit the local climate: their exterior architectural space is the interior of the gallery, and once again we see a similar conflation of these binaries as body and object intermingle in space.

Conclusion: Haptically Speaking

In this chapter, I have tried to reorientate the conversation on blindness and the ocularcentric nature of art history towards the haptic-centric sensations of tactility. Through this marked new direction in the rhetoric around a “tactile choreopolitics,” I am more interested in the knowledge to be gained from the participation in touch-based activity rather than what is lost from an absence of vision. While artists have historically found a temporary lack of vision to be a great source of insight where they have “discovered” the power of their full senses, I put forward the work of Fayen d’Evie and Wendy Jacob to suggest that there are other more generative and empowering strategies for experiencing multi-sensorial regimes. The contemporary work of d’Evie and Jacob animates Forsythe’s choreographic objects, where wax and bronze casts, printed three-dimensional and two-dimensional surfaces, and everyday items such as platforms, walls, columns and maquettes are chambers for the conflation of the interior and exterior boundaries of the body and architecture. Both of their practices

demonstrate a commitment towards haptic activism and “tactile choreopolitics,” and contribute towards a critique of ocularcentrism, where they emphasize the value to be had in learning about an art experience through touch, instead of relying on the static nature of vision alone.

At the beginning of this chapter, I asked the question, what are the implications for the body’s proprioceptive relationship with matter when the body is either blind or deaf? Though d’Eve and Jacob’s work, we can observe that these implications are profound, namely, that a fuller spectrum of audience members can access objects in a museum or gallery that may not have been available to them previously, owing to conventional “No Touch” policies. Being able to engage in an encounter of tactility in a museum gives the disabled visitors an opening, and a new advantageous position, where they are empowered through haptic aesthetics and need not rely on discursive or representational regimes in art history to validate or sanction their experience. What is especially important to note is that the tactile realm, while empowering and benefitting a disabled audience, is also equally accessible to non-disabled visitors as well. In sum, it is an egalitarian modality. D’Eve and Jacob’s work take up this important work as a type of intervention, and they also shift the conventional foci on disability, which we understand has been shrouded in pity and ignorance.

Both d’Eve and Jacob’s work also contributes to the lines of inquiry began by Lygia Clark in the 1950s and 1960s, where her work might be considered as precursor of sorts, of the art of the choreographic object, given her interest in radically collapsing binaries and considering the sensorium (amongst

other things) as valid topics for experimentation within visual art practice. Clark's work in conversation with a disability aesthetics provides a useful platform to remark on how the work of contemporary disabled and non-disabled artists extends art movements such as performance art and minimalism from a disability-centered perspective, where we understand a tactile experience with the disabled experience in mind first and foremost. While it is true that Clark's body work assumed able-bodiedness according to my research, one of the major advantages to her work is that it is very amenable to disabled audiences for the most part. When I visited Clark's major survey exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2014, co-curated by Cornelia H. Butler and Luis Pérez-Oramas, I was accompanied by the non-visual learner Carmen Papalia (whose work I discuss in great detail in Chapter Two). Papalia touched many of the objects on display in the exhibit, and both of us also experienced Clark's *The House Is the Body: Penetration, Ovulation, Germination, Expulsion* from 1968, which required us to negotiate and feel our way through a cordoned off corridor-like space filled with white balloons, hanging yarn from the ceiling and rubber balls across the floor, which imitated a birth canal and the female reproductive system. Incidentally, the security guard made Papalia keep his cane outside of the installation for fear of bursting all the balloons, which became a conundrum raising questions around access and how accessible Clark's work is for disabled users after all. So while I acknowledge the complexity of access in a museum setting, and without speaking for Papalia, I do believe that Clark's work, both at point of origin, and in its revised and reconstituted form in museum installations,

many years after her death, offer exciting opportunities for haptic activism if curators were to think from a disability-centered perspective. Inviting and working with artists like d'Evie and Jacob is a first step in critically thinking through the challenges of access as they offer intelligent pathways, literally and metaphorically.

Conclusion: Beautiful Progress to Somewhere

In this dissertation, I have attempted to illustrate a unique definition of Lepecki's choreopolitics in combination with Forsythe's choreographic objects by applying these terms towards the radical performance of disability in contemporary art, or what I like to call "raw sense." What the reader will discover is a new discourse for the epistemology of "disability art." Through the work of Carmen Papalia, Laura Swanson, Corban Walker, Christine Sun Kim, Alison O'Daniel, Fayen d'Evie and Wendy Jacob, and my own *Alterpodium* project, which each directly engage in choreopolitical framing, action and agency, I state the politicized position around disabled subjectivity, and chart the lived experiences of disability from a complex array of counter-hegemonic viewpoints within contemporary art practices. I have charted this lived experience by relying on first-person narrative in the form of interviews with each of the artists (which sometimes span a number of years) by email, Skype, or phone. My mediated exchanges with the artists are integral to how I get closer to offering a vital and dynamic experience for the reader, who must navigate their own cognitive pathways in order to glean new understandings and experiences regarding the disabled body. I have also offered extensive quotes by the artists throughout the chapters, as it is here where we come to intimately understand their thoughts and concerns, which I find energizing.

Structurally, I have approached this dissertation by deploying a comparative study where I have concentrated on two major areas, which involved a reading of work by contemporary disabled and non-disabled artists in

juxtaposition with a re-reading of iconic historical work in Fluxus, minimalism, performance art and institutional critique by established non-disabled artists. These included practitioners such as Marina Abramovic and Ulay, Vito Acconci, Lygia Clark, Gordon Matta-Clark, Marcel Duchamp, Andrea Fraser, Ann Hamilton, Alvin Lucier, Robert Morris, and LaMonte Young, amongst others. It was essential to have both components to my comparative project, because I argue that providing a historical framing for the contemporary work of disability art contextualizes these practices for us, and helps us to comprehend the meaning and significance of their work within the fields of art history and visual culture. I situated disability-themed art in the larger categories of installation, film, video, photography, performance and body art and socially engaged art practices, and articulated how many of the goals and functions of these genres are analogous to those of disabled artists. For instance, qualities such as complex embodiment, de-centring and fragmentation that are characteristic of contemporary art practice in concert with identity politics also can be found in disability-themed art. I did this in an attempt to define a critical space for the work of artists with disabilities by laying out established theoretical, art historical parameters to situate their practices. As I grappled with how to articulate the process that is unfolding in the artists' work around me, I also attempted to locate and sift through earlier generations of artist's work within my current field of enquiry. Ultimately, I have strived to carve a space for the difference of disability in the manner of other minority subjects.

The definition of Lepecki's "choreopolitics," in addition to Foucault's questioning of normalcy and power, and Merleau-Ponty's application of the primacy of perception has been complicated through the work of the artists. In Chapter Two, the politics of choreography has encompassed the various usages of the prosthesis beyond the amputee-user: first, from the perspective of an artist who is a non-visual learner (Carmen Papalia), who challenges conventional use of his white cane by turning it into a dialogical and multi-sensorial tool in various socially-engaged art projects; and second, my own *Alterpodium* project, which challenges normative architecture, namely the podium, through insidious and radical performance. In Chapter Three, my experiences of the world from my perspective as one with dwarfism was further expanded by two other artists who also have dwarfism. Laura Swanson and Corban Walker articulated how they choreograph space at their scale, by offering portraits and sculptural installations that encourage the audience to consider various optical and angular perspectives beyond the average-height viewing position. Christine Sun Kim and Alison O'Daniel blend choreography within two-dimensional and three-dimensional form, but they especially provide us with a sense of how sound, too, can be manipulated politically in space, as told through deaf and hearing impaired ears in Chapter Four. Lastly, Fayen d'Evie and Wendy Jacob provide us with a rich range of examples in the choreographic politics of vibration in Chapter Five, which aims to facilitate a haptic experience of art beyond its conventional ocularcentric parameters, certainly for the benefit of blind, visually impaired, deaf, and hearing impaired individuals, but also for society at large.

My discussion on each of the artists' practices was prefaced by in-depth discussions on the problems and challenges of historical and contemporary representations of various complex embodiments. I offered brief overviews, on, in this order, the overblown usage of the prosthesis as metaphor, the limited and one-sided tropes of the image of the dwarf, especially as circus clown or in the nude, embedded assumptions of the ostensible "silent" deaf world, and how occurcentrism remains the dominant framework in which we experience visual culture in our world. These problems seem very obvious, despite how ingrained they still are in the public imagination and everyday reality of the lived experience of the disabled subject, but what is unique is how the artists themselves grapple with them, counter them, and ultimately offer creative new solutions that bring the non-disabled participant into this "disabling" equation alongside the artist. Providing these overviews was important so that the reader could grasp some of the particular issues at stake in the contemporary work described, and to gain an understanding of the history of prejudice that has pervaded much of the perception, reception and representation of the disabled subject across various forms of complex embodiments. In turn, these overviews established the base in which the choreopolitics attached to the specific work described in each of the chapters gains momentum, as it is these misunderstandings and reductive associations that the artists aim to work against, implicitly and/or explicitly.

Through these unique models and forms of "choreopolitics," which each demand audience participation – be it through looking and observing, talking,

touching, or moving – the artists to elicit an empathy and compassion towards the disabled subject that simultaneously exposes their vulnerability while at the same time demonstrates their agency. Indeed, the politics of their choreography is to reveal the revelation of complex embodiment itself – one that is not strictly “disabled” in the conventional understanding of the term, that is affixed to a certain body that the world understands to mean “different,” but rather the idea that complex embodiment can be a status or state inhabited by *any* body, at any time, temporarily or permanently, moving in and/or out, that changes and shifts. The artists’ complex embodiment is, at times, revealed through an “aesthetics of discomfort,” as they engage with a public to convey a message about their unique political, and creative message. The artists therefore “choreograph empathy,” by way of Foster’s construction, by asking them to, for example, change the angle of their heads, the curvature of their spine, or the bend in their hips, as they are forced to gaze upon a work in a gallery space from an alternative viewing position, sharing these physical adjustments with the experience of someone who has dwarfism. Or perhaps they must struggle to elicit sound from Velcro strips across the ceiling of a gallery space, bringing them into a shared space regarding the challenges of communication and translation from a deaf or hearing-impaired perspective. Or the viewer must close their eyes and walk through an urban space without the privilege of sight, so that the hierarchy of the senses becomes problematized and reorganized, and a new appreciation of the senses can be formulated, in conjunction with haptic activism. Through their artworks, the artists procure compassion from the non-disabled participant and/or viewer that

brings them into a shared sense of the disabled subject's corporal conditions. Through this choreopolitical participation, the disabled subject shares a slice of their various complex embodiments, and in doing so, breaks down the entrenched binary between "able" and the "disabled." Instead, their work demonstrates that complex embodiment is a status we have in common across humanity, continuously, all the time. Ultimately, this new choreopolitical model of reception catalyzed in the relationship between the viewer and the *non-normative* body aims to pave the way for long-lasting impacts on the power of positive visual representations of the disabled body, and the fate of the disabled identity and subject within the academic, museological and everyday world.

In considering how the development of a "new" art history informed by disability studies could unfold in the future, within this dissertation, I have aimed to offer a distinctive template, where a conflation of the theoretical work of phenomenology, Foucauldian analyses of power relations, and Lepecki's choreopolitics may find usage in future analyses of disability art. My goal has especially been to strategically invigorate art history and contemporary art discourse from both an insider and outsider perspective. In other words, I speak as one operating within the canon, and yet I also simultaneously inject the canon with a new framework of "other." This means that I position myself both within the center and the margin, echoing the theory I engage by de-stabilizing and de-centering such binaries. This positioning is important for me in order to acquire an authoritative voice in the field, where I am able to offer dynamic new material while equally demonstrating my knowledge and innovative engagement with

established, mainstream artists. In my reading of work by contemporary disabled artists, I have been able to think and write about how a viewer's perceptions of the disabled body can be shifted by encountering a plethora of atypical physical experiences inscribed in a work of art. These experiences have ranged from blindness, deafness, dwarfism and challenges with scale, or how bodies engage with the built environment using inventive new prosthetic objects like a long cane, where they may also rely on sound, touch, and vibration. Each of my chapters has uncovered these physical experiences by focusing on two artists that radically open up the discussion about bodies. My application of a disability studies perspective to contemporary art discourse in juxtaposition with seminal movements in art history from the 1960s and 1970s reveals readings we did not even know were missing. I am poised to invigorate visual culture in new ways as I bring to the forefront an awareness of disability in a bid to foster new critical and socially just representations. Indeed, I am excited about the choreopolitical phenomenological knowledges that have surfaced within these new artwork configurations, where pieces that were once stamped within a certain "normalizing" rhetoric have not only be unhinged from safe frameworks, but they have also been unbounded, rearticulated and reformulated within radical politicized arenas, breathing new life into their original conceptions and discourses.

In 2011, Joseph Grigely wrote an excellent and influential essay, entitled "Beautiful Progress to Nowhere," which contributed towards an extensive collection of commissioned texts compiled and edited by Aaron Williamson for

the journal, *Parallel Lines*. The online journal was facilitated and hosted by the Serpentine Gallery in London and funded by Arts Council England.³⁷⁸ In the text, Grigely talked of how “there are no easy answers about disability, and no easy answers for disabled artists. We make progress where we can, even beautiful progress to nowhere, straight into a wall.”³⁷⁹ Grigely was making reference to a work by visually impaired artist Stephen Lapthisophon, which formed part of his solo show at Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois in 2002, entitled “With Reasonable Accommodation.”³⁸⁰ The installation took place during the 12th year of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and emphasized the ineffective manner in which the public responded to its policies of accommodation and access for disabled people. Despite the ADA, many buildings and public spaces remain inaccessible to the disabled population to this day, as we already understand through the work of the contemporary art explored in this dissertation. Lapthisophon had inserted ladders, sculptural intrusions, cardboard boxes, electrical cords, walkers, architectural details, images, signage and obstacles in his installation in order to choreograph the way that visitors maneuvered, or rather, tripped and strained, through the gallery space. Here, like the other artists in this dissertation, the artist reversed access so that the disabled subject was empowered, while the non-disabled figure was forced into that of the minority. This exhibition also subscribed to the disabled economy of suffering, wounding and retribution that I discussed earlier, where Lapthisophon attempted to arouse

³⁷⁸ For more information, see <http://www.parallellinesjournal.com> Accessed April 26, 2016

³⁷⁹ <http://www.parallellinesjournal.com/article-beautiful-progress-nowhere.html> Accessed April 26, 2016

³⁸⁰ For more information on the exhibition, visit <http://gallery400.uic.edu/exhibitions/with-reasonable-accommodation> Accessed June 1, 2016

an empathetic response in his audience by reversing access privileges often taken for granted by non-disabled communities. Poignantly, the artist had also created a bright green-coloured choreographic object in the form of a wheelchair ramp, leaned up against, and heading into, a wall (Appendix: Figure 176). Grigely used this as an analogy and metaphor for the ambiguous state of the disability legislation around the ADA of 1990, and the continued obstacles (or walls) faced by artists in securing “reasonable accommodation.” I use Grigely’s essay as inspiration for the title of my conclusion to this dissertation, but to, in fact, tweak it slightly, so that it reads as “beautiful progress to somewhere” instead of “nowhere.” Throughout the chapters of my analyses, I have argued that the category or the movement of disability arts *is* going somewhere, demonstrated by the artists’ literal and symbolic choreopolitical acts. While I agree with many of the points that Grigely makes about the roadblocks that disabled artists and disability politics continues to face, I also believe that this “nowhere” might be shifted, albeit subtly, towards “somewhere.” Using a term such as “beautiful” is also interesting and useful here in application to the idea of “raw sense” and the so-called “raw” quality of the disabled body, which we understand is the antithesis of classical ideals of perfection. Applying “beautiful” in this context therefore suggests that a choreography and performance of disability through artistic practice demands its own version of aesthetics separate and distinct from these classical ideals.

Unfortunately, key challenges also often impede the art historian or curator from turning to disability-related subject matter, given faculty often have

to deal with what Elizabeth Sweeney describes as “resistance, backlash or the threat of backlash for displaying [or writing about] disability” from both within their own institutions and the general public.³⁸¹ They also fear getting it wrong, as Sweeney talks of how often the rare curator (or scholar) who does approach disability as a subject matter is unaware of the history disability displays, its contested representations and how these stereotypes can skew interpretations and perceptions of work even when a project is not intended to reference any problematic past.³⁸² Disabled artists also often lack agency within exhibitions representing their work, due to an issue around perceived abilities to communicate in a “normal” manner by able-bodied curators. And while curators who do attempt to move into the foreign terrain of disability may be well-intentioned, Sweeney continues to say that good intentions are hardly the best basis from which to critically engage and understand disability art.³⁸³ Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the theme of disability can become an important paradigm for art historians, and an empowering concept for all artists, not just those who identify as disabled. Aaron Williamson sees a need for “a cultural tradition of disability art that is complex and compelling enough to gain widespread and lasting critical worth [...]. Disability art needs to survive the ghetto.”³⁸⁴ Following this, Jennifer Gonzalez suggests that artists (and by default, curators), have tried to work around what she calls the “double bind,” by

³⁸¹ Elizabeth Sweeney, “(Dis)played: American able and the display of contemporary disability art,” A Research Paper Submitted to the Graduate Programme in Critical Disability Studies, Toronto: York University, 2012.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ For more information on the ghettoization of disability, see Aaron Williamson’s essay, “In the Ghetto? A Polemic in Place of an Editorial” in *Parallel Lines* journal, <http://www.parallellinesjournal.com/article-in-the-ghetto.html> Accessed April 26, 2016

“choosing to mix dominant and subaltern discourses of representation to draw our attention to the sites of their intersection, not as a simple celebration of cultural fusion, but rather as a carefully considered analysis of unequal power relations...”³⁸⁵ The double bind can be described as the limiting framework artists are placed when they emphasize differences based on race, ethnicity, gender or ability, as a critical white audience will automatically label this as “other.”³⁸⁶ On the other hand, the omission of otherness, while it might be accepted by the mainstream, will also be at risk of being “emptied of social critique.”³⁸⁷ It seems the challenge for curators and artists, then, is a push and pull: to generalize without minimizing and to specialize without ghettoizing, because to generalize notions of the body without getting into specifics of disability, such as blindness and what its experiences might look or feel like, maintains its invisibility. Like Gonzalez, I argue that it is possible to offer social critique whilst also offering other ideas within an artwork, so that any outcome will provide a multimodal experience that is neither conforming to “other” or “multiculturalism” nor to the “mainstream imperative to assimilate.”³⁸⁸

As an Australian woman living and working in California, USA, who identifies as physically disabled according to the social model of disability, I am often asked for my opinion on the state of disability arts in various countries, specifically that of Australia, Canada, the UK, and the USA (indeed, I cannot speak of the state of disability arts outside of these places owing to my limited

³⁸⁵ Jennifer Gonzalez, “James Luna: Artifacts and Fictions,” *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2008), 38.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

contact). My response to this question is useful for incorporating into the conclusion of this dissertation in order to give an overview of the presence of disability within the arts more generally, separate to the specificities of my argument. Public arts funding towards disability-based creative initiatives in both the UK, Canada and Australia is quite robust, and the UK is at the forefront and a clear leader in this regard. One thinks of organizations such as Shape Arts in London, DASH in Shrewsbury, Arts Access Australia as Australia's peak body for the arts (along with many other smaller disability-arts organizations throughout its various states), and Tangled Art + Disability based in Toronto as the Canadian counterpart. On the other hand, the USA tends to excel at offering rigorous academic opportunities in disability studies (although not strictly disability arts), and the Society for Disability Studies is very active at staging annual conferences and publishing its peer-reviewed journal, *Disability Studies Quarterly*. Whilst there are few departments dedicated wholly to disability studies in various universities and colleges (Ohio State University and University at Buffalo are some examples), disability studies invariably pops up as a minor, and is housed within other humanities-based academic departments.³⁸⁹

All of this only truly scratches the surface of the representation, growth, and development of "disability arts," for it also arguably encompasses a very narrow definition of what it might come to mean. For example, another facet might consist of the proliferation of disabled models who are now achieving great national and international success on the world stage and are working to challenge

³⁸⁹ For a full listing, visit <http://disabilitystudies.svr.edu/programs-list/> Accessed April 29, 2016

normative and deeply ingrained aesthetic ideals, such as Madeline Stuart, Nyle DiMarco, and Rebekah Marine, who embody Down's Syndrome, deafness and amputee form in that order. In other words, "disability art" has proliferated across the globe in ways beyond the purely visual, where its representation can be experienced in all art forms including theatre, dance, music, dance, architecture, new media, poetry, curatorial studies, and creative writing. Pedagogically, a number of scholars have also developed handbooks, offering templates for how to teach disability arts in the classroom, such as Petra Kuppers and Alice Fox and Hannah Macpherson.³⁹⁰ Conferences and symposia on "disability arts" have also blossomed, including the 2016 "Crippling the Arts" conference that took place in Toronto thanks to Tangled Art + Disability, not to mention DASH's "Awkward Bastards" held at the mac center for the arts in Birmingham in 2015 and another again in 2017. Disability arts festivals are also flourishing: DaDaFest in Liverpool continues to remain strong, while the brand new US counterpart, DisArt, based in Grand Rapids, Michigan is leading the charge for a new quality and branding of experience for visitors to engage in the vibrancy that is disability arts, officially launched in 2015 and securing significant national arts funding through the National Endowment for the Arts. The world of athleticism and sports has also launched substantial artistic and funding opportunities for "disability arts," such as the *Unlimited* programming that stemmed from the Olympics and Paralympics in London in 2012, and the PanAm and ParaPanAm Games in

³⁹⁰ For more information, see Petra Kuppers, *Studying Disability Arts and Culture: An Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), and Alice Fox and Hannah Macpherson, *Inclusive Arts Practice and Research: A Critical Manifesto* (New York and London: Routledge, 2015).

Toronto in 2015.

“Disability arts” also encompasses politics and activism around access. Myself, along with several self-identifying disabled colleagues at institutions like the University of California Berkeley, such as Georgina Kleege, and independent artist Carmen Papalia are especially interested in issues of “creative access,” where we aim to disseminate and illustrate evolving radical and transgressive ideas in curatorial design for how museum and gallery workers might become competent in building and delivering best accessible multi-media practices in museums. We consider innovation in curatorial practice that advances the goal of increasing access to exhibitions by people with sensory, cognitive and physical disabilities. Considering accessible design principles for a wide-range of bodies is critical for the future direction of *all* modalities of design.

Despite all this “somewhere” – progress that is occurring – which suggests that the voice of disability and disabled artists is becoming much louder and more prolific and noticeable than what was previously occurring several decades ago, many of us in disability community still face ongoing “walls” or barriers within our daily lives. The world was not built for disabled people, and this fact continues to remain true. We also wrestle with challenging terms and definitions, and this is especially wrapped up with the d-word itself (‘d’ for “disability”): which persistently presents a ghettoizing conundrum for artists and arts workers alike, who often have to carefully and strategically consider the vicissitudes of self-identification in relation to their complex embodiment, or even their politics, no matter how earnest and strong. Lepecki and Forsythe’s terms have been

productive to co-opt here within the context of disability and contemporary art practice centered on the sensorium as a way of building a new language and a new approach.

I would also like to acknowledge the systemic limitations of my work, which I continue to find troubling and complicated, as I continuously find myself curatorially and academically confined by the very nature of our world that is built for, and caters towards, vision, and the capacity to see. The irony of my dissertation, of course, is that as much as it expounds the virtues of contemporary artists who radically experiment with image, text, language, the bias of vision and the overall sensorium, this dissertation will only mostly be legible through vision alone. What we have come to understand through this dissertation is that vision is simply one aspect of the matrix of all our embodiments, but none-the-less, I must still operate within this ocularcentric system whilst consistently reminding and advocating for alternatives.

Another limitation and danger rests in the threat of the essentialization of the disabled subject position in this dissertation, where a reader might walk away and assume that all blind people, or deaf people, or dwarf, share similar experiences. These types of assumptions and/or conclusions that readers may take away with them are hard for me to control. The same is true for the idea that, in stressing the bodily and the somatic, there is some risk of reducing the disabled subject to a body and, in the process, abstracting that body from a mind and an intelligence. The inadvertent effect of reliance on “body” theory might be to reinforce this reduction of the disabled to a physical symptom or condition. This

is not my intention, but it is something to consider as certain metaphors and linguistic forms are deployed through and within my writing.

Despite these challenges, this dissertation straddles what Sweeney calls the exploitative and the exploratory. While I agree with Sweeney's argument that curators and art historians must know whether a disability-themed work is exploitative or exploratory (as many look the same, especially given the history of displaying disabled people for entertainment via the freak show), this doesn't necessarily mean that the curator or art historian should steer clear of the exploitative because it implies a negative quality. We must question and delve into the complexities of these representations more deeply in order to grasp what has previously been ineffable. This notion goes a long way into countering the argument about the essentialization of a particular subject position articulated by artist Mary Kelly, where she talks of the possible limitations for expressing subjectivity through "feminist body art" practices because the female body continues to be objectified. What I have suggested in this dissertation is that the choreopolitics of my topics in each of the chapters – namely, prostheses, scale, sound or the sonic, and the haptic, which operate collectively as both ephemeral and tangible sensorial channels for being-in-the-world, are not tautological or confined to one definition or monolithic category. I have purposefully intended to disrupt easy categorizations of so-called universal experiences people who are "amputees," or those who have dwarfism, are visually impaired and/or blind, or are deaf and/or have a hearing impairment. So for example, the user experience of a prosthesis now comes from the perspective of a person who is a non-visual

learner (Papalia) and a person with dwarfism (myself), while I turn to work by a visually-impaired and non-disabled artist to consider how they inspire haptic activism. Through these interruptions of categories, I also disrupt any straightforward or common assumptions around physically disabled experiences. This means that, for instance, a phenomenology of blindness is actually one that embraces vision as much as it does the full sensorium, and thus cannot be reduced to an over-reliance on any one particular mode of sensing, or by casting off the very modality that causes oppression because a “normative” population considers it “abnormal” not to have sight. In other words, it would be reductive of me to create further binaries, or inclusions and exclusions, around assumed capacities and incapacities within the possibilities of blindness itself; it is rather more enlightening to let temporarily blind and acquired blind embodiments speak for themselves. In this way, I hope I bestow full agency on both the participating artists in this dissertation, and also the world’s audience, who might choose to turn their attention and their senses, including vision, to my experiment. Ultimately, each experience of being a disabled and non-disabled artist is completely intersubjective and personal, offering us even more opportunities for a rich palette of knowing the world through diverse and creative choreopolitical acts.

In Chapter One, I posed some challenging questions that I seek to briefly address here, especially focusing on the goals and potentials of the choreopolitical disabled body, and its *ability* to transform normative society and its systems of power. Chantal Mouffe talks of the role of “antagonism” in politics, which might

be contextualized in this dissertation by the retributive character I have assigned to many of the works described in the chapters. Mouffe declares that we live in a time where there is a hybridity between “labor, political action and intellectual reflection...” which therefore means that the spheres of “art” and “politics” are not distinct and separate, but rather intertwined.³⁹¹ Mouffe continues to say that “artistic practices play a role in the constitution and maintenance of a given symbolic order, or in its challenging, and this is why they necessarily have a political dimension.”³⁹² Suffice to say that the artists I bring forward here are participating in counter-hegemonic practices and politics by virtue of their *criticality* in “unsettling the dominant hegemony.”³⁹³ This work is critical of mainstream conventions of looking and being-in-the-world whilst simulateously offering alternative and more inclusive solutions, and this is its import.

In winter, 2016, New York-based artist and wheelchair user Park McArthur staged her first solo exhibition in London entitled *Poly*, at the Chisenhale Gallery.³⁹⁴ McArthur’s installation explored “what it is to bear, to accommodate and to cushion...and the inseparable material relations of art to life.”³⁹⁵ Her exhibition included three new bodies of work and a text, which revealed the artists’ interest with the changing properties of materials and readymade industrial objects. Through this gathering of mixed media, ranging from foam, polymer powder, paper, and disposable hygiene products such as

³⁹¹ Chantal Mouffe, “Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices,” *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), 87.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ For more information on this exhibition, visit <http://www.chisenhale.org.uk/archive/exhibitions/index.php?id=177> Accessed June 1, 2016

³⁹⁵ <http://www.chisenhale.org.uk/archive/exhibitions/index.php?id=177> Accessed April 26, 2016

incontinence pads, bed liners and sanitary towels, McArthur also alludes to the temporary quality of the exhibition format. Exacerbating this topic is the impermeability of materials is the context of the gallery itself which offers atmospheric conditions that cause objects to transition from one state to another, either through decay or growth. One unofficial aspect of the exhibition, which also happens to illustrate the interests and points the artist was trying to make, was a series of welcoming red heaters that lay equally spread out around the perimeter of the rectangular box-shaped room (Appendix: Figure 177). The heaters were ordered before the installation to support the comfort of the artist during her time in the gallery – indeed, they functioned as a subtle, if ambiguous, “accommodation,” as visitors often easily confused the heaters for actual works of art. If the heaters had not been in the space, then it would not have been possible for the artist to be there on a daily basis as she prepared her show, owing to the unsuitable temperature conditions of the space. The artist had made the decision to keep the heaters as part of her overall installation in order to leave this trace of her individuated adapted existence in the space, but also to keep the space warm for the comfort of her visitors. The heaters act as a tangible accommodation for McArthur’s body and that of the audience, and also reveal much about the gallery’s intangible engagement with care, demonstrating how the social and atmospheric space of the gallery created its own aesthetic objects through need and desire, where context and effect inform one another. Indeed, through the inclusion of these objects, McArthur provokes us to consider questions around the boundaries between accommodation and art – when is an accommodation an art,

and can and is art accommodating? McArthur's 2016 heaters might also work as a companion to Lapthisophon's 2002 ramp – although rather than an unaccommodating ramp leading to nowhere, where it is quite unwelcoming, with its “back” to us and pointing to the wall, in McArthur's show, the heaters face towards us, inviting us to share in a space together, embracing accommodation to its utmost potential. These heaters remind us that all our bodies are choreopolitically mapped onto space, even if some of those bodies require more, or different, accommodation than others. McArthur's show is significant for it might act as an antithesis to Lapthisophon and Grigely's “nowhere,” or walls that shut everything down. Instead, it suggests an opening that spans physical, conceptual, spatial and dialogic qualities, which also points to how disability arts, and how this resonates with a “new” art history, might be going “somewhere,” after all.

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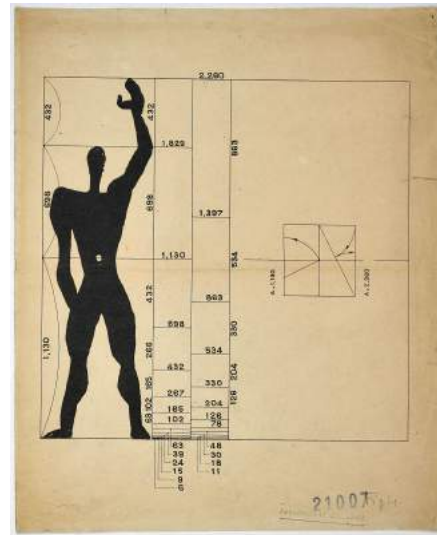
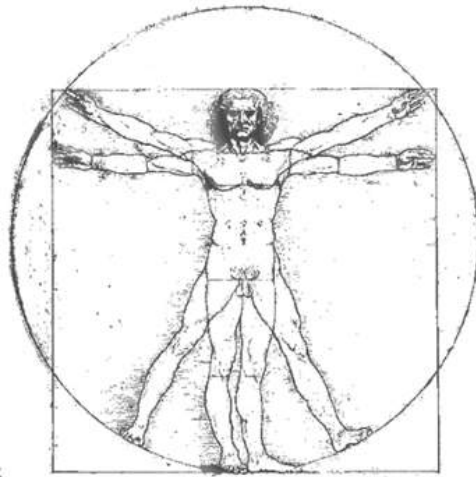
Appendix



Figures 1-2: (left) Mowry Baden, *Untitled (Seat Belt, Three Points)*, 1970;
(right) *Untitled (Seat Belt with Pole and Two Straps)*, 1969–1970



Figures 3-4: Amanda Cachia wearing Mowry Baden's *Untitled (Seat Belt with Pole and Two Straps)*, 1969–1970, as part of *Flesh of the World* at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto, June, 2015 (note that this is not the same piece described in the text).



Figures 5-6: (left) Leonardo da Vinci, *Vitruvian Man*, c. 1487, pen and ink with wash over metal point on paper, collection of Gallerie dell'Academia, Venice; (right) Le Corbusier, *Le Modulor*, 1945. drawing.
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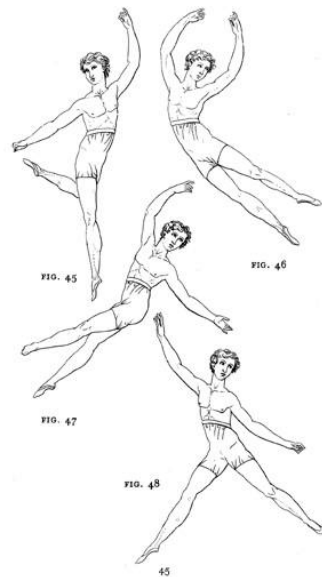


Figure 7: Carol Blasis's *An elementary treatise upon the theory and practice of the art of dancing*, c. 19th century



Figure 8: Mowry Baden, *Untitled (Seat Belt with Concrete Block)*, 1969–1970



Figure 9: Ricardo Gil, *Untitled*, c. 1990.



Figures 10-11: Ricardo Gil, Untitled (photos of Meg), 1994-2004



Figures 12-13: Garry Winogrand, Untitled, 1964 and American Legion Convention, Dallas, Texas, 1964



Figures 14-15: Wheelchair users crawl out of their chairs to climb up the steps of Capitol in 1990 to protest and claim their rights in the Americans with Disabilities Act



Figure 16: A Bolivian disability activist group suspending themselves with rope off a viaduct in Cochabamba in February 2016 to protest lack of public funding towards disabled populations.



Figure 17: Jackson Pollock making one of his drip paintings, photo by Hans Namuth, 1950



Figures 18-19: (left) William Pope L., still from *The Great White Way* (2001-ongoing); (right) Valie Export, *Heldenplatz 1*, 1982



Figures 20-21: stills from Kazuo Hara's *Goodbye CP*, 1972.



Figure 22: Noemi Lakmaier, *One Morning in May*, 2012



Figures 23-24: Scenes from Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 3*, 2002. (left) Aimee Mullins wears glass leg prostheses; (right) and cheetah leg prostheses.



Figures 25-26: Carmen Papalia, *Long Cane* performances, 2009-2011, Vancouver, BC



Figure 27: Carmen Papalia, *Blind Field Shuttle*, California College of the Arts, San Francisco, 2012. Photo: Jordan Reznick



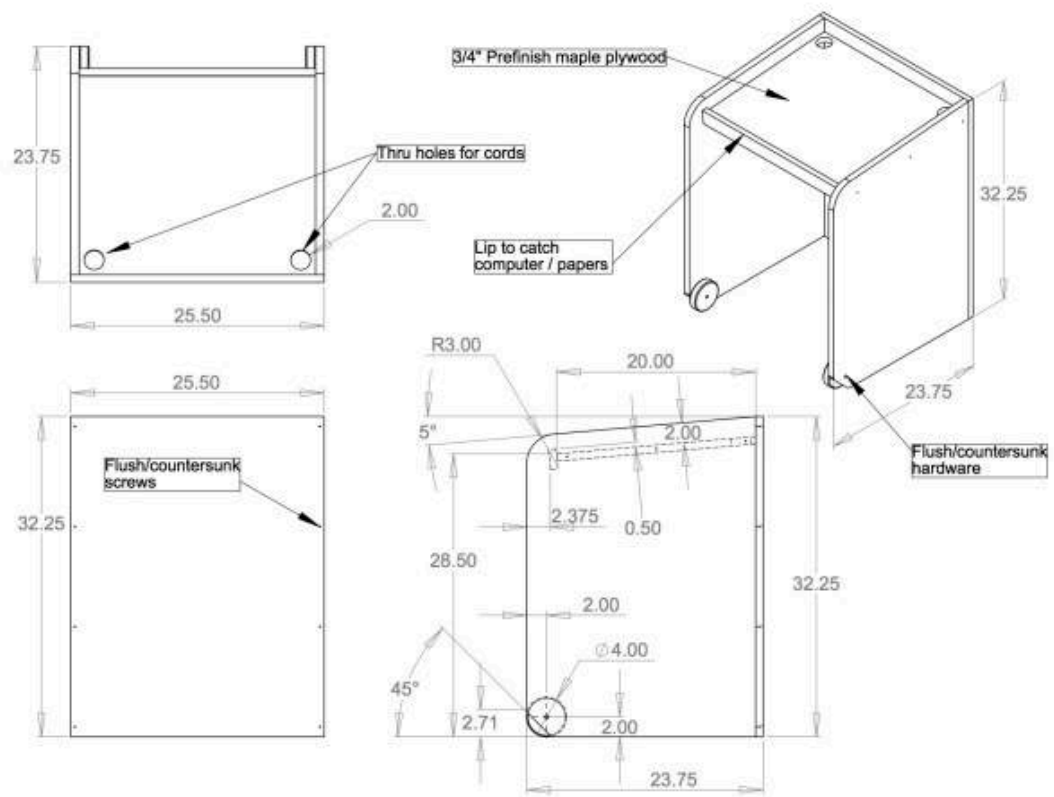
Figures 28-29: Carmen Papalia, *Mobility Device*, 2014, Grand Central Arts Center, Santa Ana, CA



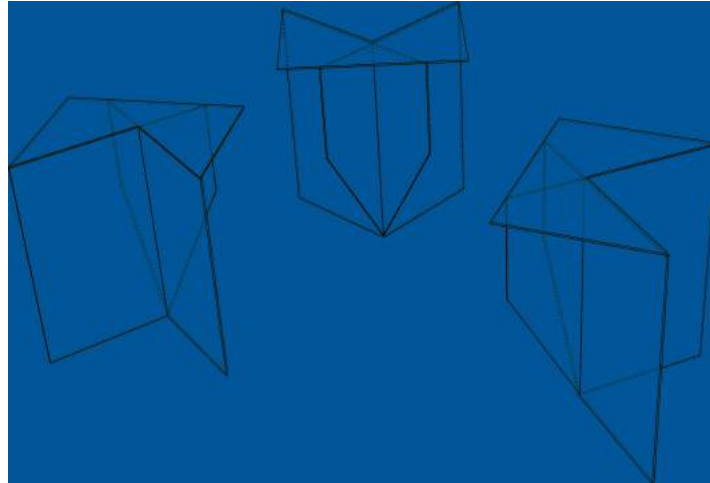
Figure 30: Carmen Papalia, still from the video, *White Cane, Amplified*, 2015, Vancouver, BC



Figure 31: Ann Hamilton, *untitled (body object series)*, 1984-1993



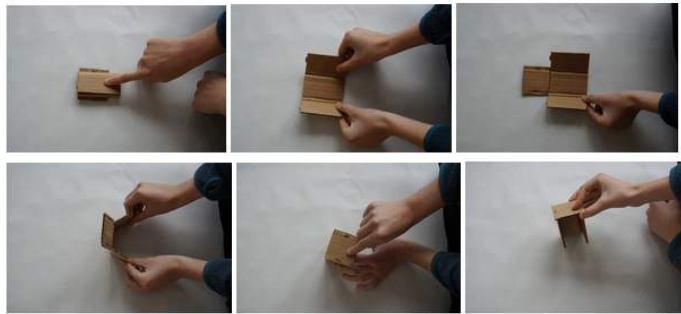
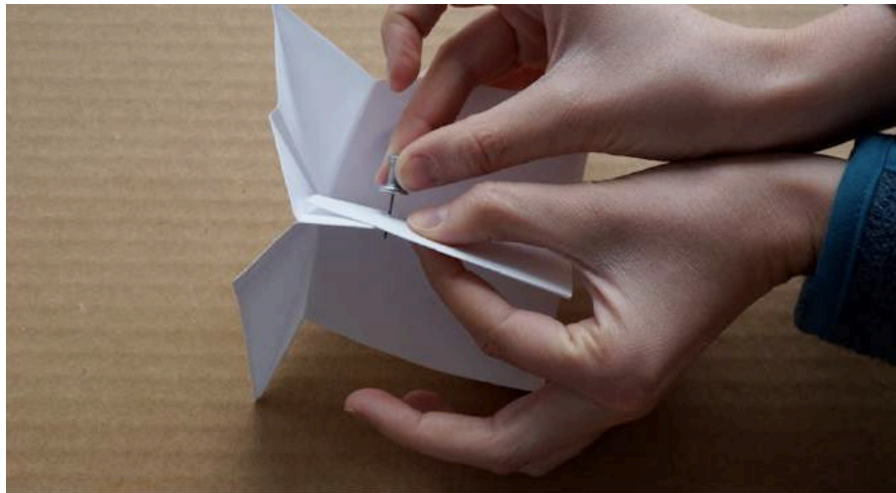
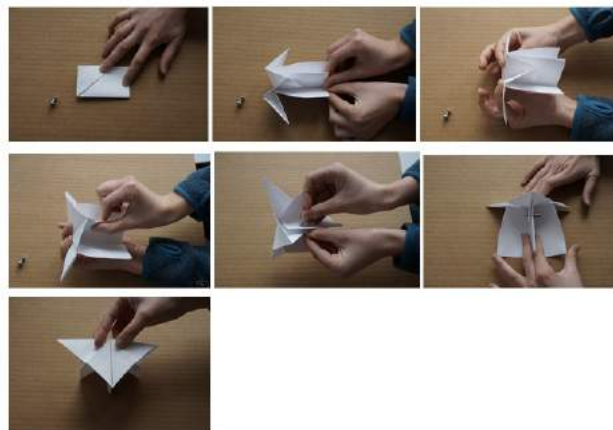
Figures 32-33: (top) Specifications for the original design of *Alterpodium* by Shawn Hibacronan, followed by its execution by Adrian Segal in 2012.



Figures 34-36: (above) the design of Hendren's Papanek-inspired concept for the first iteration of *Alterpodium*, conceived in 2013; Cachia (on right) using the *Alterpodium* for the first time at a symposium held at the Abrons Arts Center in New York, after Hendren (on left) built it for her in front of the audience



Figure 37: Amanda Cachia showing off the cardboard prototype of the *Alterpodium* to Sara Hendren's class at Olin College of Engineering in Boston, January 2015

Shape 2: box**Shape 3: triangle top**

Figures 38-39: Various student paper and cardboard prototypes to test out the shape and format for the new *Alterpodium*, January-May, 2015



Figures 40-41: (top) The final result of the portable *Alterpodium* designed by students at Olin College in 2015, illustrating the three stages of its build from beginning to end; (bottom) Cachia using the *Alterpodium* at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in December, 2015



Figures 42-43: (left) Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights*, 1989, Philadelphia Museum of Art; (right) Robert Morris, *21.3*, New York, NY



Figure 44: Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656



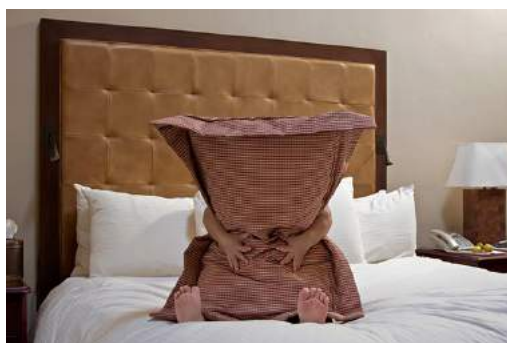
Figures 45-46: (left) Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin; (right) Diane Arbus, *A Jewish giant at home with his parents in the Bronx, N.Y.C.* 1979



Figures 47-48: (left) Mary Ellen Mark, *Twin Brothers Tulsi and Basant (Great Famous Circus, Calcutta, India, 1989)*; (right) Bruce Davidson, *Jimmy the Clown, 1958*



Figures 49-50: Katarzyna Kozyra, *The Midget Gallery Goes to Frieze*, 2009



Figures 51-52: Laura Swanson, *Anti-Self Portraits*, 2005-2008



Figures 53-54: Laura Swanson, *Anti-Self Portraits*, 2005-2008



Figure 55: Diane Arbus, *Masked Woman in a Wheelchair*, 1970



Figures 56-57: (left) Danica Dakić, *Isola Bella*, 2007-2008;
 (right) Joel Peter-Witkin, *Dwarf from Naples*, 2006

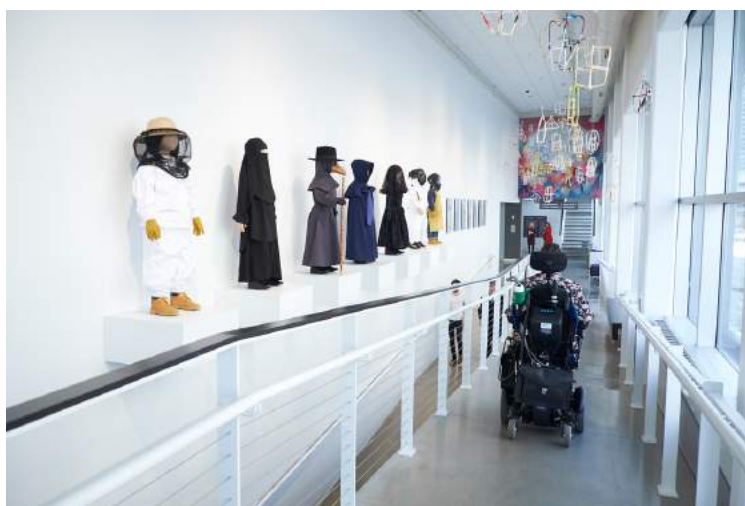


Figure 58: Laura Swanson, installation of *Uniforms* (2015) at Urban Institute of Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids, Michigan as part of exhibition, *Art of the Lived Experiment*, co-curated by Aaron Williamson and Amanda Cachia



Figures 59-64: Laura Swanson, *Uniforms* (2015) – sculptures (above) and photographs (below)



Figures 65-66: Laura Swanson, *Hope NY* (2011-2015)



Figure 67: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Conical Intersect*, 1975



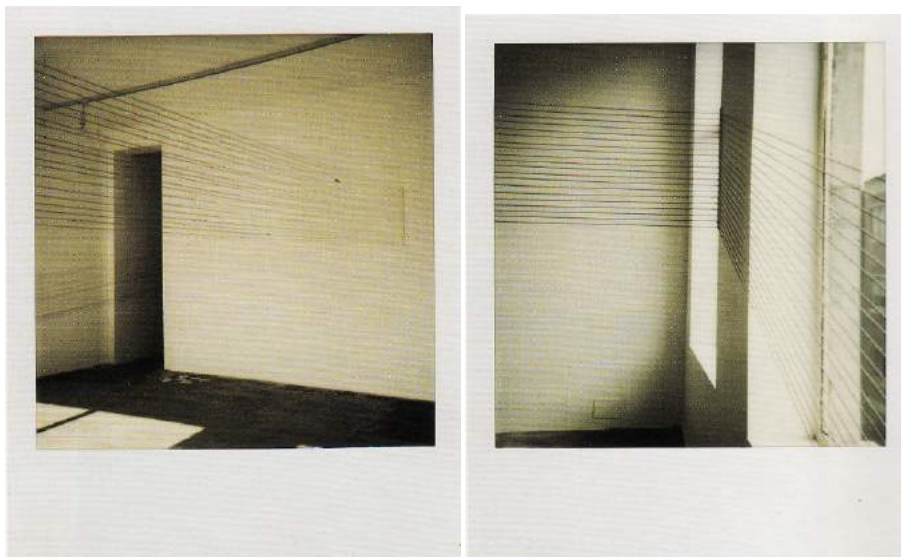
Figure 68: Ricardo Gil, *Restroom Portrait*, c. 1988



Figure 69: Laura Swanson, *TOGETHER together* series, 2009, ficus trees



Figure 70: Marina Abramović & Ulay, *Imponderabilia*, 1977, performance



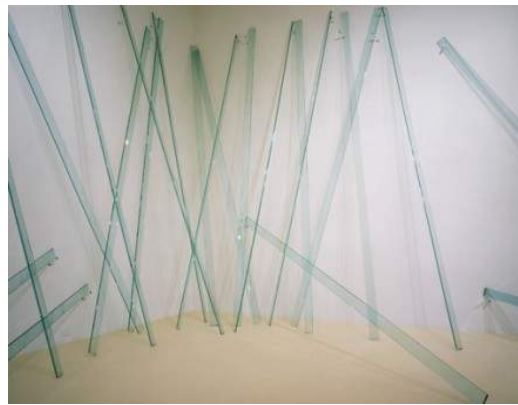
Figures 71-72: Corban Walker, *Trapezoid*, 1997



Figures 73-74: (left) Marcel Duchamp, *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition, 1942, New York, organized by Andre Breton; (right) Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974



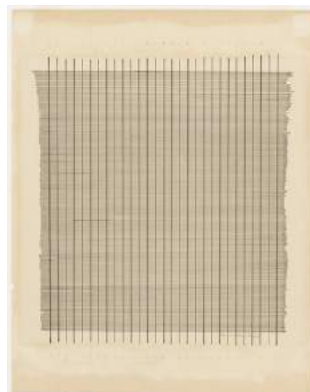
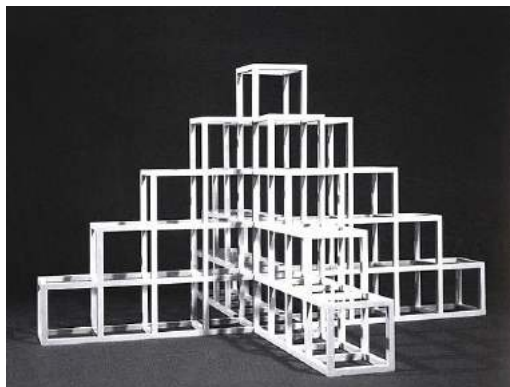
Figure 75: Corban Walker, *Trapezoid*, 1997



Figures 76-77: (left) Corban Walker, *Zip*, 2004; (right) Corban Walker, *Mapping #4*, 2000



Figure 78: Corban Walker, *Please Adjust*, 2011
Istituto Santa Maria Della Pietà, 54th Venice International Art Biennale, Italy



Figures 79-80: Sol LeWitt, *Cube construction*, 1971;
(right) Agnes Martin, *Tremolo*, 1962

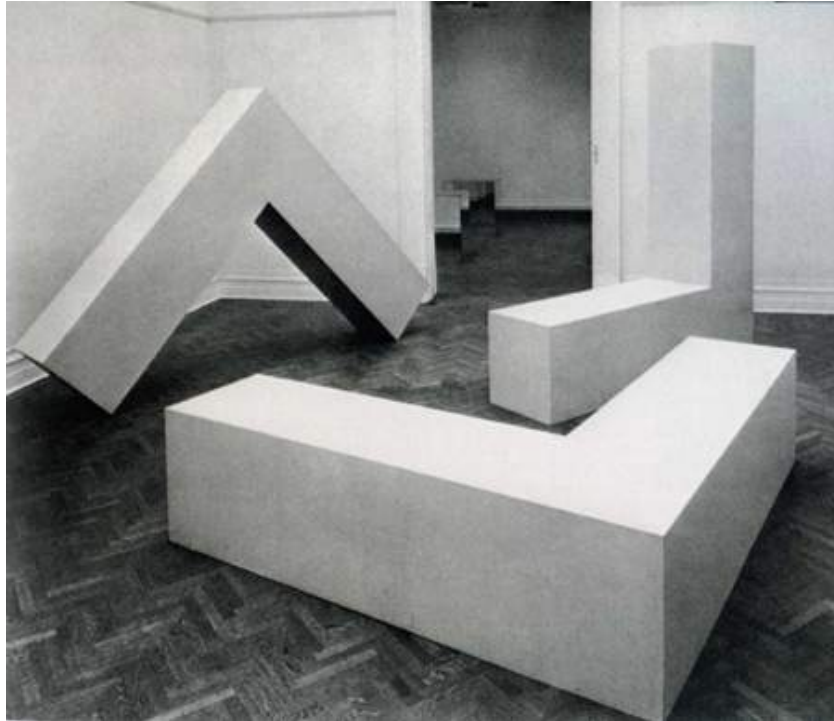


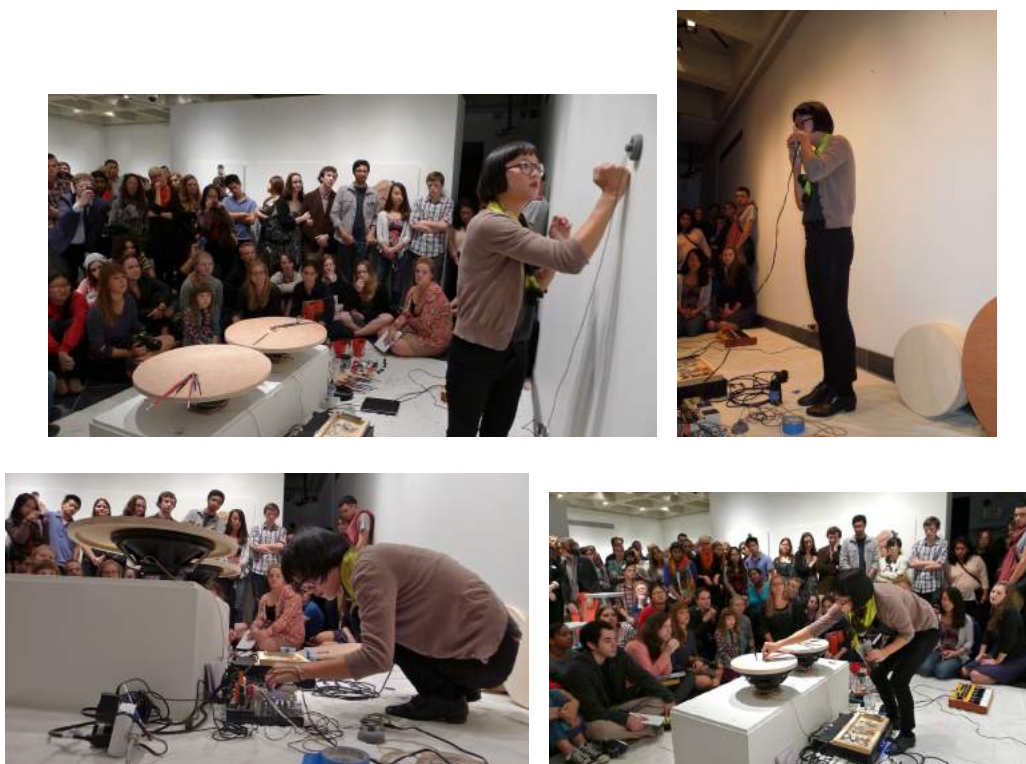
Figure 81: Robert Morris, *Untitled (L-beams)*, 1965



Figure 82: A viewer circumnavigating Corban Walker's *Please Adjust*, 2011



Figures 83-84: (left) Artur Zmijewski, still from *Singing Lesson*, 2001;
(right) still from *Singing Lesson 2*, 2003



Figures 85-88: Christine Sun Kim performing at Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Haverford College, PA, October 26, 2012



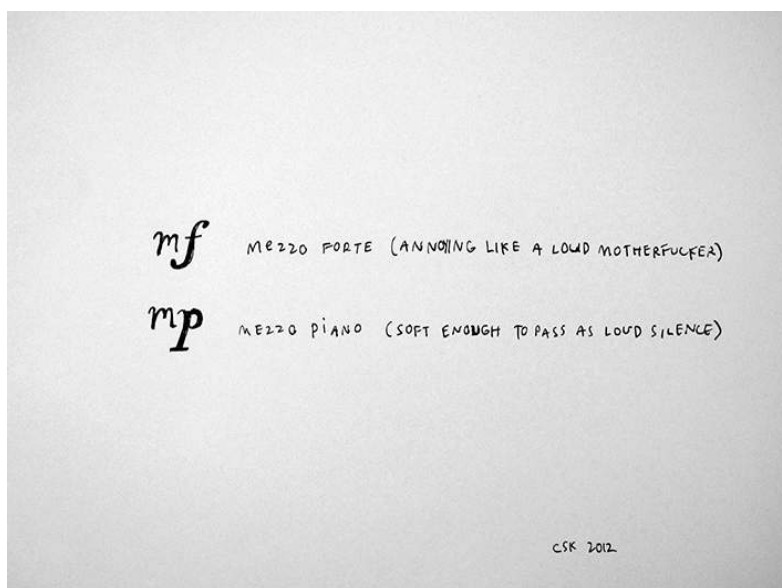
Figures 89-90: (left) Christine Sun Kim, *Speaker Drawings #1-10*, 2012;
 (right) detail of one of the *Speaker Drawings*, 2012



Figure 91: A young girl reacts to Christine Sun Kim's performance at Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Haverford College, PA, October 26, 2012



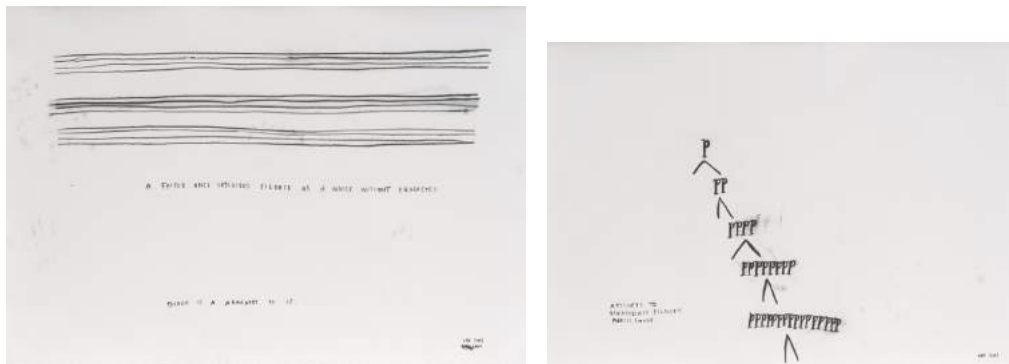
Figures 92-93: (left) Yves Klein, *Anthropometrie* performance, 1960;
(right) Janine Antoni, *Loving Care*, 1993



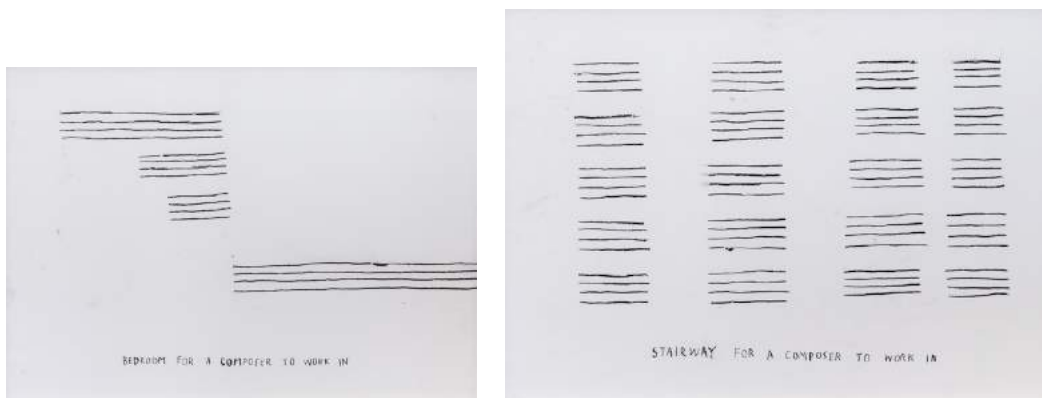
Figures 94-95: (left) Christine Sun Kim, *loud silence*, 2012, score drawing, 30" x 44";
(right) La Monte Young, *Score for Composition 1960 #7*, 1960



Figures 96-97: (left) Christine Sun Kim, *as mezzo as possible*, 2013, score drawing, 30" x 44";
 (right) Christine Sun Kim, *slur version of piano*, 2013, score drawing, 30" x 44"



Figures 98-99: (left) Christine Sun Kim, *a noise without character*, 2013,
 score drawing, 30" x 44";
 (right) Christine Sun Kim, *rehabilitating silence*, 2013, score drawing, 30" x 44"



Figures 100-101: Christine Sun Kim (left), *Bedroom for a Composer to Work in*, 2016;
 (right) *Stairway for a Composer to Work in*, 2016

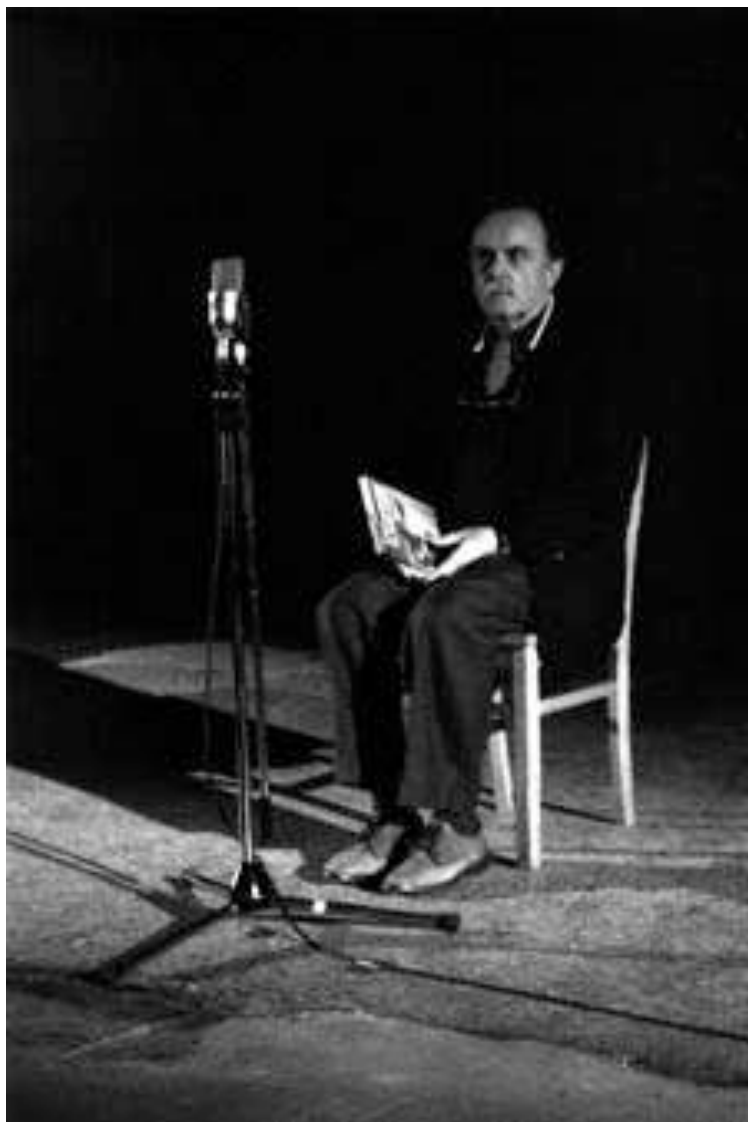
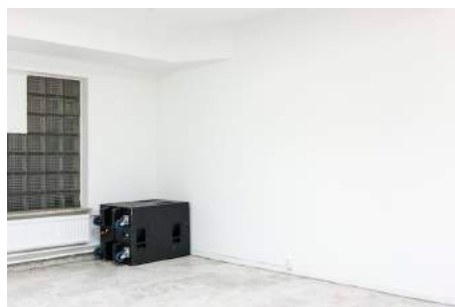
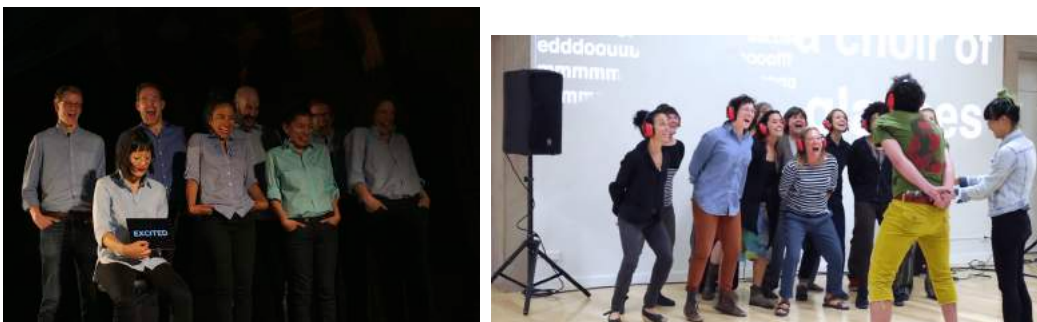


Figure 102: Alvin Lucier, *I am sitting in a room*, 1969



Figures 103-104: Christine Sun Kim, *4x4*, 2015, Andquestionmark, Stockholm, Sweden



Figures 105-106: Christine Sun Kim (left), *Face Opera*, 2013; (right) *A Choir of Glances*, 2014



Figures 107-108: Christine Sun Kim, *Subjective Loudness*, 2013, Sound Live Tokyo event, Japan



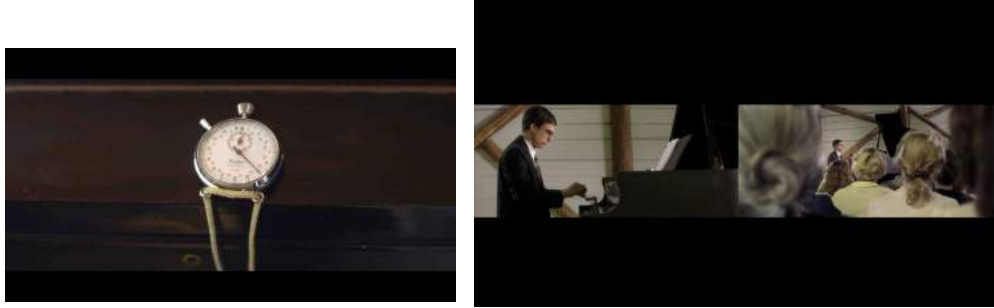
Figure 109: Christine Sun Kim, *Game of Skill 2.0*, 2015, Carroll Fletcher Gallery, London



Figures 110-111: Amanda Cachia interacting with Christine Sun Kim's *Game of Skill 2.0*, 2015, in *Greater New York* at MoMA PS1 Center for Contemporary Art, 2016



Figures 112-113: The score from John Cage's *4'33"*, copyright ©1960 by Henmar Press, Inc. Used by permission of C.F. Peters Corporation. All Rights Reserved.



Figures 114-115: (left) Alison O'Daniel, *Hearing* (4'33" scene) from *The Tuba Thieves*, 2014, film, 9:00;
 (right) Alison O'Daniel, *Hearing* (4'33" scene) from *The Tuba Thieves*, 2014, film, 9:00



Figure 116: Alison O'Daniel, *Hearing* (4'33" scene) from *The Tuba Thieves*, 2014, film, 9:00



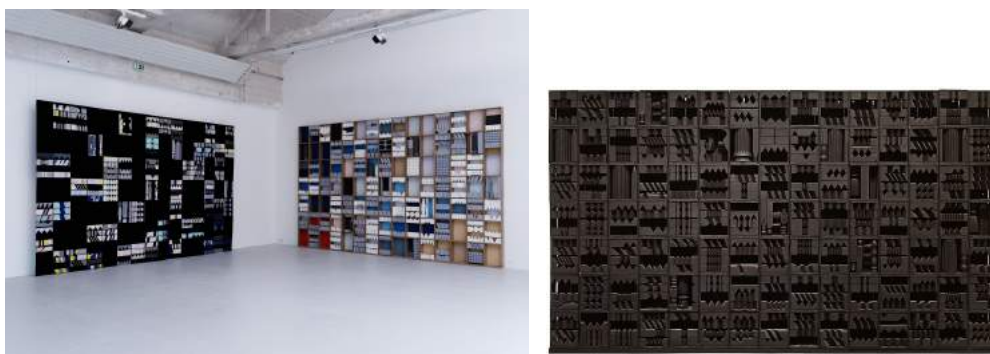
Figure 117: Alison O'Daniel, *Sun Score*, 2013, concrete, steel, necklace chain, bronze, wood, 8" x 8" x 5'; *Breathing Instruments*, 2013, steel, chain, shutter, wood, paint, 27" x 102.5" x 10.25"; *Early 30's*, 2013, concrete, steel, necklace chain, paint, 15" x 15" x 42"



Figures 118-119: (left) Robert Morris, *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, 1961; (right) Robert Morris, "The Plywood Show," Installation at the Green Gallery, New York, 1964.



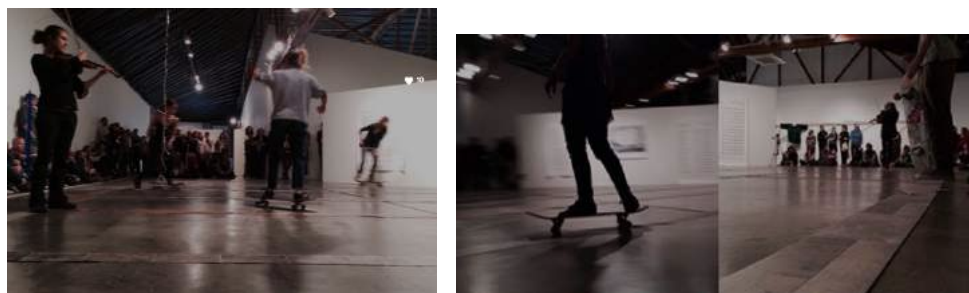
Figures 120-121: (left) Alison O'Daniel, *Composers*, 2016, cotton, steel; (right) *Soundtrack*, 2016, cotton, steel



Figures 122-123: (left) Alison O'Daniel, *Luminous Louise (Soundproofers)*, 2015: (left) *Soundproofers 1*, patchwork quilt with cotton, thread, steel bar, 10ft x 16ft; (right) *Soundproofers 2*, wood, acoustic sound foam, paper, 10ft x 16ft installation at Centre d'Art Contemporain Passerelle, Brest, France September 25, 2015 - January 2nd, 2016; (right) Louise Nevelson, *Luminous Zag: Night*, 1971, painted wood, 105 boxes, 10 ft x 16 ft 1" x 10 3/4" overall Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Gift, Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Singer, 1977



Figure 124: Sophie Taeuber-Arp, *Oval Compositions with Abstract Motifs*, 1922



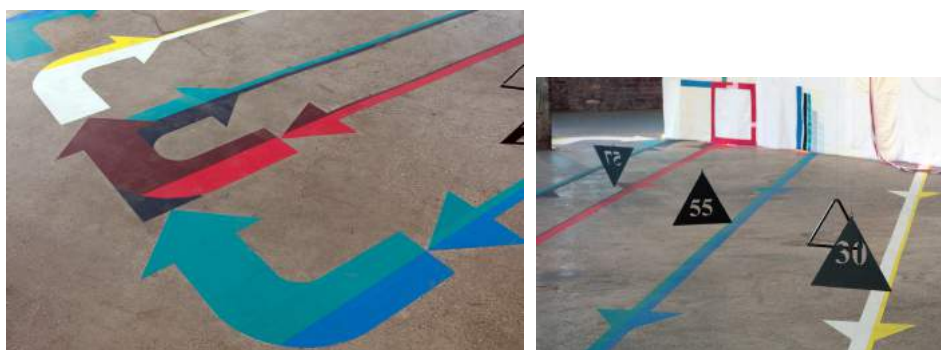
Figures 125-126: details from Alison O'Daniel installation and performance, from *Book of Scores* exhibition at Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, Portland, OR



Figure 127: detail from Alison O'Daniel installation and performance, from *Book of Scores* exhibition at Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, Portland, OR



Figure 128: Alison O'Daniel installation, *Room Tone*, Art in General at The Knockdown Center, New York, 2016



Figures 129-130: details from Alison O'Daniel installation, *Room Tone*, Art in General at The Knockdown Center, New York, 2016



Figure 131: detail from Alison O'Daniel installation, *Room Tone*, Art in General at The Knockdown Center, New York, 2016



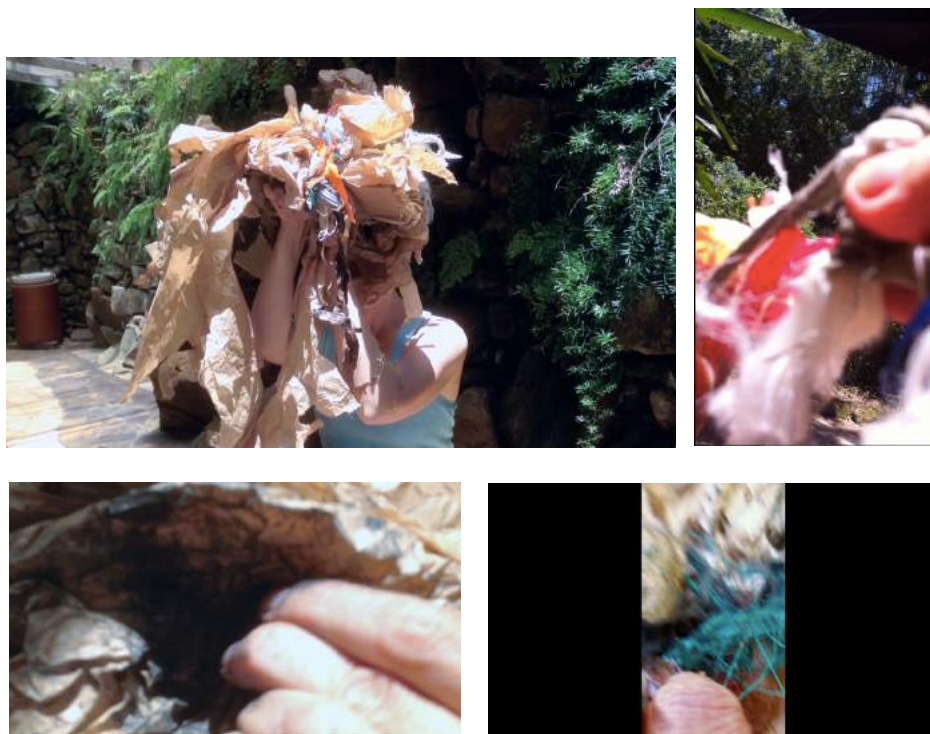
Figures 132-133: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Aveugle Voix* (Blind Voice) performed at 63 Bluxome Street in San Francisco in 1975.



Figure 134: *Bandaged Orchestra* during the Fluxus Festival arranged by Yoko Ono at Carnegie Recital Hall, 1965



Figures 135-136: (left) Robert Morris, *Blind Time (Grief) V* (2009);
(right): Robert Morris, *Blind Time (Grief) II* (2009)



Figures 137-140: Raphaëlle de Groot, stills from *Study 5, A New Place* (2015), video, 8:03 minutes.



Figures 141-142: Raphaëlle de Groot, installation shots of *Study 5, A New Place* (2015) in *Sweet Gongs Vibrating*, San Diego Art Institute, 2016, curated by Amanda Cachia



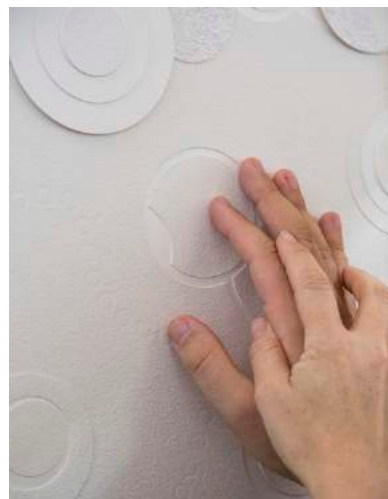
Figures 143-144: (left) Lygia Clark, *Planos em superfície modulada no. 4* (Planes in modulated surface no. 4), 1957; (right) *Sem Título* (still untitled), 1952



Figures 145-146: Fayen d'Evie, (left) *WHERE'S MY MONEY, PUNK? Prologue for a Novella that May or May Not Eventuate*. Minerva, 2014; (right) *Essential Make-Up Repairs (P1',t)*. Westspace, 2015



Figures 147-149: (left) Lygia Clark, *Bicho* (Critic, 1960); (right two images) Fayen d'Evie, installation detail, *Not All Treasure is Silver and Gold, Mate....* West Space, Melbourne, 2015



Figures 150-151: (left) Lygia Clark, *Luvas Sensoriais* (Sensorial gloves, 1968); (right) Fayen d'Evie, *Not All Treasure is Silver and Gold, Mate...* (2015)



Figures 152-154: Lygia Clark, *O Eu e o Tu: Série Roupa-Corpo-Roupa*
(The I and the You: Clothing/Body/Clothing, 1967)



Figures 155-156: (first two on left) Fayen d'Evie tactile dialogues workshop July 22, 2016,
Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco; (on right) Fayen d'Evie, *Prologues for Handling*, 2016



Figures 157: (left) Lygia Clark, *Baba Antropofágica* (Anthropophagic Slobber) 1973;
 (right) Wendy Jacob, workshop with MIT students at Gallaudet University, 2008



Figures 158-159: Wendy Jacob, *Silent Mixer*, Cabinet Space, Brooklyn, NY, 2010



Figure 160: Wendy Jacob introducing vibrations to care workers at the day center at the Cherry Road Day Center hosted by Artlink, Glasgow, UK, 2013



Figures 161-162: (left) *Mapping Sharjah* workshop with Wendy Jacob, Hasan Hujairi and students from Al Amal School for the Deaf recording sound from the streets; (right) Wendy Jacob, *Mapping Sharjah*, (2013), Sharjah Biennial



Figures 163-164: Wendy Jacob, *Waves and Sounds*, 2015, Kendall College of Art and Design Gallery, Grand Rapids, MI

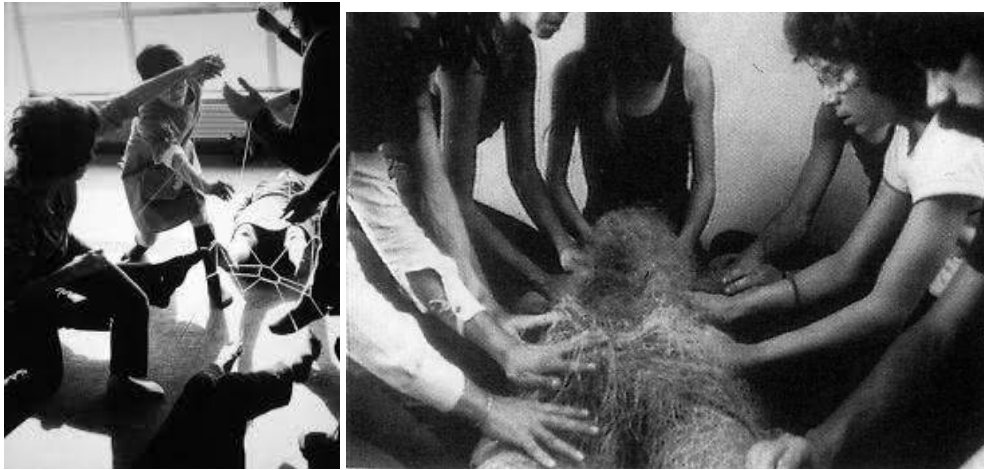


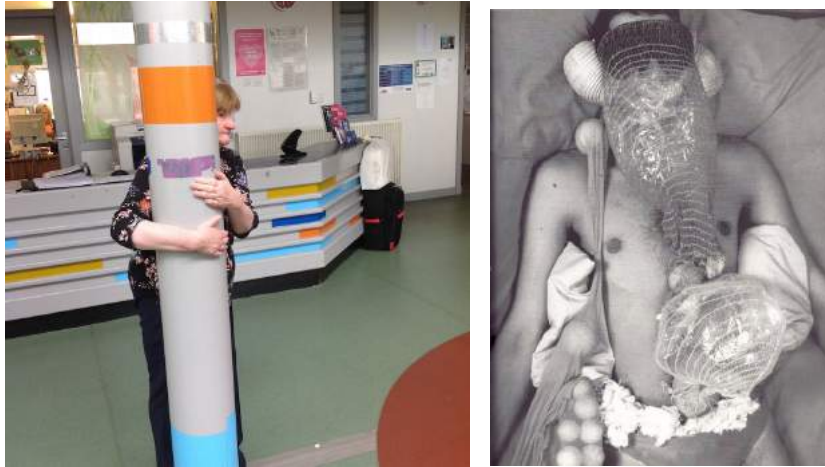
Figure 165-166: Lygia Clark, *Baba Antropofágica* (Anthropophagic Slobber), 1973



Figure 167: Wendy Jacob, *Waves and Signs – Basketball*, 2015, University of Toronto Art Centre, Toronto



Figures 168-169: Vito Acconci, *Seedbed*, 1970



Figures 170-171: (left) Wendy Jacob, *The Singing Column*, 2016, Artlink, Glasgow UK; (right) Lygia Clark, *Objeto Relacional* (Relational Object 1980);



Figures 172-173: Wendy Jacob, *Three threads and a thrum*, 2016, San Diego Art Institute, CA



Figures 174-175: (left) Wendy Jacob, architectural model of The Parthenon in Athens, originally used for blind education in the 1960s and 1970s on loan from Perkins School for the Blind, Watertown, MA. Part of *Calm. Smoke rises vertically*, 2016, Johnson-Kulukundis Family Gallery, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; (right) Lygia Clark, *A Casa do Poeta* (Maquete), 1964



Figure 176: Stephen Laphisophon, *Ramp*, 2002, painted wood 60.9 x 10.2 x 91.4 cm
© Stephen Laphisophon

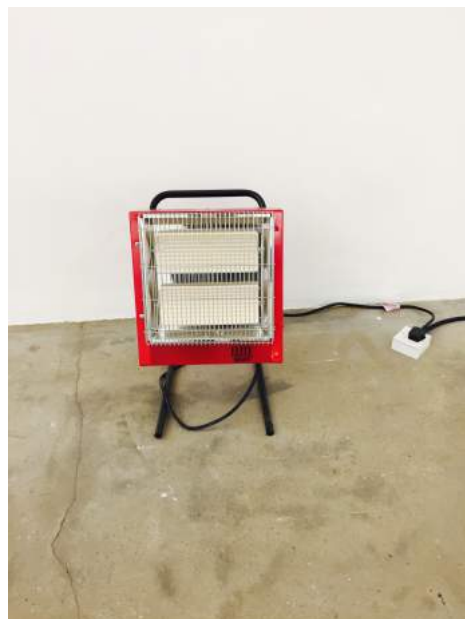


Figure 177: heaters that were included in *Poly*, 2016, Chisenhale Gallery, London, solo exhibition by Park McArthur (not an official artwork, but an “accommodation”)