

Bodies in Space: Spatial Practice and Spatial Representations in the Work of
Francesca Woodman and Gordon Matta-Clark

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Abstract

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This is a thesis about two artists prolific in the 1970s. Moreover, this is a thesis about the body and space, and about the indivisible relationship between the artistic process--the spatial practice--and the works produced--the *spatial representations*.

Part 1, *Spatial Practice*, is informed by Henri Lefebvre (*The Production of Space*, 1974). Lefebvre's spatial theory provides a starting point for approaching the dialectically abstract and concrete realms of space with regard to the artist's making. Part 2, *Spatial Representations*, is informed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and other phenomenologists. Discussions of perception are useful in support of a comparative analysis of the photographs by Woodman and Matta-Clark, which invite the viewer to fully embody the experience of seeing *with*.

The thesis structure reflects the conceptual framework of temporarily abstracting and dividing the indivisible, in an examination of Francesca Woodman's photography and the building cuts and photographs of Gordon Matta-Clark. The discussion begins with the artist's body in space, and ends with the viewer's body in space.

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Introduction

As the title suggests, what follows is a thesis about two artists: Francesca Woodman (1958-1981) and Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-1978). Though it is unlikely the artists ever met, their lives ran parallel courses, and their oeuvres are situated in the historical context and cultural milieu of the 1970s. Both were born into artist families, grew up with privileged, cross-cultural educations and produced immense bodies of work during their short lives.¹ Woodman and Matta-Clark were truly artists of their time, who drew upon and responded to a decade of intellectual shifts: modernism to postmodernism; feminism, the gendered body and sexual liberation; questions of institutionally accepted fine arts--such as photography and the expanded categories of sculpture; the end of the Vietnam war and acute social/political activity.

Indeed, Woodman and Matta-Clark offer stunning photographic evidence for this research and its broader purpose, which is the investigation of the body in space. Within the framework of the body and space, this is a thesis about the indivisible relationship between the artistic process--which I call the spatial practice (Part 1)--and the artworks produced, which I call the spatial representations (Part 2). The interest in the elusive word "space" began with Henri Lefebvre, a French Marxist philosopher who wrote *The Production of Space* in 1974.² Lefebvre developed a spatial theory which acknowledged the overlapping triad of lived, perceived and conceived space; in other words, he addressed

¹ Francesca Woodman was born to artists George and Betty Woodman in Boulder, Colorado, and spent summers in Italy with her family growing up. Francesca returned to Italy when she studied abroad in Rome while at RISD, where she studied photography. Gordon Matta-Clark was born to artists Roberto Matta and Anna Clark in New York. Matta-Clark's godmother was Teeny Duchamp. Matta-Clark grew up spending time in Paris and Chile, and studied at the Sorbonne for one year during his time at Cornell for architecture (1963-68). Francesca Woodman committed suicide in New York City, January 1981, at age 22. Gordon Matta-Clark died from cancer in August 1978, at age 35.

² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, 1991 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1974).

space as both the abstract, intangible realms and the concrete, sensory realms. Lefebvre's work was highly influential with regard to this project's starting point, structure and methodology--or the way in which the conceptual framework was approached for investigating the relationship between the artist's process and the artworks produced.

Before looking closely at the photographs of Francesca Woodman next to the photographs of buildings cuts by Gordon Matta-Clark, it is important to analyze each artist's work at its origin point--the body--which is the ground zero of production. It is obvious, perhaps, that everything made can be traced to a moment or moments of action and to the body of the maker who produced it. In discussing the "immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the body's deployment in space and its occupation of space" Lefebvre continues:

Before *producing* effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before *producing itself* by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before *reproducing itself* by generating other bodies, each living body *is* space and *has* its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space. This is a truly remarkable relationship: the body with the energies at its disposal, the living body, creates or produces its own space; conversely, the laws of space, which is to say the laws of discrimination in space, also govern the living body and the deployment of its energies.³

Although Lefebvre illustrates the relationship between the body and/in/as space in order to suggest implications for the production of social space, the language of deployment, occupation and immediate relationship resonate with Woodman's and Matta-Clark's artworks. To this point, scholar Johannes Binotto contends, "When Woodman shows herself in her pictures, she not only uses the room to stage herself and her body. The converse is also true: the artist uses her own body to illustrate the unusual spatial qualities

³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 170.

of her scenes. The body is the medium that allows us to experience space.”⁴ About viewing Matta-Clark’s building cuts, scholar Michel Moussette writes, “So we become the building and the building becomes us. Part of us is trapped in the building. Part of the building is trapped in us. We enter the becoming of the building. We plunge into surfaces. Into the condensed strata that are the traces of process.”⁵ These insights into the indivisibility and symbiotic relationship between the body and its spaces are important not only in philosophy--which abstracts reality in discourse in order to derive meaning--but also in the embodied experience of making and viewing artworks--works which visually challenge the intellectual divides erected between the body and space or between the mind and body.

Certainly, Woodman’s and Matta-Clark’s photographic representations are extensions of their spatial practices, and their practices are tied to the dynamic of the body in space and time. Part 1 of this thesis suggests three ways of approaching the discussion of a spatial practice: 1. the performative body; 2. response to place, which is the activation of space; and 3. time. Subsequently, the spatial representations--referring primarily to the photographs--are paired together in Part 2 of this thesis so that common aesthetic qualities can emerge and supply entry points for visual dialogue and a deepening of possible significance. The photographic pairs are curated and then interpreted in a structured manner: three pairs seen through the lens of movement, and three pairs seen through the lens of tactility.

⁴ Binotto, “Outside In: Francesca Woodman’s Rooms of Her Own,” in *Francesca Woodman, Works From the Sammlung Verbund*, 56.

⁵ Moussette, “Gordon Matta-Clark’s Circling the Circle of the Caribbean Orange,” in *Chora IV: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, 199.

The seeing in Part 2 is informed by a study of phenomenology, specifically Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the phenomenology of perception.⁶ Photography as a medium fits nicely with the elusiveness of space--as it provokes both a visible seeing and an invisibly sensing, and the photograph contains not only the self-conscious acts of the photographer but also contains the optical unconscious, as Walter Benjamin described.⁷ Furthermore, the viewer brings his or her own body, experiences and perceptions to the photograph, extending the mystery of the object by the ability to be awakened, triggered, struck by a detail, or perhaps to feel nothing at all. The method of seeing *with* the photograph engages the senses and opens up the imagination, and it invites the viewer to see two photographs--out of their usual context--within the framework of the body in space through photography.

Considering both the spatial practice and the spatial representations, what is overt in Woodman's work--the body as subject--is subtle in Matta-Clark's, where the body is like a trace. Conversely, what is overt in Matta-Clark's work--architecture as subject--is more subtle in Woodman's work, as the environments her body engaged with. These dynamic similarities and distinctions are the undercurrent of the thesis structure, which temporarily divides the indivisible before returning to a synthesis. A synthesis of the body and space; the spatial practice and spatial representations; artist and viewer. Ultimately, this thesis describes that the spatial practices of Woodman and Matta-Clark begin with the artist's body in space, and the spatial representations culminate as experiences with our own bodies in space, as the viewers who see *with* the photographs.

⁶ Especially "Eye and Mind," in *The Primacy of Perception, and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*.

⁷ "A Short History of Photography." *Screen*, Vol. 13, 1972.

A brief intermission: biographical notes and significant scholarship

Francesca Woodman began experimenting with photography around the age of thirteen, and went on to study at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence from 1975-1978. Photography was not offered as its own degree until 1963, as the medium was slow to be accepted in museums and institutions as a fine art in its own right. There is little doubt that professors in the department at the time--especially photographer Aaron Siskind--contributed to Woodman's early, definitive aesthetic. During her lifetime, Woodman took over 500 photographs, though only a fraction of these have been exhibited posthumously. Her known works reflect a recursive practice of self-representation and an interest in the body's engagement with haunting, tactile spaces.

Since Abigail Solomon Godeau published the essay "Just Like A Woman"--which laid the groundwork for feminist interpretations of Woodman's oeuvre and was published only seven years after her suicide⁸--much has been written about her photography. The broad trajectory of studies privileged feminist and surrealist interpretations, formal readings in the context of photography as an evolving tradition, heavily biographical readings of the works, and finally--and of greatest interests to this research--the innately spatial qualities of the photographic scenes, and the ways in which Woodman treats the boundaries between body and environment.⁹ The topic of self-representation--and the history of women, photography and self-portraiture--is also crucial to viewing what was clearly a self-referential practice for Woodman. No matter what the bias or bent is when

⁸ Abigail Solomon Godeau, "Just Like A Woman," in *Francesca Woodman: Photographic Work*, April 9--June 8, 1986, eds. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Ann Gabhart, and Rosalind Woodman Krauss (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Museum), 11--35.

⁹ Specifically, the monograph by Chris Townsend (2006) and *Francesca Woodman: Works from the Sammlung Verbund*, ed. Gabriel Schor cover a broader, pluralistic reading of Woodman's work.

approaching Woodman's photography, there is a repetitive insistence on the dialogue between her body and the space it occupies.

While photography was Woodman's primary medium and the central focus of her career, Gordon Matta-Clark left behind a more diverse scope of work, including films, drawings, land/landscape projects, note cards, letters, the conception of a restaurant, and of course the building cuts, spatial interventions and photo-work documentations of interest here. Gloria Moure insightfully notes the influence of the 60s--the shifting and fracturing ideologies, frontiers and landscapes--which Matta-Clark loved to challenge and defy in his own expansive artworks.¹⁰

Matta-Clark's oeuvre can be woven into social and politically-charged discourse, as his transgressive projects did indeed strive to disrupt normative boundaries and the status quo. Furthermore, he wrote and gave interviews extensively; although it is not the project here, one could extrapolate on biographical details and on the artist's perceptions and descriptions of his own works. Matta-Clark's concept of *Anarchitecture*--folding anarchy into the word architecture--is representative of his belief in the mutability of space, and of the significance of the built environment as a mirror of culture, values and social climate. Stephen Walker reads Matta-Clark's work as an attack on modernism.¹¹ Peter Muir writes compellingly about Matta-Clark's work in relation to cultural values of public/urban space, drawing upon Henri Lefebvre.¹² Certainly, there is an undercurrent of the Situationist project to Matta-Clark's abrupt and temporal spatial interventions. Whatever the approach to reading his work, the building cuts and coordinating photo-representations provoke

¹⁰ Moure, "Short Term Eternity," in *Works and Collected Writings*, 9-27.

¹¹ Walker, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Art, Architecture and the Attack on Modernism*, 2009.

¹² Muir, *Gordon Matta-Clark's Conical Intersect: Sculpture, Space, and the Cultural Value of Urban Imagery*, 2014.

questions about the body's agency in space, about the built environment's role in our embodying space and about the nature of divides: public/private; interior/exterior; permanent/temporal.

In 2003, in a roundtable discussion about "Francesca Woodman Reconsidered," George Baker refers to Woodman's work in the same realm as that of Gordon Matta-Clark, in that they both challenge bodily and spatial experiences through their work.¹³ Baker points out that what Matta-Clark does through his physical, sculptural works--the vertigo and disorienting interventions--is somehow also present in Woodman's two-dimensional photographs.¹⁴ Indeed, there is a profound resonance in the spatiality of both artists' works, and this could be not only because of aesthetic parallels (the ruinous settings) but also because the viewer senses each artist pushed his/her medium(s) to the limits of possibility. An extreme sense of exploration and experimental process gives Woodman's photographs and Matta-Clark's representations of his building cuts a dynamic life reflective of the spatial practices which formed them.

¹³ George Baker et. al, "Francesca Woodman Reconsidered," *Art Journal*, 65. It was exciting to discover the transcript of this discussion, as it helped validate a connection I was hoping to make between Woodman and Matta-Clark, although they operated in different art circles during their lifetimes.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

PART 1: Spatial Practice

Broadly, the term spatial practice is used here to define the artistic processes of Francesca Woodman and Gordon Matta-Clark. Each respective practice is a nexus of embodiment, place and artistic rituals--together, an overcoding--which produces the artwork. In the case of both artists, overcoding involves conceptually and/or physically altering existing place in order to produce (new) spatial experiences. By extension, new spatial representations are produced. Spatial practice originates with the artist's body, in the activation of designated place, and with a constellation of development processes, which are both material and conceptual, measurable and immeasurable, self-conscious and inadvertent. 'Practice' denotes a recursive doing that is both knowing and unknowing. For example, many actions of the body in space are planned and designed, while others are implicit, unconsciously rooted in everyday life rhythms. In general, these spatial compartments are overlapping and intersecting. The existing physical realm, the body, and the activity between forms the spatial practice.

By emphasizing a spatial practice, this thesis is implying there is significant weight to the artist's daily rhythms, to his/her acts of being and to the complex intersections of making. But could not it all be considered unconnected actions in the crevices of time and space? No, and this too has to do with space. It is crucial to acknowledge that because what is produced has been understood to be art, all preceding processes are thereby imbued with meaning within this conception of art and the spaces of art-making. Consider Henri Lefebvre's point on gestural space:

When a gestural space comes into conjunction with a conception of the world possessed of its own symbolic system, a grand creation may result. Cloisters are a

case in point. What has happened here is that, happily, a gestural space has succeeded in mooring a mental space--a space of contemplation and theological abstraction--to the earth, thus allowing it to express itself symbolically and to become part of a practice, the practice of a well-defined ground within a well-defined society.¹⁵

The example of the cloister is useful for considering Francesca Woodman and Gordon Matta-Clark and their own gestural spaces in the art world. Certainly, art has profound similarities to the ethos of spiritual practice; both art and religion aim to reflect the inner landscape in the external world, and in that attempt create distinct spaces imbued with ritual and traces of the body and mind. Furthermore, a social space is made possible, where a common ground is created for a shared sense of being and seeing. So then, beyond taking interest in the art objects and experiences produced by Woodman and Matta-Clark respectively, this research identifies the innate spatiality of each figure's production process which, taken out of the context of art, would be something else entirely.¹⁶ In the same way a religious figure can overcode existing physical space through a blessing (at least within that self-aware religious context), so too the artists produce new space through their processes in the realm of art.

Thus, the word 'spatial' is necessary to the stated term not only as a reminder of the framework for this research but also as a theoretical reference to Henri Lefebvre's work in the progress of spatial theory. Lefebvre's project to reconcile fractured definitions of space as *perceived*, *conceived* and *lived* certainly informs this thesis project.¹⁷ However, rather

¹⁵ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 217.

¹⁶ But what else could they be? An entire thesis could of course be dedicated to discussing the definition of art and the art historical context of Woodman's photography (in the 1970s, the medium was just becoming incorporated into serious art programs) or the buildings cuts of Matta-Clark, whose work fits into discussions such as Rosalind Krauss' "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" (*October*, Vol. 8. Spring, 1979).

¹⁷ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

than re-deploying Lefebvre's spatial triad verbatim, this analysis absorbs Lefebvre's approach to abstracting the concrete and unpacking the multiple ways by which space may be regarded, and then specifically considers the body in space in the realm of the contemporary artist. Ultimately, Lefebvre's triad of space is folded into this research, which calls its own divisions 'spatial practice' and 'spatial representations.' These two broader divisions reflect the fundamental dialectic of interests: a connective separateness between artist/artwork or the maker as he/she is connected to and also separate from the made object. Everything in between the body in isolation and the object in isolation is a dynamic relationship, the spatial practice. It is the symbiosis of the body in space--material and conceptual--as the abstract art idea becomes a concrete representation. Spatial practice is the realm of *ings*: thinking, drawing, staging, collecting, cutting, performing, removing, adding, photographing, and so on.

In order to clarify the dynamics of spatial practice specifically with regard to Francesca Woodman and Gordon Matta-Clark, it is helpful to name the major nodes from which all other activity radiates. Furthermore, it is beneficial in calling out themes which underscore the artists' broad similarities, as they have been paired together with great intentionality. Side by side, the photographic oeuvres of Woodman and sculptural practices of Matta-Clark come alive, dialoguing with one another and informing one another with a haunting immediacy. From the photographs, questions about the making also present themselves, and it is within the realm of artistic practice where Woodman and Matta-Clark operate with distinct objectives and methods but which can be located under three broad

categories. They are: (1) The body (2) Response to place (which leads to the activation of space), and (3) Time.

The body is the origin point for understanding space. Without identifying the body, its relationship to anything/anyone else is difficult to discuss. Furthermore, it is critical to understand the body as the mind as well as the body as skin and bones. Embodiment is inclusive of the body's perceptions, inner being and physical presence. The body is its own space and activates the space around it. Indeed, the body leaves its trace on its environment, and those spaces leave their trace on the body; the symbiosis of this physical and metaphysical exchange is active--a theater of space, so to speak. Extending this metaphor, Woodman and Matta-Clark may be discussed as producing work which is, at its core, performative. The performative body is the starting point for each nuanced spatial practice from which every activity and spatial dynamism extends. However, the discussion of the body diverges as one considers each artist individually. For example, the sex and gender of the body: Woodman was a female artist who acted as her own model/subject; Matta-Clark was a male artist who *enacted* physical alterations upon his subjects, the buildings (his own body is but a trace in photographic representations). To consider the sexed body leads to discourses on individual perception, gender privilege and power. Certainly, Woodman and Matta-Clark embodied, perceived and responded to space according to their own identities and experiences.

Identity is more difficult to quantify. It seems to be a matter of one's interior self projected outward and lived experiences absorbed within, but embodiment has its own geography. Physical sites are essential to a concrete discussion of the body and space, and

so the artists' response to place is the second fundamental aspect of both Woodman's and Matta-Clark's oeuvres. Existing places were transformed, through artistic practice, into new spaces. Michel de Certeau's compelling description of this distinction between place and space is helpful here:

*A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities. [...] In short, space is a practiced place.*¹⁸

Space as a result of deployed movement is clear in the work of Woodman and Matta-Clark. Various existing sites are imbued with new meaning and distinction, as the body responds to their presence, activates them and thereby alters them, through gesture and overcoding and/or through physical enactments. Woodman does this through a process of photography--primarily of herself as subject--and Matta-Clark does this through his building cuts and subsequent photographic representations. Though the artist intentions, primary medium and outcomes are different, responding to site as a live element of the performative practice is a clear, unifying tenet.

Finally, the places of practice for both Woodman and Matta-Clark tended to be ruinous, abandoned, decrepit, and in this fact the element of time becomes an obvious importance. For all their differences, it is not insignificant that both Woodman and Matta-Clark shared the drive for re-injecting life into forgotten place, and their performative bodies were the instruments to do so. Space cannot be divorced from time; besides the fundamental marriage of the two, there are distinct ways in which the artists

¹⁸ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). 117.

engaged the concept of time both literally and more abstractly. An obvious example is, as stated, old buildings--the setting of many photographs in question--which are temporal by their very nature, fated for material deterioration. More abstractly: the act of taking a photograph and developing it vs. the acts of (de)constructing a building reflect distinct chronologies of making. Conceptual and concrete space hinges itself to time, which is itself an unknown and invisible force, suspected only for its trace on our bodies, on physical matter, on other evidences of change.

As a final introductory note to the spatial practices, writings by both Woodman and Matta-Clark¹⁹ reveal a repetitive intellectual engagement with the meaning of space in their work. Arguably, the question *what is space?* is quite often asked and answered through the endeavors of contemporary art. The following excerpts reflect such literal questions by the artists; the recursive processes of executing the spatial concepts--through photography and building interventions--may offer readers some insight to the body and space. About her own explorations, Woodman wrote:

I am interested in the way people relate to space. The best way to do this is to depict their interactions to the boundaries of these spaces. Started doing this with ghost pictures, people fading into a flat plane -- i.e. becoming the wall under wallpaper or of an extension of the wall onto floor.²⁰

To be sure, boundaries, dichotomies and the spatial interplay between the body and surfaces are evident themes in Woodman's oeuvre (e.g. fig. 1). About works such as *Splitting: Four Corners*, Matta-Clark wrote:

¹⁹ There is a significantly larger amount of published writings and drawings by Matta-Clark than there are available by Woodman. However, both artists exemplify a propensity for language and a clever love of words/word play, and this is another fascinating biographical parallel.

²⁰ "Excerpt from Notebook #6," as cited in Townsend and George Woodman, eds., *Francesca Woodman: Scattered in Space and Time*.

I see the work as a special stage in perpetual metamorphosis, a model for people's constant action on space as much as in the space that surrounds them. Buildings are fixed entities in the minds of most -- the notion of the mutable space is virtually taboo -- even in one's own house. People live in their space with temerity that is frightening. Home owners generally do little more than maintain their property. It's baffling how rarely the people get involved in fundamentally changing their place by simply undoing it.²¹

Indeed, if Woodman plays with normative interactions between body and space, then Matta-Clark could be said to play with the conventional ownership and perceptions of space, in this case that of a suburban home which he actively "undoes." (fig. 2).

As the previous reflections imply, the nature of the artist/artwork relationship involves continual conceptualizing--journal entries, planning notes and sketches are all evidence of such--and those mental constructs layer themselves over each realm of the spatial practice and each work produced. In this sense, Lefebvre's secondary 'conceived' realm of his triad--the discourse *on* space--permeates the spatial practices of Woodman and Matta-Clark.²² Similarly, this thesis research itself prods at the *modus operandi* of each artists with a desire to more fully understand the spatial qualities thread throughout the process and, by extension, the end products: the spatial representations.

²¹ Donald Wall, 'Matta-Clark's Building Dissections,' *Arts Magazine* (May 1976), 74-79.

²² It should be clear by now that my use of the term 'spatial practice' is not the same as the expanded definition of the term as it is translated from Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (with regard to his spatial triad). Within this framework, considering two specific artists and their artwork, my terminology was chosen for its literal connotation of repeated actions in the process of producing art (art which I go on to argue is, at its core, performative and spatial).

Spatial Practice: The Performative Body

As stated, the body is the origin point for a discussion of spatial practice. The body as performative is a useful way of considering the productions born out of each artist's practice. Stuart Elden, a scholar on Lefebvre, interprets the significance of the body in space in this way:

There is an opposition established between our conception of space--abstract, mental and geometric--and our perception of space--concrete, material and physical. The latter takes as its initial point of departure in the body, which Lefebvre sees as the site of resistance within the discourse of Power in space. Abstract, decorporalized space is, as he suggests, still another aspect of alienation.²³

Indeed, considering both Woodman and Matta-Clark, the body deployed in space can be discussed with regards to resistance and power, but through different means to distinct artistic ends. Extrapolating on these differences allows for nuanced discussions of each spatial practice. Because Woodman's work is more commonly read with an emphasis on the (her) body, that discussion may shine new light on an analysis of Matta-Clark's own work, which emphasizes the built environment as subject matter but in which his body is very present, even if as a trace. In a similar manner, an analysis of Matta-Clark's body as a trace and the social-political perspective of space can inform a reading of Woodman's own practice of self-representation. For now, it is obvious to state that Woodman and Matta-Clark differ in their spatial practices in terms of subject matter, gender, and the tools/technology used as extensions of their performative bodies.

²³ Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible* (London: Continuum, 2004), 189.

Francesca Woodman: the performative body & (self) representation

For Woodman, the body is the origin point of her artistic practice as a photographer, and it is also a primary subject of her photographs. Significantly, the body (subject) represented is almost always her own; Woodman is both photographer and model, artist and muse. Although the body and its spatial setting(s) are ultimately inseparable realms of Woodman's practice, each may be discussed in its own right--as a dialectical otherness/ oneness--and this is particularly important with regard to the sexed body. The most conspicuous and definitive aspect of Woodman's oeuvre is her recursive mode of self-representation. In *About being my model* for example, a repetition of the artist's self-referential identity is staged (fig. 3). The cloning effect begins on the left, with a self-portrait pinned to the wall. The woman on the far right leaning into the foreground is Woodman, and the other two figures in the center make reference to the artist through their mirrored poses and the prints of Woodman's face held over their own. This is one of many images in Woodman's collection which depicts her nude or semi-nude figure as subject, but a subject which denies the viewer a direct visual encounter. The unsettling repetition of the masked subject figure and surrogates are indicative of the kinds of uncanny disruptions Woodman regularly staged and the representations of deferred identity which her work engages.²⁴ (See also figures 4-5).

Woodman's distinct and haunting *modus operandi*--her recursive, performative movements in evocative spaces and her use of eclectic and often symbolic objects--reveals a practice which extends beyond mere (self) representation of the feminine nude. Indeed,

²⁴ Part 2: Spatial Representations will directly address the key elements of Woodman's work--such as movement and tactility--which emerge as a result of her spatial practice and distinctive stylistic approach to photography.

one of the most salient qualities of Woodman's work is her representation of her body in a way which challenges passive objectification and the voyeuristic gaze, and which redeploys various tropes of avant-garde photography. For example, compelling parallels exist between Woodman's work and surrealist photography; yet Woodman's work departs from a fixation on sexual difference, which in the history of surrealism was often manifested in shocking contradictions of female body dismemberment and erotic or fetishized representations, such as in the works by May Ray or Hans Bellmer.²⁵ Instead, Woodman's approach to representation disrupts normative expectations of the female nude--evading either overtly sexualizing or desexualizing the body--while maintaining a sense of the uncanny. Furthermore, the focus on difference--another trace of surrealism's effect--exists not on the body-as-object, but *embodied* in the blurred distinctions between reality and imagination and in the blurred distinctions between body and environment. The performative body--Woodman's as photographer and Woodman's as model--in spaces that evoke nostalgia and memories past, both recall avant-garde precedents and redeploy the trope of the artist-subject (male-female) relationship. Woodman's spatial practice creates a gendered space, and it creates a space for addressing identity and representation.

While Woodman's work cannot be aptly discussed without acknowledging the role that her own body and femaleness plays in the construction of her photographs, her distinctive aesthetic is in part due to the cleverness with which she inserts herself into the images. Woodman repetitively evades the fixed gaze, and by extension any fixed

²⁵ My interest in Francesca Woodman originally evolved from an interest in surrealist photography and gender studies regarding female representation. In 2014, I wrote a paper from that perspective entitled *Surrealism, Reimagined: The Conflation of Bodily and Spatial Identities in the Photography of Francesca Woodman*. For a good source which supports that specific topic, see Whitney Chadwick, *Mirror Images: women, surrealism and self-representation*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).

interpretation. That is to say, it is difficult to claim that Woodman is either desexualizing or sexualizing the (her) female figure, that she is either hiding from or confronting her own identity, that her work is either feminist or surrealist, or anything else alone. Through her art, Woodman expresses a complexity of identities and suggestions about being in and perceiving space and being in and perceiving the self. Ultimately, the body is the protagonist of Woodman's story, the heroine who works out her identity in space: self-contained and unreserved, meek and bold, disguised and exposed. In embodying the subject role, she feels, sees, hears, smells, tastes. She absorbs and engages her environment, and she translates the spatial experiences into performative scenes in front of and behind the camera. Rather than pursuing too early an interpretation of the photographs, this investigation into spatial practice simply suggests that the body--and the sexed body in its female identity--is the starting point for Woodman's sensory-engaging spatial narratives, and from them radiates a multiplicity of photographic practices and subsequent visual effects.

One such practice was repetition, which led to the production of thematically grouped images. Woodman regularly photographed recursive scenes, each frame varying slightly according to the body's performance; many works are untitled, but the *House* series, *Charlie the Model*, *Self-deceit* and *Angel* are a few examples of her serial practice. In every series, Woodman acted as the subject/model moving through space, and as photographer she documented herself--perhaps in acts of premeditated patterns or perhaps in the inspiration of the embodied moments as they occurred. Even in

documenting Charlie, by the end of the series Woodman has herself disrobed and joined him in the spatial performance (fig. 6).

A spontaneous rawness and honest vulnerability exists in the photographic traces. The visual effects--such as movement, made evident by the blurred parts of an otherwise focused image--is also movement in real-time, and here is one example of the conflation of the moment and the trace, the collapse of time in the photograph. For as Woodman embodied space--the ruinous dwelling in Providence, for example--the camera documented the performance as it unfolded: under the window, behind the fireplace mantle, crossing the room. In *self-deceit*, Woodman moves around the basement of the RISD palazzo in Rome, the mirror her partner in a spatial dance (figs. 7-10). If her movements were traced on the floorplan of the room, the geometries on paper would form a new space, a new network of lines left by the movement of the body. Or consider Woodman's own self-conscious spatial study of her body (fig. 12). On the contact sheet, Woodman used a marker to delineate invisible boundaries of her body in its various movements. This practice of drawing over the photograph is another action which serves to conjoin the activity of conception and perception of space, to bridge the mental gap between what is imagined and conceived and what is concrete. For in reality, there are boundaries and limitations of the body in any given pose, in any certain physical motion. And Woodman imagines these boundaries alive, floating borders around her limbs. As she might say, the *geometries* of space or the geometries of the body are made visible on the trace of a moment in real time and space. The contact sheet is perhaps the best evidence not only of

Woodman's own mental process but also of the triad definition of space coming together in its most visible form possible.

In discussing the body, it is crucial to acknowledge extensions of the body, or the camera as its own body which is joined and related to the artist's. Already, we know that the language of the camera is derivative of the language of the human body, the eye specifically. That connection is clear and profound. In addition to the camera's relationship to the human eye--except for the fact that it is outside the body, more objective, less interested in perception and more interested in the gaze we can never ourselves quite have--the camera is in relationship with the hand, the fingers. Behind the camera, Woodman ducks to see through the objective eye, and she deploys her hand in space--at the moment of her choosing--to push the button which will capture that particular moment. Or, as Woodman commonly did for her self-representations, she will use a cable release and thereby take a photograph even further removed spatially from the eye of the camera itself. The distance here, between the objective camera eye and the subject's eye, becomes the same distance as the photographer from the site of the photograph.

A wonderful example of this very event can be seen in a series Woodman created for her graduate exhibition at RISD, *Swan Song*.²⁶ The cable cord layers itself in the composition like the layers of the body and paper and table (fig. 13). Woodman does not aim to hide the cord, and that appears quite intentional. There is a visual sense of division--an undercurrent of fragmentation or death--mimicked by the still bird lying on the table in fig. 14. The contrast of drapery and naked exposure, the unconscious

²⁶ These photographs were released to be shown publicly for the first time after Woodman's passing in 2007 at Victoria Miro Gallery, London.

vulnerability of the body on the table parallels the exposure of the technology itself, which has made the image quite possible, and remains exposed and in the grip of the artist. The viewer here knows for certain who the photographer is, and yet her stillness disrupts an impression of her active presence. This is in stark contrast to other images where the body's movement is overt. The body the woman and the body the camera are each partially exposed, partially revealed, wholly connected to one another.

Throughout her oeuvre, Woodman disrupts normative expectations, including that of the female nude, and her representations resist any singular definitive interpretation. She is always in motion--sometimes quite literally--or exploring the boundaries of her body and space. The uncanny effects are produced through these blurred distinctions between reality and imagination, between body and architecture. Woodman's practice reflects a gendered, performative space, which provokes questions of self-representation, identity and merging boundaries.

Gordon Matta-Clark: the performative body as a trace

In Matta-Clark's spatial practice, the body is the origin point of the works produced. While Woodman inserted herself into spaces with the intention of activating a dialogue between her own body and site, Matta-Clark physically altered existing buildings in order to create new spatial experiences and dialogues which would, as a result, welcome new sensory experiences. Matta-Clark's work is the choreography of body/building/site, witnessed by visitors and documented by camera, but where the origin point of the practice is the artist's body (and helping bodies) in response to the built environment. Matta-Clark and his team's actions produce direct, physical results in the form of the buildings. In addition and more elusively, the actions of the body throughout the spatial practice over time produce their own space--an overcoding--and identify the otherwise nameless (de)construction efforts a profound form of art making. As Peter Muir argues, Matta-Clark's work is a "repetitive sculptural act," which is paradoxically "making by unmaking."²⁷ The making/unmaking is done/undone through immaterial, mental efforts: thinking, planning, imagining. It is also informed by context: the cultural and social milieu, the political climate of the cities and the collective efforts of those involved. Besides such invisible and important intersecting factors of the building cut processes, technology played a major role in the concrete realm of Matta-Clark's practice. Before the role of the camera's eye--and after the drawing/sketching/writing--tools were Matta-Clark's prosthetics--extensions of his body--which aided in the interventions.

²⁷ Peter Muir, *Gordon Matta-Clark's Conical Intersect: Sculpture, Space, and the Cultural Value of Urban Imagery* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), 60.

Although Matta-Clark's own body is not the primary subject of his work, he embodied the environments in order to (de)/(re)construct space, to move the building interventions from mental concepts on paper to physical realities. The individual buildings--and by extension, the built environment in the eyes of society--is the subject of Matta-Clark's interventions. Furthermore, the perception of space--which requires the active, sensing body--is implicit in his spatial practice and then embedded in the photographic representations. As in Woodman's work, there is a performative, ritual component to Matta-Clark's practice. Most obviously, his physical activity in buildings was laborious, aggressive, manual, and the work of altering space is necessarily recursive. One can easily imagine the rhythmic and grating sounds of sawing, tearing, cutting; of lifting, walking, piling. Imagining such a scene, who is present? The gendered body is immediately active here, not only because Matta-Clark was a man, but also because physical and at times quite dangerous labor in crumbling structures carries a masculine connotation. About *Day's End* (1975), Elisabeth Sussman writes, "His overcoming of the environment, his assault on the structure, his sensation of being chained to the ceiling and burned by the acetylene torches, all were 'macho' [...] part of the masculine dynamic."²⁸ In name of artwork, one sees Matta-Clark making a carefully planned incision into the corrugated metal wall (fig. 15). On the suspended seat, he is both an acrobat of the construction site and surgeon of the building, a structure whose ailment was abandonment and lack of daylight.

Consider also *Splitting*, where Matta-Clark (right) and an associate (left) simultaneously work on one of the corners of the New Jersey suburban house (fig. 16). The

²⁸ Elisabeth Sussman, "The Mind Is Vast and Ever Present," *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2007), 29.

large, primary cut has already been made down the center of the house; removing cinder blocks from each corner allows the house to quite literally split open with a perfect tension Matta-Clark envisioned. Note the men, shirtless, positioned in similarly braced stances of physical exertion as they handle the supporting jacks. Like the acrobatics of *Day's End*, the (de)construction labor of *Splitting* is a kind of masculine, choreographed labor. While Woodman produced and performed within an overtly gendered space--gender as a primary subject in her practice--Matta-Clark could be said to capitalize on his gender privilege in order to execute his artistic visions and enact the strenuous physical labor necessary for the building cuts. Furthermore, he acted boldly as a male activist in decrepit, abandoned spaces and defied laws against trespassing, as in the *Day's End* project. Certainly, there is at least a perception of less danger for the male body in an abandoned warehouse on the pier or in the literal splitting of a house than there would have been for a female body acting on her own in 1970s New York.

Prior to actually enacting the building cuts, Matta-Clark's spatial practice was located in Lefebvre's definition of conceived space, the two dimensional space of the architect.²⁹ Matta-Clark's training in architecture is evident in his knowledge of structure and materials and in his approach to drawing and planning the spatial projects. But rather than go on to pursue architecture as a profession, he turned toward a sculptural, performative art practice which critiqued any popular notion of a sterilized, modernist agenda. It is important to acknowledge the activist in Matta-Clark. In fact, the language of being *active* is central and critical to the artist's philosophy, spatial practice and modes of

²⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*

representation. Just as Woodman can be said to have redeployed avant-garde tropes of photography and female representation, Matta-Clark redeployed tropes of his own: namely, the architect's planning and programming process, which he reimagined in the context of what he termed *anarchitecture*, the meeting of the words anarchy and architecture.

What automatically distinguishes Matta-Clark from the traditional architect is his insistence--as an artist working both in the abstract and in real space--on embodying the translation of conceptual space to physical spatial experiences, which demand the body's attention exactly because of their disruptions. His social and politically minded mode of self-insertion in space--and the changes which then require new movements in order to perceive the space--is very much about the body and what it means to truly be in and see space, what it means to have a sharp and perceptive awareness which modernism had, for Matta-Clark, significantly dulled. Indeed, Matta-Clark's own body is the active planner *and* doer. He is the mind of the dreamer and the body of the performer in/on/as space.

The architect-artist's thin-lined process drawings reflect a delicacy and exactitude which carries over into the work of the building cuts; and yet, the work itself is ridden with a raw, unpolished realism in the labor itself (figs. 17-20). Matta-Clark closes the gap between his body and paper and his body in/on the building subjects, thus lessening the divide between conception of space and real-time perception of space as it takes form and responds to the activity of the laboring body. Matta-Clark's work does indeed reflect values held about society at large and what it means to actively inhabit a place. In his own words: "space, to me should be in perpetual metamorphosis by virtue of people continually acting on the space that surrounds them. A house, for instance, is definitely a fixed entity in the

minds of most people. It needn't be. So one of the effects of my work is to dramatize the ways, or stage ways in altering that sense of stasis."³⁰ A sense of stasis is indeed disrupted in his work, and that statement reveals his general concern for people's sense of place and ownership over space. In other words, Matta-Clark's work addresses a larger social question of use and response to the built environment, and this is distinct in comparison to Woodman's practice which largely engages the realm of self-representation and the solitary body/space relationship. Or perhaps, both artists in their own representations and enactments can say to the viewers, *you too can make space this way*. After visiting *Splitting*, did anyone see their own home differently, or for the first time? Did anyone tear down the partition wall which he/she had always disliked, which had always disrupted the closed space, a space which could in reality be made open and free?

Unlike Woodman, who is literally present in many of her photographs, Matta-Clark's body is but a trace in his own self-documented work. After the drawings and after the physical building cuts, there is the realm of the photographs, the documentations or representations. The photographs of Matta-Clark's performative interventions and building cuts reveal a dichotomous present/absent role of the body; it was overwhelmingly *there* for the events of the work, but it is not visibly *here* in the viewing (figs. 21-22). This theme of the body's presence/absence parallels the dichotomy of doing/undoing, constructing/deconstructing, adding/subtracting--or any number of dualities that may be used to describe the Matta-Clark's spatial enactments. It was noted that Woodman's work--the raw and vulnerable state of her own representations--was an act of bodily

³⁰ Gordon Matta-Clark, as cited in Walker, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Art, Architecture and the Attack on Modernism*, 114.

vulnerability; then the same might be said of Matta-Clark's buildings. Cut open and exposed, the built subjects are made vulnerable to the actions of the artist and to the presence of the bodies that come to experience the new space.

Spatial Practice: Response to Place (the Activation of Space)

Place can be understood in two ways: a physical site as it exists on its own (without or before the influence of the artist), and as a site (physical but also overcoded by a conceptual intention) activated by and with the performative body of the artist in his/her spatial practice. The majority of the focus here is on the latter definition of place--effectively, what de Certeau called *space*--but the discussion deepens with an investigation into the history of the sites Woodman and Matta-Clark selected to use for their photographs and interventions. Acknowledging the geographical specificity of place (how would this photograph's meaning change if it had been taken elsewhere?) is also an acknowledgement of cultural, social and political geographies.

Woodman's oeuvre lends itself to organization or categorization by geographical place and by date. Whether or not Woodman was self-aware of her stylistic shifts and artistic growths, her work suggests distinct phases which correlate to the respective city she was working in at the time. For example, Woodman's Providence, Rhode Island body of work--while a student at RISD--is identified largely by the spaces she worked within: primarily her warehouse studio and an abandoned house. Those collections are visibly distinct from her work while studying abroad in Rome, or the work produced toward the end of her life in New York City. Of course, there are overarching key thematic elements. Woodman's approach to encountering rooms, surfaces and objects reveals a continual investigation into the concept of merging body with place. Identity of the body and identity of place--or symbolism of objects in space--come into contact, and the photograph captures the event which is not only a physical meeting but a conceptual occurrence. The body and

space (place) are no longer strictly distinct, but interplay in real time and in the subtleties of the photographic trace.³¹ In other words, an invisible quality emerges: the transfer of energy between flesh and stone, which is realised through Woodman's spatial practice specific to site, and solidified in her photographic representations.

While Woodman's response to place is best discussed in light of her photographic aesthetic and through the lens of (self) representation, Matta-Clark's oeuvre extends far beyond the scope of photography as medium, which was actually for him a secondary means of representing the spatial enactments. For this reason, Matta-Clark's response to place is best considered *the* motivating factor of any work subsequently produced. Of course, the origin point of practice is the body; but first, the sites to be transformed are the muses. The buildings call Matta-Clark into action. In other words, place/space was the subject of his art focus, and within the category of Building Cuts, one can distinguish the work based on site specificity. Significantly, the geography of place is distinct also with the specificity of architectural typology: a house in the suburbs of New Jersey; an abandoned warehouse on the pier of the Hudson River in NYC; an office building slated to be demolished in Antwerp, and so on. Almost always, the projects reflected some larger topic or issue in the neighborhood or urban core, reinforcing the relationship between site and context. How Matta-Clark did or did not regard the context overall is one way of critically viewing the building cuts.

³¹ In the words of Kathryn Hixson, "Woodman experiments with the interrelationships between the body, time and space. She sometimes conflates these essences so that they are an inextricable continuum that resists representation." Hixson, "Essential Magic: The Photographs of Francesca Woodman," in *Photographische arbeiten = Photographic works*, 30.

For Matta-Clark, social activism and a certain mindful lawlessness were strong undercurrents in his response to place and the transformations of derelict buildings into newly evocative spatial experiences. On a micro level, each individual building cut or physical alteration to space is a revelation of a particular response--the body to the building. As previously stated, Matta-Clark's work requires the collapse of the second and third dimensions: what is drawn on paper or conceived of space may or may not be possible to actualize. So then, the active embodiment of a place--all senses engaged--is necessary to bring to life a spatial experience which serves the body at the same time it communicates intangible messages about expectations, disruption and engagement with the built environment.

Francesca Woodman: response to place and the merging of dwelling/work space

The immediate significance of Woodman's response to place--and the activation of space through the photography of her performative body--is her conflation of dwelling and work space. Work produced in Providence, Rome and New York distinctly reflect the contexts of the city, the trajectory of Woodman's artistic growth and her focus at the time. Simply put, Woodman's artistic development cannot be divorced from her context; the places she was drawn to work within were, for the most part, the most available places. Woodman is often quoted stating matter-of-factly that she photographed herself because she was always available. The profundity of the work itself leaves room for a deeper analysis. Nevertheless, Woodman did seem to focus her creative energy on the most immediate scenes at hand, producing evocative spatial representations in otherwise abandoned settings. Capitalizing on the particularities of each city she lived, studied and worked in, Woodman's spatial practice reflects a convergence of life-rhythms and object/space inspiration for her photo studies. As Johannes Binotto pointed out, Woodman does not only use rooms to stage herself, she also stages herself in order to illustrate the spatial qualities of her scenes,³² and it is this dynamic of the performative body in and with space which opens up a discussion about the places Woodman selected as sites for her work.

Consider a photograph of Woodman taken by by Douglas Prince, who taught photography at RISD from 1976-1979 (fig. 23). Prince photographed Woodman's Providence studio as a part of his environmental portraits project; he was interested in the

³² Johannes Binotto, "Outside In: Francesca Woodman's Rooms of Her Own," 56.

way that Woodman's sense of fashion and her living space were in his words, "a genuine projection of her persona and not some 'style' or device put together as photographic prop."³³ Woodman certainly articulated a desire for artistic solitude in open, unregulated space when she chose to live in the Providence studio--located in a nearly-abandoned fabric factory--instead of living near or with other RISD students. Friends, peers and professors agreed on Woodman's fluidity or non-division between life and work, and this biographical note furthermore underscores the fact that Woodman viewed places as spaces to be transformed, and objects and everyday encounters were potentials for spatial study. The continuous conceptualizing, drawing, writing, planning and staging--in the blurred boundaries between home and studio--was all central to her practice.

Photographer George Lange also documented Woodman at work in her Providence studio (fig. 24). Here, Woodman is seated behind the camera on its tripod, carefully studying the scene in front of her. With the ability to frame any number of shots in the open space and to pull from the eclectic mix of blankets, mirrors, furs and furnishings, Woodman's work is evidence of an artist who thoughtfully composed her shots, considering the geometries of space, her own body and the objects surrounding her in order to stage and execute her artistic visions. In the same way that Woodman's body as photographer found its way to the other side of the lens--body as subject model--so too the spaces she dwelled within became the other subjects of her photographs. The focus of her work in Providence was largely domestic space, and the work evolved within such sites of dwelling.

³³ Douglas D. Prince, *Francesca Woodman in her Studio*, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://www.douglasprince.com/p690616609>. Prince also noted the "ever-present evidence of decay."

In addition to working within her own factory studio, Woodman photographed in an abandoned house in Providence, the site of her more notoriously haunting images. In *House#4*, Woodman's body appears lodged--though in motion, the arm blurred--between the mantle's frame and the wall of the fireplace (fig. 25). In *Space2* the body stands between wall and paper, softly and partially exposed (fig. 1). The room: deteriorating materials large windows, the rhythm of wide plank floors, peeling scraps of wallpaper, a loose mantle. Woodman's body in action moves *into* (literally behind, inside of, within, among) the voids and material available (fig. 11). Indeed, Woodman's practice absorbed, processed and reimagined existing space to be activated by the performative body. The body in space shifts boundaries, acknowledges difference and dichotomous relationships: in front of/behind, inside/outside, nude/clothed, hidden/unveiled.

In the *Angel* series, Woodman makes a series of leaps in front of the camera, silhouetted against the windows of Giuseppe Gallo's Pastificio Cerere studio space in Rome. Like Douglas Prince in Providence, Enrico Luzzi took interest in Woodman's method of surveying space, planning and staging the photographs.³⁴ In Luzzi's documentations, Woodman disrobes down to a mid-length white skirt and begins to realize her vision (figs. 26-27). She moves around the stark factory space, setting the camera on its tripod to view the suspended paper wings and expansive paned windows. Unlike the peeling wallpapered rooms of the abandoned Providence house, the Pastificio's concrete walls of are bare, stark, highly textured. Architecturally, Rome offered Woodman new materials, new spatial histories, new inspirations. Her work reflects the embrace of the new spatial canvases, and

³⁴ Reproduced in Pedicini, *Francesca Woodman: The Roman Years*, 107

she explored the factory's interior surfaces as she continued to explore the surfaces and movements of her own body. Consider name of artwork, in which Woodman destabilizes body-space boundaries by transferring traces of the wall onto her skin while her skin presses into the wall (fig. 28). Gallo's studio provided a stage for any performance of Woodman's imagination, for any movement of her body. Gallo described: "She was never distracted [...] She was like a machine: she could be inspired by anything she looked at, or she could figure out how to make it useful from a creative point of view [...] She didn't love ordinary things, but she loved decadence, the ruined object, vestiges of the past."³⁵

Beyond privileging her body as subject and ruinous spaces for sites, Woodman made certain methodologies and technical approaches characteristic aspects of her practice in furthering the effects of the body/space encounters. For example, she rarely (if ever) used artificial lighting, and instead relied on the (often sharp) geometries of a room's natural daylight. Woodman is also known for her framing techniques, in combination with the meticulous planning and staging of camera angle to produce effects which play on the visible known/unknown.

³⁵ Pedicini, *Francesca Woodman: The Roman Years*, 124

Gordon Matta-Clark: response to place and interventions on temporal space

Matta-Clark's spatial practice cannot be divorced from his response to the specificity of place. All evidence of the artist's process work--notes, drawings, letters--suggests that the particularities of any work required first a clear notion of the site. A wonderful parallel which continues to emerge is the role of the ruin for both Woodman and Matta-Clark. As Elizabeth Sussman understands it: "They [the building cut projects] were simultaneously sculpture and performance, social action, psychic/spatial experience, and materialist structures. [...] That the conditions which enabled the buildings to become theaters for his activities meant that they would probably be destroyed did not haunt him."³⁶ Yes, and in fact Matta-Clark's buildings cuts relied on places which were slated to be demolished or entirely forgotten by the city. It was in the urgency of forthcoming demolition that Matta-Clark inserted himself in order to artistically deconstruct while also *reconstructing*. The necessity of responding to the existing structure--its physical architecture, its social context, its site in the city--merged with Matta-Clark's conceptual vision for radical spatial interventions.

In 1974, Matta-Clark began a project on 322 Humphrey Street in the suburbs of Englewood, New Jersey. The house was purchased by Holly and Horace Solomon, and given over to Matta-Clark just months before its scheduled demolition. Matta-Clark had been looking for an entire residential building he could cut through. In an interview with Liza Bear, he communicated his interest in the "direct, immediate activity" of structurally

³⁶ Elisabeth Sussman, "The Mind Is Vast and Ever Present," *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2007), 24.

altering architecture.³⁷ For Matta-Clark, the project was about the physical acts of learning the house's structure, as well as the implications of perception when space is drastically changed.³⁸ Furthermore, he used the language of performance to discuss the way action was staged throughout the process of shifting the building and making cuts (this is reminiscent of Woodman's curiosity about the body and spatial boundaries).

Splitting is indeed a performative dialogue between the body's actions and the architecture's own movement. At each cut--the chainsaw an extension of the body--the house responds; the walls expose their layers of construction and release attachment to the ceiling/floor/corner. The steps of *Splitting* are recorded in the documentary artbook produced by Matta-Clark after the project's completion:

BEVELING DOWN
FORTY LINEAL FEET
OF CINDER BLOCKS
TO SET HALF THE BUILDING
BACK ON ITS FOUNDATIONS

REMOVING INTACT
ALL FOUR CORNERS
AT THE EAVES

DEMOLISHED AND REMOVED
SEPTEMBER 1974³⁹

The event, or the performance, of splitting the Humphrey house activated movement innumerable ways. Not only was the origin point of action in the body, which was responding to the house, but the house itself moved in response to the body. The new

³⁷ Gordon Matta-Clark in an interview by Liza Bear, "Gordon Matta-Clark: Splitting the Humphrey Street Building," in *Gordon Matta-Clark*, ed. Corinne Diserns (London: Phaidon Press, 2003), 166.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

³⁹ Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 32-page black-and-white book (New York: 98 Greene Street Loft Press, 1974), reproduced in *Gordon Matta-Clark*, ed. Diserns (London: Phaidon Press, 2003)

openings allowed for radical shifts in perspective, changed spatial perception, welcomed new infiltration of light, sound and smell, and revealed previously unseen materials and structural layers. In relatively simple acts of dissection, one is thrust into a space with new realms of sensory engagement (figs. 28-29).

In 1975, Matta-Clark identified an abandoned industrial building, Pier 52, in Manhattan on the Hudson River. The site was known only for its significance to the gay community, and was otherwise neglected by the city. In this regard, Matta-Clark's vision for *Day's End* directly responds to the building's existing context: in the shadows of secrecy and largely deemed illicit behavior, in the anarchy of the piers. A 2012 exhibit titled "The Piers: Art & Sex Along the New York Waterfront" contextualized artworks like Matta-Clark's with gay subculture exactly because the project resisted normative conceptions (of art) and defied boundaries of the law.⁴⁰ Indeed, Matta-Clark began working on the project (without permission from the city) almost entirely unnoticed, documented primarily by his short film titled *Day's End*. Securing the building with his own locks, Matta-Clark reimagined the industrial space--once as a house of shadows--to be a cathedral for the day's passing. Matta-Clark precariously suspended himself at great heights to cut out the pathways the sunlight would enter. He removed ceiling, floor and part of a side elevation facing New Jersey, all very specifically calculated geometries like slices of a sphere. Matta-Clark's performance offered the daylight its own stage, its own voids to penetrate and surfaces to illuminate. His response to the specificity of the site visually

⁴⁰ "The Piers: Art & Sex Along the New York Waterfront," Curated by Jonathan Weinberg with Darren Jones, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, <http://www.leslielohman.org/exhibitions/2012/the-piers.html>

connected two cities; joined the interior darkness with the light of day; reimagined a space's seedy reputation and injected new meaning.

Transgressing boundaries of permanence, privacy and abandoned interiors, Matta-Clark responded to site by capitalizing on the urgency of forthcoming demolition. He inserted himself into places in order to artistically deconstruct while also *reconstructing* space--despite the architecture's impermanence. The necessity of responding to the existing structures--the physical architecture, the social context, the site--merged with Matta-Clark's conceptual visions for radical spatial intervention, and reflected his concept of *anarchitecture*.

Spatial Practice: Time & the Photograph

Time is the third element of the spatial practice, after the body in/as/activating space and after response to place (not after as in separate; rather, time and space are indefinitely joined). The layered meanings of time as a theme can be discussed for a moment in the contexts of Woodman's and Matta-Clark's spatial practices, separately and together. First and more broadly, time is significant with regard to photography as a medium. Because photographs are the immediate subject matter of this thesis, unraveling from the perspective of bodies in space, Walter Benjamin's discussion of the optical unconscious is illuminating and applicable.⁴¹ Second and more specifically, the difference between Woodman's use of the photograph--as her primary means of exploring the body and space--and Matta-Clark's secondary use of photography--as a means of documenting and representing his spatial interventions--is pertinent with regard to time in the process of making. Quickly, one realizes *time* coats every surface of every discussion, from the practice of drawing to the process of developing film; or it could be measured with regard to the dates attached to each phase of an artist's work. Finally, time can be perceived as a visual theme which saturates each photograph, not only in the obvious ways but with the urgency that suggests the artists were self-consciously engaging with its power. The privileged roles of the ruinous/demolished setting and the temporal body in performative action are each reinforced in the spatial representations. The dialectics of time's watch in life/death are pressing--not only in the biographies of both artists--as in the biographies of any mortal human--but also in the very foreground of the artworks produced.

⁴¹ Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 1972.

Let us begin with photography, the medium, the mode of representation, the visual capsule of moments in time--of the body as it performs itself in space, of buildings cut and of spaces in the thick of activation and intervention. Benjamin's discussion of the camera as the *other* eye is a metaphor especially palpable when considering Woodman's photographs, and more subtly with regard to Matta-Clark's interventions. Despite Woodman's self-conscious mode of her performative body's own representations, and despite her role as photographer, there is indeed a sense that the camera acts with a certain immeasurable autonomy. Particularly considering the perceived freedom and fluidity with which Woodman moves through space, the actual image captured is a single moment in a range of time. While tracing the history of photography, Benjamin relates the medium to psychoanalysis, for it was on account of the camera's technology that, for the first time, the optical unconscious could be made visible.⁴² In one sense, the photograph illuminates a distinction between one's subjective perception--the human eye--and whatever this new alternative presents: a more objective eye? Benjamin's words: "It is indeed a different nature that speaks to the camera from the one which addresses the eye; different above all in the sense that instead of a space worked through by a human consciousness, there appears one which is affected unconsciously."⁴³

In earlier discussions of the body and space, an overt discussion of time was sidestepped, but clearly it was ever-present in the understanding of Woodman's performative body as she activated space. Indeed, movement is a thematic lens through which her photographs can be read. Time is movement's benefactor, the variable overseer

⁴² Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

of the intersections: the overlapping seconds in which the body darts across the room and the second(s) it takes for the camera's shutter to snap shut. The photographs narrate Woodman's insertion of herself into spaces already ridden with memory, frozen in time and now reactivated by the movement of her own present body.

In contrast, Matta-Clark's spatial interventions via building cuts have the effect of dismantling the building's past life and suggesting a future moment--the moment of re-entry and re-experience. Certainly, traces of the past modes of occupying space exist in the skeleton of the structure, but Matta-Clark's longer process of developing a single, large-scale spatial experience slowly builds into a culminating moment, which is not necessarily the moment of the photograph. Indeed, the very temporary nature of the buildings (often pending demolition), seems to collide with Matta-Clark's practice of remaking. Matta-Clark's building cuts transcend the time of their intervention, largely through oral histories of the making and viewing, films shot, photographs taken, collages assembled, building fragments still regularly displayed, and so on. From this perspective, Matta-Clark fought the temporal nature of his projects by insisting--even if just in representation--that they endure. The photograph accomplished this sort of endurance for Woodman's work, and clearly she retains notoriety and following. Yet the innate difference should be clear: Woodman worked with photography as her primary medium, while Matta-Clark created temporary, sculptural spatial experiences which absolutely hinged on an end note of destruction. His medium was nearly time itself.

The process of developing and printing the photographs from the negative representations is a further extension of the spatial practice, the origin of which is the body

itself. Because of the significance of Woodman as artist/model, subject/object, and because of the nature of the photographic medium, the time between the moment(s) of performative action and the instant of photographic capture is collapsed, as compared to Matta-Clark's practice which was structured around the specificity of site and scope of the intervention. Ultimately, one could more closely relate Woodman's development and printing process to the moment Matta-Clark snaps a documentary photograph--both examples are extensions of the spatial practice some amount of linear time outside the origin point of the performative body in space.

Ultimately, thinking about the time and photography reveals a summarizing common thread: both artists' decisions to site their work in ruinous space--to face head on dialectical implications of death and of a certain still-existence after death--is a striking contrast to the temporality of the body. While it is true that buildings also decay, the rates are different. Factually, Woodman's sites seemed to endure: reappropriated factories, Roman palazzos. Matta-Clark's were destined for eradication. He fought time in the temporal interventions and creations of new spatial experiences. Woodman fought time with her body, facing her own temporal flesh through the eye of the camera.

Consider Woodman's photograph from *Angel* series (Fig. 45) next to a view of Matta-Clark's *Splitting* (Fig. 46). Side by side, these photographs offer a summation of the resonance which exists between the artists' aesthetics, and are furthermore indicative of the use of time as a driving thematic element. The perspectives are similar: slightly crooked elevation views of two rooms, where a central framed opening is the focus, drawing the eye into a second space. In Woodman's photograph--which is a closer view of the opening--a

light sheet or garment appears like a ghost, seeming to float in space. In fact, an arm extends from behind the opening, waving the fabric but appearing still in comparison to the textile. A disjunction in time. The stillness of the stark space disrupted by movement, and the absence of bodies disrupted by the subtle presence of an arm, appearing bizarrely fragmented from the rest of the disappeared body.

Matta-Clark's photograph--a view of *Splitting* (1974)--is also still, and truly absent of bodies. Only time is present in the dual sense of permanence and impermanence of the architecture. What appears at first to be solid and remaining is in fact fractured, literally split down the center along the length of the room. The daylight washes in through the crack, and through the uncovered windows. While the body in Woodman's photograph disrupted a sense of timelessness, the clean fissure in the architecture disrupts the sense of timelessness in Matta-Clark's. Indeed, a body has been there to unmake, to construct by deconstructing, to split the house in half and thereby challenge one's conception of endurance, performance, the (im)mutability of space over time.

Indeed, time is the final layer of the spatial practice, and it is also a transition into the spatial representations. The privileged role of the ruinous/demolished site and the changing body in performative action are reinforced in the spatial representations through the themes of movement and tactility. Movement is known in the photograph through a knowledge of time--the time it takes for a body in motion to be captured as still, determined by the shutter speed of the camera's eye--and tactility is understood through the distinct material edges which reflect time's wear.



Fig. 1. Francesca Woodman, *Space2*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1976



Fig. 2. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974



Fig. 3. Francesca Woodman, *About being my model*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1975-78



Fig. 4. Francesca Woodman, *Space2*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1975-76



Fig. 5. Francesca Woodman, *Untitled*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1975-76



Fig. 6. Francesca Woodman, *Charlie the Model #8*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1976-77



Fig. 7-8. Francesca Woodman, *Self-deceit #1, 3*, Rome, Italy, 1978

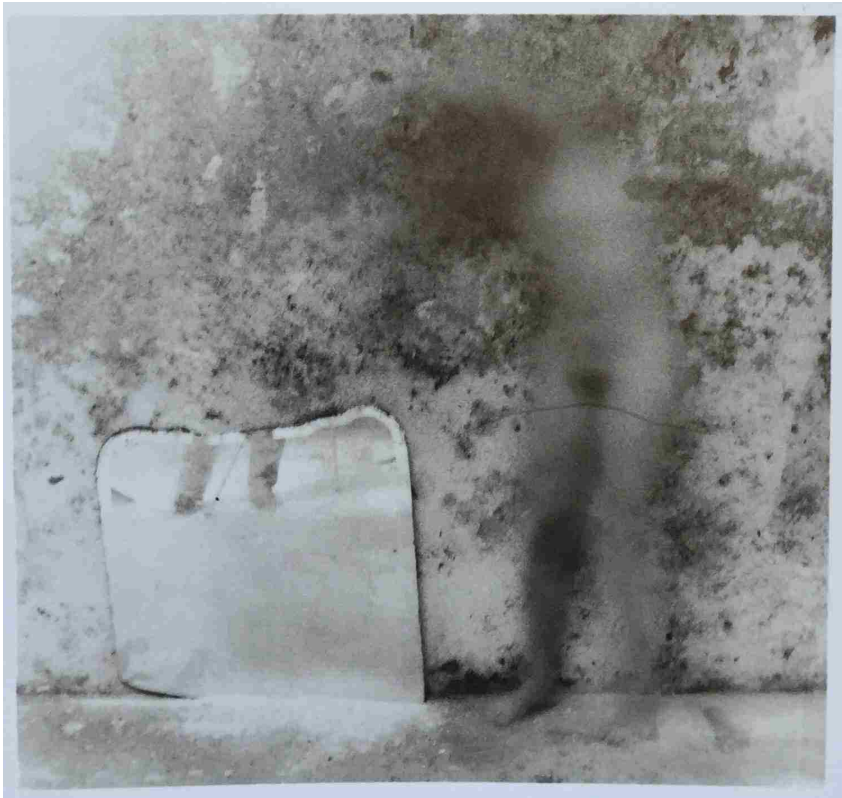
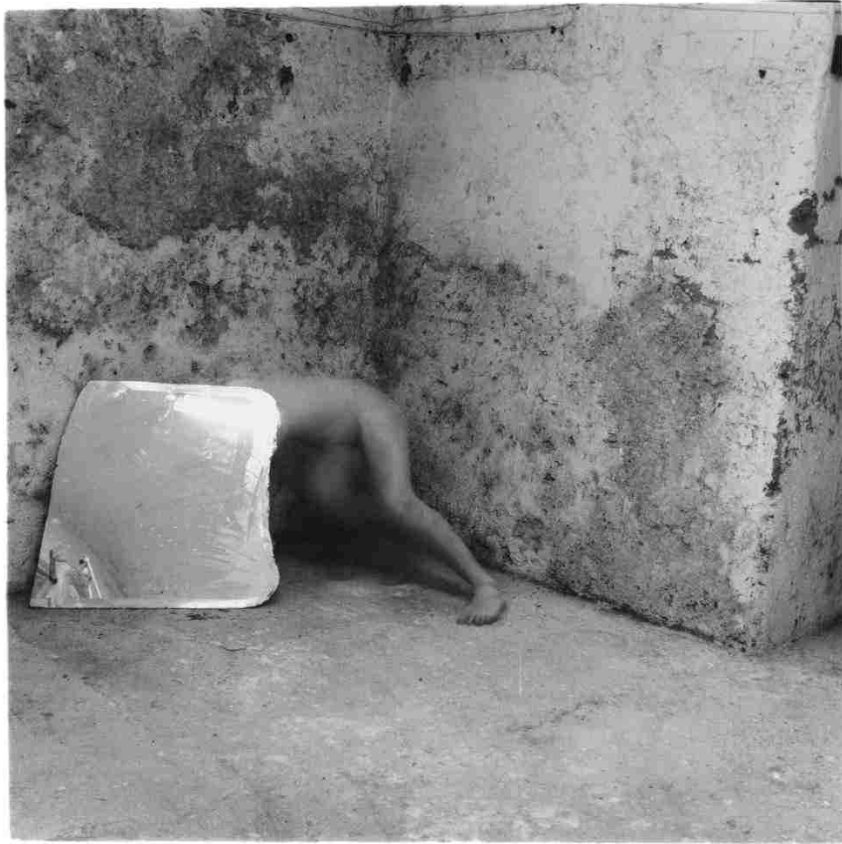


Fig. 9-10. Francesca Woodman, *Self-deceit #5, 7*, Rome, Italy, 1978



Fig. 11. Francesca Woodman, *House #3*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1976

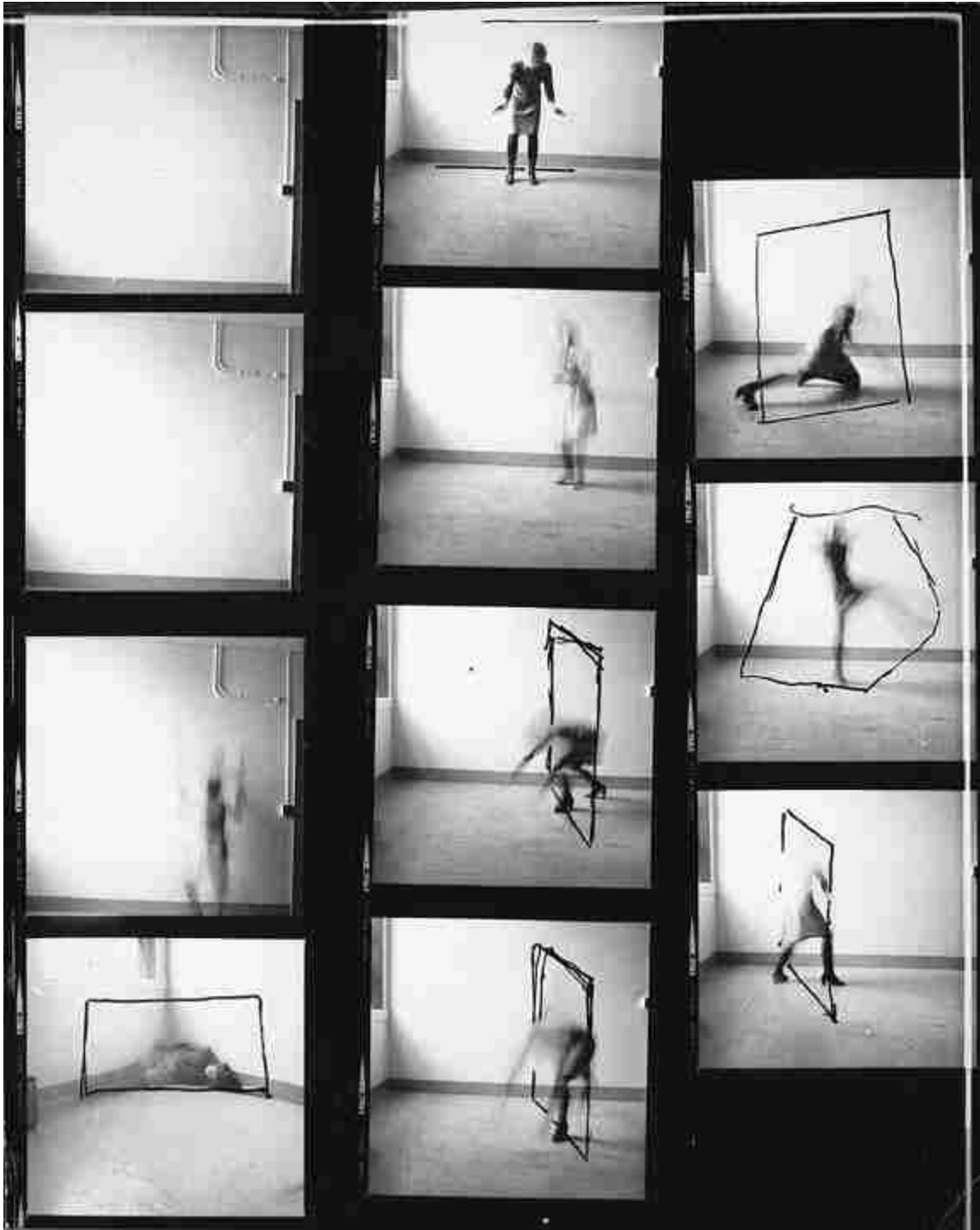


Fig. 12. Francesca Woodman, *Untitled* contact sheet, Providence, Rhode Island, 1976

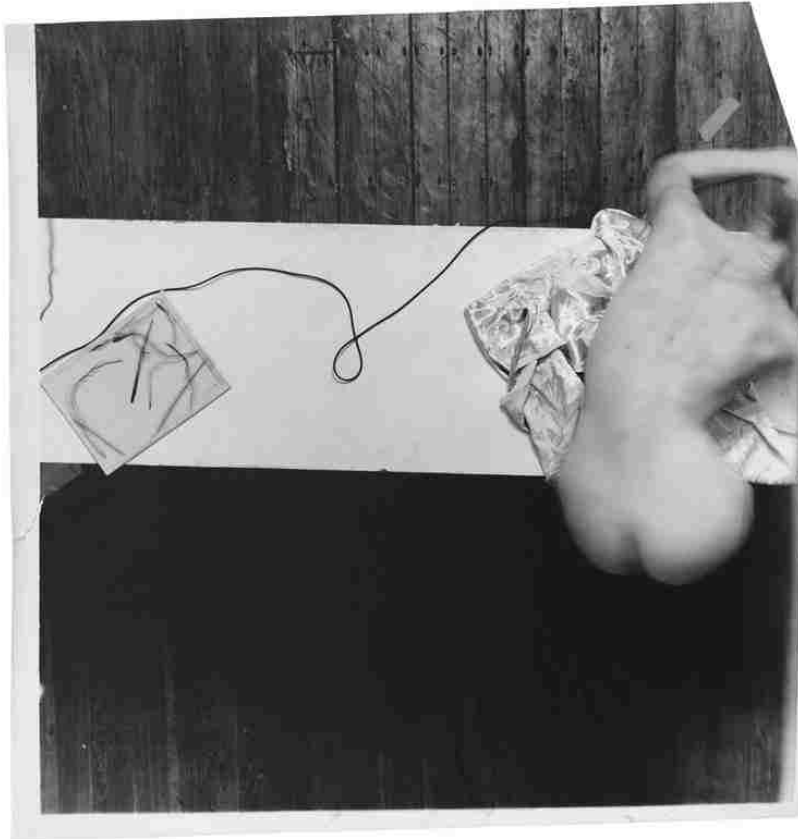


Fig. 13-14. Francesca Woodman, Untitled from *Swan Song*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1978

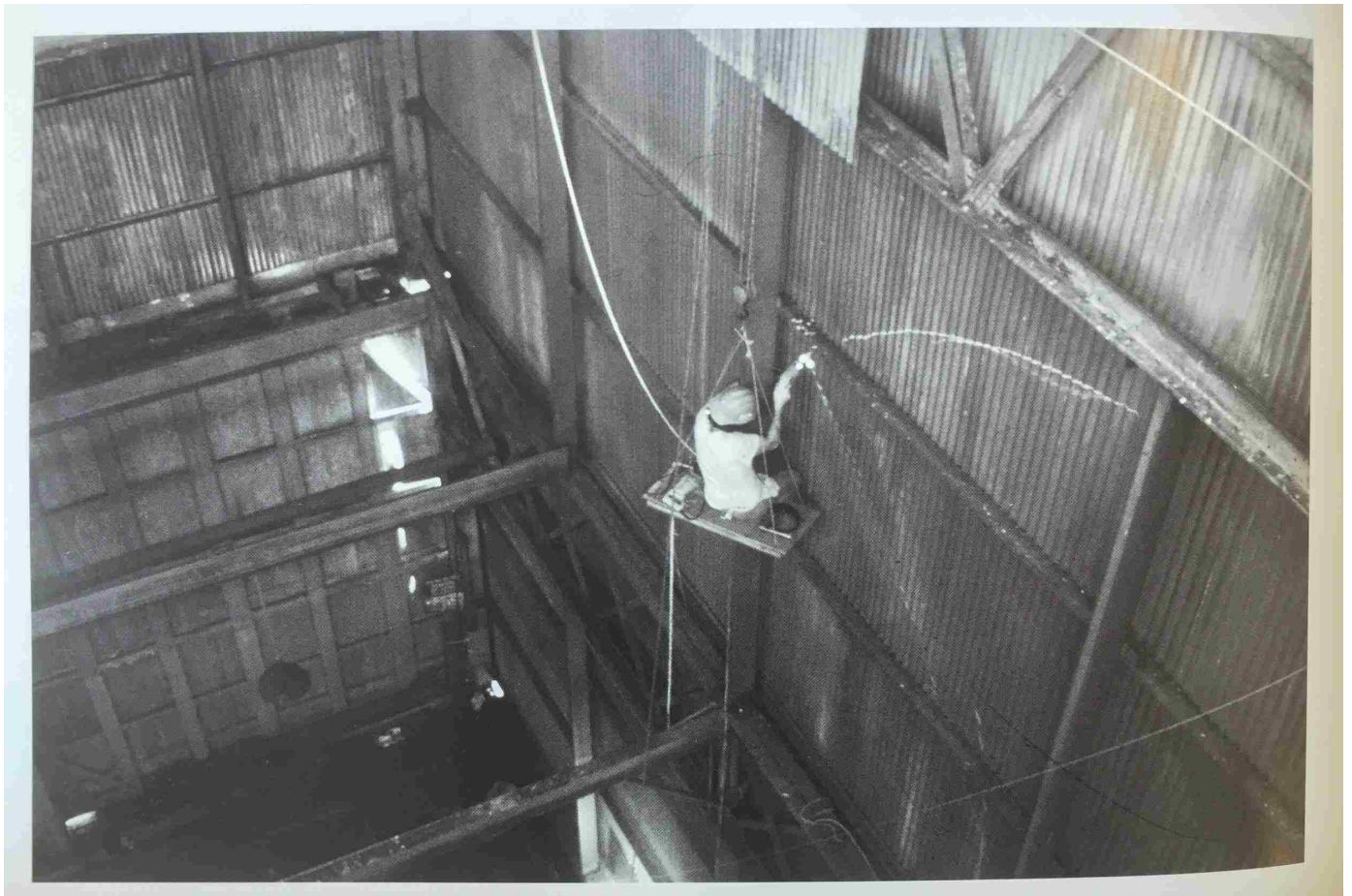


Fig. 15. Gordon Matta-Clark cutting *Day's End*, 1975



Fig. 16. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting building cut*, Englewood, New Jersey, 1974

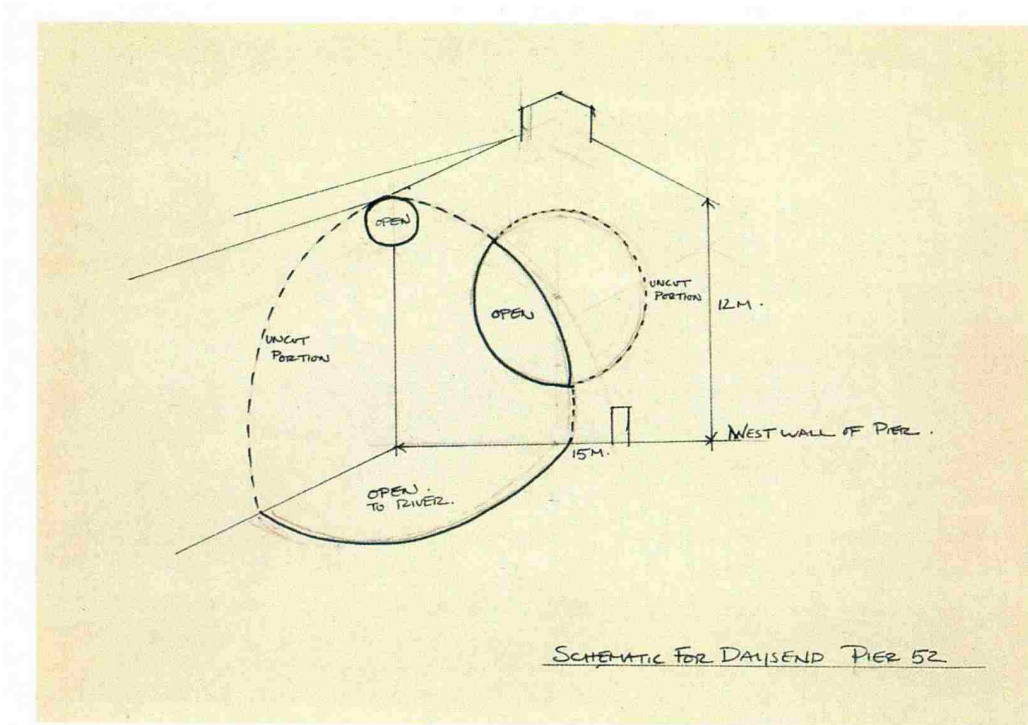


Fig. 17. Gordon Matta-Clark, Sketch for Day's End, 1975

Fig. 18. Day's End, 1975

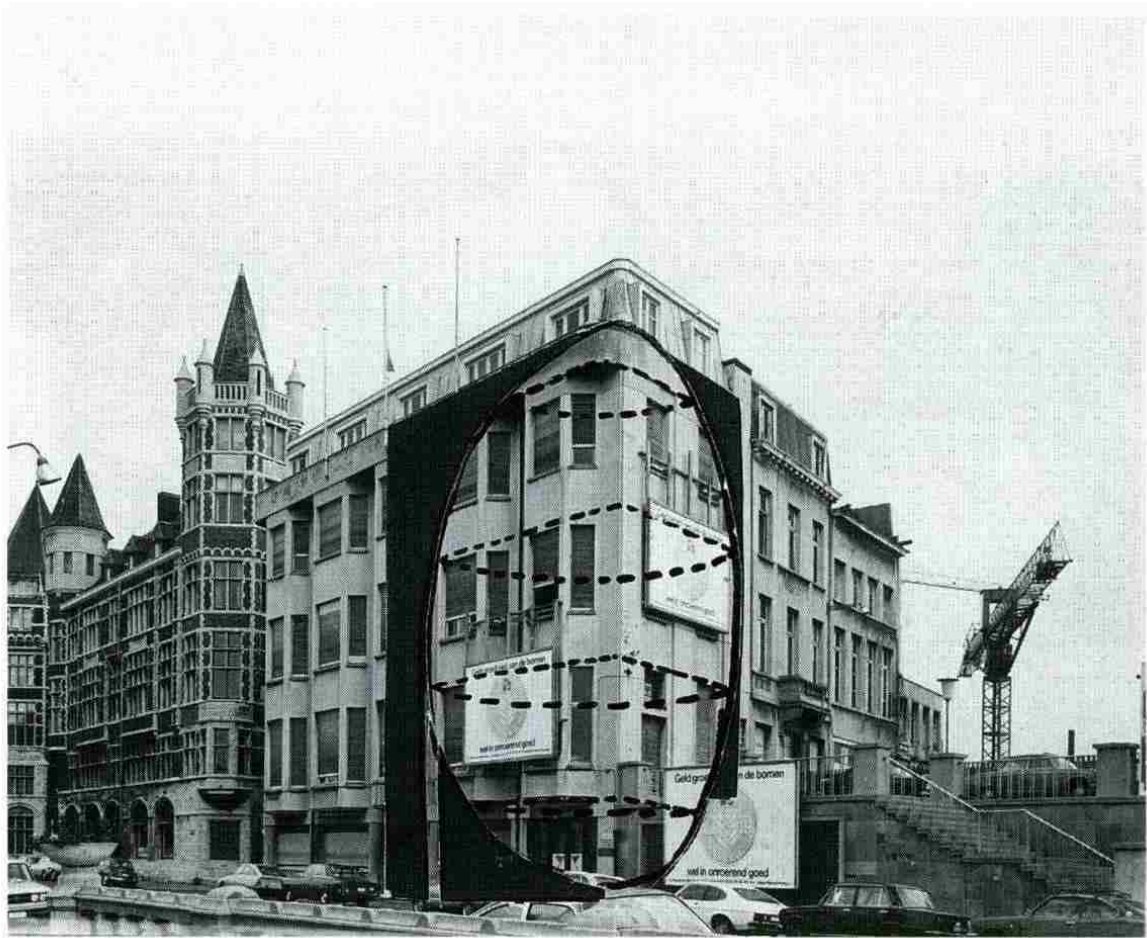


Fig. 19. Gordon Matta-Clark, concept for *Office Baroque*, Antwerp, 1977

Fig. 20. *Office Baroque*, 1977



Fig. 21. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974



Fig. 22. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974



Fig. 23. Douglas Prince, *Francesca Woodman in her studio-05*, 1976

Fig. 24. George Lange, *Francesca Woodman in her studio*, Providence, Rhode Island, c. 1976



Fig. 25. Francesca Woodman, *House#4*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1976



Fig. 26-27. Enrico Luzzi, Francesca Woodman at Pastificio Cerere, Rome, 1977



Fig. 28-29. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974



House #4



Fig. 30. Francesca Woodman, *House #4*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1976
Fig. 31. Gordon Matta-Clark, view of *Splitting*, 1974



Fig. 32. Francesca Woodman, *Untitled*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1975-76
Fig. 33. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Bronx Floor: Threshold*, New York, 1973



Fig. 34. Francesca Woodman, from *Angel* series, Rome, 1977
Fig. 35. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Day's End*, Pier 52 New York, 1975

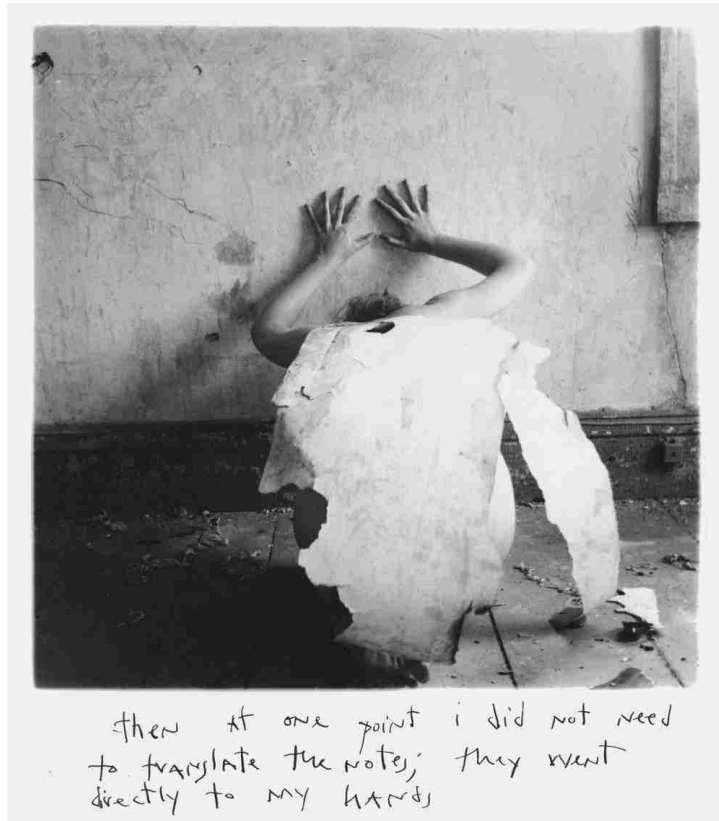


Fig. 36. Francesca Woodman, *then at one point i did not need to translate the notes; they went directly into my hands*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1976
Fig. 37. Gordon Matta-Clark, from *Conical Intersect*, 1975



Fig. 38. Francesca Woodman, *Untitled*, New York, 1979
Fig. 39. Gordon Matta-Clark, from *Bronx floors, Bronx doors*, 1973

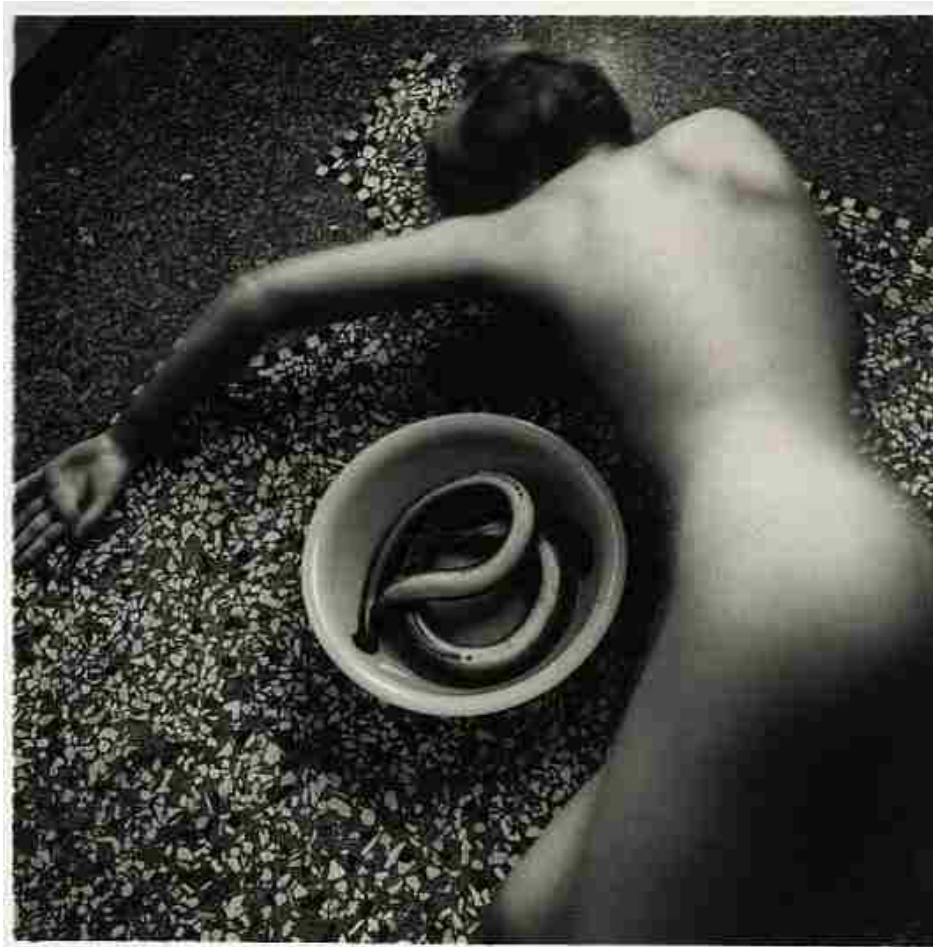


Fig. 40. Francesca Woodman, *Eel*, Rome, 1977-78
Fig. 41. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Office Baroque*, 1977



Fig. 42. Film still from *Conical Intersect*, 1975, 16 mm film, color, 17 minutes 12 seconds.



Fig. 43. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Office Baroque*, 1977, Cibachrome, 30 x 40 inches

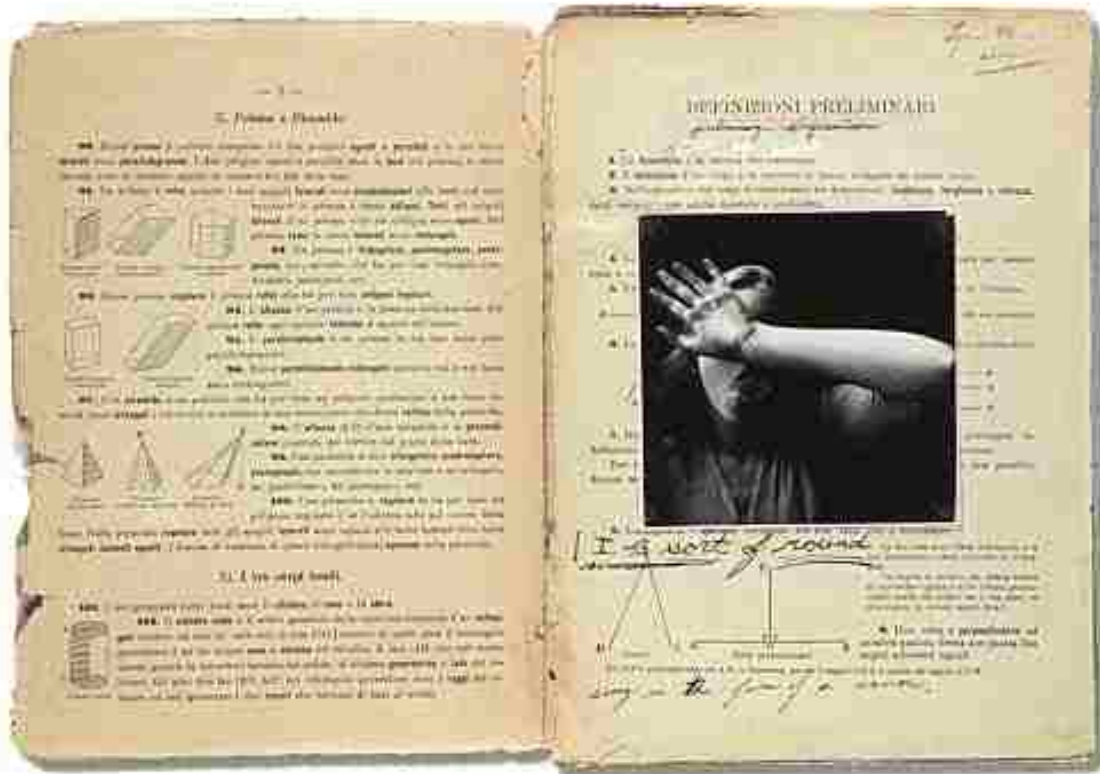


Fig. 44. Francesca Woodman, from *Some Disordered Interior Geometries*, Rome, 1977

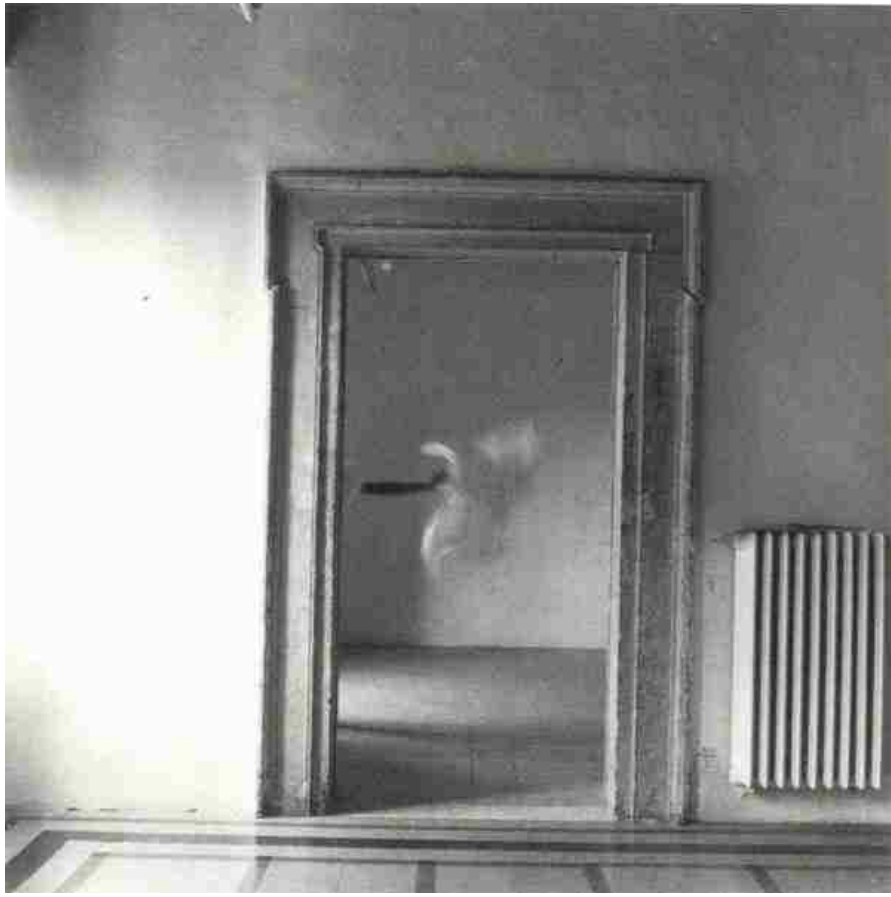


Fig. 45. Francesca Woodman, from *Angel* series, Rome 1977



Fig. 46. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, New Jersey, 1974

PART 2: Spatial Representations

The term 'spatial representations' refers first and foremost the photographic work of Francesca Woodman and Gordon Matta-Clark. The photographs are literally representations of moments in the spatial practices, and the photo objects are the primary subjects of focus here. In the broader sense, spatial representations also encompass the exhibitions, art books, photo-works⁴⁴ and films created by the artists as further extensions of their work. Understandably, the word 'representation' could be challenged as suggesting a trace, a duplication of something else, rather than something of value in its own right. In fact, the photograph and photography as a medium are elusive and mysterious in exactly this way. A duality exists, for the photograph is both an object of present value in its own right--though not always considered art, here another complexity--and a trace of something other, something past. Roland Barthes understood the photograph as unprecedented:

[...] since it establishes not a consciousness of the *being-there* of the thing (which any copy could provoke) but an awareness of its *having-been-there*. What we have is a new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction between the *here-now*, for the photograph is never experienced as illusion, is in no way a *presence* (claims to the magical character of the photographic image must be deflated); its reality that of the *having-been-there*, for in every photograph there is the always stupefying evidence of *this is how it was*, given us, by a precious miracle, a reality from which we are sheltered.⁴⁵

Indeed, the photograph refers back to a past moment, while also being a thing of the present. Barthes aptly considers the technical otherness of the medium, and although he

⁴⁴ Matta-Clark used the term "photo-works" to differentiate his collages and other 2D art extensions of the original spatial interventions from the documentary-style snapshots of the building cuts.

⁴⁵ Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (Stony Creek, CT: Leete's Island Books, Inc., 1980), 278.

elides the term “magical” in the excerpt above, his later writings, specifically in *Camera Lucida*, concede to the way certain photographs reach him and animate him, all the while others appear nothing more than mere documentations.⁴⁶ Certainly there is a sort of mystery, if not magic, in photography’s potential to affect, which often transcends any sterile formula for “good photographs.” Rather, the spark of a photograph seems to have something to do with the moment of the photograph as well as the moments of its viewing--the intersecting and meeting of bodies in space and time. In effect, the experience of viewing a photograph is reflexive to the moment of the photograph, the event of its making. These indissolvable moments are layered and overlapping in the meaning or significance of the photograph. Thus, the relationship of the spatial practice / spatial representations--the meta argument here for viewing two artists--is reflected in and affirmed by the very nature of photography as a medium.

Like space, which is an elusive nexus of invisible and visible (conceptual and physical) realms, the photograph-as-object provokes a similar pluralistic knowing. Consider John Berger’s statement: “Photography is the process of rendering observation self-conscious [...] The immediate relation between what is present and what is absent is particular to each photograph: it may be that of ice to sun, of grief to a tragedy, of a smile to a pleasure, of a body to love, of a winning race-horse to the race it has run.”⁴⁷ In the examples of photographs by Woodman and Matta-Clark, such present/absent dualities are powerful: as in the body shown or the body as a trace; architecture cut and the sense of architecture as it was. Additionally, the viewer brings her/his own presence and absence to

⁴⁶ Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 20.

⁴⁷ John Berger, “Understanding a Photography,” *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (Stony Creek, CT: Leete’s Island Books, Inc., 1980) 292-293.

the seeing, extending the mystery of photograph with the ability to be awakened, triggered, pricked by a detail, or nothing at all.⁴⁸

Whether or not a certain photograph affects the viewer in a way which transcends the mere image (after all, how many hundreds of images does one see in a day?), is really an argument about photography vs. art-photography, or a picture versus a photograph. Exemplary scholars have taken on this discussion over the years, delving into the history of photography and its evolving place in the art world.⁴⁹ Rather than repeat all of their arguments here, the worthier task is first asserting that both Woodman and Matta-Clark are indeed artist-photographers, but then pointing out some important distinctions in their respective modes of representation. Marius De Zayas made a simple and useful distinction between the photographer and the artist photographer when he wrote, “The artist photographer in his work envelops objectivity with an idea, veils the object with the subject.”⁵⁰ In Woodman’s photographs, especially her self-representations, her subjectivity as it conflates with the “objective” study is visually clear. In Matta-Clark’s photography, the trace of his body, of the physical labor he exerted in order to alter the buildings, is latent in the photo documentations. Both artists inserted themselves performatively into the work; any argument which supposes they were attempting to simply document a scene outside of themselves would be unconvincing. However, distinctions are important.

As discussed, the very core of Woodman’s practice was the photograph and the recursive focus on self-representation and the body in space through the medium of

⁴⁸ Terms repeatedly used by Barthes in *Camera Lucida*.

⁴⁹ Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, Marius De Zayas and John Berger, to name a few.

⁵⁰ Marius DeZayas, “Photography and Photography and Artistic-Photography,” *Classic Essays on Photography*, 131.

photography. Matta-Clark's focus, on the other hand, was the building cut itself; his primary medium was the architecture as it served his sculptural, performative vision for altered spatial experience. It could be tempting, then, to suggest Matta-Clark used photography to objectively document the original art, and the photograph was nothing more than a reference material. Suppose Matta-Clark had stumbled upon a house, perfectly sliced in half; if he paused there, on the outside and removed from the work, to take a photo, only then could the photograph be considered objective documentary effort. Instead, Matta-Clark's subjective intention for space--and for the body in space--veiled the objects of his photography, at least most of the time. The intention of his spatial interventions overcoded and extended into his practice of representation via photography, and this is particularly evident by the abstracted perspectives he often chose for the photographs. Like Woodman's self-conscious methods of staging, Matta-Clark exercised a subjective gaze which seems to psychologically and visually reinforce his practice of physically altering a space. However, this thesis concedes that Woodman's photography as a whole is perhaps more parallel to Matta-Clark's photo-works, the collages he constructed from the singular images in order to express in two dimensions what the original three dimensional work was like. The photo-works are an extension of the spatial representations, as are the art books by Woodman and the installation of exhibitions by both artists.

Having established that the photographs in question are self-conscious as much as they also capture the mysterious optical unconscious, the grounds for a comparative analysis can be laid. After accepting that the photograph is a thing of its own value today, even as it encapsulates the mystery of moments long past, the act of viewing becomes its

own adventure. The goal here is to return to the photographs themselves (“return to the things themselves”) and embrace our perceptions as viewers, with and without any formal knowledge of the images.⁵¹ By pairing singular photographs by Woodman next to those by Matta-Clark, common aesthetic qualities emerge and supply entry points for a visual dialogue and a deepening of possible significance. By looking at the photographs, paired uniquely side by side, the intention is not to solve the problem of meaning, nor is it necessarily to make new claims. Rather, the method of engaging a visual dialogue sparks the senses and opens the imagination, and invites the viewer to see two photographs--out of their usual context--in order to then place them back in context with new revelation about the body and space in photography. Here, two themes have been selected as starting points for a comparative investigation of the photographic pairs: Movement and Tactility. Movement immediately resonates more strongly with Woodman’s work, and Tactility with Matta-Clark’s. Yet the activation of the body so present in Woodman’s work can be taken as a lens through which to view Matta-Clark’s; conversely, the focus on edges, texture and layers of material so present in Matta-Clark’s photographs can be applied to a reading of Woodman’s. Side by side, Woodman’s and Matta-Clark’s photographs dialogue in the context of the body in space and the sensory engagement so vital to seeing with art.

⁵¹ Merleau-Ponty wrote to clarify the meaning and methods of phenomenology in “What is Phenomenology?” *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, eds. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 56-57.

Spatial Representations: Movement

*...we must go back to the working, actual body--not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.*⁵²

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Movement has been discussed within the context of the spatial practice as the literal, physical movements of Woodman's and Matta-Clark's active bodies in space. Movement must also be considered with the act of viewing. Movement in the spatial representations is the visual effect produced, the evocative *sense of* which the photograph engenders as a result of the performative spatial practice which happened in past moments. Yet because the goal is not to isolate the photograph as an object divorced from its making, movement covers not only the actual motions in space which helped produce the photograph, but also the visual impressions--or traces--which are contained in the photograph like motion's echo and the movement of our own active gazing. As Merleau-Ponty wrote, "vision depends on movement. We only see what we gaze upon. What would vision be without eye movement [...] The visible world and the world of my motor projects are both total parts of the same Being."⁵³

Movement is not embedded in the photographs of Woodman and Matta-Clark to the same degree or in the same manner. The distinctions in the artists' respective spatial practices produced distinct photographic effects. The methodology of pairing singular images from each artist together in an original way serves the purpose of deepening a reading of the works with the body in space as a focus. Furthermore, a reading of Woodman's use of movement, particularly the visual effects produced through her body's

⁵² Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 353.

⁵³ Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 353-354

motion in space, can inform a reading of Matta-Clark's photographs empty of bodies; on the other hand, Matta-Clark's use of photography to offer abstracted visual insights into the building cuts as a new spatial experience where the body is but a trace, can inform a spatial reading of Woodman's own representations of her body and its architectural environments.

Of movement as a theme, the following questions are asked of the images: *(1) What movements occurred in the spatial practice in order to produce the scenes at hand?* This question requires an engaged imagination, as the viewer must wonder about the collection of moments in real time and space which are here represented in a single photographic moment. *(2) What is the movement in the photograph, and what does it evoke on its own? Or, What does the sense of movement communicate, even as the viewer considers only this singular photographic moment as a starting point for the visual imagination?* This requires a close reading of the photograph, a search for evidence of motion which might be found on the body, on the building, on an object, in a sense of time, and so forth. *(3) What kind of movement is required of the viewer in order to see with the photograph?*

To see with a painting, as Merleau-Ponty wrote--or photograph, in this case-- is to engage the senses and conceptually tear down the barrier between subject and object, eye and mind, for a moment. He wrote: "I would be hard-pressed to say where the picture is that I'm gazing at. For I do not gaze at it as one gazes at a thing. I do not fix it in its place. My gaze wanders within it as in the halos of Being. Rather than seeing it, I see according to, or with it."⁵⁴ To experience *with* a photograph is not the same as experiencing something with

⁵⁴ Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 355.

a person, but it is helpful to think of this sort of empathy. It is, at its best and simplest, a shift in perspective which allows a viewer to see differently by way of being differently with the work; to move poetically into the work rather than staying outside of or detached from it. Though we are speaking of a mental shift, it may very well be that physical movement of the full body around the works--not only the eye itself--would add to the act of seeing *with*. The following three image pairs, organized under the theme of movement, offer the viewer an opportunity to explore the emergence of similarities and differences through the embodied process of seeing with the photograph in a comparative manner.

Movement:

Francesca Woodman, *House #4*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1976 (Fig. 30)
and Gordon Matta-Clark, *View of Splitting*, New Jersey, 1974 (Fig. 31)

A perspective view of a decrepit room and a blurred woman's figure. The focal point is a fireplace opening--frame and mantle detached from the wall, layered over the figure in a squatting position--flanked by two windows. The outer halves of both windows, penetrated by daylight and allowing only glimpses of the structures outside, are cropped out of the square-framed image. The room is filled with textures: the uneven wood plank flooring; the roughed up surface of the fireplace facade and window frames; the peeling wallpaper and spotted plaster. The saturated blackness of the fireplace abyss--an opening which leads to visual nothingness--is offset by the blown out exposure of the daylit windows and the various surfaces washed in medium grey tones. The figure's left leg is a prime example of the photograph's tonal range: the black black of the Mary Jane shoe next to the deep grey of the shadowed half of the leg. The limb's rounded surface, sliced by the ridge of the shin bone, lends itself to the gradient scale of greys which reaches its brightest white at the edge of the kneecap and top of the fleshy calf. The woman's dress flows from beneath the crease of the leg and rests on the surface of the floor. Is she suspended just above the ground, or does she touch down from the squatted perch at the moment of the photograph?

The viewer, with imagination engaged, can infer what kinds of movement were required in order to produce *House#4*. The angle of the perspective view is immediately striking. The camera must have been placed just offset from a straight elevation view and pointed down slightly in order to create the effect of the fireplace wall--which juts out from

the recessed window wall--collapsing down inward on the figure and toward the viewer. A structural tension is present in the room, as the fireplace frame leans back against the wall, the wall seems to lean in; a triangular negative space is produced. A body fills the gap. At a point of balance between the opposing leaning forces, the subject figure seems to brace herself against the motion of the room, feet planted and knees squeezing in. Yet she too moves, at least her upper body does. The viewer can deduce that the woman's quick motion, paired with a slow enough shutter speed, would produce the fuzzy effect of the arm, torso and head: there but barely there. Perhaps the body is in a motion of just having pushed off from the ground. Or perhaps it is sliding down the wall to the ground, or perhaps it is on its way to follow the head, which ducks into the black recess of the fireplace opening.

Two years later. A view from the top of a flight of stairs, looking down. A narrow perspective, the image is framed by an upper level landing on the left side and a wall--split down the center--on the right side. That strange split and its penetrating daylight leads the eye around the photograph in a jagged horseshoe pattern. Speaking of geometry, there is an abstract quality to the image, after the viewer absorbs the realistic impression of the house's interior: wood floors, wood railing, every surface a little peeled and rough and rugged. If the viewer squints, the image becomes a series of polygons and trapezoids, layered on top of one another at various angles. The polygon on the left is the top layer, the foreground in focus; this is the upper level of the house--mostly outside of the frame, but inside just enough to give us a sense of where we have come from. We know we are

heading down the stairs; the viewer can deduce by the camera angle, pointing down and centered on the landing, the far wall marked with a mysterious black triangle.

A sense of movement is thickest in the angles of the composition, and it is more subtly present in the structural split. Who did that? Even without a context--without knowing who Matta-Clark is, or that this New Jersey suburban home was his project--the viewer sees the image titled *Splitting* after noticing the clean, precise gap in the wall and in the lower stairs and in the upper level, where a rail post has missed a beat. Furthermore, a black cord is coiled in the shadows of the lower level and snakes its way up the stairs toward the viewer--a power tool? Finally, there is the movement of light. With a little imagination: one could sit at the top of the steps for a few hours, and watch the trapezoidal composition transform as the celestial bodies shift. At the moment captured here, the blackest parts of the photograph are found properly in the shadow spaces, in the split of the upper level and in the recessed spaces at the lower level. The base of the stairwell--that square post--is the brightest bright, standing just in the way of the daylight's splitting path.

The images together, side by side, dialogue.

Immediate parallels: black and white gelatin prints. Interior perspectives. Deteriorating houses. Angles and lines. So we're back to geometry and to light and shadow. An uncanny and parallel effect, between the two. In the photograph by Woodman because there is a body, and her unknown relationship to the room unsettles and compels us to look closer. The dismantled fireplace pins her or protects her or just covers her in hiding. Ghostly. In the photograph by Matta-Clark, we are now even more aware of the absence of any body, but someone was there. Or, who cut the house open? After having seen the

woman and the mouth of the fireplace, who is to say a body could not, at any moment, appear through the split in the wall at the base of the staircase and look up at us? The energy of the unknown hums below the surface of the visible (and behind it and inside of it and beneath it). The body's presence also shows its absence, and the visible spaces suggest the invisible. Dichotomies. Analogies. The body and space. The body in space. The body as space. The body is space.

Movement:

Francesca Woodman, *Untitled*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1975-76 (Fig. 32) and Gordon Matta-Clark, *Bronx Floor: Threshole*, New York, 1973 (Fig. 33)

A black framed mirror on a wood floor. A hole in a wood floor. Rectangular object, rectangular void. The mirror shows the viewer a reflection--everything above its glossy surface--while the hole reveals everything below its once-was-solid surface. A figure stands on her knees atop the mirror glass. Well, but she doesn't stand still; the invisibility of her head and the blurred mass of her torso--is that an unbuttoned shirt or draped shawl?--is evidence of movement in between the seconds it takes for the camera's shutter to snap shut, evidence of time's stamp of light and shadow on the film negative. Her form seems to shift and reshape, the more one looks closely. Traces of a hand, there, and fingers. Perhaps even the shadows of a face, its soft protrusions and recesses staggered and stuttering in a two-inch square. Trails of hair and fabric blend together and float in the ambiguity of the body's non-form.

For reprieve, direct your tired eyes to a clearer image on the mirror's surface. There, there is the hand. Fingers splayed. Hiding the woman's sex. From the fingertips on the

mirror surface up to the top edge of the photograph's frame, it is quite like a double exposure, the sense of seeing two images in one moment.

There! When the image comes alive in your imagination, you'll know it. All at once, you'll see: the figure on her knees, she leans down and touches the glass with her left hand before pushing back up again.

Carry this sense of movement into Matta-Clark's photograph below. Lean over the hole, carefully cut into the Bronx apartment floor. Set on your knees like Woodman, so as to get a better view. Peer into the space below. But wait. Could it be that we are the ones below, looking up? Vertigo. The peeling plaster wall rises from the foreground, behind the cut, and the window in its recess. We are below the floor, cut out, looking at the apartment above. Or, is this rectangle too a mirror reflection? An unsettling symmetry is thick in the image. The floor is also the ceiling, or the ceiling is also the floor. And suddenly the viewer matters. Where are we, with the image, with the camera? With an embodied, imaginative seeing, one can move into and around the cut. One can cross the *threshold*.⁵⁵

Woodman's performance of movement through her swift interaction with her reflection lends the viewer a sense of cause and effect. Perspective--of the staged camera at its carefully selected angle, of the subject figure in relation to the mirror reflection, of the mirror object resting on the floor--matters. Woodman's movement is that between herself and herself projected as an *other*, in the reflection of the mirror. She physically moves toward and away from it, heightening the space between herself embodied and her self projected as mirror image. So too in Matta-Clark's image, perspective matters when

⁵⁵ Matta-Clark employed puns and other clever language, such as this play on the word threshold and hole.

considering the location of the camera's eye/the viewer's eye. The body's performative movement has left its trace already, with the cut in the floor. Why there? Why documented at this angle, which disrupts our understanding of the space and our place in it? Exactly. So then, the experience of seeing oneself move swiftly atop a mirror and the experience of moving through a space in which segments of the floor/ceiling have been removed is translated into singular photographic moments, latent with movement and disjunction. The photographs are representations for re-experience, or the two dimensional art object which contains its moments of production and the original, three dimensional spatial experience.

Movement:

Francesca Woodman, from *Angel* series, Rome, 1977 (Fig. 34)
and Gordon Matta-Clark, *Day's End*, 1975 (Fig. 35)

An industrial space: a brightly lit window at the center; a floor littered with debris and washed with daylight; a ceiling so high it disappears into the shadows. Two white, papery forms are suspended in space. *Angel*. Angel wings. The wing on the left still shows the contour lines it was cut from, and feathered edge details have been drawn on. A woman is caught in motion, legs just touching off the ground. Her upper body--unclothed--bends slightly to her right, toward the center of the frame. Her long hair and mid-length skirt ripple in motion. The woman's face is only slightly visible, illuminated by a soft highlight on one side of the jaw and neck. The face points up, the head tilted back. The viewer knows the movement: the fists closed, body straight, a vertical jump into the air; just off the ground, a slight backbend, the right shoulder shifts back while the eyes look up into the ceiling shadows. The viewer's eye is drawn back to the center point, the window in the distance

which is filled with all light and an infinite unknown behind its glass facade. We are drawn into the light, the wings hanging there, on the way, for our taking flight.

A light also draws us to the far end of this industrial space. The shape, an irregular slice of a sphere, is repeated four times in the image: ceiling, floor, wall, wall. North, south, east, west. The slices of light like cardinal points, marking quadrants of open, empty space. Speaking of slices, the floor is sliced open. Be careful as you walk through the warehouse, changing the location of your body while you watch the location of the light shift as the day ends. The angel wings in Woodman's photograph--along with that piercing, daylight window--offer the viewer a token of religious symbolism, a bit of spiritual mystery. Take it into Matta-Clark's warehouse. He called this intervention a "sun-and-water temple,"⁵⁶ but one doesn't have to know that information to know the parallel between the architectures of church and industry; history recorded that shift, and forms were reabsorbed and reimagined. Recall or imagination the sensation of walking through an abandoned warehouse: see the skeletal steel trusses stretch high above; hear the reverberation of your voice and your footsteps, which hardly finds a surface soft enough to absorb it; smell the mix of metal and wood, drenched with the stale flavor of having been hidden for years from air and light. The space could be anything, and the cut in the side of the building--left edge of the photograph--reminds us of that. The warehouse--once dark and quiet--can be pierced by exterior sound and light, all the sudden a stage for the performance of a sun. Or of bodies. Clench your fists, take a vertical leap in the open space, cast your own shadow on the area rug of sunlight laid next to the canyon cut into the floor.

⁵⁶ Bruce Jenkins, statement about Day's End, 1975, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Works and Collected Writings*, ed. Gloria Moure, (Barcelona: Polígrafa, 2006), 202.

Spatial Representations: Tactility

With vision and the sense of movement, there is also tactility, or a sense of texture and materiality as it is invoked through the photographic image. Visual perceptions of tactility--and the language of texture--is an active part of encountering the photographs. Even at a glance, the photographs by Woodman and Matta-Clark paired together immediately share a similar visual texture, largely due to the ruinous settings. Furthermore, the parallel tactility is summoned through difference: what is absent in one photograph is perhaps present in the other, and the dialogue continues. The presence of Woodman's flesh is an absence in Matta-Clark's; his geometric lines and man-made cuts are edges less defined in Woodman's pictorial spaces.

Tactility certainly describes the visual appearance of texture. As with movement, understood in the photographs through visual clues like Woodman's blurred body or Matta-Clark's precariously tilted perspectives, a sense of highly textured materials are perceived through cues of visual difference. These visual cues are tied to language and embodied knowledge. One has learned that the skin is, compared to a concrete wall, soft, smooth and warm. In an image, the skin will appear as a uniform surface with soft highlights and shadows, void of the same severe divots and protrusions seen in the rough surface of the concrete wall. Only through embodied knowledge is the viewer able to assign elements of a photograph tactile metaphors which are attached to specific associations, memories and bodily experiences. Smooth like skin. Rough like concrete. Sharp like the edge of broken glass.

Visual tactility is interesting because it is not about being about to touch with the photograph (most photographs, the objects themselves, will feel exactly the same and not indicative of the textured scenes they represent), for it is still about seeing with the photograph. And yet, the viewer's understanding of tactility is not stored in the intellect removed from the body. Rather, seeing *with* is a fully embodied consciousness, which invites--necessitates, even--one's own feelings, memories, physical sensations. In some sense, to see with the tactile nature of a photograph is to relate with your skin.

Contemporary artist Ann Hamilton--who is well-known for her large scale installations which focus on sensory experience and the possibilities of people experiencing in solidarity, alone and together--constantly circles back to touch, to the skin. Hamilton asserts that we know things primarily through our skin, the largest organ on our body which both covers and reveals.⁵⁷ The tactile rhythms, the layers of the body and architecture or of material and voids, add another dimension to the viewer's experience of seeing with artists Woodman and Matta-Clark. The following three image pairs offer the viewer a visual-tactile experience of the photographs. As with the theme of movement, what is often absent in one image is present in the other, and the comparative method of reading the photographs provokes new questions and insights.

⁵⁷ "Ann Hamilton: Making, and the Spaces We Share," with Krista Tippett, *On Being*, KTHP, February 13, 2014, <http://www.onbeing.org/program/ann-hamilton-making-and-the-spaces-we-share/transcript/6148>.

Tactility:

Francesca Woodman, *then at one point i did not need to translate the notes; they went directly into my hands*, Providence, Rhode Island, 1976 (Fig. 36)
and Gordon Matta-Clark, from *Conical Intersect*, 1975 (Fig. 37)

This time, the body is still. Crouched down, hands pressed against the wall, fingers splayed and elbows bent outward. A smooth, stiff sheet of wallpaper lays over the figure's back. Its drape follows the rounded curvature of the spine. The bare flesh of the buttocks is just visible beneath the edges of the paper. Edges. Soft edges of the skin in contrast with the jagged, torn edges of the papery material. The skin of the wall a blanket now for the skin of the human body. The wall touches the floor, and so do her feet. Her hands press the plaster--surely she will be left with a trace of the worn surface, dust on her palms, specks of plaster perhaps. See the floor, speckled with remnants cast off by time.

Everything touching everything. The body feels the room, the room surrounds her, folds over her. Even the daylight and the shadows fold into one another. The centered, papered body is most brightly lit in the foreground. Behind it, the image is divided: deep shadows on the left blend into soft highlights on the right.

If the tactile nature of Woodman's photograph is that of a body layered over a room, the tactility of Matta-Clark's photograph is that of a building layered over the open sky. A circular hole has been punctured in a structure's concrete facade. And although it is difficult to determine the actual geometry of the space, a chunk of the wall to the left--and up to the ceiling--seems nearly torn, like a jagged page ripped from a book. What is revealed behind is more ripped pages, an elevation view of bumpy edges, the remaining posts like lines drawn to represent past walls.

A range of textures: smooth planar wall surfaces--those interior, left in tact--wood door, glass paned window in the far left recess. And the varied ridges of concrete innards which are clumped inside the boundaries of the structural walls. The visual-tactile complexity of the semi-demolished interior opens up to a soft sky, lightly strewn with clouds as deduced from the pockets of slightly brighter tones.

Tactility:

Francesca Woodman, *Untitled*, New York, 1979 (Fig. 38)
and Gordon Matta-Clark, from *Bronx floors, Bronx doors*, 1973 (Fig. 39)

The analogous relationships between body, space and object: the human spine, covered in skin; the skeleton of the fish, exposed; the spine of the wall--the ribbed rebar--exposed where the plaster has broken away, and covered elsewhere. Even the repeated fern pattern on the dress mimics a skeletal structure; the stem is the vertebra from which the thin leaves stretch out. What is overt in Matta-Clark's work--the "grinding, chewing, gnarled edges"⁵⁸--is more subtle here in Woodman's. The wall's smooth surface meets an abrupt cluster of voids. In the absence of plaster, the viewer sees the steel bars in dark contrast to the lightness of the blemishes of missing paint and peeling surface. The wall alone is a stunning display of the layers of texture possible on a single plane. Woodman's insertion of her own body, which is both covered and uncovered, like the wall's interior, adds the warmth of flesh to the otherwise cool tactility of architectural surfaces. The body, fabric, skeletal-fern object and room relate, in visual and tactile camouflage.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Matta-Clark in an interview by Judith Russi Kirshner, *Works and Collected Writings*, 334.

⁵⁹ In his book *Camouflage*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), Neil Leach uses the photography of Francesca Woodman to illustrate the theoretical text.

Run your fingers across the ribs of the steel bars, inside the open flesh wound of the crumbling architecture. Then run those same fingers along the brittle, thin ridges of the fish vertebrae, and along the length of the woman's bare spine.

Matta-Clark's photograph leads the viewer from the outer edges of plaster to the repetitive wood slats underneath, to a section of negative space before another level, and finally to a view of wall, ceiling and two open doorways above. The perspectival interest in edges is immediate. The viewer could almost reach in and grip the boundaries of the smooth exterior plaster and pull, extending the jagged tears even further in order to expose the wooden substrate. Like Woodman's photograph, this is a revelation that what is first visible on the outer layers is not indicative of the material beneath, on the other side, within.

Rather than gazing at wall head on, we are--in his disorienting fashion--looking up from the floor below. Through a clean hole in the floor, like two intersecting rectangles, the ceiling of one level gives way to the floor above, right at the entrance for two rooms. More to explore, more to touch. While Woodman's photograph opens up a spectrum of questions and possible interpretations about the analogous relationships between body and space, Matta-Clark's photograph seems to again zoom in and abstract a slice of a single interior perspective, and insists that the viewer look close. Touch the room with the fingertips of your eyes; not a room with walls and ceilings and floors that divide, but a room with walls and ceilings and floors that open up. Did you know what would be there when you peeled the first layer back? Here, a study of the materials like skin--both covering and revealing.

Tactility:

Francesca Woodman, *Eel*, Rome, 1977-78 (Fig. 40)
and Gordon Matta-Clark, *Office Baroque*, 1977 (Fig. 41)

Two photographs: dark and shadowed, as if concealing some hidden truth.

Immediately, the ground surfaces dialogue. In Woodman's, small, jagged mosaic, and in Matta-Clark's a small-pebbled stone surface. In hers, the subjects are raised from the floor into the foreground, toward our eyes and toward our touch. In his, the opposite; the viewer's gaze leaves the pebbly foreground and spirals downward to the focal points: geometry. Too far to reach it all. Speaking of geometry, the viewer is struck by the circular cut-outs, which envelop one another, repeating over and over again until the form changes into a teardrop at the farthest point below. We could fall, slip over the edge and tumble from level. To level. To level. To level. To level. To tears.

In Woodman's image, her nude body lays wrapped around the central, circular geometry, which in turn envelopes a new form. It is the body around a bowl around an eel. The eel's slick, wet form reflects light, brighter still than the lightest peaks of the human body's smooth, matte surface. A visual contrast, yes. But a provocative sensory contrast all the more: the clammy cool, slick eel and the warm, smooth skin. Indeed, the eel seems the lead actor in this performance of tactility; at least, it sparks the most reaction by its difference, its otherness. The scene's forms and textures are dually sensual and repulsive, quieting in their stillness but unsettling in their uncanny proximities and bizarre spatial context. The aloofness of flesh⁶⁰ Next to the eel's glossy body. Do her hands hold the

⁶⁰ Ann Gabhart wrote that Woodman was "fascinated by the sensuous and tactile qualities of objects, she always saw them in relation to the soft aloofness of flesh" in "Francesca Woodman 1958-1981," *Francesca Woodman: Photographic Work*, (MA: Wellesley College Museum, 1986), 54.

memory of trying to hold it?--delicately but firmly, lest its wet snaking body slip from her grasp.

Matta-Clark calls us again into a dialogue about architecture's hidden texture. What does visual order feel like? What does visual chaos feel like? Grab a handful of rocks, then a pile of rubble, then a sliver of smooth parquet flooring, and so on. You descend. Struck by--and literally perhaps *struck by*--difference. A kaleidoscope of views and sensations. Imagine a body, like Woodman's curled on the ground around the building cuts. The office of voids is also void of bodies. Now. But the trace is there, and one imagines the drawing, the cutting. Along the lines, and start from the bottom, or circles and teardrops will come crashing down.

Spatial Representations: Seeing the Seeing (a synthesis)

The body is the origin point of the spatial practice, the spatial representations are the second realm of the discussion (and a direct extension of the spatial practice), and the exhibitions, artist books and films are the third realm of discussion, a final dialectical extension of the practice and representations fused together. In other words, these artist-produced extensions of the representations could be called a synthesis of the spatial practice and spatial representations. They are a synthesis of movement and tactility. They could be called a synthesis of the artists and the viewers. And ultimately, they are a synthesis of the body and space, for they are not only the original works produced through the nexus of spatial practice, but they are also the works reimagined through a second spatial practice and a second means of representation. The highly intentional plan of an art book, a film production or an exhibit created by the artist of her/his own works overtly welcomes the bodies of viewers--to see what has been created from what was created. The event of the exhibit, artist book or film is the event of the artist seeing the seeing. The artist sees what s/he has made, sees it again as s/he puts it in a thoughtful context, and has opportunity to see it *being seen* by others.

Before discussing the third realm synthesis of the practice/representations, it should be noted that in Woodman's photographic practice, the idea of seeing the seeing is present in the very nature of her self-representations. The self-portrait is indeed an act of seeing oneself seeing, but with a gap in time between the moment of the photograph and the moment the film negative is finally processed to reveal the image. But this gap in time is collapsed or bridged when the mirror is present in the act of self-representation. The artist

and mirror self-portrait trope must be so because it profoundly expands the experience of seeing oneself seeing, as in Woodman's *Self-deceit* series (Figs. 7-10). The immediacy of the effect is seeing oneself in real time *which is also* the moment of the photograph; then the seeing continues in the darkroom, while gazing at the print, and finally while gazing at the print recontextualized in an exhibit or art book being gazed at by others.

The fullness of seeing the seeing also recalls Merleau-Ponty's notion of reflexivity: the hand touching the hand. One can perceive it as one feels it: a hand pressing down or the hand below pressing up. The interchange of touch is both physically sensed and perceived accordingly, or perceived and then sensed accordingly. To extend this concept of reflexivity into the conversation about the body and space--and within the realm of art photography--becomes quite interesting. In one of the most compelling readings of Woodman's work as it might engage the viewer, Harm Lux wrote:

Environments are crucial for situating ourselves; it is the only way to determine our relation to others, to define and strengthen ourselves. She [Woodman] deals with her environment as a mirror. Her works therefore offer viewers the possibility to hone their sensory perception and awareness of the borders of their own realm of existence.⁶¹

Indeed, Woodman's work is that of the body merging with the environment--the wallpaper touching the body and the body touching the wallpaper, for example--and the reflexive exchange between the body's skin and the building's material always seems to be the loci of the images.

While Matta-Clark did not have a recursive self-representational practice, he did extend his oeuvre to include motion film. Though the film works are not the central focus of

⁶¹ Harm Lux, "Roads of Access," in *Francesca Woodman: Photographische Arbeiten / Photographic Works*, 15.

this research on photography, they are crucial to mention with regard to seeing the seeing. For the practice of filming and being filmed--which Matta-Clark was when he handed the camera off to a friend--is somewhat parallel to Woodman seeing herself see the photographic moment. Though the lapse in time is different, Matta-Clark's reviewing a film in which he is performing the cuts and spatial interventions is a new seeing, seeing what he saw in the moment of its happening. In viewing a film like *Conical Intersect*, Matta-Clark becomes audience to himself (Fig. 42).

The exhibit, which draws in the perspective of the viewer and a new spatial context, epitomizes how the artwork reflects back on the practices of making. For example, Woodman installed her RISD show, *Swan Song* (1978) in a manner which asserts her own engagement with space. For the first time, she printed selected images at a large scale, and arranged the prints high near the ceiling or low toward the floor's line, rather than eye level. Certainly, this required a unique engagement on the part of the viewer, and it activated the architecture of the exhibition space.⁶² Woodman's photographs are elevated to fixtures of the unexpected, stunning disruptions of a formulaic gallery setting. Furthermore and equally as important, Woodman's approach to displaying the work--which required the viewer to crane her neck or crouch down at the baseboards, to step back from the three foot prints to see and move toward her traditionally small, square prints to see--reflected her own spatial practice charged with movement. Not only does the exhibition then activate the display space, but it also reactivates the space of the

⁶² "SFMOMA Presents Landmark Reconsideration of Francesca Woodman's Brief but Extraordinary Career in Photography," SFMOMA, accessed October 26, 2015, <https://www.sfmoma.org/press/release/sfmoma-presents-landmark-reconsideration-of-france/>

photographic moment, when the body draped itself over the table to be seen by the camera's eye above (Figs. 13-14).

Here is the difference between seeing and seeing with, or seeing and experiencing. Critical to the exhibition space like a gallery or museum is the necessity of the body with the intention of seeing art. The gallery is a gestural space of its own, overcoded with rituals and traditions of movement: slow, reverent steps and hushed voices. The exhibition catalogues become traces of such live encounters with the work, a token of the event of seeing and sharing space. The posthumous ongoing exhibitions have a valuable place--and are valuable space--in the history of art and trajectory of continuing visibility of works. The installations organized by and with the living artists are a crucial part of an extended spatial practice and worthy of consideration as a part of the oeuvres.

The effects of Matta-Clark's photographs, which were artfully executed documentations of his spatial interventions, were reinforced through his large scale Cibachrome collages. The act of producing a collage is clearly more than a means of documenting the temporal spatial interventions, and Matta-Clark did distinguish between his efforts to document a project and his efforts to take complex photographs that would lend themselves to his so-called photo-works. The collages were a strategy of making which allowed Matta-Clark to extend his practice of cutting, intervening, shifting space, exploring edges, or what he called a voyeuristic interpretation.⁶³ The photo-works also extended the temporality of his building cuts, guaranteeing at least a photographic experience could live on. Through photography and the creation of photo-works, Matta-Clark was able in a way

⁶³ Matta-Clark in an interview by Judith Russi Kirshner, *Works and Collected Writings*, 332.

to re-experience or see the seeing of the spatial interventions, and offer those interpretations to others.

In the collages, movement and tactility are further pronounced. The literal movement, the adjusted angles of the photos arranged in the composition, are supplementary to the perspective views of the individual prints. For the photograph has its own structure, and the groupings of a large scale collage altered the singular photograph's stasis as much as the building cuts altered the architectural stasis. They are evocative of a turbulent progression through space, through voids and crevices and around architectural barriers torn down. There is a visceral tactility to the edges of the photos--one could trace them with a finger--or imagine walking along the frames' zigzagging edges like raw edges of a wall protruding outward. Consider the Cibachrome collage of *Office Baroque* (Fig. 43). The cut itself invites seeing from any angle, and the collage invokes a seeing from multiple points of view but on a two-dimensional surface, overlapping and colliding like the planes and surfaces of the (de)(re)constructed ruin. Considering the role of the viewer, Stephen Walker offers a compelling summary:

The expanded notions of time, space, matter and form that Matta-Clark's oeuvre offers cannot be sustained without the work of the observer, a situation that contrasts with the passivity expected of modernism's viewer. Matta-Clark's oeuvre developed a number of strategies to contest the expectations of the relationship between this viewer and a work, and moved instead towards more contingent relationships where the observer's body became significant.⁶⁴

In the same vein as Matta-Clark's photo-works, Woodman produced seven artist's books throughout her practice, only two of which were published. *Some Disordered Interior Geometries* is particularly interesting for several reasons. First, that Woodman added and

⁶⁴ Walker, *Gordon Matta-Clark: art, architecture and the attack on modernism*, 89.

responded to an existing text, an old geometry school book in printed in Italian. Secondly, that she taped her own photographs to the pages and in this way created a particular narrative which a viewer--or even a curator--may not have created otherwise. In essence, Woodman was doing the task of pairing her own images side by side and recontextualizing them. Finally, it is fascinating that she added her own captions below the photographs, which seemed to relate not only to her work but also to the text of the exercise book she was responding to⁶⁵ (Fig 44). The example of the artbook is a micro instance of the larger spatial practice: the performance of the body--hands taping the pictures and thumbing through pages and writing captions--response to site--reading and reacting to the existing pages and texts--and time--the forgotten book meets contemporary images and becomes a new material for reproduction and collection.

The extended representations--the "seeing the seeing"--is in summary a concluding synthesis. To briefly consider the exhibitions, artists books, collages and motion films is to understand the fullness of Woodman's photographic practice and Matta-Clark's documented spatial interventions. Furthermore, the concept of seeing the seeing is a synthesis of the artists bodies and the viewers bodies in space, together. The highly intentional plan of an art exhibit, the design of an artist book, the making of a photo-work collage, or the production of a motion film overtly welcomes the bodies of viewers to see what has been created again from what was originally created. It is further reflexive because the artist makes him/herself present in these works *again*. The artist sees what

⁶⁵ Gabriele Schor makes a good argument for a literary investigation of Woodman's work, and uses *Some Disordered Interior Geometries* as a supporting example. "Props as Metaphors--Arranged by Francesca Woodman," *Francesca Woodman: Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND*, (Vienna, 2014), 35.

s/he has made, sees it again as s/he puts it in a thoughtful context, and has opportunity to see it literally *being seen* by others.

Conclusion

With the interest in spatial theory, the gendered body, photography as a medium, and architecture in the period of the 1970s, I found that Francesca Woodman's photographic oeuvre and Matta-Clark's photographic work of his sculptural building cuts produced a compelling visual dialogue when seen side by side. From a purely formal, aesthetic perspective, what was present in Woodman's was subtle in Matta-Clark's, and what was overtly present in Matta-Clark's was subtler in Woodman's. That is, the body is ever-present in Woodman's photographs, while it is but a trace in Matta-Clark's representations of the the building cuts. Conversely, the architecture is subject in Matta-Clark's work, and architecture is the theater in which Woodman's bodily identity--her primary subject--is staged.

The aesthetic similarities and differences which surfaced from pairing the images side by side in Part 2 reinforced the organization of the thesis into two parts, in order to structurally and conceptually mirror the visual, thematic relationships which exist between the two artists. The image pairs also lent themselves to more specific thematic categories of movement and tactility, although over time the differences became just as evident as the initial similarities. In effect, a series of overlapping and intersecting dualities provided an organization which reinforces the dialectical relationship between the body and space, the spatial practice and spatial representations, and the similarities and differences between Francesca Woodman and Gordon Matta-Clark.

Reflecting on the thesis project, the organization of the thesis structure seems to successfully reflect the conceptual density of the questions at hand. In other words, the structure of dualities--Woodman and Matta-Clark; body and space; movement and tactility--and the impossibility of ever truly separating them accurately reflects the complex nature of such relationships. One can of course talk about Woodman separate from Matta-Clark, but in general, art history tends to group and compare, in order to deepen an understanding or situate an artist in a comprehensive context. The body and space are reflexive and interdependent; we too need spatial contexts for our physical bodies and the intangibles of our inner beings. Movement and tactility--as perceived in photographs--are entwined in embodied knowledge. Merleau-Ponty discussed the intertwining of vision and movement, and here we have furthered that discussion by acknowledging tactility which depends on the skin rather than the eye.

With regard to the image pairings, it was interesting to group them under either movement or tactility. Yet I realized quite quickly that the comparisons were not always equally weighted, and this added to the discussion of one artist informing the other in a back and forth process. In other words, Woodman's work seemed to lend itself more quickly to a sense of movement and the body, while Matta-Clark's photographs were immediately tactile and architectural. And even so, the nature of Woodman's own bodily presence in the photographs added a tactile dimension nearly lost in Matta-Clark's, where his body was but a trace. Ultimately, a poetic reading of Woodman's photographs was slightly easier than that of Matta-Clark's, particularly because he often opted for the abstracted, vertigo-inducing views from which less information could be gathered. A solution to this sense of imbalance in some of the pairings could be--in another project--to consider right away the photo-works (i.e. collages) which Matta-Clark produced as an

extension of his original building cut documentations. It has been suggested that in terms of the spatial practice within the realm of photography, Matta-Clark's efforts to produce a collage would be more equivalent to Woodman's production of her serial photographs. However, this type of comparison would negate that immediate aesthetic resonance which first struck me, when viewing the two artists' black and white gelatin prints side by side. Indeed, the less curated representations of Matta-Clark's raw spatial interventions recalls the optical unconscious and performative essence expressed through Woodman's work, or what George Baker also saw when discussing the type of spatially charged responses the artist's exemplified in their respective works.⁶⁶

It felt important to take a broad topic--bodies in space--and begin to follow the specific physical and conceptual threads that Woodman and Matta-Clark wove into the intellectual tapestry. There were numerous threads that could not be followed in this project, including a deeper investigation into the gendered body and the ways in which that duality manifests itself in the spatial practice and full scope of spatial representations. Additionally--as has already been mentioned briefly--Matta-Clark's motion films would provide new evidence for a discussion of movement, tactility and seeing the seeing. Woodman herself seemed about to expand her practice toward the end of her life--leaving short films of her own as well as large scale diazotype prints⁶⁷--and one can only speculate as to how her work would have evolved. Indeed, both Woodman and Matta-Clark knew the brevity of time. During their short lifespans, they established prolific practices and produced compelling works, all of which are evidence of the complex dynamic between the body and space and between the artistic process and the works produced.

⁶⁶ George Baker et. al, "Francesca Woodman Reconsidered," *Art Journal*, 65

⁶⁷ See works from *Blueprint for a Temple*, 1980. The collages especially would make a fascinating comparison to Matta-Clark's photo-works, particularly if this project had not been focused on the greater majority of her medium format photographs--which are in general more representative of her oeuvre.

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