

Replacements:
From the Primordial Hut to the Digital Network

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Chapter Two
Re-Usable Sites:
Gordon Matta-Clark's *Fake Estates* and the *Odd Lots* Exhibition

On October 14th, 1974, the real estates section of the *New York Times* presented a report on the city's auctioning of tiny property plots. Appearing over time, between and inside of larger lots drawn up by architects and city planners, these unusable gutter-spaces, small in size and odd in dimension, could be purchased at bargain prices by anyone interested in owning a piece of the city. One such interested party was the artist Gordon Matta-Clark. At the time of the newspaper interview, Matta-Clark had just come away with a sliver measuring one foot by ninety-five feet, another without any pedestrian access, and had bid furiously on but lost yet another measuring four by five feet. Speaking to the *Times* reporter, Matta-Clark explained that he planned on using his purchases as new works of art. "The artworks," he proposed, "will consist of three parts: a written documentation of the piece of land, including exact dimensions and location and perhaps a list of weeds growing there; a full-scale photograph of the property, and the property itself. The first two parts will be displayed in a gallery, and buyers of the art will purchase the deed to the land as well."⁵⁰ However, nothing of the kind was unveiled during Matta-Clark's short lifetime.

Until a few years ago, what art historians and viewers knew about the initial development of this real estate project was ambiguous, contradictory at best. But in 2003, *Cabinet* magazine's editorial team undertook this task, dedicating an issue to a

⁵⁰ Gordon Matta-Clark in Dan Carlinsky, "'Sliver' Buyers Have a Field Day At City Sales," *The New York Times*, 14 October 1973, Real Estate Section, 1 and 12.

fervent, much-needed search for information on the location of the original lots, Matta-Clark's process of acquiring them, and the development of his art project. Interviewing those in close contact with the artist, editors Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi, and Frances Richard began to piece together a narrative. They discovered two batches of deeds pertaining to a total of fifteen small parcels of land, fourteen in Queens and one on Staten Island, bought by Matta-Clark on the 5th of October 1973 and by his assistant, Manfred Hecht on the 11th of Jan 1974. They learned that it was his friend Alanna Heiss who first introduced Matta-Clark to the city's auctions. Heiss, founder of the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, a small organization that uncovered abandoned sites around the city in order to open temporary exhibition spaces, recalls that Matta-Clark accompanied her to an auction at the Roosevelt Hotel. While Heiss pined over the larger lots that were well beyond her means, Matta-Clark instead became interested in the slivers of property up for sale, all listed in the price range of twenty-five to seventy-five dollars. The next time the two friends went to an auction, Matta-Clark made a purchase.⁵¹

Accompanying Matta-Clark on a visit to several of his newly-owned plots in 1975, Jaime Davidovich brought along his video camera and recorded as his friend measured several of the plots' dimensions, drew their property lines on the ground in white chalk, and took his own photos.⁵² The video is the only documentation of Matta-Clark's involvement with his small properties. Davidovich recalls: "We would go to some of the places, and people would get upset; people would yell at me...and

⁵¹ Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi and Frances Richard, *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates* (New York: Cabinet Books, 2005) 43.

⁵² Jaime Davidovich, video, 1975 (shown at the exhibition, *Gordon Matta-Clark: You are the Measure*, Whitney Museum of American Art, February 22 – June 3, 2007).

he would go with the measuring tape, and try to find as many places as possible.”⁵³

As Matta-Clark’s friend Betsy Sussler, also along for the visit, explains: “He understood quite well the psychological and political factors involved in walking onto a person’s property to inform them that his piece of forgotten land he’d bought was in fact part of their driveway.”⁵⁴ Such comments, and the video footage that supports them, hint at the conceptual basis of Matta-Clark’s envisaged art project, in which property and its mode of economic and social exchange determine the demarcation of space through ownership

Indeed, Matta-Clark’s very act of purchasing slivers of unusable and often-times inaccessible land that bordered on, cut through, or was situated between other larger lots, intervened into the real estate market by questioning the determination of property, rendering the seemingly useless possibly useful, and challenging the fixed boundaries and ownership of space. In buying commercially unusable land, Matta-Clark reinvested the gutter-spaces with another imagined artistic use, attempting to reverse their uselessness by re-engaging them as ownable properties. As art historian Pamela Lee claims, “the absurdity of real estate is laid bare as a bad pun.”⁵⁵ When unusable property is also up for sale, to be bought and re-valued, the real estate market’s division of space into valuable units is then redefined as infinitely extendable with all sites as potentially usable. Re-articulating Hegel’s views on property in relation to Matta-Clark’s project, Pamela Lee suggests: “If Hegel argues that property’s ‘essence’ consists in its use and ‘vanishing,’ Matta-Clark parodizes

⁵³ Jaime Davidovich, *Odd Lots*, 45.

⁵⁴ Betsy Sussler, *Odd Lots*, 47.

⁵⁵ Pamela Lee, *Object to be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000) 103.

[sic] this idea through literalizing it. For him, property's essence consists equally in its *attrition*; it is accorded value as property only when it passes into a state of uselessness or ruin."⁵⁶ The using up of property thus defines, according to Hegel, the fullest enactment of a subject's ownership and the simultaneous negation of her owned property.⁵⁷

However, the inaccessibility of many of Matta-Clark's gutter-space properties renders the vanishing of property as always already in process without necessitating a particular owner's negation of it. "When I bought those properties at the New York City Auction, the description of them that always excited me most was 'inaccessible,'" Matta-Clark says in an interview with art journalist Lisa Bear. "What I basically wanted to do was to designate spaces that wouldn't be seen and certainly not occupied. Buying them was my own take on the strangeness of existing property demarcation lines. Property is so all-pervasive. Everyone's notion of ownership is determined by the use factor."⁵⁸ Matta-Clark's inaccessible property sites are useless without offering the opportunity to use them up, suggesting that spatial ownership is linked to the ongoing process by which use-value and legitimacy is determined and re-determined, rather than to the materialized building or site accorded with such value.

But what if the process of owning space is no longer tied to the framing of useful sites and the fixing of bodies in or on them? Pamela Lee suggests that in Matta-Clark's alternate use for his owned spaces, he conceived of ownership as an

⁵⁶ Lee 112.

⁵⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) 158.

⁵⁸ Gordon Matta-Clark, "Interview with Lisa Bear – Gordon Matta-Clark: Splitting the Humphrey Street Building," reprinted in *Gordon Matta-Clark*, ed. Corinne Diserens (London: Phaidon, 2003) 164.

opening rather than a closing down of both spatial and social boundaries. Lee writes: “In *Fake Estates*, the unusability of this land – and the reification of space through the laws of property – is Matta-Clark’s principal object of critique. At the same time, that which cannot be used, that which is inaccessible and therefore *non-productive* or *workless*, may also be a potential source of social space.”⁵⁹ For Matta-Clark, the revaluing of unusable sites as spaces of critique and intervention, spaces that bring artists, viewers, neighbors, buyers, owners and city planners in contact with each other, is indeed socially productive, making legible and visible the ways in which social formations define and demarcate space as alternately accessible or inaccessible, legible or illegible. As Judith Russi Kirshner has argued, an investment in the formation of communities, however temporary, underscores much of Matta-Clark’s work. With specific respect to his imagined property project, Kirshner contends that “[h]is largely non-cynical vision supported agendas of social action and targeted the hegemonic presence of private property.”⁶⁰ In fact, to extend both Lee’s and Kirshner’s arguments, the passages of bodies together, apart, and across both useful and seemingly useless sites is, for Matta-Clark, capable of activating a different process of spatial definition, unfixing spatial boundaries and unmooring property lines as ever ready to be replaced and re-sited.

Ownership understood through these kinds of circumstances is a permeable process. Indeed, as art and film scholar Giuliana Bruno suggests with respect to sites of art-making and art-receiving: “A constant redrafting of sites rather than the circularity of origin and return, ensures that spatial attachment does not become a

⁵⁹ Lee 104.

⁶⁰ Judith Russi Kirshner, “The Idea of Community in the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark,” *Gordon Matta-Clark*, ed. Corinne Diserens (London: Phaidon, 2003) 148.

desire to enclose and possess.”⁶¹ This continuous redrafting of sites through both embodied encounters within and movement through specific places – a redrafting that incompletely returns to and critically renews spatial sites as we have seen in the revisitations of original dwelling narratives – renders the experience of belonging on site, in built structures and with others as no longer attached to spatial ownership. Instead, the presence and movement of bodies initiate a continuous process of renewed legitimization of sites both past and present, sites that oscillate between usefulness and uselessness. In Matta-Clark’s expanded property project that encompasses this interconnectivity of shifting sites and moving bodies, spatial ownership is networked over time so that spatial belonging, however precarious or temporary, can also be replaced in time.

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The process of specifying sites through the presence and movement of bodies has been the defining feature of site-specific art practice, to which Matta-Clark’s jointly architectural and artistic work most closely belongs. Such practices attend to the intertwining of bodies and sites, where the body in motion held momentarily in a particular space renders that site visible, legible and even temporarily yet specifically useful. Though bodies and sites come together and apart, their interaction is not always reciprocal or co-legitimizing, for as Gordon Matta-Clark’s engagement with property reminds us, sites and built structures can also be subsumed and rendered illegible by urban expansion. The impulse to renew the usability of a site in the face

⁶¹ Giuliana Bruno, *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007) 166.

of decay or abandonment finds its drive in the very bodies that use and disuse, pause within and pass over, leave and return to that specific space.

Matta-Clark began to address the formation and embodied use of illegible spaces through his informal artists' collective, Anarchitecture, which ended up serving as an inspiration that led Matta-Clark to purchase the gutter-spaces of *Fake Estates*. In a letter sent to member Carol Goodden from Paris in 1973, Matta-Clark outlined a list of proposals to be undertaken by the group, one of which was noted as "Fake Estates: property slivers with some projected ideas for them."⁶² Though Anarchitecture would not in the end participate in the *Fake Estates* project, the working group did consider spaces of collapse, ambiguity, privacy, and inaccessibility outside of the readily demarcated and legislated. Suggesting that these spaces that are outside of architecture's conventional frameworks could potentially be useful, Anarchitecture members such as Goodden, Tina Girouard, Richard Nonas, and Laurie Anderson, took photographs of holes, horizon lines, fallen monuments, train wrecks, spaces between buildings, doorways, and locked key-holes. They then exhibited their findings anonymously at the Greene gallery in March of 1974. In addition, *Flash Art* magazine published a two-page spread on the group's photographic findings.

In an interview with Lisa Bear, Matta-Clark remarked that the group was "thinking more about metaphoric voids, gaps, left-over spaces, places that were not developed...the places where you stop to tie your shoe-laces, pieces that are just interruptions in your own daily movements. These places are also perceptually

⁶² Gordon Matta-Clark, letter to Carol Goodden, reprinted in *Gordon Matta-Clark*, ed. Corinne Diserens (London: Phaidon, 2003) 154-155

significant because they make reference to movement space.”⁶³ Matta-Clark’s naming of “movement space” denotes both the spaces that bodies move through and spaces that are themselves moving, either changing over time or activated by phenomenal passages through them. This fluid understanding and experience of space resists the conventions of rationally fixed and framed sites in which, as Matta-Clark remarks, “the notion of mutable space is virtually taboo – even in one’s own house. People live in their space with a temerity that is frightening.”⁶⁴ As Pamela Lee understands it, “a place that is an ‘interruption’ or a ‘movement space’ is a liminal space, unbounded by the restrictions of real estate. Leftover because not legislated for use, these spaces refuse ownership because they are illegible, ambiguous, kinetic even.”⁶⁵ Matta-Clark himself wrote in his notebook under some brainstormed objectives for Anarchitecture: “Somewhere outside the law / You are the measure.”⁶⁶ Giving momentary pause to the illegible sites over which bodies traverse while emphasizing that such sites both transform and are transformed by embodied pauses and passages, Matta-Clark and Anarchitecture staged what he called a “perceptual metamorphosis, a model for peoples’ constant action on space as much as in the space that surrounds them.”⁶⁷ Thus, you in relation to others are the measure that defines spatial boundaries, accessibility, and usefulness.

In recognition of Matta-Clark’s attention to the embodied practices through which spaces are alternately opened up and collapsed, Donald Wall categorizes

⁶³ Gordon Matta-Clark quoted in an interview with Lisa Bear, “Gordon Matta-Clark: Splitting the Humphrey Street Building,” reprinted in *Gordon Matta-Clark*, ed. Corinne Diserens, 164.

⁶⁴ Gordon Matta-Clark, interview with Donald Wall, *Gordon Matta-Clark*, ed. Corinne Diserens, 185.

⁶⁵ Lee 105.

⁶⁶ Gordon Matta-Clark, reprinted in *Gordon Matta-Clark: You are the Measure*, ed. Elisabeth Sussman (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2007) 97.

⁶⁷ Gordon Matta-Clark quoted in an interview with Donald Wall, 185.

Matta-Clark's work by its commitment to process-based performance, or to use Wall's terms, a "performance constancy," as opposed to a conventional art or architectural-based materialization of an "object constancy."⁶⁸ Wall's concept of a "performance constancy" signals an inherent tension in Matta-Clark's practice that exists between a work's temporal unfolding and its specific spatial situation, or between duration and stasis. In an interview with Wall, Matta-Clark qualifies his building, property and Anarchitecture work as "an ongoing act for the passer-by" that "provides a stage for the busy pedestrian in transit."⁶⁹ The site acts on the passing bodies as they in turn act on the site, however incidentally or accidentally. Such theater-based terminologies of act and stage articulate a link between an action manifested and endured in time and the spatial parameters in which that action occurs. If performance is a constant, it must go on endlessly. For Matta-Clark, this endless process must also be spatially sited, pausing in place and within specific spaces before starting up again.

Fake Estates had more than one starting point. While still participating in Anarchitecture's informal gatherings and discussions, Matta-Clark visited his properties several times, taking photographs of the concrete or dirt ground of each small, strange plot. He put these photos in a cardboard box along with the property deeds and city maps detailing their dimensions and location. When Matta-Clark could no longer pay the property taxes, he gave the box and thus turned over the

⁶⁸ Gordon Matta-Clark quoted in an interview with Donald Wall, 181.

⁶⁹ Gordon Matta-Clark quoted in an interview with Donald Wall, "Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections," reprinted in *Gordon Matta-Clark*, ed. Corinne Diserens, 184.

ownership of the plots to his friend, the art collector Norman Fisher. Matta-Clark died of pancreatic cancer in 1978, long before he or Fisher could do anything with the properties or their documented materials. Upon Fisher's death, Matta-Clark's widow, Jane Crawford, received the box, and ownership was again transferred.

In the 1992 retrospective of Gordon Matta-Clark's work at the IVAM Centro Julio Gonzalez in Valencia, Spain, *Fake Estates* was finally born as an exhibitible artwork, ultimately without the participation of the artist. It exists to this day in the form of collages assembled by Jane Crawford from the contents of Matta-Clark's box. In 1994, the artworks were also exhibited at the Holly Solomon Gallery in New York, and again in 1995 at the Rhona Hoffman Gallery in Chicago, both under the title of *Realty Positions: Fake Estates and Other Architectural Musings*.

In 2003, *Cabinet* magazine editors Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi and Frances Richard interviewed Crawford about the development of these collages. The black and white photos, deeds, maps, and tax slips were arranged in the infamous cardboard box in no particularly order, so Crawford used the photo negatives that were kept in Matta-Clark's archives in order to follow the sequences of images that together made up one property plot. Then she drove through Queens trying to match up the sites with the various sequences of photos. Crawford recalls: "There is a degree of inconsistency among the elements included in each work. In some, Gordon included a long shot of the site, or more than one map. I imagine it depended on what he found or was able to photograph. Some of the sites running between houses, down

the middle of the block, must have just been about impossible to photograph.”⁷⁰

Many times, she had to trespass on private property in order to gain access to a site, much like Matta-Clark’s own experience visiting the plots in 1973 with Davidovich and Sussler.

Crawford used archival tape to assemble the strings of photos, pairing a sequence with its corresponding property deed and map. She decided to exclude the tax slips, because she believed that “they were no longer relevant to the works.”⁷¹ While the exclusion of the tax slips points to a temporal suspension of each site as outside the passage of time and thus of the incurring of taxes, and in turn to a negation of ownership duties, the use of archival tape gestures towards the incomplete closure of Matta-Clark’s project. Archival tape would allow others to undo and redo the photographic sequences, and marks not only authorship but ownership as unstable. If Matta-Clark did not actually put the collages together, is the work still defined and valued as a Matta-Clark artwork? Crawford cited the Guggenheim purchase of a collage as a problematic example. When curators found out that Matta-Clark did not assemble the work, they became anxious, but Crawford countered that he had, in fact, made other “puzzle-participation pieces” such as the 1970-72 *Blast from the Past* in which viewers would reassemble sweepings from his studio floor with a photo and measure as a guide.⁷² The collages were not fully authored or owned by Matta-Clark. Yet through the hands of Crawford and later through other artists commissioned by *Cabinet* magazine, and in their combined return to and re-use

⁷⁰ Jane Crawford, “Mythology: The Evolution of *Fake Estates*, Part II,” *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark’s Fake Estates*, ed. Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi and Frances Richard (New York: Cabinet Books, 2005) 53.

⁷¹ Crawford, 52.

⁷² Crawford 54.

of his sites and their renewed destabilization of spatial use-value, Matta-Clark's unfinished project initialized a practice of art-making perhaps best suited to his understanding of spatial ownership and belonging, concepts arguably impossible to materially realize as a solo artist.

“Who would have known beyond a shadow of a doubt how Matta-Clark would have chosen to assemble it?” Jane Crawford attests. “Nevertheless, there's an open-endedness to it, and it's that aspect of his work which I find so compelling.”⁷³ In fact, as the three *Cabinet* editors agree, with respect to their fact-finding mission: “Contingent factual gaps such as these turned out to be not simply an obstacle to scholarship, but rather an invitation to identify further disappearances – of authorship, meaning, intentionality – integral to the very fabric of this persistently ‘open’ work.”

⁷⁴ Here, the open work alludes to the various transformations of the site through property exchanges and city-planning, the potential proposals initialized by Matta-Clark, and the later versions of his project undertaken through the participation of others.

The birth of *Fake Estates* as a set of collages that can be undone and redone, and that include various types of documentation, formally materializes this openness. Collage, specifically photographic collage, was a form that Matta-Clark himself used to document his more famous building cuts. Writing about Matta-Clark's photographic and film documentation, Christian Kravagna isolates a collage style that the artist often used, in which the compiled images “take the viewpoint of a person moving around inside the building, in an evident attempt to convey something of the

⁷³ Crawford 57.

⁷⁴ Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi and Frances Richard, *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates*, 5.

particular atmosphere or drama of moving through a sculpturally transformed building.”⁷⁵ Using collage, Matta-Clark thus visually enacted an open-ended phenomenal experience that remained in flux, an experience also intimated by Crawford’s own assemblages.

In formalizing Matta-Clark’s property project as a series of collages, Crawford also keyed into a durational openness enacted through the various forms of documentation she included. For art historian Thomas Crow: “There was a tribute lurking in these works, with their juxtaposition of different levels of document, to Robert Smithson’s use of maps and description in such Site/Non-Site projects as the *Mirror Displacement* sculpture executed for the Cornell ‘Earth Art’ exhibition.”⁷⁶ That Matta-Clark was at this exhibition and even helped execute several of the included pieces should not be dismissed. As Pamela Lee recounts in her study of his formative years, Matta-Clark’s meeting with Robert Smithson at Cornell instigated Matta-Clark’s interest in process-based art. Smithson’s 1968 series of *Nonsites* was certainly an influence on Matta-Clark, as was Smithson’s emphasis on the durational condition of erosion that he believed was intrinsic to sited art practice. Qualifying that temporal process as moving between the “non-sited” gallery work and its corresponding physical site, Smithson collected rocks, minerals, earth and other materials from specific outdoor sites and placed them in crates in a gallery next to maps and photos of the area from which the materials had been collected. These *Nonsites* attempted to frame, though not quite perfectly, the actual sites of collection

⁷⁵ Christian Kravagna: “‘It’s Nothing Worth Documenting If It’s Not Difficult To Get’: On the Documentary Nature of Photography and Film in the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark,” *Gordon Matta-Clark*, ed. Corinne Diserens, 139.

⁷⁶ Thomas Crow, *Gordon Matta-Clark*, ed. Corinne Diserens, 71.

that, if actually visited, would not remain the same as they were on the day of collection and might even be geographically dispersed across many different locations.

“There is a one-to-one relation,” Smithson has said in an interview about the work and its site, “but at the same time that one-to-one equation tends to evade connection so that there’s a suspension. Although there’s a correspondence, the equalizer is always in a sense subverted or lost.”⁷⁷ Spatial specificity, therefore, passes back and forth from site to nonsite. The direction of this durational passage of spatial specification is therefore evasive; it is a passage that Smithson identifies as “dialectical” and thus is not primarily forward or onward moving.⁷⁸ Ultimately, Smithson’s enactment of the displacement of the site, and thus of spatial specificity across continually changing passages shared by artist, viewer, and materials, that occurs through an ongoing process of environmental decay can also be applied to the urban landscape, since, as Smithson reminds us “the world is slowly destroying itself,” a world inclusive of urban built areas.

Yet in his own challenge of the displacing and effacing process of site-specific entropy, Matta-Clark’s Anarchitecture proposals, property ventures, documentations, and subsequent *Fake Estate* collages collectively initiate embodied networks that link multiple makers and viewers who cross and loop over time, reactivating the specific usability of spaces. For Matta-Clark, unlike Smithson, material disappearances instead become instances and sites for reappearances, since moments and

⁷⁷ Robert Smithson, “Four Conversations between Dennis Wheeler and Robert Smithson (1969-1970),” *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996) 218.

⁷⁸ Robert Smithson, “Notes: Dialectic of Site and Nonsite,” 152.

materializations that are lost, destroyed or denied are not completely gone but may return and can be re-used. “While my preoccupations involve creating deep metaphoric incisions into space/place, I do not want to create a totally new supportive field of vision, of cognition,” Matta-Clark postulates in his interview with Donald Wall. “I want to reuse the old one, the existing framework of thought and sight.”⁷⁹ Re-use is antithetical to closure, instead operating through material and temporal replacements.

Writing about Matta-Clark’s practice, the artist Dan Graham emphasizes Matta-Clark’s process of revisiting illegible spaces in order to renew phenomenal accessibility and to replace social legibility. The impulse of revisitation challenges the modern social ideology of progress that discards the old and moves quickly onto the new. In order to expose what Graham names as “the containment of the environment according to capitalist interests,” Graham understands Matta-Clark’s practice as “an attack on the cycle of production and consumption at the experience of the remembered history of the city.”⁸⁰ Though Graham gestures specifically to his colleague’s building cuts, Matta-Clark’s act of purchasing gutter-spaces to re-use in future artwork can also “reveal the just-past.”⁸¹ Indeed, the splits, fissures, voids, and holes that Matta-Clark effected in properties that were outmoded or ready for demolition literally revealed the material past just below the surface of the new. His work with Anarchitecture, on the other hand, along with his imagined *Fake Estates* project and its subsequent renewal together centralize the living practices and paths of

⁷⁹ Gordon Matta-Clark quoted in an interview with Donald Wall, 185.

⁸⁰ Dan Graham, “Gordon Matta-Clark,” *Rock My Religion*, 197.

⁸¹ Dan Graham, “A History of Conceptual Art,” *Two-Way Mirror Power*, 20.

spatial users and dwellers, whose movements and pauses resuscitate the past within the structures of the present.

Graham's evocation of the "just-past" references the social critique of cultural theorist, Walter Benjamin, whose ideological challenging of modern historical progress finds resonance in Matta-Clark's own art practice. In fact, material cycles of reuse and phenomenal pathways of renewal invoked by Matta-Clark's artwork are undertones to Benjamin's montage of collected notes and sources, and formulate the basis of Benjamin's revision of historical progress as spatialized in specific sites. In his *Arcades Project* which centers on nineteenth-century Parisian consumer arcades and crystal exhibition palaces, Benjamin demonstrates that slightly out-dated objects and spaces of mass culture possess the potential means of spatially unsettling the historical fixity of the past and undermining modernity's emphasis on the always present and new. Begun in 1927 and remaining incomplete in 1940 when he died, *The Arcades Project* is Benjamin's materialist philosophy of history, constructed out of visual, tactile, and spatial debris that survived in the remaining nineteenth-century Parisian arcades, which one by one were being demolished. Benjamin sought out small discarded objects, outdated building structures and fashions, and overlooked historical motifs in order to provide material evidence that together propose a radical critique of historical progress, particularly in its view of history from a backwards glance. This focus on the disused materiality of history that has just moved past its material function provides a dialectical contrast to the myth of unimpeded social, ideological, and economic progress. Introducing a working concept of visual and tactile concreteness through montage, Benjamin presents the world of surviving

objects as fossils exhibiting the traces of living history to be deciphered. In his unearthing of these buried markers, Benjamin exposes progress as the fetishization of modern temporality that is caught repeating the new as always the same. Instead, he emphasizes that history is always split between the progress of industry and the status of our embodied relations to these means of production.

For Benjamin, the material structures and urban plan of Paris exemplifies this negotiation, and also provides a specific material link between the artist and the cultural theorist. Matta-Clark himself also turned his attention to subterranean Paris, taking photographs and video of underground cellars and catacombs for his 1977 series of photomontages, *Sous-Sols de Paris*, and its accompanying film, *Substrait Paris*. Paris was built over a system of caverns and catacombs on which the modern transportation system of the Métro and its connection to over-ground railway system was later founded. This modern system of underground tunnels and thoroughfares connecting ancient vaults, quarries, and grottoes finds a parallel above ground for Benjamin in “the bloody knots in the network of streets, lairs of love, and conflagrations.”⁸² Benjamin’s the wandering flâneur, like Matta-Clark’s modern-day urban dweller, traverses this maze of urban traffic with an “amnesiac intoxication” that “not only feeds on the sensory data taking shape before his eyes but often possesses itself of abstract knowledge – indeed, of dead facts – as something experienced and lived through.”⁸³ For Benjamin, a “colportage phenomenon of space,” which identifies a spatial and temporal conflation as embodied in the flâneur’s movements, is also contained within the commercial activities and

⁸² Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 83.

⁸³ Benjamin 417.

commodity exchanges that took place within the arcades.⁸⁴ The arcades' architecture frames its commercial use in terms of the movements of the passers-by, and thus also affords a palimpsest of outdated nineteenth-century objects and passages to be revisited and retraced by Benjamin in the early twentieth century.

Positioning cultural material within an expanded temporal register before and beyond the present, Benjamin qualifies progress as enacted by bodies in motion through and back to specific sites, and in relation to specific structures and objects. Here the ties to Matta-Clark's practice are strong, and thus the larger stakes of his architectural projects may become clearer once aligned with Benjamin. Spatial accessibility, and by extension the social legibility afforded to those offered access, are together based on the re-use and replacement of specific objects and constructions, a system that is activated and re-activated by embodied encounters. For both the theorist and the artist, these encounters, in turn, are embedded in a kind of durational process of material reinvention that loops forward and back across sites and through time.

Cabinet magazine initiated its own cycle of return, re-use and replacement, for revisiting Matta-Clark's purchases and retracing the passages and transformation of the sliver plots into the *Fake Estates* collages was not the ultimate end of *Cabinet's* interaction with Matta-Clark's unfinished work. In fact, the magazine editors also launched a project of their own, re-activating and extending, rather than finishing,

⁸⁴ Benjamin 417.

Matta-Clark's initial work-in-progress. Along with their detailed research, all of which was published in their Spring 2003 issue, *Cabinet* also presented three new proposals by the contemporary artists Jimbo Blachly, Matthew Northridge, and Clara Williams who were each commissioned by the magazine to create artwork related to one Matta-Clark plot of their choice. Each commission was informed by the material dimensions of the original site, while also in turn informing Matta-Clark's concepts of spatial ownership and belonging. All three commissions, very much like Matta-Clark's initial involvement with his *Fake Estates* project, remained notional proposals on papers, presented in *Cabinet* as such.

Choosing a strip off Woodward Avenue in Queens measuring two feet wide by three-hundred and fifty feet long, Jimbo Blachly proposed to install ten parking meters down the left wall of a building.⁸⁵ The meters' revenue would go towards the purchase of another plot housing the abandoned foundation of what once was a masonry building on West 171st Street in Manhattan. Blachly's financial plan, taking into account the cost of purchase and installation of the meters, their income, the cost of hiring a local gang to upkeep the meters and ensure safety, the asking price of the masonry foundation, the down payment, and mortgage, estimated that in six years the Manhattan property would be owned outright. Blachly envisioned that maintenance and development of the derelict site would come from additional arts granting organizations.

Implicit in Matta-Clark's initial purchase of unusable plots of land was an entwinement between the useless site and its useful potential. Blachly's work, in

⁸⁵ Jimbo Blachly proposal, *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates*, ed. Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi and Frances Richard, 73.

turn, reinforces this concept of ownership experienced as an ongoing process in which the useless site becomes useful only to become useless again, and so on. What one owns is, then, a relation between usefulness and uselessness, always in flux between sites, sited objects or buildings, those who own them, and what they do with them. In his participation in the auction's property-buying mania, Matta-Clark called attention to the unending drive to possess sites of even no apparent use-value. Yet his very act of purchase also reversed the slivers' uselessness by affording them a new potential use-value.

For both Matta-Clark and Blachly, these sites and the projects they imagined occurring there, provide social spaces of critique. As critical artistic processes ongoing and unfinished, Matta-Clark's and Blachly's projects both take place within already established infrastructures. Matta-Clark gains legal possession of the plots by engaging in city auctions, while Blachly embarks on a plan to procure a mortgage. Choosing to hire local youths to upkeep the parking meters, Blachly even acknowledges the urban legend of the "local gang" whose presence is linked to the low income and high crime rates of the neighborhood. Yet in his temporal continuation and spatial extension of Matta-Clark's initial purchase, Blachly also invokes an alternative sociability implicit, as Pamela Lee has proposed, in the "workless" site. Matta-Clark's workless property, workless both in terms of its commercial worthlessness and in light of the artist's subsequent un-use of it, passes onto Blachly's hands and into his own work. In its passages, re-imaginings, and reincarnations, the unusable, oddly-shaped site in Queens traces a dialogue between

two artists, a dialogue that proposes a networked understanding of use-value founded on the two artists' intertwined processes of ownership over time.

For *Cabinet*'s second commissioned artist Matthew Northridge, the uselessness of inaccessible plots attests to the fakeness inherent in the unending impetus to possess property, a critique made explicit in Matta-Clark's title, jotted in his notebook as *Fake Estates*. Northridge chose an unseen square lot, close to 66th Street in Queens, measuring roughly four to five feet on each side, large enough only for an anchored pole. At the top of the pole, Northridge proposed to place a tiny blue cottage complete with landscaping. The work exists only as an illustration, which Northridge describes as "an idealized model and still quite fake."⁸⁶ The drawing's emphasis on an idealized and fake site of property, impossible to actualize, revisits Matta-Clark's critique of fixed, stable, and thus tangibly ownable spaces, extending the initial project's conceptual experience. The material form of Northridge's un-built, un-viable, and paper-bound rendering is itself in dialogue with Matta-Clark's inability to physically experience this particular site, its inaccessibility translated formally through printed information and metaphysically through artist's and viewers' imagination.

As Jeffrey Kroessler from *Cabinet* magazine remarks, "Matta-Clark's purpose, as he wrote in his notebook in 1976, was 'to convert a place into a state of mind.'"⁸⁷ The relationship between the "state of mind" incurred from being in or imagining a specific place, however temporarily, and the maps, deeds, contracts, and

⁸⁶ Matthew Northridge proposal, *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates*, ed. Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi and Frances Richard, 74.

⁸⁷ Jeffrey A. Kroessler, "Gordon Matta-Clark's Moment," *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates*, 34.

photographic documentation of the individual plots on which Matta-Clark would place nothing, enacts a definition of sited-ness that Northridge re-activates. The site of the property is nowhere fixed, neither stabilized between its imagined use and material viability, nor between its conceptual and physical dimensions. Northridge's proposal, in dialogue with Matta-Clark's specific plot and unfinished project, therefore proposes a siting, rather than a site, of property. The siting of property is an ongoing process; the site, however, is always vanishing. In Northridge's piece, it is projected as an ideal, only ever to be falsely or fakely stabilized as a something that can be used and used up.

For *Cabinet's* third commissioned artist Clara Williams, the object of property, always in the process of being sited, ultimately belongs to no one. On the corner of 40th Street and Borden Avenue in Queens between the Calvary Cemetery and the Sunnyside residential neighborhood, Williams proposed to install a black residential mailbox on a strip of grass between the sidewalk pavement and a wire fence.⁸⁸ Across the side of the box is printed the word "NOBODY" in black and white stick-on capital letters usually reserved for a resident's name or address. Further complicating Matta-Clark's accordance of a potential usefulness to the useless plots of land through his purchasing of them, Williams' placement of the mailbox points to an inhabitant at the same time as it articulates that potential inhabitant's disembodied, unnamed status. There is literally no body to receive the letters; there is no body that owns the object that marks the property as owned.

⁸⁸ Clara Williams proposal, *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates*, 75.

Matta-Clark, together with Blachly and Northridge, redefine property as the ownership of a conceptual relationship between usefulness and uselessness, continually resituated as a material process over time that loops forwards and back. Attuned to this process, Williams foregrounds property's material relationship between objects, sites, and bodies, while posing a link between ownership and belonging that is nonetheless critical of its linking. Her installation reveals the means by which owned objects, such as the mailbox, declare ownable sites, such as the plot of property, while also marking out sites of belonging, such as the house situated on the plot. The object and site seemingly belong to a body, or should. But what, asks Williams, if no body belongs to the owned object or to the potentially renewable and ownable site on which that object stands? The mailbox and the site belong to each other, maintaining each other as useful. Williams' choice of a mailbox gestures to the federal postal system that marks points of location and tracks correspondence between them, a system that works alongside the fixed notion of spatial ownership. While engaging with rather than operating outside of this system, very much like Matta-Clark's own engagement with the structures and rules of property exchange, Williams' artistic critique makes visible those who are illegible, are literally nobody, because they are not property owners or renters and are thus not fixed in one place. Revising this claim, Williams suggests that nobody fully owns property, and that nobody is fully in one place.

Re-owning the initially useless sites and re-framing property as a process, the site of which also remains in flux to be disembodied and re-embodied over time, Blachly, Northridge and Williams join together with Matta-Clark to form a networked

construction of ownership. In contemporaneously resuscitating Matta-Clark's *Fake Estates*, *Cabinet* magazine's research and their initial three commissions also proposed a spatially-specific, temporally-disjunctive, conceptually-dialogic network of belonging. Linked through the passages and meeting points of art makers and viewers, property owners, users and inhabitants, this network offers replaceable avenues of connection that momentarily open the possibility of belonging in specific sites.

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In 2005, *Fake Estates* was given another new life, a new name *Odd Lots*, and new exhibitions at two venues during the fall of that year. In addition to *Cabinet's* foundational research into Matta-Clark's initial activities and their initial commissioning of proposals from Jimbo Blachly, Matthew Northridge, and Clara Williams, *Cabinet* also applied to re-purchase the ten remaining lots still un-owned after their repossession by the city due to delinquent tax bills. Even though the city was no longer auctioning land, the magazine was able to acquire annually renewable property licenses for some of the original sites. The magazine then partnered up with the Queens Museum of Art and the White Columns gallery in Manhattan, an out-growth of the 112 Greene Street exhibition space of which Gordon Matta-Clark was a founder. *Cabinet* magazine catalogued both exhibitions and its own preliminary research in a 2005 publication entitled *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's "Fake Estates."* This revisitation of *Fake Estates* initiates multiple avenues of return, in each of which a specific site was re-used and a specific material past of Matta-

Clark's project was reactivated in the temporal present while together forming a network through which both the artist's material practice and his conceptual concerns are expanded and replaced.

At the Queens Museum of Art, Matta-Clark's gutter-space slivers were marked out on a panoramic map of New York, accompanied by multimedia documentation detailing the city's layers of urban planning which led to the creation of these odd lots over time. The White Columns gallery, in turn, hosted a series of artworks commissioned by a group of contemporary artists who responded both individually and as a group to Matta-Clark's initial project. Like the proposals by Blachly, Northridge and Williams which were also exhibited in their printed form at White Columns, the new group show returned to the actual sites and revisited key issues proposed by *Fake Estates* in its earlier incarnations. Individually, each artist not only renews but broadens a dialogue with Matta-Clark's formally open work and its ongoing conceptual process. As a group, the *Odd Lot* artists introduce new art practices, such as sound art and performance alongside site-specific, conceptual art and institutional critique. The group also interjects new social issues ranging from environmental politics, the spatial effects of globalization, the violence of fixing spatial sites, the reactivation of embodied passages and accessibility, and the social transactions that specify those bodies and the sites they use and re-use.

Recalling the formation of Matta-Clark's urban sliver spaces, *Odd Lots* artist Francis Alÿs depicts a similar process of spatial transformation in the small Mexican town of Tepoztlan. In Alÿs's contribution, a slide presents a tiny tunnel-sized commercial building that sells thread and buttons next to a drawing that sketches out

three stages leading to the site's creation between two buildings that once stood to either side of it. The informational nature of Alÿs's piece follows the form of Matta-Clark's initial visual documentation and of Crawford's *Fake Estate* collages, while adding sound. A recorded announcement tells viewers that the space was once a passageway for animals to access a piece of land located behind the buildings. After the land was sold, the animals were gone and the passage was thus no longer needed, a new owner built a small structure in the passageway. The owners of the buildings on either side later decided to demolish them, leaving only the thread and button seller. Through these alterations in the urban landscape, Alÿs emphasizes the creation of new spatial possibilities in which structures adapt to the ongoing cycle of destruction and reconstruction. In Tepoztlan, a town quite different than Matta-Clark's New York City, Alÿs finds a structure that replaces use-value in a site of disuse, a challenge that expands Matta-Clark's re-valuing of liminal space initiated through his act of purchase. Alÿs's work situates the spatially insubstantial thread and button seller as, the recorded voice tells viewers, "a positive residue of a natural process...a metaphor of resistance."⁸⁹ While spaces and structures come and go depending on need and desire, the spatial flexibility and structural adaptability of Alÿs's small building takes advantage of urban transformation, attesting to the eventual renewal of all kinds of seemingly illegible sites.

For the artist Maximillian Goldfarb, an expansion of the built environment and city-scape bespeaks not a natural growth process but rather what he names as "the

⁸⁹ Francis Alÿs, "Next Slide Please," *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates*, ed. Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi and Frances Richard.

unstoppable expansion tendencies of poorly considered city planning.”⁹⁰ Goldfarb’s critique is enacted through sound art, itself an oftentimes illegible or sidelined partner to the conventional visual arts. Echoing Matta-Clark’s attention to urban expansion with an added focus on the destruction of the natural landscape and thus on the contemporary demands of environmental politics, Goldfarb placed low-power radio transmitters with sound loops emitting ambient nature sounds on FM public radio frequencies during the months leading up to the exhibition. Surrounding homes or passing cars receiving the radio signals would hear the sounds of tree boughs breaking, buzzing insects, or rushing creek water, all sounds associated with an environment very different from the one within which the hearer is situated, making the distinction between urban and natural aurally available. The work was presented in the gallery as a series of documentary photos next to a pair of headphones playing the transmitted sounds. This aural punctuation of natural into the urban, in both the outdoor sites and the site of the gallery exhibition, also in turn momentarily reverses the sprawl of the urban environment into the natural. Yet although the natural environment is re-heard, its mode of transmission is technological, rendering its experience second-hand, or even third-hand in the gallery. Any reversal of urban expansion is thus unstable and always already bound up with the technological developments that help to drive that expansion.

While Goldfarb’s sound piece temporally and technologically replaces the increasing disappearance of undeveloped nature, Mark Dion’s “Gordon Matta-Clark Subterranean Museum” opens up even more possibilities beneath one of Matta-

⁹⁰ Maximilian Goldfarb, “Coordinate Relocation Program Test,” *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark’s Fake Estates*.

Clark's original sites, re-using the only remaining un-owned space which now exists under the earth. Described as "an event-based experience" and exhibited in the gallery as a mixed media proposal formally akin to the earlier print proposals of Blachly, Northridge and Williams, Dion's subterranean museum invites visitors down through various geological periods apparent in the earth's inner layers. With its self-stated mission of emphasizing "geology as a science of time," the museum enacts the temporal formation of space as viewers hypothetically descend through layers that represent the earth's transformation.⁹¹ Situated on one of Matta-Clark's original sites, the museum proposes to unveil the earth's planetary transformations that vertically parallel the horizontal globalization of its surface, in which sites both near and far have become more readily accessible. Plunging viewers down into the site, Dion's imagined museum also counters Matta-Clark's project of renewing initially unviable spaces with Matta-Clark's own caution about the uncontrollable need to contain and own any kind of spatial site. The environment above and below ground alters in time, and both, Dion's project demonstrates, can be subject to a cycle of disuse and re-use driven most emphatically by urban expansion and the ease by which the entire world, surface and now depth, can be accessed.

While Jude Tallichet offered Feng Shui as a practice capable of bringing balance back to a spatial environment always in flux, redesigning the White Columns office space according to its principles, a number of artists created object-based works that consider the materialization of fluid temporality. These artists continue to explore and extend Matta-Clark's spatialization of the ongoing processes of

⁹¹ Mark Dion, "The Gordon Matta-Clark Subterranean Museum," *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates*.

ownership as momentarily static and in materially situated properties. For his part, Dan Price created a Tupperware with the exact dimensions of one of Matta-Clark's sites, which he converted into volumetric space. Tupperware, which Price notes was introduced the year Matta-Clark was born, contains and preserves left-over food. Like Matta-Clark's use for the leftover parcels of land, the Tupperware also proposes a future use for its discarded matter, affording new use-value to what could have been thrown away. Yet while Tupperware preserves and keeps its contents from rotting, Matta-Clark's plots were subject to change and indeed decay over time. Framing a connection between an abandoned site of property and a Tupperware that envelops its dimensions, Price's objects reenact a temporary containerization of space that registers past and future time as momentarily and materially situated, not only as Matta-Clark feared in order to fix the site but also to slow its disappearance, rendering it potentially valuable, and allowing it to be eventually re-used.

Katrin Sigurdardottir, in turn, enacts the temporal registers of spatial formation with her composite set of objects that come together and apart, materially mirroring the process by which Matta-Clark understood the specification of sites through embodied encounters and passages. Folding out to map a cityscape, her seven small cargo containers together form one object and one continuous environment. Before their exhibition, each container was sold separately and shipped to various pre-established owners. The owners then sent the boxes back to the gallery in time for the show and all were reassembled back into one unified object, complete with tags and information bearing evidence to the travels of each component part. Reminding new viewers of Matta-Clark's engagement with the property market of

buying and exchanging, and also of the passages, transformations, and travels of Matta-Clark's box of deeds and photos, the object as a temporary whole is formed through its passages to and from various bodies, and therefore through both its spatial and temporal dispersions. The fragmentation of the initially whole object through the sale of its parts also parallels the continual splintering of urban cityscape into sections of property, a process that Matta-Clark took as subject and material for his own work. The re-integration of Sigurdardottir's boxes, however, poses the possibility of a return to a composite yet cohesive landscape, in which the distances and co-existent differences between each sector are now legibly marked.

The co-existence of individual spatial sites does, however, present another scenario of spatial cohesiveness that is instead marked by territorial fixity and thus haunted by a destructive potential. The following three *Odd Lots* artists introduce the issue of violence inherent in private property ownership, in which the boundaries of owned land is defended and upheld at any cost to human life. These works recall the accusations of trespassing and the threats and enraged demands to leave owners' sites, as experienced by Matta-Clark, Davidovich, and Sussler, and later Crawford while they were attempting to access and document Matta-Clark's lots.

Helen Mirra literally embeds the potential for violence in her work's self-stated "spatialization of temporality."⁹² A sixteen-millimeter cotton band is stretched across the gallery wall, the measurements of which refer in formal dimensions to the temporal medium of film. This strip of banding that looks like film-stock also has the same dimensions as one of Matta-Clark's lots, but Mirra covered the band with text

⁹² Helen Mirra, "Ithaca," *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates*.

from a gun catalogue, signaling the owning and using of guns as a form of protection against those intruding onto private property. The catalogue text introduces a language of territorial violence inherent to a conventionally fixed notion of ownership, in which the unchanging and yet vulnerable lines demarcating one's property against another's must be protected against permeability of any kind.

In her own response to the impermeable fixity of spatial demarcations in relation to temporal change, Valerie Hegarty placed a rosebush that eventually tore through a corner of the gallery. Wedging its way wildly in between the unmovable wall, the growing rosebush provides a visual translation of one of Matta-Clark's strangely shaped slivers wedged oftentimes invisibly in between larger, accessible properties. Hegarty imagines that the change in the sliver plots over time, incurred as planners, architects, and owners continue to divvy up the city, acts akin to the natural process of a rose bush's growth. As it blossomed over the course of the exhibition, the rosebush invasively broke through the gallery wall, resisting its assumed fixity with both flowers and thorns.

For Isidro Blasco, the photo collage, a familiar Matta-Clark art form, becomes capable of formally breaking through the fixity of a unified cityscape. Depicting one splintered viewpoint down a street in Queens, individual photos detailing a portion of the view are horizontally and vertically layered on top of each other, visually suggesting that the building and street are simultaneously destructing and reconstructing themselves before the viewers' eyes. Blasco explained that she was inspired by Matta-Clark to "break loose the grid at an urban scale."⁹³ She does so by

⁹³ Isidro Blasco, "Queens Street View," *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates*.

focusing on one particular line of perspective fragmented over time that is always impossible to hold steady and unified in one's eyes. Spatial boundaries remain vulnerable, unsteady, and unfixed, while the tendency to uphold and protect those boundaries can exact violence against bodies and destruction to sites in flux.

In dialogue with Mirren's, Hegarty's, and Blasco's attention to the ramifications of fixing and defending sites of property, Dennis Oppenheim's two models of high-rise constructions warn against the disembodied nature of fixedly unified and yet uniformly sited and embodied buildings. In defiance of his early training in architecture at Cornell, Matta-Clark had himself declared that the nature of his own artistic work, most famously his buildings cuts as well as his interventions into liminal and inaccessible urban spaces, "takes issue with a functionalist attitude to the extent that this kind of self-righteous vocational responsibility has failed to question, or to reexamine, the quality of life being served."⁹⁴ Modern functionalism determines formal design in terms of the methods afforded by industrial materials and technological developments, thereby equating a building's structural efficiency with its projected utility for those who inhabit or work within it. Functional efficiency is, then, embedded in formal structure as aesthetic design comes to be aligned with practical and predictable use-value. In Oppenheim's work, tiny yellow figurines, all identical in size and shape, are lined up in rows to form the walls of the rectangular model. Nearby in the gallery, a large paintbrush shape, replete with more identical figurines, is titled "Building A For Artists." Oppenheim's stick-figure wall people and his artists stuck in a paintbrush are serialized and inhuman, inhabiting

⁹⁴ Gordon Matta-Clark, "Gordon Matta-Clark: Building Dissections – Interview with Donald Wall," *Surface Tension*, ed. Ken Erlich and Brandon LaBelle (New York: Errant Bodies, 2003) 43.

diagrammatic structures that mimic the functionalist modern architecture of which Matta-Clark found fault. Both artists question what practical and predictable life is being served in these built spaces that suppose a transparent equivalence between universal user and architectural use-value. Certainly not a specifically embodied and variable life, Matta-Clark and Oppenheim would both answer.

Echoing such an answer is Julia Mandle's performance piece which revisits Matta-Clark's appeal to specific, embodied, and variable spatial experiences, and in which artist and viewers together participate in the process through which sites are framed and re-framed over time. Wearing yellow platform shoes, the soles of which marked chalk lines wherever she walked, Mandle took small groups from one of Matta-Clark's original sites in Queens across Roosevelt Avenue to another. Enacting a material linkage to Matta-Clark's own tracing of several property lines in chalk as seen on Davidovich's video, Mandle's shoes traced and re-traced temporary traffic lines that marked each group's renewed discovery of the sites and the connections they made between the two spaces as well as between the two artists and their intertwined projects. The passage of bodies to and from these sites reactivates both their past and present spatial specificity in relation to the movement and presence of another set of users, inhabitants, viewers and makers who are granted new and different bodily access.

Also working with the process of tracing in relation to the ways in which various bodies access, possess and ultimately belong to spaces, Lisa Sigal was inspired by Borge's narrative that describes a map of an empire drawn to scale. Sigal decided to map a single Matta-Clark property, point by point, on the gallery floor.

She chose the central courtyard of a building because its size could fit inside the gallery. Initially inaccessible, the sliver space was re-drawn in the gallery and re-sited as accessible. Sigal's re-plotting also remakes Matta-Clark's initial work as accessible to herself, another artist, and to a new set of viewers. Matta-Clark's and Sigal's site thus becomes jointly re-possessed and re-owned, suggesting a new opening to spatial belonging expanded through embodied interactions replaced, rather than displaced, in time.

The siting of space as a process linking bodies and sites across time is further specified as a social transaction and framed by temporary and localized community formations in the following pieces by *Odd Lots* artists Jane South, Sarah Oppenheimer and Mierle Laderman Ukeles, all of whose work responds to the replacement of Matta-Clark's project within the White Column gallery space. For Jane South, the difference between working within studio or gallery spaces and working outside with property sites as Matta-Clark did, urged her to consider a similar allotment of "gallery real estate" negotiated within the group show. As each artist's work divided up the exhibition space, South waited to use the leftover spaces, the gutter-spaces of the gallery so to speak. Her own work, depicting a lay-out of the gallery marked with each artist's site, engages with the relationship between neighboring artworks, akin to objects of property, taking as its subject the social and spatial networks momentarily formed by and negotiated through the group nature of the exhibition.

Working transactions that link specific bodies in specific sites are also the subject and material foundation of Sarah Oppenheimer's *Odd Lots* contribution.

Before the exhibition opening date, Oppenheimer contracted Stettner Construction company to remove sheetrock from the studs on a wall of the gallery and to reinstall the same sheetrock on the same studs five times. As Oppenheimer states, the contract and the finished wall, both of which comprise her exhibited artwork, demonstrate that “the form of property results from social transaction” much of which remains hidden from the buyer and owner.⁹⁵ The company’s workers, who would remain anonymous to future gallery visitors, were to use no new sheetrock or other materials during the un- and re-installation which was cyclically ongoing from August 13, 2005 until September 7, 2005 at which time all the debris was to be cleared. Stettner Construction received one thousand dollars from *Cabinet* magazine for their work. Imparted a visibility by Oppenheimer’s project, the work involved in sheet-rocking one wall that is reworked and renovated time and again, suggests that processes of replacement must acknowledge the specific material residues of past use.

For Mierle Laderman Ukeles, the specific and ongoing work needed to maintain the relationship between the gallery and the environment in and around Matta-Clark sites formed the basis of her piece titled “Queens Cookies/Sweet Splits.” Prior to the show, Ukeles located the best bakeries closest to several of Matta-Clark’s lots, and invited local bakers to use their favorite recipes to make a cookie based on their nearby lot’s shape. The baker’s sheets showing the holes after the shapes had been removed alongside the baked cookies were exhibited in a bakery store counter housed at the gallery. The cookies were for sale to viewers, while the money the cookies earned was used to make more. Ukeles’ process connects spatially with

⁹⁵ Sarah Oppenheimer, “Renovation,” *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark’s Fake Estates*, ed. Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi and Frances Richard.

Matta-Clark's actual sites through an extended network of new artists, workers, viewers, and buyers linked through consumption and demand. Her project also continually and visibly uses up the material bases of such connections and then enacts the subsequent socio-economic transactions required to keep the process going. While Matta-Clark's practice re-used sites that are rendered useless from the buying and selling process and are discarded like the remnants of Ukeles' cookie sheet, Ukeles' project makes use of this very process in order to re-embody and make visible the work necessary to keep the making, transacting, and using ongoing. In choosing to pair the act of baking, a skill traditionally aligned with women and homemakers, with Matta-Clark's engagement in the property market, Ukeles qualifies the invisibility of certain modes of making, transacting and using as gendered feminine. Her artwork is dependent on a local community's bakery, as a spatial center of potential gathering and knowledge, and on neighborhood traditions of baking recipes. Such dependencies makes accessible and legitimate alternate ways in which people may still come together across those neighborhoods, despite the economic cycle of use and discard and the displaced nature of modern spatial experience.

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The renewal and replacement of specifically embodied interactions with Gordon Matta-Clark, his unfinished *Fake Estates* project as a whole, and the individual sites he purchased was not only initiated through the participation of individual artists. Their particular pathways of return to Matta-Clark's material past as well as to his spatial and social concerns also instigate a collective replacement of

conventional modes of ownership and belonging. Indeed, the group nature of the Matta-Clark *Odd Lots* re-exhibition proposes an understanding of permeable spatial ownership in which sites oscillate between usefulness and uselessness, and in which the material fixity of property is, as Matta-Clark critiques, fake. Instead, ownership is determined through a specifically embodied and renewable process by which use-value is re-determined over time through the presence and passages of bodies, rather than situated in the owned object or built structure. Matta-Clark and the collection of *Odd Lots* artists continually replace connections between sites, buildings, and those who use and re-use them. Specifying the changing relations between sites and bodies, this network between artists, builders, sites, objects, viewers, participants and inhabitants is spatially specific while unfolding over time that is discontinuous. *Odd Lots* as a group exhibition enacts this network, keeping in play the oscillation between useful and useless sites while putting into practice specific dialogic interactions that negotiate a site's temporal duration and material situation over time and in relation to its users.

By purchasing unusable and inaccessible gutter-spaces, Matta-Clark overturned their uselessness, affording the sites a potentially critical use-value. Revisiting his initial and un-finalized plans, *Cabinet* magazine's research and new artistic commissions again overturned the unfinished project's potential while remaining committed to the overlapping of site-specific art, architectural, and urban planning practices. Responding to Matta-Clark's initial concerns, the *Odd Lots* group show reinvigorates a contemporary assessment of spatial experience not so very different from that of their predecessor. But the individual proposals, installations,

and practices housed and extending from the pages of *Cabinet* and the walls of White Columns also specify the working mode of this networked construction of property as collectively informing an experience of belonging not in fact strictly fixed in space but rather traced through meeting points between other bodies within a site. In other words, once released from conventions of containing space, ownership becomes a process of linkage that in turn proposes modes of belonging that can be unattached from ownership.

In addition to the dialogues initiated between the individual artworks and between the collective group and Matta-Clark, the *Odd Lots* exhibition offered a handful of bus tours to several of the properties in Queens. The spatial and social links made available through these tours, without ignoring the selective sites and bodies able to participate, offers a potential mode of belonging to spaces that do not, in turn, belong to us. Though free, participants had to book their places on the tours in advance, and only four were offered; not everybody could go. The first tour was given by Jaime Davidovich, Matta-Clark's video artist friend. The next two tours were guided by different teams of artists including Jimbo Blachly and Mark Dion who both participated individually in the *Odd Lots* exhibition. The last tour was guided by Nato Thompson who showed viewers modes of everyday resistance to fixed spatial norms, including cars parked in the wrong direction.

Coming into intimate spatial contact with the sites, those who had garnered places on the tours could also upon specific material residues of Matta-Clark's project, now in the temporal past. Passing through and around these sites, artists and viewers alike permeate both past and present site-lines demarcating ownable spaces

and rendering them porous and vulnerable to change. By moving from one to another, the tour groups not only repossessed Matta-Clark's resistant means of inhabiting space, but they also replaced the fixed sites of ownership as lines of temporal and spatial linkage. The demarcation of property sites is, therefore, traced by specific passages alternately accessible and inaccessible at various times to variously particular bodies. These passages of revisitation, much like the re-exhibition, suggest that re-use rather than dis-use, and replacement rather than displacement, together identify a mode of networked spatial ownership through which an experience of belonging is nonetheless possible. For Gordon Matta-Clark and all of the *Odd Lots* artists then, we may indeed belong to sites that we pass over and in spaces not individually or equally owned