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A Rose Has No Teeth: Bruce Nauman 1965-1974

by

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B.A. Art History
Vassar College, 1987

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARCHITECTURE: HISTORY AND THEORY OF ART

AT THE MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

JUNE 2001

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation develops a critical reading of the early work of the American artist, Bruce Nauman, who, in the mid-sixties, began creating a highly diverse and eclectic oeuvre—including discrete sculpture, photographic and text pieces, video and audio installations, neon signs, and cast body parts. While most studies focus on either one medium, theme, or body of work for review, I take a synthetic approach, arguing that the failure to locate the coherence of Nauman's art is due to the challenges it proposes theoretically and art historically. In the literature, the art of the late sixties is frequently divided into two strains of practice, which are seen as mutually exclusive—one defined through models of language, the other through the body and performance. Nauman's art, however, undermines the legitimacy of these divisions. As such, I propose that it raises philosophical and theoretical questions regarding the meanings of language, action, the body, experience, and subjectivity, resulting in the necessity for an art historical re-evaluation of their significance. The point of departure for my investigation is Nauman's reception of Minimalist sculpture, which challenged the traditional idea of medium and interrogated the perceptual conditions of the art object. I propose that Nauman's art, however, lends historical and social specificity to this project, responding to the extraordinary growth of technology and expansions of media in the sixties, which were, paradoxically, accompanied by a philosophical critique of the subject. As a result, I suggest that Nauman's practice overcomes the abstract notions of experience and limited definition of subjectivity Minimalism proposes. By examining the multiple material forms his investigation takes, I conclude that the very opacity of Nauman's art emerge as an embodiment—or an enactment—of its meanings. From enigmatic body sculptures,
which are frequently mistitled, to proposals for impossible performances, to the use of confining architectural spaces mediated by sound, light, and video recordings, the potentiality for communication (linguistic, perceptual) to fail or manipulate can be recognized as a central theme of Nauman's technically and stylistically diverse, but conceptually consistent, work.

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For Stefano and Grace D.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

There are many people who directly and indirectly contributed to this dissertation and I would like to take the opportunity to briefly acknowledge them here. First, I would like to thank my advisors, whose differing intellectual commitments and working methods were instrumental in shaping my thinking and endlessly inspiring more questions than answers. My primary advisor, Benjamin Buchloh, whose seminars at M.I.T. were some of the most engaging of my graduate school experience, was an ongoing source of intellectual exchange and valuable criticism during the arduous process of writing, helping me see this to completion when the end never seemed in sight. Michael Leja was extraordinarily generous with his time, insights, and reassuring advice, all of which were entirely unwarranted and graciously offered. Lastly, Yve-Alain Bois agreed to lend this project his support and exemplary intellect when he did not need to, for which I am extremely grateful.

I also want to thank Leila Kinney, whose sense of commitment to and advocacy for her students, in addition to her inspiring thinking, greatly enhanced my experience at M.I.T.. I am indebted to the many dear friends and colleagues who, in various ways, helped me write the following chapters. First, special mention goes to Leah Dickerman and Margaret Sundell, who sustained me in more ways than I can express. In
addition to being steadfast sources of friendship and encouragement, they endured the task of reading roughly-hewn chapters, helping to mold their form and my own thinking. Similarly, Frazer Ward and Helen Molesworth, through lively conversation and many dinners, shared their intelligence, humor, and camaraderie. Thanks also to Miwon Kwon for being a valuable interlocutor, Michael Lobel for his warmth and always welcome sage advice, and Catherine Morris and Ellen Tepfer for their enduring support and companionship. I also benefited from informal exchanges with Judith Rodenbeck, as our interests cross paths in interesting ways. I am grateful to Mary Jo Marks, a companion from my days at the C.U.N.Y Graduate Center, who secured materials and contacts for me in the early stages of conceiving this project. Similarly, I want to thank Kim Paice, whose creative intellect and friendship were so valuable to the formation of my own critical thinking.

My longtime friends, Jillian Hamilton and Sharon Giese, sustained me in other ways, providing an always entertaining and welcome relief from the lonely writing process. Thanks also to both my former and current colleagues at the Whitney Museum of American Art's Education Department, including Linda Daitz, Connie Wolf, Kathryn Potts, Helena Vidal, and Raina Lampkins-Fielder. During the early days of my research, the employees of Castelli Graphics--Maureen Mahoney, Alan Duffy, and Jodi Dady--opened up the Nauman
files for my scrutiny and ran the film projectors. Mentions of individuals who have contributed to the Nauman scholarship, making my task that much easier, appear in footnotes throughout the dissertation. I want, however, to acknowledge Joan Simon's painstaking research and editing of the Nauman catalogue raisonné that appears in the Walker Art Center retrospective catalogue; it was a constant resource for me during the course of my own research and writing and, without it, many questions would have remained unanswered and issues unrecognized.

Finally is my family--my sisters Pamela and Evelyn and my brother Michael, and my extended family of in-laws, nieces and nephews--and, especially my parents, Michael and Patricia Kraynak, without whose support I would never have been able to realize this project. Lastly, but first in this list of thanks, is my husband, best friend, sailing companion, and most formidable debater, Stefano Basilico. He endured and contributed more than anyone, for which no amount of thanks can adequately reciprocate. Without him, this dissertation, and I, would be incomplete.
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS: All works by Bruce Nauman, unless otherwise noted.


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68. *Run From Fear, Fun From Rear*, neon tubing with clear glass tubing on suspension frame, 1972.


BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE:

The following abbreviations are used throughout the dissertation:

**de Angelus**


**DCR**


**van Bruggen**


**Walker**


**WCR**

Simon, Joan, ed., Walker Art Center Catalogue Raisonné of Nauman works (in text, "WCR" is followed by entry number).
INTRODUCTION:

Not long ago, a friend and colleague relayed an anecdote to me regarding an encounter she had with Bruce Nauman's *Collection of Various Flexible Materials Separated by Layers of Grease with Holes the Size of my Waist and Wrists* (1966, figure 1). Attending an exhibition with her brother at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, she drew his attention to Nauman's laterally oriented floor piece, stating that it was the work of one of the most important artists of the postwar generation; yet she could not tell him anything about it.

Such loss for words was the inspiration for the current project. Given the magnitude of Nauman's reputation, the dizzying complexity and eclecticism of his art, an experience with Nauman's art often induces confusion and critical anxiety, resulting in an inability to locate the appropriate interpretive or descriptive language. Indeed, after embarking upon this project, I soon discovered that the more I looked at Naumans' art, the more I read and thought about it, the less I knew, and the more complicated and unwieldy it became. I was humbled by my object of study, which seemed to refuse to submit to any form of order, but kept inspiring new questions and taking me down an endless series of paths. The question that quickly arose was, is this lack of accountability or understanding a result of Nauman's art, or
is it due to the shortcomings of the explanatory models currently in place? If Nauman's work does not quite "fit" the dominant histories of sixties' art, then why? Is there, perhaps, another way of reading not just his work, but the period in which it emerged and developed? Does Nauman's art in some way point to what is left out of this history?

Ambivalent responses accompanied Nauman's art from the very first moments of its' exhibition. Fidel Danieli, writing in 1967, in one of the earliest pieces of criticism on the artist, declares, "A first encounter with the work of Bruce Nauman is extremely disconcerting. Very little prepares one for the realm of remarkable concepts and surprising forms with which this young sculptor deals." In other cases, the critics sense of discomfit and unease is projected onto the objects themselves and/or the artist himself, as evidence of his sadistic tendencies to cruelly manipulate his audience and the inherent "difficulty" of his enterprise. "Many artists please us, and we value them for it." one critic, reflecting back upon Nauman's career in the eighties, weighs in:

Other artists--a very few--haunt us, and we scarcely know what to do with them. I think of them as artists of difficulty [...] Nauman, forty-one years old, is the most baffling and discomfiting American artists of the last fifteen years. Like conscience, or malaria, he is a sometimes inconspicuous but finally stubborn

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presence in the culture, an avant-garde star of the
chaotic late '60s who, in contrast to others of
that breed, has survived periods of neglect and
self-doubt to grow even more disturbingly
powerful.²

Not all assessments of Nauman's "difficult" art are so kind,
however; in the tellingly titled "Vapid Wunderkind," one
conservative critic, reviewing the artist's early
retrospective, goes so far as to lament Nauman's "thinner
talent" through the language of emasculation: "One gets
videotape after videotape of Nauman gravely smearing his body
with black or green makeup [...] and (in) an effort named
Bouncing Balls, 1969, a long closeup of Nauman's unremarkable
testicles jiggling up and down. It makes the most tedious of
Warhol's movies seem like the chase scene in Bullitt.³

The following statement, however, summarizes the range of
reactions, whether praiseworthy or condemning: "You can
recognize a Nauman by the way it makes you want to go home."⁴
It is not simply the jarring noises, claustrophobic spaces,
and other forms sensory overload—which become more
pronounced in the later work—that lead to this assessment,
but also the sheer diversity of Nauman's practice, one which
overwhelms the viewer or commentator. Practically every
major strategy of the avant-garde from the sixties to the

²Peter Schjeldahl, "Profoundly Practical Jokes: The Art of Bruce
⁴Andrew Solomon, "Complex Cowboy: Bruce Nauman," New York Times Magazine
(March 5, 1995), p. 29.
present can be recognized in Nauman's art: fabricated sculpture of lead and iron, ephemeral pieces, photo-documents, abstract fiberglass and resin casts, suspended piles of felt, figurative body parts, performance films and videos, text works, neon signs, and large-scale room installations. In terms of art historical movements or paradigms, Nauman can be seen as post-Minimalist, Conceptual artist, performance artist, body artist. But while he is all of them, he is none of them. Any attempt to categorize his practice or his place within an historical movement or group will always fail, met with so many other examples that don't fulfill the imperatives of classification.

The sense of simultaneous belonging and displacement characterizing Nauman's art is matched by the artist's own biography. As a young artist, Nauman quickly attained extraordinary professional recognition and success. In 1966, he was granted a solo exhibition at the up-and-coming Nicholas Wilder Gallery in Los Angeles and, during the same year, was included in Lucy Lippard's important "Eccentric Abstraction" exhibition at New York's Fischbach Gallery. On the heels of these events, in 1968, he had his first exhibitions with the venerable Leo Castelli Gallery in New York and Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf, both of whom would become the artist's long-term dealers. Critics, curators, dealers and other artists recognized in Nauman's art--with its invocation of the body and use of unconventional, diverse
materials—a very different sculptural aesthetic than Minimalism, which at the time was still dominant. Additionally, the very elusiveness of Nauman’s work proved seductive, placing the beholder in a position of ambiguity that seemed appropriate for the uncertainties of a postmodern age.

Good fortune for the artist continued; in 1972, at the tender age of thirty-one, with only six or seven years of his career behind him, Nauman was the subject of a major, “mid-career” (which can now be recognized as an early career) retrospective, co-organized by Jane Livingston and Marcia Tucker of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, respectively. The exhibition traveled to these host institutions as well as six other venues in Europe and America. Nauman’s reputation as a major artist was sealed. Yet during this entire time, he remained ambivalently connected to the power centers of the art world—in particular, New York and Europe—preferring to remain in the relative “backwaters” of Northern California and then, in 1979, moving to the desert town Pecos, New Mexico.


6During this time, Nauman lived in New York for less than a year—in 1968, which was around the time of his first exhibition at Leo Castelli Gallery. Characteristically, however, Nauman did not remain in Manhattan, but moved to a house co-owned by artists Roy Lichtenstein and Paul Waldman in Southampton, Long Island. There, during the winter 1968–69, armed with the video camera Nauman had urged Leo Castelli to purchase, he made his first videotapes.

7In an interview from 1980, Nauman remarks, “I think that both intellectually and emotionally I feel comfortable with that distance on
the internationally acclaimed, cutting-edge, contemporary artist, became a cowboy.

Given the work's complexity and the biographical idiosyncrasies of its maker, where does this leave the chronicler of Nauman's art? Despite its profile and ubiquity, its perceived significance as a precedent for much of contemporary art, and the vast amount of critical literature, why does Nauman's art remain so elusive? Over and above its willful plurality, are there any defining qualities? Does it possess an identifiable coherence that transgresses surface differences? Or is it hopelessly, schizophrenically divided within itself, as so many personalities that co-exist but do not and cannot cohere?

Faced with the heterogeneity and difficulty of Nauman's art, many commentators seek terra firma by focusing on a specific medium (e.g. neons, drawings), body of work (e.g. performance films), or single theme (i.e., phenomenology, Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy\(^8\)). Indeed surveying the vast number of solo exhibitions devoted to Nauman's art, one will notice

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the art world. I've always had that in a certain sense. [...] even if I went to install the show, I usually left right afterwards, so I didn't get a lot of direct feedback. In the early days I couldn't afford to travel anyway, a lot of times the work was shipped and put up and I wasn't even there. So I always had a kind of distance. It took two years before I found out what people thought about thinkgs anyway." de Angelus, p. 93.

that many follow this procedure, isolating one medium for review: "Bruce Nauman: Neons" (Baltimore Museum of Art, 1982); "Bruce Nauman: Drawings/Zeichnungen 1965-86" (Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, 1986)\(^9\); "Bruce Nauman: Videos 1965-1986" (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1988); "Bruce Nauman: Skulpturen und Installationen 1985-1990" (Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, 1990)\(^10\); "Bruce Nauman: Prints 1970-1989" (Castelli Graphics, Lorence-Monk Gallery, New York, 1989).\(^11\) While these many efforts have provided extremely valuable insights into key aspects of the artist's production, revealing and transmitting its breadth and depth, what remains is a series of critical fragments, which have the unintentional consequence of atomizing Nauman's art.

Those exhibitions that do not follow this format—in particular the recent impressive, large-scale retrospective organized by the Walker Art Center—while taking an inclusive approach, have not attempted, however, to offer a comprehensive theory or reading of the artist's practice, nor to articulate the specificity of its art historical context and significance.\(^12\) The following seeks to offer an

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\(^9\)The exhibition traveled to ten other venues in Europe and America, listed in Walker, p. 345.

\(^10\)For the list of European venues to which the exhibition traveled, see Walker, p. 346.

\(^11\)The "Prints" exhibition was simultaneously exhibited at Donald Young Gallery, Chicago, Earl McGrath Gallery, Los Angeles, and Pence Gallery, Santa Monica.

\(^12\)This statement is made, however, with a caveat, in that I would also like to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution the Walker retrospective's curators, Neal Bezerra and Kathy Halbreich, have made to Nauman scholarship—and, as a result, to my own project. As much of Nauman's work is very inaccessible, because it remains in private
alternative, taking a comprehensive approach to an investigation of the early period of Nauman’s art. This undertaking is not pursued in hopes of making untenable claims for the artificial unity of Nauman’s work, nor to mitigate its internal disquietude and unresolved nature that, in a very meaningful way, refuse to allow for clarity and resolution. In fact, this study hopes to elucidate that the very opacity of Nauman’s art is an embodiment or, more precisely, an enactment of its meanings, demonstrating the unreliability of communication itself. In lieu of offering a singular concept as the organizing principle or master signified of his oeuvre, this study attempts to identify and illuminate a set of concerns underlying stylistically and technically pluralistic works. Approached as a whole, it is my contention that Nauman’s art can be recognized as not standing outside of, but rigorously challenging accepted tenets regarding the development of sixties art in the aftermath of Minimalism, as well as the categorical divisions that art history itself has erected in its subsequent interpretation.

collections or, as in the case of the room installations, it does not exist until it is exhibited, the retrospective was one of the few opportunities to view the totality of Nauman’s art in context. Also notable is the 1997 exhibition Bruce Nauman: Image/Text 1966-1996, organized by Christine van Assche at the Centre Georges Pompidou, which traveled to the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, the Hayward Gallery, London, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki. The exhibition provided the opportunity to view a large representation of Nauman’s films, video and sound installations, and neon. Additionally, essays and interviews in the catalogue address Nauman’s relationship to Samuel Beckett, Meredith Monk, and avant-garde film, among other topics.
While Nauman belongs to the generation of artists who came of age upon the heels of Minimalism—and thus his work is most frequently discussed in terms of "post" Minimal aesthetic developments—I propose that the point of departure for his practice was Minimalism's transformation of sculpture: namely, from a stationary, self-contained entity to a temporal, bodily, and experiential field. With this redefinition of the sculptural object, Minimalism explored the interconnectedness and impurity of the senses, leading to the collapse of definitive boundaries of medium and discipline—all of which are central to Nauman's working method. But in the literature, the progress of sculpture after Minimalism is often relayed in terms of a genealogy or a discrete series of stages. First comes post-Minimalism, which is seen to emphasize the temporality suggested in Minimalism's phenomenological subject, while overcoming its commitment to stable, built form through an investigation of process. Following post-Minimalism, two other set of strategies—or paradigms—are said to emerge: performance and Conceptual art, both which take their cues from Minimalism, but are seen to articulate its different, contradictory sides. In short, performance (and body art) is thought to be concerned with notions of the subject and subjectivity, while displacing the crafted object altogether by directly using

13See Chapter One for a more thorough discussion of Minimalism and its legacy.
the artist's body as subject and medium. At the same time, Conceptual art (and Institutional Critique), taking cues from Minimalism's reconsideration of the readymade and its spatial extension of sculpture, probe the linguistic and ideological definitions of art and site and the linguistic conditions of perception.

This art historical division, however, is based upon certain theoretical premises that are themselves problematic. First, through the body, performance (as a set of practices or strategies) is thought to secure an authenticity of experience and represent a more "real" artistic form. Second, "language" is viewed as disembodied, anti-material, and anti-experiential: in short, an impersonal entity that bears little relation to human action. A central ambition of this dissertation, however, is to challenge these presumptions, arguing that not only can they not be taken at face value, but in Nauman's practice, they are a point of critique. As a result, in this project, I reconsider the meanings of both "performance" and "language" theoretically and art historically. Strict divisions between body/language and action/thought are not maintained--and furthermore, are deconstructed. Approached this way, it is my contention that seeming discontinuities between Nauman's various artworks begin to evaporate.
The dissertation's chosen time-frame--from 1965, the beginning of Nauman's career, to around 1974-75--directly corresponds to the period between Minimalism and the rise of Institutional Critique in the early seventies in which the visual, perceptual, ideological, and ontological status of the art object underwent a thorough transformation. These art historical circumstances were not, however, the sole motivation for this study's temporal focus. Rather I maintain that the concerns Nauman's art initiates in relation to Minimalism around 1965 culminate in the room installations that dominate his practice between 1969 and 1974. In these large-scale works--which incorporate architectural elements, video imagery/recording, sound, and light--the viewer is insistently engaged, made to perform a range of sensory tasks including moving, listening, reading, and thinking. Additionally, various mechanisms of estrangement--first introduced in a series of sculptures in the mid-sixties--become even more pronounced. While the work following this period, after 1974-75, represents by no means an absolute break, an alternate set of strategies and issues emerge (for example, a reconsideration of explicit narrative structures), leading to a set of concerns outside the scope of this project.

Furthermore, the time-frame of this study corresponds to a set of historical conditions resonant in the sixties: a period that ends, following Frederic Jameson, "around 1972-
74." This period witnessed a dual dynamic: an extraordinary technological growth—in which human effort to harness understanding of and control the external world reached new heights—and, simultaneously, a profound philosophical skepticism regarding the autonomy and power of the subject. This paradoxical coupling led to a situation in which the expansion of technology and media had to be negotiated by a subject whose power to act in a willful and intentional way was most critically withering away.\footnote{Nauman's art, following Minimalism, continually foregrounds the viewing subject as a sentient being determinant of the artwork's meaning. But at the same time, it demonstrates the \textit{inability} of the beholder to determine or dictate the terms of that engagement. Unlike \textcite{Jameson1969} to understand the term "period" from its conventional definition: "Here... the 'period' in question," he writes, "is understood not as some omnipresent and uniform shared style or way of thinking and acting, but rather as the sharing of a \textit{common objective situation}, to which a whole range of varied responses and creative innovations is then possible, but always within that \textit{situation's structural limits}." (p. 170, my emphases) Under Jameson's reformulation, a "period" represents not a homogeneous entity—e.g. the period of x, y or z as determined or guided by one principle, such as "The Age of Reason"—but recognizes the conditional or "situation's limits" of any historical time, within which parallel responses in different fields emerge.\footnote{As Jameson points out, a profound questioning of the status and meaning of the subject and his/her autonomy pervaded intellectual, cultural and aesthetic practices in the sixties, leading to triumph of structuralism—or what is often referred to as the "linguistic turn" of the decade. Structuralism's notion of language as a self-contained system of arbitrary and differential signs, untethered from the world of "real" objects, inspires an examination of the impersonal or extra-personal laws and institutions which shape collective practice and behavior (Foucault's notion of \textit{discourse} being one example). At the same time, however, a media revolution was accompanied by an unprecedented expansion of capital. For Jameson, these unique conditions led to a form of crisis, resulting in the parallel phenomenon of an internal realignment of academic and artistic disciplines, and an external realignment of national/international political and economic relations. See Jameson, "Periodizing the Sixties," cited above.}
the phenomenological tendencies of Minimal art—in which the subject is able to ground consciousness and secure his/her bodily identification with the world of external objects—and its elaboration in more ideal forms of expressive performance art, Nauman's work takes a far dimmer, and more critical approach. By replicating or responding to the conditions of a media (mediated) environment, Nauman denies the viewer a sense freedom and control. The limitations of interactivity, now embraced by technology and media as a tool of manipulation, I suggest, come sharply into relief. In so doing, Nauman's work both incorporates and critiques the phenomenological dimensions of Minimalism, building upon its investigation of experience, while lending it social and historical specificity.

Additionally, Nauman's practice responds to the disciplinary realignment initiated during the sixties, in which, to use Roland Barthes' term, there was an "intertextual" turn. In brief, rather than remaining within a specific discipline, which possesses its own rules and subjects, one works "intertextually", moving across and through disciplines, almost randomly. For Jameson, this development is summarized as "the withering away of philosophy"—that is, a shift from the distinctiveness and totalizations of philosophical inquiry to the porosity and partiality of "theory."¹⁶ "The

new text must necessarily be a commentary on other texts,"

Jameson remarks:

[...] yet those texts drawn from the most widely
distant disciplines (anthropology, psychiatry,
literature, history of science), will be selected
in a seemingly arbitrary fashion [...] The
vocation of what was formerly 'philosophy' is
thereby structured and displaced: since there is no
longer a tradition of philosophical problems in
terms of which new positions and new statements can
meaningfully be proposed, such works now tend
towards what can be called metaphilosophy—the very
different work of coordinating a series of
pregiven, already constituted codes and signifiers,
of producing a discourse fashioned out of the
already fashioned discourse of the constellation of
ad hoc reference works.17

"Intertextuality" has a counterpart in sixties art in the
notion of "intermedia", first advanced by the Fluxus
collective—a group of artists whose experiments with
performance, music, and performative linguistic structures, I
propose, serves as an important precedent for Nauman's
project.18 Intermedia suggests a working between media,
rather than harmoniously integrating different media.
Nauman's art takes a similar approach. As a result of
Nauman's reception of the Minimalist challenge to the notion
of medium and John Cage's investigation of the integration of
the senses—both examined in the following chapters—his
artwork transgresses not just media within the visual arts,
but also liberally crosses disciplinary boundaries.

17Ibid., p. 193.
18See Chapter Five for a discussion of Fluxus.
While Nauman's manner of working is, in some respects, consistent with that of intermedia, I want to characterize it, however, in slightly different term, proposing instead the notion of *bricolage*--that is, a borrowing freely from and recycling of a range of disparate sources. The *bricoleur* is the handyman, the diddler, the one who "uses the means at hand," in the words of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, in order to make something new, without inventing anything.\(^{19}\) Similarly, in his work, Nauman freely mines all available resources and precedents, incorporating strategies and ideas from a range of disciplines, not confined to the limitations of the "visual" arts--and in part to overcome and critique those very limitations.\(^{20}\) "I just couldn't see how to proceed as a painter..." Nauman once remarked,

> It still puzzles me how I made decisions in those days about what was possible and what wasn't. I ended up drawing on music and dance and literature, using thoughts and ideas from other fields to help me to continue to work. In that sense, the early work, which seems to have all kinds of materials and ideas in it, seemed very simple to make because it wasn't coming from looking at sculpture or painting.


\(^{20}\)As Derrida clarifies, the *bricoleur* employs "the instruments he finds at his disposition around him [...] those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous--and so forth." Ibid, p. 285.
I don't mean that it was simple to do the work. But it was simple that in the '60s you didn't have to pick just one medium. There didn't seem to be any problem with using different kinds of materials—shifting from photographs to dance to performance to videotapes. It seemed very straightforward to use all those different ways of expressing ideas or presenting material. You could make neon signs, you could make written pieces, you could make jokes about parts of the body or casting things, or whatever.21

Given the significance of moving outside the confines of the visual arts (and art history) for the production of Nauman's art, this study contemplates the use-value, in turn, of these fields for revealing critical insights and building an interpretation of the objects themselves. Following my subject, I draw upon a range of material from other disciplines—namely philosophy, literature, dance, film and music—remaining attentive to shifting historical paradigms within these fields. Thus while each of following chapters is centered around either a specific issue or a specific body of work, each one also develops in relation to a discipline outside the visual arts from which Nauman's art draws and to which I turn. In so doing, this study aims to move beyond the confines of the genealogies of art history by probing critical challenges posed by other fields as a means to question accepted definitions of strategies and concepts that shape and inform the history and reception of sixties' art. It is the hope that this approach will contribute to an

21Joan Simon "Breaking the Silence: an Interview with Bruce Nauman," Art in America vol. 76, no. 9 (September, 1988), pp. 142-143.
understanding of the value of interdisciplinarity both on the sides of production and reception. As a result, I am less interested in probing lines of influence, than in working synchronically, aiming to uncover parallel developments across different fields as they undergo transformation in the sixties.

Chapter One serves as a general introduction and establishes the terms of the discussion by contextualizing Nauman's art within the transformation of sculpture initiated by Minimalism. It argues that Minimalism's definition of a temporalized, experiential, subjective and contextual notion of sculpture is both the point of departure for, and point of critique of, Nauman's early work. In particular, I demonstrate how Nauman's art questions the givenness of the body and phenomenological experience, destabilizing these terms, while particularizing and historicizing the issue of experience and offering alternative notions of subjectivity. Furthermore, while Minimalism represents a significant break with modernist tenets, this chapter examines how Nauman's art identifies the persistent grasp of an abstract logic on Minimalist sculpture.

Chapter Two examines an enigmatic, diverse group of sculptures Nauman began producing between 1966-67. While incorporating a range of representational models--from the figurative to the indexical--they all, in some way, figure,
conjure, or reference the body. The latent notions of realism and authenticity governing the art historical discourse of body art serves as a point of departure for my interrogating the "reality" and "truth" of these sculptures. Rather than "realism," I maintain that what returns in these works is the "reality"—or the referent—within the constitution of the sign. What is suggested, thus, is that Nauman's body sculptures represent the return of modernism's (and, in some cases, postmodernism's) repressed: namely, the question of referentiality, a project, I propose, that has a precedent in the nouveau-roman's critical reconsideration of literary modernity.

Chapter Three is the first of three chapters that offer an extensive rumination upon the issue of performance. This chapter begins by questioning the validity of the strict art historical separation between models of performance and language in the reception of late sixties art. Through its reception of avant-garde dance of the period—with its transformed idea of the performer and self-reflexive analysis of performance—Nauman's art develops a more expansive idea of performance. In short, those things conventionally thought to be outside the confines of the performance event—including choreography, scores, notations, and documentation—are understood to be immanent to it. Drawing upon the concept of performativity from linguistic philosophy—which theorizes the relationship between speech or language and
action—I argue that Nauman's sculpture acquires multiple performance forms: from bodily enactments (i.e. filmed performances) to textual ones (i.e. proposals and instructions), undermining the implied opposition between the two.

Chapter Four continues the discussion of performance, focusing upon the contingencies of the recording apparatus. In the literature, the use of photographic reproduction in performance pieces and ephemeral artworks is often discussed in terms of the document—as a passive, transparent witnesses preserving impermanent events. In contrast, I argue that in Nauman's art, performance itself is articulated through reproduction, collapsing the moment of production and reproduction, presentation and representation, and ultimately, the object and the document. As a result, I examine how experience and vision are orchestrated and defined through the mediums of film and video, regulating the content and meaning of Nauman's performances, which are seen to undermine the value of "presence" associated with the live event.

Chapter Five offers a coda to the dissertation, beginning with an analysis of the room installations of 1969-1974, which are viewed as a culmination of the concerns initiated in the early work, while also offering another dimension to the performance discussion. This chapter identifies the
extensive use of sound in Nauman's art, posing question what
does it mean to listen to an artwork? By considering the
precedent of the experimental music of John Cage and his
followers, I propose that Nauman's art counters the
hierarchies of "seeing" and "hearing" latent in modernism,
employing sound to shape space into "sculptures of sound."
But the reference or context for sound in Nauman's art is not
music, this chapter argues, but language--that is, speech.
In closing, this chapter identifies and theorizes the
implications of a subjective model of language that, I
maintain, is operative in Nauman's art.

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The title for this study, *A Rose Has No Teeth*, is taken from a
sculpture Nauman made in 1966 (figure 2). In this work, the
phrase is inscribed on a small, lead plaque that is mounted
to tree with hopes that bark eventually would grow over the
piece and it would disappear. Relating to contemporary site-
specific sculpture and earth art, while not really belonging
to either category,\(^{22}\) the piece's wittiness and strangeness is

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\(^{22}\)Furthermore, the artist has made several ascerbic asides regarding
earth art. In discussing *A Rose*, Nauman once remarked, "...at one point
I thought about making outdoor sculpture. I thought that outdoor
sculpture was usually big and durable but seemed very dumb, because it's
already nice outside with trees and fields and I didn't want to put
something out there and change it all." Joe Raffaele and Elizabeth
Artnews, (Summer, 1967), p. 75. As testimony to these sentiments, on
the occasion of an earth art exhibition in 1969, Nauman developed a
proposal for a performance in which a skywriting plane would be
commissioned to write the words, "Leave the earth alone" in the sky.
(See WCR no. 161). Also his 1966 *Cardboard Floor Piece with Foot Hole,*
embodied in the words it contains. Nauman borrowed the phrase from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, where it is an example of what the philosopher calls a "language-game," which emphasizes that the meaning of language is dependent upon "use": that is, assumptions and knowledge external to the linguistic phrase itself. We know, after all that babies have teeth, but flowers do not.\(^{23}\)

As an analogue for Nauman's practice, *A Rose Has No Teeth* functions in several ways: for one, it emphasizes the performance dimension of language or how meaning arises through its utterance and material contexts. Secondly, while we understand all the individual words of the phrase, together, it makes no sense. Likewise, the many "parts" or sub-groups of Nauman's art can be situated into neat categories, lines of influence, or specific contexts, but collectively, there is a roadblock to understanding. As a unity, fissures seem to materialize. This study does not claim to resolve all the difficulties of Nauman's practice, nor to account for the many issues it raises—as indeed much more can be said and needs to be pursued. Rather it aims to

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\(^{23}\)As Nauman explains, "[Wittgenstein] is talking about language and he says to think about the difference between 'A rose has no teeth' and 'A baby has no teeth'. With the first one, you don't know what it means, because you've made an assumption outside the sentence. So when I thought of what to put on this plaque I thought of these words, because they have as much to do with nature as anything I could think of." Joe Rafaelle and Elizabeth Baker, "Way Out West," p. 75.
offer a potential roadmap with which to start to rethink Nauman's important early work: to consider, that is, how a rose can have teeth.
"There has to be some conflict between what is already known and the innovation; if there is no relationship or connection, then very little will happen. It won't even be seen."  

In the mid-sixties, Bruce Nauman produced a series of sculptures that might be described as imperfectly Minimalist. Cast of the Space Under My Chair (1965-68, figure 3) appears to be a misshapen Donald Judd cube. Platform Made Up of the Space between Two Rectilinear Boxes on the Floor (1966, figure 4) transforms a Robert Morris regular, geometric form into an irregular, flat shape of chipped and stained resin. The pristine surfaces and clean edges of a Carl Andre lateral floor piece are rendered into a pockmarked slab in Wax Impressions of the Knees of Five Famous Artists (1966, figure 5). And the multipart sculpture, Shelf Sinking into the Wall with Copper-Painted Casts of the Spaces Underneath (1966, figure 6), playfully subverts the rigidity of serial progression, with two of its sections resting on the floor, seemingly descended from their host above.

In descriptive terms, Minimalism appears cold, formal, and technical, replete with regularized, uninflected shapes and surfaces. With the exception of Robert Morris, its proponents—including Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, and Dan Flavin, among others—developed a systematic art

contained within limited aesthetic parameters, not unlike the
seriality endemic to high modernism, from the grids of
Mondrian to the abstractions of Rothko. Nauman's art, in
contrast, is gestural, messy, bodily, and resolutely
pluralistic. It moves from medium to medium, discipline to
discipline with ease. Indeed its heterogeneity, or lack of
coherence, is often cited as its one--and only--unifying
characteristic.²

It is no surprise, therefore, that Nauman's art is widely
considered, if not anti-minimalist, then certainly after
Minimalism. This belatedness leads to the sub-division of
his oeuvre into groups, which are theorized in the context of
post-Minimalist, process, performance, video, body and
Conceptual art. While many of Nauman's works can be
interpreted in these terms, such an approach bears a
significant, if unintended consequence--that of eliding any
serious accounting of the intimate engagement Nauman's art
has with Minimalism.

Nauman's career as an artist began in 1965-1966, in the midst
of Minimalism's artistic and critical dominance.³ During that

²In an interview, Nauman describes being "trapped into using a
particular medium, or not trapped so much as, you use it a lot and
finally find out its wrong. It's getting in the way." de Angelus, p.
78.

³Although not unchallenged during this period, the Minimalist aesthetic
remained a critical focus and point of reference well into 1968. The
non-linearity of this history is significant in that there is a tendency
to think of neat transitions between a Minimal period into, for example,
a post-Minimal one, when more often than not, these were co-existing, in
dialogue to one another. For example, 1966 was also the year of several
period, several seminal exhibitions of Minimal work were mounted: "Shape and Structure" at Tibor de Nagy Gallery; "Primary Structures" at the Jewish Museum; and "10" at Dwan Gallery, among others. There were a flurry of solo exhibitions, including those of Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Donald Judd, John McCracken, and Robert Mangold. Nauman himself alludes to the work of Robert Morris and Richard Serra in several interviews, while emphasizing that his primary access to artistic developments in New York was through art magazines.\(^4\)

In raising this temporal overlap, I do not want to fall prey to the perils of historicism by implying that the

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important "post-Minimalist" exhibitions, including "Art in Process" at Finch College and Robert Smithson's exhibition at Dwan Gallery. What is at issue here is how history itself is understood to unfold, and thus how subsequent historical accounts are written.

\(^4\)Nauman mentions the role art magazines played early in his career for obtaining information about the work of Jasper Johns and Marcel Duchamp. (de Angelus, p. 38). His statements also suggest that magazines provided an important source for more contemporary developments, such as Minimalism. Jane Livingston, writing in 1972, refers to the significance of Robert Morris' Artforum articles on sculpture, citing Nauman: "As Nauman now looks back on his interest in gestalt theory, he recalls being excited by Robert Morris' writings in 1966 and later 'realizing things could be a lot more complex and still deal with the same kind of experience. Morris and other people quoted applicable or convenient things...I was interested in the concept of completion, and I still am. But I'm not so interested any more in the theories behind the feeling.'" J. Livingston and Marcia Tucker, Bruce Nauman: Work from 1965-1972 (Los Angeles and New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1972), p. 16. Also regarding Robert Morris, Coosje van Bruggen--referring to her conversation with Nauman, in which they discussed his decision to stop creating fiberglass sculptures in 1966--writes, "As a next step Nauman started to make rubber floor pieces, all cast in the same mold, with their colors mixed into the material. [...] That same year the New York art dealer Richard Bellamy put some of these rubber pieces in his summer group show, and shortly thereafter Robert Morris, then a better-known artist than Nauman, showed some similar works in felt. Nauman recalls reacting with considerable competitiveness to Morris, though he recognized Morris's ability in handling materials." van Bruggen, p. 12.
contemporaneity of Nauman's early work and Minimalism itself justifies the proximity of his project to the latter; rather, I want to return to the context of Minimalism in order to argue that Nauman's project was formed in critical relation to both its possibilities and its ultimate limitations. In Minimalism, the very category of "sculpture" was radically redefined and its potentials expanded—namely, sculpture became contextual, temporal, experiential and subjective.\(^5\)

The following discussion turns on an investigation of these terms ('context,' 'temporality,' 'experience,' and 'subjectivity') which together inform and emerge from Minimalism's redefinition of sculpture, and which constitute the critical legacy most pertinent to Nauman's practice. In probing how Nauman's art responds to Minimalism, this chapter has two aims: first, to establish the theoretical and thematic foundation upon which remaining chapters of this dissertation will build; and second, to rethink Minimalism's legacies in late sixties art in more general terms. In this chapter, I will argue that through a more attentive accounting of Nauman's relationship to Minimalism, not only

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\(^5\)For an account of Minimalism's transformation of the terms of sculpture, see Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985). Additionally, it should be emphasized that although here a particular trajectory of Minimalism is being addressed—in order to articulate Nauman's relationship certain issues it sets in motion—the term "Minimalism" encompasses a heterogeneous field of practices. See James Meyer's forthcoming book for a thorough historical overview of Minimalism, one which also establishes the complexities of the term. Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
can the underlying coherence of his project to be surmised, but the history of Minimalism's artistic aftermath itself can be revisited. In order to do so, it is first necessary to briefly summarize the break that Minimalism represents.

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Minimalism's questioning of modernist tenets and ideals can be summarized through two terms: the body and experience. Several of the artists who would be central to the formation of the Minimalist aesthetic were enthusiastically drawn to the then recently translated edition of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. In fact, the core project of Minimalism might be described by modifying Merleau-Ponty's declaration, "The theory of the body is already as theory of perception," into "A theory of sculpture is a theory of the body is already a theory of perception."

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Through the presentation of art objects with no "interest," no visual gratification, and no separate compositional parts in "actual" space on the floor of otherwise bare galleries, Minimalism intended the viewer to grasp the object in context. Minimalist sculpture departed from the premise that we (as subjects of consciousness) are separable from the external world of objects, mounting a philosophical as well as an artistic challenge. Its insistence upon the contextual nature of perception serves to deconstruct the metaphysical dualism of subject-object, by demonstrating that one term in the pair bears properties of its supposed opposite. Subjects (i.e. viewers) are defined through their relation to objects, not as self-contained consciousness; and the sculptural object is subjectivized, insofar as its existence and meaning relies upon a situation with a beholding subject.

If Minimalism launched a philosophical attack on dualist thinking, its artistic challenge was twofold, in that the self-sufficiency of artistic objects is a central principle not just of modernism (with its belief in the autonomy of art), but traditional aesthetics as well, in which art is thought to occupy a separate realm of existence from the quotidiant. It was this aesthetic challenge that initially most upset Minimalism's detractors. Hence, Richard Wollheim's intent in using the term "minimal" to describe what he felt was an art of annihilation and negation, one
that, moreover, possesses no "content." The "ordinary,"
anti-aesthetic quality of Minimalist sculptures led Michael
Fried to describe them as "literalist objects"—a terminology
coined in partial response to Donald Judd's notion of
Minimalism's "specific objects". Fried's attack on
Minimalism, outlined in his 1967 "Art and Objecthood," has
achieved a certain infamy in postwar art history, not simply
because of the level of its negativity, but because Fried's
critique demonstrated an extraordinary understanding of the
work, and even a prescience for what would succeed it. The
significance of Fried's analysis lies in the fact that it
moved beyond an assault upon Minimalism's "minimal" art
qualities, recognizing that its more consequential break was
in displacing the object (i.e. the artwork) altogether,
substituting experience or the work "in a situation." In
Minimalism, as Fried notes, meaning does not inhere within
the artwork; rather, meaning originates beyond its
boundaries, and depends upon the experience of the object in
space and time through the mediating term of the beholder.

7Richard Wollheim, "Minimal Art," Arts Magazine (January, 1965),
reprinted in Minimal Art: a Critical Anthology, ed. Gregory Battcock
has no "content" is perhaps what set it apart in Wollheim's and others'
thinking. While associations between art and ordinary things—or the
former defined as the latter—is hallmark of the Duchampian and Pop
readymade, the ordinariness of Minimalism seemed more an affront. Not
only were its objects ordinary and mechanically fabricated, but they
didn't even indulge the senses with recognizable symbols, forms,
illusionism and color; all these aspects, present in Pop, were banished
in an unforgiving industrialist aesthetic.
8Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," Arts Yearbook 8 (1965), reprinted in
Complete Writings 1959-1975 (Halifax and New York: The Press of the Nova
9Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," Artforum vol. 5, no. 10 (Summer,
Minimalism's situational quality led Fried to condemn it as "theatrical." "Literalist sensibility," he writes, "is theatrical because, to begin with, it is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters literalist work." The simple acknowledgment of a beholder was in and of itself problematic for Fried, whose subsequent writing charts an historical narrative of art's attempt to "defeat theater" as an integral component of the development of modernism. For Fried, the meaning of art objects exists independently of their surfacing in the world (i.e. prior to and regardless of their communicative interaction with the viewer/beholder). In Minimalism, the inverse is true: the

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10 Ibid., p. 15.
11 Fried later remarks, "I have subsequently done a lot of historical work aimed at establishing that the attempt to defeat the theatrical was a central impulse of a major tradition within French painting between, say, Greuze and Manet." Fried's comment is from a paper he delivered for the panel "Theories of Art After Minimalism and Pop," at the Dia Foundation in New York in 1987. The proceedings were published as Discussions in Contemporary Culture I, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), p. 57. Fried is referring to a series of books written subsequent to "Art and Objecthood," including, Courbet's Realism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), Manet's Modernism (or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s) (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1996), and Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and the Beholder in the Age Of Diderot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
12 It is useful to compare in this regard Fried's assessment of the beholder in the early formalist criticism of Alois Riegl, who attributes one of the central accomplishments of seventeenth century Dutch painting precisely to its recognition of a beholding subject. In specific, Riegl maintains that a unity is produced between the figures and forms within the painting (yielding its "internal coherence") and the acknowledged beholder (its "external coherence"). In a fascinating account of Riegl's notion of "attentiveness" and the beholder, Margaret Olin refers to Fried's reading of Minimalism, which she argues misrepresents Riegl's theories: "In the most provocative contemporary exploration of the issue of beholding, however, Riegl's formal system has indeed been appropriated, but in service of a set of values diametrically opposed to Riegl's own. Michael Fried began with concerns similar to those of Riegl. He used Riegl's vocabulary without an acknowledged awareness of
object and the viewer are physically and literally co-present in a recognized shared space. Fried contrasts this quality—what he terms Minimalism's "presence"—to modernism's "presentness." The former may be described as a material temporality, one of the lived, actual world. The latter, in contrast, suggests an ideal time, a temporality that essentially exists outside of time. What needs to be emphasized here is that a particular understanding, or model, of temporality is operative in Fried's analysis, one which is beholden to a metaphysics of time.

Jacques Derrida analyzes this idealism of a permanent present in his reflections on "the meaning Being" in traditional metaphysics, and, in particular, the philosophy of Heidegger. Derrida approaches the ontological issue of Being in terms of the problematic of time, by querying, "In what way has a certain determination of time implicitly governed the determination of the meaning of Being in the history of philosophy?"\footnote{Jacques Derrida, "Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from Being and Time," in his Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 30.} Specifically, Derrida attacks the "privilege of the present," in which the essence of time is said to be its origin, but with a perceptive understanding of its consequences. In the 1960s, Fried used the terms 'optical' and 'tactile' to denote essentially the same formal characteristics as Riegl. 'Tactile' suggests the palpably, or verifiably, real, as it did for Riegl, while 'optical' suggests the mental, or, as Riegl would have termed it, the subjective. From nearly identical premises, however, Fried and Riegl drew opposed conclusions. Fried thought modern art needed to exclude the appearance of reality provided by tactile values. Similarly, his exploration of theatricality is not a defense, but a passionate attack against an art that seeks contact with the beholder." Margaret Olin, "Forms of Respect: Alois Riegl's Concept of Attentiveness," The Art Bulletin, vol. LXXX, no. 2 (June, 1989), p. 297.
the "now": what for Hegel is the "jetzt". Fried's conception of the artwork's "presentness" implies this form of always present, in which time does not unfold but appears as a succession of points of presence.\footnote{As Derrida writes of Hegel, the "now" is "a point" or the "absolute this." Ibid., p. 37.} But in Minimalism, Fried declares,

...the experience in question persists in time, and the presentment of endlessness which, I have been claiming, is central to literalist art and theory is essentially a presentment of endlessness, or indefinite, duration. [...] The literalist preoccupation with time--more precisely, with the duration of experience--is, I suggest, paradigmatically theatrical; as though theater confronts the beholder, and thereby isolates him, with the endlessness not just of objecthood but of time...\footnote{Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 22 (author's emphases).}

In contrast, Fried contends that modernist painting and sculpture possess a "presentness," suggesting a transcendental, unchanging state: a single point, as opposed to a succession of points or a duration. As he describes it, "... a continuous and entire presentness, amounting, as it were, to the perpetual creation of itself, that one experiences as a kind of instantaneousness: as though if only one were infinitely more acute, a single infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience a work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it."\footnote{Ibid., p. 22.}
With Minimalism's slippage into "presence" (or a durational model of time), art's autonomy is at stake, but moreover, introduced into the parameters of sculpture—a visual and resolutely spatial medium—is temporality: something putatively alien to all visual art. This problem of time is key to the debate over sculpture—and the art object in the sixties in general. For Fried, the modernist valuation of pictorialism is in part a defense against the temporal and, by association, the real. In order to render meaning self-evident and the experience of an artwork immediate, modernist abstraction asserts painting's "essential" or irreducible qualities: surface, flatness, edge and limit, all of which are "spatial" and atemporal. But in temporalizing sculpture, Minimalism, Fried senses, proposes a dangerous line of attack: an undoing of the notion of "medium" itself.

The relation of time and medium constitutes the unstated insight of Fried's critique, and the explicit focus of several of Rosalind Krauss' important writings, which have established an influential interpretive framework for Minimalism. Krauss contends that one of Minimalism's key achievements is its subversion of the legitimacy of the category of medium. In her aptly entitled Passages in Modern

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Sculpture, Krauss places Minimalism at the apex or culmination of a counter-history of modern sculpture, in which the spatial and visual are continually revealed to be impure, or rather no longer thought in opposition to the temporal, haptic and material. As a result, "sculpture" is no longer tied to a set of limited, conventional materials and procedures, and thus the notion of "medium" withers, or, rather, its meaning changes. As Krauss observes in a subsequent essay, in the wake of Minimalism, anything can be a sculpture: "...piles of thread waste on the floor, or sawed redwood timbers rolled into the gallery, or tons of earth excavated from the desert, or stockades of logs surrounded by firepits..."18 Minimalism was the turning point and in its aftermath, "sculpture" becomes, at the very least, an ambiguous term.19

The destruction of the traditional terms of medium is often a critical focus in readings of Minimalism's legacy in postwar art, credited for ushering in the object's "dematerialization" under Conceptual art; the displacement of artistic materials by the body in performance; and the hybridity of materials in installation art. All of these developments are understood as "post-medium," and Nauman's lack of affinity to any one medium seems to place him firmly

19As Krauss notes, "We had thought to use a universal category to authenticate a group of particulars, but the category has now been forced to cover such a heterogeneity that it is, itself, in danger of collapsing. And so we stare at the pit in the earth and think we both do and don't know what sculpture is." Ibid., p. 279.
in this "post-medium" category. But I want to suggest something else: that Nauman's main concerns are not necessarily engaged with the idea of medium per se--and neither were Minimalism's. The undoing of medium, it will be argued here, is only symptomatic of a more consequential proposition to which Nauman's art responds.

In Minimalism, spatial art is temporalized because vision and cognition are linked to the body. In so doing, however, the very function--or capacities--of the sensory apparatus is investigated, leading to an insistence upon the inseparability of the senses. One result of this realignment is the elimination of the traditional idea of "medium." In contrast, the development of modernism was predicated upon the drive to isolate and purify the visual field, which served to reinforce the autonomy of medium. Painting as a medium is understood to address solely the eye and issues of opticality; thus pictorialism as a central modernist value concerns the ideology of the visual and the idealism of a purely optical subject. What emerges is an implicit link between the notion of medium and the subject, one which was explored at a symposium held at the Dia Foundation on in which Fried's essay becomes a central focus.20 Rosalind Krauss identifies this ideal viewer as one who is 

"...abstracted from his bodily presence and reorganized as

20The participants on the panel included Rosalind Krauss, Michael Fried, and Benjamin Buchloh. "1967/1987 Theories of Art After Minimalism and Pop," (see note 11 above).
the noncorporeal vehicle of a single stratum of sensory experience—a visual track that is magically, illusionistically unsupported by a body, a track that is allegorized, moreover, as pure cognition." Krauss comments reflect her position, elaborated elsewhere, that vision is embodied—that it operates in association with, and not independently from, the body. Minimalism serves as a key moment in her account of an oppositional modernism, as it directly challenges the very possibility of any pure sensory experience, including that of opticality or cognition. As Krauss writes:

> The bodily specificity of [the minimalist] subject, the fact that it had a front and back, that its experience was affected by the vagaries of ambient light, that its very corporeal density both guaranteed and was made possible by the interconnectedness of its sensory fields so that an abstracted visuality could make no more sense than an abstracted tactility—all of this was choreographed and mobilized by minimalist art.

Beyond an undoing of medium, Krauss contends that Minimalism sought to emphasize the interdependence—and as such the impurity—of the senses. But in so doing, Minimalist

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21Ibid. p. 61 (my emphases). Moreover, the linkage of pure optical experience to pure cognition in modernism (as in Clement Greenberg's idea of grasping with the eye) thus possesses a distinct temporality—an atemporal condition of instantaneousness, one which informs Fried's ideal of "presentness."


23In Foster, *Discussions in Contemporary Culture I*, p. 63 (my emphases).
sculpture bears another consequence, one of interest to me here. Modernism's belief in the ability to isolate visual experience is also the foundation upon which it makes a claim for visual art's distinctiveness, its sense of purpose. The categorization of different art forms is, in fact, fundamentally dependent upon both the separation and specialization of the senses. Painting and sculpture concern the eye; music the ear; dance the body. Senses of sight, sound, and touch, it follows, are determinable and divisible. Fried's defensive rhetoric demonstrates his awareness that Minimalism's interconnecting of the sensory fields poses a more fundamental threat: to visual arts' status as a self-contained discipline. For example, he writes: "...theater and theatricality are at war today, not simply with modernist painting (or modernist painting and sculpture), but with art as such..."24 Fried's use of the term "theater" to describe this condition is revealing, in that theater is inherently multi-sensory, engaging the eye, the ear, the body, and the intellect. In similarly breaching sensory boundaries, Minimalism questions not just the fundamental legitimacy of separating media within the visual arts, but also the strict disciplinary divisions between the arts, setting into motion a possibility for a new art object that exceeds the Minimalist one--which despite its critique, still maintains an allegiance to a more conventional notion of sculptural materiality.

Fried attempts to support his commitment to modernism in the face of its defeat—certainly with respect to the interpretation that each art form's development is a quest to identify and respect its "essence," which postwar art cannot support—through the foil of "quality." He writes,

For example, a failure to register the enormous difference in quality between, say, the music of Carter and that of Cage or between the paintings of Louis and those of Rauschenberg means that the real distinctions—between music and theater in the first instance and between painting and theater in the second—are displaced by the illusion that the barriers between the arts are in the process of crumbling... and that the arts themselves are at last sliding toward some kind of final, implosive, hugely desirable synthesis.\(^25\)

Herein lies the weakness of Fried's generalized deployment of the term "theater", which is described as a total integration of art forms, a unification that is the hallmark of the Wagnerian gesamtkunstwerk, in which the temporal, spatial, visual, and aural are harmoniously integrated. If anything, the music of Cage—to use one of Fried's examples against his own thesis—orchestrated a dissonance between the senses, an inability to integrate them, while simultaneously calling attention to their interdependence.

Modernism confronts no such dissonance; by claiming to autonomize the visual, the modernist subject is divided and the senses compartmentalized accordingly. The idea of

\(^{25}\text{Ibid., p. 21.}\)
"medium" and "discipline" thus are informed in a fundamental way by the classical, philosophical conception of the subject, including notions of the cogito, consciousness, and subjectivity. Not only are the senses discrete, but the subject, as Hegel proposes is "that which is capable of maintaining itself without its own contradiction." In other words, what is alien, or "other", to the subject is reappropriated into the self. In contrast, Minimalism responds to the radical disarticulation of the subject as proposed by contemporary philosophy (in particular, structuralist or deconstructionist thinking). As Jean-Luc Nancy observes, this entails a "transference of the thinking of Being to the thinking of life, or of the Other, or of language etc.," which all involve "putting subjectivity on trial." It is perhaps not coincidental that during the sixties, one of the key moments in the critique of the subject, an explicit staging of the interconnectedness of the sensory apparatus becomes the aesthetic cum critical focus of artists working across the range of disciplines: the very interdisciplinarity of the era, I want to suggest, is related to the philosophical re-conception of the subject.

27Ibid., p. 5 (my emphasis).
28From John Cage to Happenings to Judson Dance Theater to Minimalism, the hybridity of sensory experience is exposed and explored. I cite these examples to emphasize that a number of artists (including musicians, dancers, actors, and visual artists), prior to the sixties, explored the contingency of one sense upon another. However, a systematic and broad investigation across fields is not realized until the sixties, becoming a defining aspect of the interdisciplinarity and intertextuality of the era.
The disintegration of the subject is thus intimately tied to a reorganization of the senses, the withering of the traditional notion of medium, and the subversion of determinate disciplinary boundaries. It is my contention that the critique of the purity of the senses and of subjectivity fuels much of Nauman's engagement with disciplines and traditions beyond the visual arts—including music, dance, film and literature—as well his stated lack of allegiance to any one medium. Nauman's frequently noted fluid movement between media and disciplines needs to be contextualized within this critical framework of the senses and the subject that Minimalism introduced.  

29One primary example is the frequent inclusion of sonic elements or allusions to sound, especially in a series of room installations beginning in the late sixties. Nauman once remarked that he was not simply interested in the spatial relationships of architectural sculpture, but in their sounds as well. In order to "apprehend" the space, the beholder's visual and corporeal apparatus are supplemented by aural perception. In so doing, Nauman examines one of the central contributions of John Cage's expansive and experimental approach to the idea of sound: the materiality of silence. By eliminating sound, many of Nauman's pieces—after Cage—provide, paradoxically, a heightened awareness of sound's fundamental existence, allowing one's ears to become attuned to the "found" sounds that exist in the world and internal to the body. A key distinction for Nauman's project is, however, that visual art is normatively understood to be silent; painting and sculpture are not supposed to have sound in the first place. As a result, Nauman must in some way allude to its absence as an absence. In order to do so, he constructs chambers of muffled sound, or presents audio players which can be seen but not heard; or presents a film where we see a body moving but don't hear its footsteps. The issue of sound in Nauman's art is the subject of Chapter 5 of this dissertation.
Rather than fused into an ideal unity, the senses seem to be in constant competition with one another in Nauman's art, yielding an often unsettling experience for the beholder. In art historical terms, the modernist contemplative subject is displaced and its attendant aesthetic experience of "grace" and transcendence, to borrow Fried's vocabulary, is countered by one of vigorous confrontation. Light, color, sound, space and imagery are deployed freely, orchestrated into a charged field. If Minimalism had overcome the contemplative passivity of the viewer by rendering him/her corporeally dense and mobile, Nauman's work surpasses its ultimate restraint by the development of a more radically inclusive and intensive approach, one which stages a different possibility for an interactive subject—and stands in critical relation to Minimalism and its historical precedents in the sculptural avant-garde.

The realization of sculpture as architecture, and the production of an interactive viewer maintain a particular utopianism in art history. In the context of earlier avant-gardes, such as Russian Constructivism, sculpture was redefined from a discrete object into an environmental field, physically entrenched in the spaces of daily experience. As such, sculpture was understood to resist art's elevation into a mythic, aesthetic realm of transcendence, and in turn, to

30See Chapter 5, "You May... Want To... Hear," for a discussion of how Nauman's room installations and videos (such as Lip Sync 1969) actively dissociate acts of seeing and hearing.
open up onto materialist concerns—that is, by engaging the social and political fields. With this structural shift, the traditional role of audience was transformed from one of passivity to one of proactive engagement.

Minimalism recalls this earlier history of sculpture: explicit references to the Constructivists are found in the work of Dan Flavin, who made a series of light sculptures entitled Monument to V. Tatlin, and Carl Andre, whose early table-top works are reminiscent of Rodchenko's wooden constructions. Additionally, in the critical writings of Robert Morris, the structural cum political re-orientation of the art object in the Russian Constructivism serves as a point of departure. Despite this relationship, Minimalism simultaneously abstracts the specificity of its critique, in that "space" is neutralized and conceived of in

31 The American reception of the art of the Russian avant-garde has been addressed by Benjamin Buchloh, Hal Foster and Annette Michelson in numerous essays and interviews. See Buchloh, Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955-1975 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000). By Hal Foster see, "Some Uses and Abuses of Russian Constructivism," in Art into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914-1932, Henry Art Gallery (Seattle: The Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington and New York: Rizzoli, 1990); and "Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?" in his The Return of the Real: the Avant-Garde at the End of the Century (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996). See also Annette Michelson, "Robert Morris--An Aesthetics of Transgression," (cited in note 6 above). Referring to a polyhedron sculpture by Morris, Michelson writes, "It is the movement, the direction of that installation together with the systematic investigation of the syntactical possibilities of new materials and forming processes, which allies Morris' work to that of the revolutionary tradition of constructivism--to that of Tatlin and Rodchenko in particular. It is the conception of a 'culture of materials,' as extending the possibilities of sculptural form, the realisation [sic] that 'a certain rationalisation [sic] of processes in the abstract organisation [sic] of those materials is common to the work of artist and engineer.' Above all, it is the preoccupation with the extension of sculptural form into the space of action." (p. 71)
phenomenological rather than social, political, or ideological terms. Minimalism, however, shares one important element with the earlier avant-garde; it perpetuates, to some extent, an idealism of the interactive subject. In the context of the Russian avant-garde, the interactive subject was envisioned to be emancipated from the numbing seduction of bourgeois art, and by association, from the class which supports it; similarly, in Minimalism, by virtue of participating more directly in the constitution of the art object, the subject is imagined to attain a heightened self-consciousness.

This passage from traditional viewer to interactive subject—a crucial element of progressivist avant-garde movements—needs, however, not simply to be embraced, but to be approached critically in more differential terms. While the beholder of Nauman's art performs a series of perceptual and sensory tasks, overcoming the passivity of the modernist subject, unlike in Minimalism, interactivity does not necessarily lead to an emancipated subject—in the sense of a subject who is capable of determining his/her place in the world—but frequently its antithesis. Here the abstract notion of experience operative in Minimalism is significant. If the spatial extension of sculpture allows for a consideration of the function and meaning of "real" versus "aesthetic" space, then it also potentially leads to a consideration of the status of public space in contemporary
society, and the place of the subject within this landscape. It leads, in other words, to the issue of the temporality (i.e. history) of perceptual experience and the subject. With regards to Nauman's practice, the transformed meaning of interactivity in an increasingly technologized world comes into consideration.

Minimalism's phenomenological orientation restricts it from making this leap from the abstract conditions of subjectivity and experience to their history. In contrast, the art that follows Minimalism—namely Institutional Critique, a set of practices developed out of Conceptual art—is thought to issue a corrective, interrogating the social, political, and ideological meanings of space. Although not conventionally approached in these terms, Nauman's art, I want to suggest, also performs a social reading; unlike Institutional Critique, which addresses the discursive meanings of space, however, Nauman focuses upon the experience of space—questioning the status of spatial experience in terms of an insistently mediated, privatized, technologized landscape. In other words, Nauman's art draws upon the phenomenological model of sculpture put forth by Minimalism, while

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32 This genealogy is formulated by Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism", in Individuals (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1987); a later, slightly altered version of this essay appears in Foster, The Return of the Real. Miwon Kwon has also investigated the shifting conceptions of space (from physical to discursive meanings) in post-sixties sculptural practices. See Kwon, "One Thing After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," October 80 (Spring, 1987).
particularizing the generality (or abstractness) of the notion of experience it contains.

Thus while both Nauman's art and Institutional Critique can be viewed as continuing or responding to the Minimalist challenge to the medium--realized in their mutual exploration of the "post-medium" strategy of sculptural installation--a distinction can be drawn between the experiential versus discursive orientations of their respective practices. For Nauman, an interrogation of spatial experience is most fully elaborated in a series of architectural environments, which the artist begins to create in 1969. In these works, confining and inaccessible spaces, illuminated with uncomfortable colors, loud sounds and voices, and hypnotic imagery coalesce to yield an overwhelming sense of lack of control on the part of the beholder. While the temptation may be to read these works through a thematics of aggression (and/or a sadistic attitude towards the beholder), I would suggest a more historically specific interpretation--one related to the rapid expansion of media in the postwar era.

In general terms, the development of media culture leads to subject's manipulation by space and information, accompanied by a bombardment of sensory stimuli. Frederic Jameson argues that the sixties represent a particularly significant moment in this history, as this period witnessed a "tremendous
expansion of the media apparatus and the culture of consumerism." Jameson notes that prior to what he calls this "Third Technological Revolution," industrial and technical expansions represented the human quest to control nature; this postwar phenomenon, however, departs significantly, in that the very position of the subject, in philosophical terms, is simultaneously being destabilized. Thus paradoxically, a moment of technological "advance" coincides precisely that of the subject's retreat—or in the most extreme terms, its "death"—in which the subject is rendered almost incidental to a depersonalized landscape: conceived as a mere effect of what is external to it. To revisit the Hegelian terms discussed above, such a notion of subjectivity—one fostered in post-structuralist and deconstructionist critiques—suggests the impossibility of overcoming alterity or alienation; rather, the subject perpetually exists in its own contradiction.

Within this context, Nauman's installations—in which space is confining and restricts free movement, and the path of the beholder is dictated rather than offered as an arena for voluntary, improvisatory participation—can be approached. An installation the artist made in 1970, Going Around the Corner Piece (figure 7) dramatizes this conjunction of mediated space and a compromised subject-position. In this

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piece, a square room is constructed out of white wallboard; a camera, positioned downward, is mounted upon the outside upper corner of each side, while a television monitor is placed on the floor on the opposite side of the wall. As the viewer passes along one side of the structure, he/she briefly sees a fleeting image of his/her back going around the corner. Continually circulating the room's perimeter, the viewer is thrust into an endless state of helplessness, attempting in vain to coordinate self and image like a dog frantically chasing its own tail. Moreover, the image presented is only partial and shows a view to which one is normally not privy: that of one's body from behind.

The slippage of perception orchestrated in Going Around the Corner Piece relates to Nauman's interest in exploring the disjunction of different senses. In the installation, an inability to align vision and movement is effectively realized. If phenomenology suggests that the external world of objects is a vehicle through which the subject determines his/her place in the world—a mutuality of subjects and objects—Nauman's sculptural environment both plays out this scenario, while slightly skewing its results. At every instance of the beholder's ever-shifting engagement with the piece—a transitivity of perspectives similar to that which is explored in Minimalist works—a graspable moment of recognition never materializes. In other words, what is constantly being staged is the impossibility of measuring
one's bodily relationships with the external world with any certainty, or of coordinating them with vision. In contrast, a work such as Richard Serra's *Shift* (1970-72)—a series of concrete walls, placed at angles in a rural setting, extending over 300 meters long—which Rosalind Krauss discusses through Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, exemplifies a different potential. Krauss' own reading states it best: "As one moves over the grounds of the work," she writes,

...the tops of the walls are in gradual but constant transformation. From being the lines along which one sights as one stands above them and looks down, thereby establishing one's connection to the distance, the walls change as one 'descends' the work to become an enclosure that *binds one with the earth*. Felt as a barrier rather than as perspective, they then *heighten the experience of the physical place of one's body*. Without depicting anything—this nearby human figure, that distant tree—the walls' linear/physical network articulates both a situation and a lived perspective. And it does this in the abstractest way possible: by the rotation out of depth of a plane.\(^3^4\)

Several things are notable in Krauss' description: first, Serra's *Shift*, in keeping with the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, aims to *amplify* one's sense of bodily connection to the world. Second, what is at issue is an abstract and *innocent* perception—*in the sense of "a world that exists before I am here, and who marks my place in it,"* to reiterate Merleau-Ponty, as cited by Krauss. *"Without depicting anything,"* Krauss explicitly remarks, thereby underscoring

that an abstract logic is operative in Serra's work—which, by inference, suggests an ahistorical model of experience.

In contrast, as they develop, Nauman's architectural sculptures begin to grant "experience" more explicit historical and referential grounding: starting with Double Steel Cage (1974, figure 8)—in which space is literally a prison—and then in such later works as Diamond Africa with Chair Tuned Dead (1981, figure 9) and the series of South America installations, such as South America Triangle (1981, figure 10), all of which contain clear political commentary, inspired by contemporary events. These works, however, represent not a departure from, but a further elaboration of the effects of control, dissociation, and manipulation marking the earlier installations. In the following citation, Nauman alludes to the connection between the earlier and later installations, in reference to his sculptures of underground tunnels (which he begins making in the late seventies):

There is a Beckett book called The Lost Ones which describes a large number of people in a strange, very accurately and clearly described space... but they're stuck in it. A greenish yellow light, circular space with no top to it, just black and then greenish light and walking around and around in a circle. When I read this, a very powerful connection to a lot of the work I had done before encouraged me in the direction of the tunnels and the kind of oblique comment they make on society.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{35}\)Bob Smith, "Nauman Interview," Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art Journal vol. 4, no. 2 (Spring, 1982), p. 36.
If in *Double Steel Cage* space is literally a prison, in the earlier corridor pieces, such as *Live-Taped Video Corridor* (1970, figure 11), space similarly functions to restrict rather than liberate consciousness and the body. In this piece, the viewer, walking down the narrow confines of the structure, endures a tremendous sense of claustrophobia and entrapment. But most significant is its enactment of perceptual dislocation. As one proceeds down the corridor, a camera, mounted high on the wall at its entrance, films one's moving body from behind—the image of which plays on a television monitor that is stacked on top of another one, depicting a prerecorded view of the empty corridor. As a result, in walking towards the picture of oneself, there is a sense of walking away from oneself—exacerbated by the fact that the image gets increasingly smaller as one approaches the monitor, because one is actually moving away from the recording camera. Here, as in *Going Around the Corner Piece*, the source of the subject's alienation is not an other, but the subject him/herself: an inverse of the metaphysical structure of alterity which, furthermore, is never overcome.  

36Another example of the body (which in one sense is the basis of our being-the-world, and the confirmation of our existence) becoming a vehicle for misrecognition is Nauman's sculpture *Six Inches of My Knee Extended to Six Feet* (1967). In this work, a fundamentally abstract section of the body—the knee—is further abstracted or distorted through its elongation into a thin, stick-like pole. Encountering the work, the beholder can neither identify the form through perception alone, nor, once becoming aware of its subject, connect to it through a sense of bodily identification. The later room installations, noted above, which employ video monitors and cameras, extend this idea in that one endlessly fails to able to match up one's sense of being a body to one's reflected picture or image on the monitor's screen. As a result, one feels estranged from one's own body—or the body becomes simply an external image.
Not only is Nauman's approach distinct from the Minimalist notion of audience participation, but it also departs from that of certain strains of Institutional Critique, which unwittingly extends Minimalism's idealism, despite its critical relation to it. The emancipatory possibilities proposed by Minimalism are internalized in those examples of Institutional Critique in which a form of communicative rationalism persists—and information rather than bodily experience is the basis of interaction. In other words, interactivity is established through language rather than the body; in this context, like the body in phenomenology, language provides access to the external world. What I referring to is those forms of Institutional Critique in which information is presented as objective and empowering and communication is largely transparent: exemplary of this tendency is Hans Haacke's quasi-scientific works, including MoMA Poll (1970); or his Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971, among others.37 In these pieces, the uncovering of

37It is important to emphasize here that I am contrasting the way language/information and space operate to manipulate and confuse in Nauman's art to specific strains of Conceptual art and Institutional Critique, in which there is a commitment to the purity and objectivity of language. In addition the work of Haacke, mentioned above, other examples of this approach to language include the work of Robert Barry and the collective Art & Language. Furthermore, the desire for artistic objects—however reduced and compromised aesthetically and visually—to clarify and edify, as seen in some more didactic strains of Conceptual art and Institutional Critique, suggests a certain rationalizing impulse utterly at odds with Nauman's practice. This is not, however, intended to be generalizable to all practices associated with these groups or strategies (clear exceptions being, for example, the work of Marcel Broodthaers or Mel Bochner).
information is the hinge upon which the beholder is intended to have access to the hidden ideological apparatus of the institution—or of the broader social systems of which it is a part: the qualities of neutrality and transparency reinforced in the use of uninflected tones of delivery and a banal aesthetic of white pages and courier typeface.

These concerns lead me back to Jameson's discussion of the "technocratic" culture of the sixties, in which he explicitly links the rise of systems theories/information models and media's increasing penetration into both space and consciousness. He observes: "The conceptualization of this new problematic in the coding of linguistics or information theory may [...] be attributed to the unexpected explosion of information and messages of all kinds in the media revolution..."38 In other words, Jameson unveils a connection between the prevalence of linguistic models and the expansions of new media and technologies. If we introduce his critique into the purview of artistic practice, the potentiality of language to be objective and empowering, in relation to the viewer, needs to be tempered with the recognition that relations of power and inequity constitute a significant aspect of linguistic exchange itself. Nauman's art thus operates in response to Minimalism's suggestion of a universality of experience and in contrast to the communicative rationalism—exemplified in the Habermasian

notion of communication, which presumes the possibility of equal subjects participating in rational dialogue—informing a strain of Conceptual art of the late sixties.\(^39\)

Additionally, approached through Jameson's analysis, Nauman's art can be viewed as a challenge to a de-subjectivized notion of "institution," unaffected by the contingencies of human intervention or practice. To cite Jameson again:

This lesson might well be described as the discovery, within a hitherto antagonistic and "transparent" political praxis, of the opacity of the Institution itself as the radically transindividual, with its own inner dynamic and laws, which are not those of individual human action or intention, something which Sartre theorized in the Critique as the "practico-inert," and which will take the definitive form, in competing "structuralism," of "structure" [sic] or "synchronic system," a realm of impersonal logic in terms of which human consciousness is itself little more than an "effect of structure."\(^40\)

Jameson's description reveals the unresolved nature of the radical de-centering of the subject—in particular, the one that occurred under structuralism, which bore a significant influence within a range of disciplines during the sixties.

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\(^{39}\) Habermas' theory of communicative action was countered in Foucault's work by the latter's consideration of relations of power involved in any communicative exchange. This led to Habermas' largely one-sided "debate" with Foucault (an actual confrontation never transpired prior to Foucault's early death) and his charge that Foucault was indulging in "irrationalism" of postmodernism and post-structuralism. See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977); and Jürgen Habermas, "The Critique of Reason as an Unmasking of the Human Sciences: Michel Foucault" and "Some Questions Regarding the Theory of Power: Foucault Again" in his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 238–293.

\(^{40}\) Jameson, "Periodizing the Sixties," p. 190.
Conceptual art (and Institutional critique) can both be seen as responses to the elimination of the subject and the issue of praxis proposed by structuralist thinking. Thus while it could be said that Institutional Critique responds to Minimalism's abstraction of space and experience through the dimension of information and discourse, with a diminished interest in the contingency or status of the subject in the constitution of the artwork, Nauman's art, in contrast, actively retains the subject (however transformed) and probes his/her negotiation of a mediated space—one permeated by technology, information and physical constraints. Thus the realization in Nauman's practice of the experiential domain as less than liberating and more often than not disconcerting contains a potentially critical dimension: the issue of "experience"—introduced into postwar art by Minimalism—is both particularized and historicized, and thereby subject to critical reflection.

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In the above discussion, continual references have been made to the abstractions of Minimalism—which connect it in some definitive way to modernism, despite its simultaneous attempt to sever such associations. In short, Minimalism remains beholden to modernist tenets in significant ways, notwithstanding its stated goals to undermine them. This contradiction is the overarching theme of Hal Foster's
insightful analysis of the unresolved nature of the Minimalist project; it is why Minimalism represents, for Foster, a "crux," meaning both the "apogee of modernism" and a "break" with it. Foster's central contention is that while initiating a significant departure from formal, abstract art, Minimalism paradoxically, reinscribes both formalism and abstractionism. He writes: "In short, minimalism appears as a historical crux in which the formalist autonomy is at once achieved and broken up, in which the ideal of a pure art becomes the reality of one more specific object among others." 41

Foster's point is well-taken, in that the abstract logic of Minimalism functions on many levels: abstract forms, an abstracted subject, and abstract notion of experience. 42 Minimalism replaces modernism's ideal, optical subject with a different, but equally abstracted (and somewhat idealized) subject--that of phenomenology. While no longer a subject of

41 Hal Foster, The Return of the Real, p. 54. In the same vein, Foster writes: "Yet this extreme defiance developed as excessive devotion... In short, Judd reads the putatively Greenbergian call for an objective painting so literally as to exceed painting altogether in the creation of object. For what can be more objective, more specific, than an object in actual space." (author's emphases) Ibid., p. 44.

42 Rosalind Krauss explicitly links the belated American reception of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy to a desire to redefine the possibilities for abstraction in the sixties. She writes, "The Phenomenology of Perception thus entered the consciousness of American artists only after a lag of twenty years: precisely the period during which American art underwent a radical conversion and passionate commitment to the power and meaning of abstract art." Krauss, "Richard Serra, a Translation," p. 263. In the same essay, Krauss writes, "The Phenomenology of Perception became, in the hands of the Americans [of the Minimalist generation], a text that was consistently interpreted in the light of their own ambitions toward meaning within an art that was abstract." (p. 264).
pure visuality, the beholder is replaced by one of pure perception. As Foster notes, the experiential innocence of phenomenology presupposes a neutral and universal subject, where perception, he writes, is "somehow before or outside history, language, sexuality, and power." While Nauman's art initially does not respond to Minimalism's shortcomings in terms of the sexual, ethnic, or gender constitution of the subject, it does introduce the contingencies of history, language, and power in other, substantive ways.

In order to achieve such neutralization, Minimalist objects—not unlike modernist formalism—purge art of illusion, reference, and narrative, supposedly guaranteeing a universal experience. This is not to say that Minimalism's formalism should be understood in the same terms as that of modernism—

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43 Foster, The Return of the Real, pp. 43. In Foster's reading, Minimalism's perceptual investigations directly opened up onto an analysis of sites and exhibition conventions in Conceptual art and Institutional Critique. This Minimalist-Conceptualist axis was itself exclusionary, he argues, as it omitted a consideration of "the sexual-linguistic constitution of the subject." Feminist art of the seventies and eighties will compensate for this deficiency, assuming the culminating point or apogee of Foster's Minimalist genealogy. He writes: "... in this investigation, such disparate artists as Mary Kelly and Silvia Kolbowski, Barbara Kruger and Sherrie Levine, Louise Lawler and Martha Rosler turned to images and discourses adjacent to the art world, especially to representations of women in mass culture and to constructions of femininity in psychoanalytic theory. This is the most productive critique of minimalism to date and it is elaborated in practice." (p. 59). Foster repeats this genealogical reading in the roundtable discussion, "Reception of the Sixties," October 69 (Summer, 1994): ".Minimalism did set up an analysis of the art object, its spatial parameters and subjective conditions, that asked to be extended—to a more institutional idea of 'space,' a more differentiated concept of 'the subject,' and so on." (p. 11).

44 Nauman will, however, introduce the sexual specificity of the body in several videos in the late sixties; and subsequently explore racial and gender relationships in video installations in the eighties (such as Violent Incident and Good Boy/Bad Boy, both from 1985).
in which meaning is entirely self-referential, entrenched within the internal properties of the object. Minimalism, in contrast, removed internal relations—and as such removed interest from the object per se—in order to locate meaning beyond its bounds. But the facilitator for this externalization remains a rigidly prescribed formal system of geometric structures: what Robert Morris calls "unitary forms."

Writing in his "Notes on Sculpture I," the first of a series of important critical/theoretical essays on sculpture published in Artforum between 1966 and 1970, Morris contends that these shapes—"simple, regular polyhedrons such as cubes and pyramids," as well as "simple, irregular polyhedrons such as beams, inclined planes and truncated pyramids"—resist being separated into parts, and are instead "read" by the observer as wholes.45 These wholes can then generate a "gestalt sensation." In other words, attention will be directed outward towards the relationships between the object, viewer, and site. The "known constant" of these geometric forms thus accommodates the "experienced variable" of the act or experience of perceiving.

Morris' thinking—and its realization in his large-scale, geometric sculptures—is indebted to Merleau-Ponty's

Phenomenology of Perception, with its elaboration of a notion of "pre-objective" experience (touched upon above in the discussion of Serra's Shift). Writing in the introduction, Merleau-Ponty describes his aims (and the aims of phenomenology) to uncover the "the essence of perception, of the essence of consciousness..."46 This search for essences is accompanied by a belief in a world that pre-exists experience "as an inalienable presence," or as he writes, "The world is there before any possible analysis of mine."47 These statements allude to an understanding of a world beyond considerations of history and time (and, to recall Foster's discussion, an equally ahistorical, universal subject), supporting Merleau-Ponty's contention that phenomenology is aimed at "re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world."48 In the section entitled "The World as Perceived," the vehicle for Merleau-Ponty's thinking, and for achieving this essential state, is identified as the cube (a quintessential Minimalist form): "[I]t is.. by conceiving my body itself as a mobile object that I am able to interpret perceptual appearance and construct the cube as it truly is."49

The invocation of "truth" reveals the latent positivism found not just in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology but in Minimalism

47 Ibid., p. vii, x.
48 Ibid., p. vii.
49 Ibid, p. 213.
as well, where the very identity of the object is the pre-
given, grounding perception.\textsuperscript{50} The vehicle for awareness is
the unchanging formal support or object. Experience may be
variable, but its foundation remains one based upon a model
of truth, identity, and constancy.\textsuperscript{51} In short, despite the
fluctuations of phenomenological experience, there is no
possibility that the cube is not a cube. The prerequisite of
the "known constant" thus reinscribes sculpture with a formal
essence, despite attempts to overcome such essence, through
the gestalt. Moreover, consciousness and perception operate
in an ideal state, emerging in a primordial world.

 Minimalism's elimination of illusion and reference thus
simultaneously fulfills modernism's aims towards pure
abstraction, while seeking to defeat its ambitions for a
decontextualized notion of the artwork. Looking over
Nauman's early sculptural works, an emphatic rejection of
Minimalism's prohibitive approach towards representational
elements is in evidence. Not only will "abstract," quasi-
Minimalist sculptures be given references (such as the 1966
\textsuperscript{50}A form of positivism surfaces in Morris' writing as well, as in the
following: "In the simpler regular polyhedrons such as cubes and
pyramids, one need not move around the object for the sense of the
whole, the gestalt, to occur. One sees and immediately 'believes' the
pattern within one's mind corresponds to the existential fact of the
object. Belief in this sense is both a kind of faith in spatial
extension and a visualization of that extension." Morris, "Notes on
Sculpture I," p. 6 (my emphases).

\textsuperscript{51}Notably, the positivism of "pure" geometric forms is realized through
industrial production: thus paradoxically articulating "pre-objective"
experience in terms of the modern with its ideology of the new (or an
industrial utopianism). It is significant that Nauman himself displaced
industrial fabrication with the handmade--or things that appear to be
handmade, and that his fabricated installations are neither pristine nor
display a vigorous industrial confidence, as found in Minimalism.
galvanized iron, vertical sculpture of three curved sections, *Storage Capsule for the Right Rear Quarter of My Body*), but starting in 1967, a series of sculptures that betray an emphatic, eerie realism (such as *From Hand to Mouth*) will begin to appear. In works such as these, Minimalist bodily investigations are married to a seemingly outmoded tradition of illusionism; in so doing, the past traditions of visual realism and illusionism are at once cited and, as I will argue later, surpassed.

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52 See Chapter Two, figures 16, 15, respectively.

53 I argue, in Chapter Two, that these "body" sculptures, while "realist," function in similar terms to the new, "objective" realism of the *nouveau roman*, which depends on precise description, while subverting the conventions of the traditional realist novel. Notable is Nauman's continual references to literature; he read both Beckett and Robbe-Grillet in the mid-sixties and himself pens literary and poetic forms of writing for sculpture titles as the basis for sign pieces, in video installations, and, starting in the early seventies, as accompaniments to architectural sculptures. Among the latter is the 1971 *Installation with Yellow Lights*, which was first exhibited at Leo Castelli Gallery. Visitors were given a hand-out (which was also the exhibition's poster) containing the following text, written by Nauman, in order, in his words, to define "a kind of anxiety that the space seemed to generate":

*Left or Standing/* His precision and accuracy/ suggesting clean cuts, leaving/ a vacancy, a slight physical/ depression as though/ had been/ in a vaguely uncomfortable place/ for a not long but undeterminable/ period; not waiting/ Standing or Left Standing/ His preciseness and acuity left/ small cuts on the tips of my/ fingers or across the backs of/ my hands without any need to/ sit or otherwise withdraw.

B. Nauman, Brochure and poster (New York: Leo Castelli Gallery, 1971); the text is reprinted in WCR no. 200. Nauman's use and production of prose writing needs to considered both in relation to Minimalism's continuation of modernist abstraction, as well as the limited understanding of "language" in Conceptual art, which decidedly eliminated the poetic or literary. On this last point, see Benjamin Buchloh, "Spero's Other Traditions" in *Inside the Visible: an Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher, exhibition catalogue (Boston: the Institute of Contemporary Art, 1996).
Minimalism's desire to rid sculpture of the taint of pictorialism produced an almost phobic fear of any allusion or reference, which are perceived as de facto pictorialist. The issue of pictorialism, emerging at several points in this chapter, was of particular critical concern to the generation of sixties' sculptors. It was not, however, limited to the problematic of representation, as it reared its head in other areas, one of them being the problem of color and sculpture.

Color is not intrinsically a sculptural value, but rather, according to modernist thinking, is inherent to painting. Hence Michael Fried remarks that color in sculpture always seems "added," and as such, makes one aware of the sculptural surface--and thus its "objecthood." Fried proposes that as a means of defeating its mere "objecthood," modernist sculpture should employ color as a means of successfully emphasizing flatness in order to "...to establish surface--the surface, so to speak, of painting--as a medium of sculpture."\(^{54}\)

While modernism valued a "pictorial" sculpture, Minimalism sought precisely to overcome such a possibility. As a result, color is provisionally banished in Minimalist sculpture as a pictorial component--the exceptions being Judd's use of colored boxes and Flavin's subsequent use of colored fluorescent tubing. In the case of the latter, in being projected across the pristine white walls of the pre-

existing architecture, color remains very much on the wall, the surface and location of painting. Rosalind Krauss in fact later will accuse both Judd and Flavin of being "painters"\textsuperscript{55}. In the formative moment of Minimalism, however, color was perceived as inherently immaterial, as Robert Morris' forcefully argues in the following excerpt:

This transcendence of color over shape in painting... demonstrates that it is the most optical element in an optical medium. It is this essentially optical, immaterial, noncontainable, nontactile nature of color that is inconsistent with the physical nature of sculpture. The qualities of scale, proportion, shape, mass are physical. Each of these qualities is made visible by the adjustment of an obdurate, literal mass. Color does not have this characteristic. It is additive. The objection is raised against the use of color that emphasizes the optical and in so doing subverts the physical.\textsuperscript{56}

For Morris, color is impossibly optical and non-corporeal, and as such, cannot be redeemed for (non-modernist) materialist sculpture. Looking over Nauman's sculpture, it becomes evident, however, that color is reintroduced from early on: in the 1965 \textit{Untitled} fiberglass sculptures; the subsequent body molds and casts; and in the neon tube wall

\textsuperscript{55}As Krauss notes, "...having lived through the 1960s and having been affected in the relatively undifferentiated way one experiences a movement when it is happening--at the time you're more impressed with the similarities than the differences, but as you back further away, the differences begin to appear, perhaps with a special force for those of us who didn't see them initially--it never occurred to me that Flavin and Judd were really painters. Yet now I perceive that not only did they begin as painters, they continued to be as such. So that even though Judd is the author of a famous essay arguing that painting should lose its virtual dimensions to become a 'specific object,' he remains a painter--totally involved with questions of illusionism." "Reception of the Sixties," p. 9.

\textsuperscript{56}Morris, "Notes on Sculpture I," p. 4.
signs. Most notable in terms of Morris' objections regarding color's putative inherent immateriality, however, is the use of illuminated color as an ambient presence within Nauman's sculptural environments. In such works as Yellow Room (Triangular) (1973, figure 12), color is fully spatialized rather than rendered a surface material, as in Flavin's projections on the walls.  

In contrast, color is three-dimensional; it surrounds you and seems to press upon your body much in the way that Nauman's contemporaneous sculptures shape sound.  

Nauman approaches color as a sculptural element, transforming it into a physical presence, and thus escapes the domain of painting, or pictorialism, entirely. Rather than added to space, color seems to shape space—and as a result, shapes experience. In choosing garish, uncomfortable colors--screaming greens and yellows, harsh pinks and oranges--Nauman employs color as another means of disturbing the beholder's experience of space and de-naturalizing his/her perception. A contrast can be drawn between the experience of contemplative absorption characterizing Flavin's work and the confrontation of color.

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57 There are many other installations that employ color in a similar fashion, including Green Light Corridor (1970), Natural Light, Blue Light Room (1971), and Pink and Yellow Light Corridor (1972), among others.

58 In this regard, it is interesting to relate Nauman's 1965 performance (which was later recrated as a video) Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube to Flavin's practice. In the performance/video, a neutral white light tube is straddled between Nauman's legs as he sits on the floor. It is positioned and moved in relation to his body. While recalling the signature element of Flavin's "pictorial" sculptures--the fluorescent tube--here it becomes literally a bodily appendage, a physical element.

59 This can also be seen in Nauman's use of colored neon signs, which, with their inescapable relationship to commercial signage, fall outside the terrain of the pictorial and into that of media and mass culture.
fostered in Nauman's installations. If the white cube is normative, restful, familiar, and pleasant (replicating the comfort and pleasing aesthetics of modernist geometries, and the contemplative calm associated with them), Nauman's Yellow Room is jarring and disturbing, greeting the viewer with a decidedly unfamiliar aesthetic experience, which at once cites and surpasses Minimalism's use of large-scale sculptures as aggressive presences that assert themselves in the viewer's space. Speaking of Yellow Room in a letter to his European dealer, Konrad Fischer, Nauman himself remarks upon its effect: "the room is very hard to stay inside of--I can't stay very long myself." 60

With unusual shapes and forms, negative space, misidentified objects and materials, uncomfortable spaces, and distorted parts, Nauman's sculptures function to overcome the irreducibility of experience and purity of perception latent in Minimalism, placing in their stead various mechanisms of estrangement. The "already there" and essentially knowable are countered with the unknowable, the largely unknown, or the unfamiliar. Nauman's early sculptures essentially eliminate the "known constant" cited by Robert Morris during the gestaltist period of his Minimalist practice--replacing it with what are essentially "anti-gestalts." In some cases, their intelligibility is contingent upon more than a perceptual exchange, requiring the assistance of external

60 Cited in WCR no. 229.
information, including descriptive titles. Others are "anti-gestalts" in the sense that, while they approach the appearance of geometric forms or "irregular polyhedrons," they nonetheless allude to leftover or in-between spaces. Such spaces are precisely what Minimalism does not consider, in that they are not necessarily available to perception—or are what renders it unfamiliar and "strange," countering phenomenological "firstness" with perceptual disarticulation. Nauman's Cast of Space Under Chair, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, is most explicit in this regard, for it depends upon the standard (and readily associable) Minimalist form—the cube—only to subvert the cube's identity and function as a gestalt. Imagined as the empty space under a chair, bound on the edges by its legs and the legs of a person sitting in it, Nauman's cube is not only "imperfect," (and not only refers to a thing in the world),

\[61\] Many of which, moreover, convey false information, thus revealing the power of language itself to mislead rather than communicate or inform. For example, as discussed in the following chapter, the sculpture Wax Impressions of the Knees of Five Famous Artists (1966), as discussed in Chapter Two, is neither composed of wax nor represents the knees of five famous artists.

\[62\] On this point, see Yve-Alain Bois "The Measurement Pieces: from Index to Implex," in Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible 1966-1973, exhibition catalogue (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Bois brilliantly analyzes Mel Bochner's "Measurement Pieces" in terms of ostranenie or "defamiliarization," as theorized by the Russian Formalists. As Bois explains, the Formalists were interested in "a definition of art as that which de-automates our perception..." Bochner's exposure of interstitial spaces is given by Bois as an example of defamiliarizing perception; he cites Valéry, "Years ago, I made various 'experiments' in vision—such as that of clearly seeing intervals between objects. Visually the interval between two pieces of furniture has the same worth as an object [...] The sight of the surrounding space (milieu) can be reduced to a state where the most familiar surroundings become strange, unrecognizable...." (p. 168). In addition to Nauman's Cast of Space Under My Chair noted above, his Platform Made Up of the Space Between Two Rectilinear Boxes on the Floor is based upon a similar premise, making one aware of in-between space, defamiliarizing perception.
but gives material form to negative space. As something immaterial, space cannot be grasped "in its wholes"; it is something that is more often than not below our register, or beyond consciousness. The casting of negative space thus leads to our focusing on something that normatively is merely the "background" to perception.

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Thus far, this discussion has sought to emphasize Nauman's dialectical relationship to Minimalism: his sculptures both depending on Minimalism's explicit revelation of the terms of exchange between viewer and object--making them fundamentally constitutive to an artwork's meaning--and reconsidering the bases of this exchange, primarily through rethinking the terms of the subject and experience. One of this dissertation's central contentions is that Nauman's work rejects Minimalism's presupposition of access to an unfettered experiential exchange, in which communication is envisioned as largely transparent. This belief in experiential immediacy, however, persistently appears in the reception of performance: an artistic strategy with which Nauman is intimately associated. Nauman's art, however, as being examined in the current discussion, would seem to challenge such a premise, raising the question of the role and place of his practice in the historical shift to performance: or, as is suggested in the subsequent chapters,
underscoring the necessity of distinguishing different (and sometimes competing) models of performance in the late sixties and early seventies.

The advent of "performance art" is identified with the elimination of intermediary objects, now displaced onto or conflated with the artist's body, which becomes the sculptural "medium." But this shift onto the body is often interpreted as "purifying" the exchange between artist and viewer, rendering it entirely unmediated. As a result, chroniclers of performance make passionate--and largely untenable--claims for its inherent value. For example, Lucy Lippard declares that performance "is the most immediate art form which aspires to the immediacy of political action itself. Ideally, performance means getting down to the bare bones of aesthetic communication--artist/self confronting audience/society."63 Or consider Kristine Stiles, "The artists who began to use their bodies as the material of visual art repeatedly expressed their goal to bring art practices closer to life in order to increase the experiential immediacy of their work."64 The use of the term "immediacy" by both authors is significant, and representative of the literature on performance. The

presumption is that both the origin and source of meaning are the artist's body, which is understood as "natural" or self-evident in its meanings. Additionally, the interaction between viewer and artist/performance is seen to be transparently pure—an inter-subjective exchange operating as a resistant mechanism towards the alienating effects of mediating objects.

But as this chapter has been outlining, the experiential immediacy proposed by Minimalism—and absorbed into the reception of performance practices—constitutes precisely one of the central targets of Nauman's critique. As a result, during the course of this dissertation, there is an attempt to redefine the very terms in which performance is conventionally discussed, as well as one to identify a more differentiated understanding of its development in the sixties. For now, I want to address a specific issue in relation to Minimalism's conception of subjectivity, which, I will argue, Nauman's art absorbs and extends, but which is all but absent in most discussions of performance in the literature.

Rosalind Krauss writes that phenomenology and structuralism were two strains of contemporary thought crucial to Minimalism's formation, in that both challenged the idea that subjectivity is personal and private, upending the model of
an interiorized self.\textsuperscript{65} In contrast, both posit a subject shaped by impersonal, external forces and laws; as a result, "subjectivity" itself becomes a flexible category, one that leads beyond the bounds of the subject him/herself to a "transpersonal reality," to quote Krauss.\textsuperscript{66} This philosophical reorientation became the basis for Minimalism to challenge the traditional notion of how artistic meaning is produced and models of intentionality in the history of art. Emerging in the wake of Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism departed not just from the paintings aesthetic principles, but counteracted their critical interpretation as well: both the formalism of Greenberg (targeted by Judd's "Specific Objects") as well as the expressive model informing Harold Rosenberg's influential theory of "action" painting. Preceded by such artists as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and then Frank Stella—all of whom in substantive ways de-personalized the "mark" or painterly gesture—Minimalism discredited the pretense of interiority and individuality, which fueled much of the triumphant rhetoric surrounding Abstract Expressionism. As Krauss elaborates, Minimalist work is all surface with no interior—something vividly realized in the hollowness of their

\textsuperscript{65}"Indeed, the history of modern sculpture coincides with the development of two bodies of thought, phenomenology and structural linguistics, in which meaning is understood to depend on the way that any form of being contains the latent experience of its opposite: simultaneity always containing an implicit experience of sequence." Krauss, \textit{Passages in Modern Sculpture}, pp. 4-5.

\textsuperscript{66}See Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility." In this essay, Krauss most thoroughly develops the argument that Minimalism rejects a "private" model of meaning and the self.
sculptural forms. Their "empty" centers suggest both an anti-organicism (as sculpture is traditionally considered to possess an interior life from which its external forms emerge) and a means of radically shifting interest and meaning from interiority to the external, public world of physical sites and bodily encounters. As a result, the object is not the bearer of the artist's expressivity; its meaning is produced publicly. For Krauss this undermining of the private/public dichotomy represents a significant shift: while Minimalism is subjective, it offers an impersonal notion of subjectivity. It refutes a notion of "private language" in which "intention [...] is understood as some kind of prior mental event," to paraphrase Krauss.67

Such an understanding of subjectivity is at odds with the one found in much of the literature on performance and body art, in which the artist's use of his/her own body leads to an uncomplicated notion of the subject as a purely "private" being. "Subjectivity" is frequently understood as the primary subject or content of performance—which, in turn, supports its claims for "authenticity." While one outcome of Minimalism's phenomenological orientation is understood to be performance, its critique of the traditional subject and notions of subjectivity—and specifically the idea of its

67Ibid., p. 46.
"publicness," as Krauss so convincingly elucidates—is frequently lost in this passage.68

Minimalism's anti-expressive, public notion of subjectivity, however, is foundational to the development of Nauman's project. On the one hand, when Nauman's body first appears in his work, it is offered as an objective presence: a sculptural "tool" or medium, undifferentiated from non-organic, inanimate things.69 It betrays no emotion, no extroversion, no sense of an interior life—not unlike the resolutely surface-oriented Minimalist sculptures. On the other hand, in suggesting that "subjectivity" is itself a complicated term or construct, Minimalism establishes an important precedent for Nauman to pursue a further investigation of its meaning.

Discussions of subjectivity (especially in post-sixties art history) are most frequently elaborated in terms of the body; after all we experience the world through, with and as bodies. The movement from "subjectivity" to the body thus

68 An important exception is Frazer Ward's probing analysis of the untenable divisions of the "public" and "private" instantiated, but ultimately only schematically developed, in Minimalism. Ward argues convincingly that both Vito Acconci and Chris Burden articulate their performance projects within the critical terms of private/public in a manner that refutes conventional ideas of the self and privacy that drives much of the critical and historical work on performance. Frazer Ward, False Intimacies. Open Secrets: Public and Private in the Performance Art of Vito Acconci and Chris Burden (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 2000).

69 For further discussion of this point—and the relation of this work to the early sculptures and performances of Robert Morris and the dance aesthetic of the Judson Dance Theater—see Chapter Three, "Keeping Score: Performance in Nauman's Art."
seems inevitable, unremarkable. But a more differentiated concept of subjectivity is developed within Nauman's art, one which is not limited to the body or its thematicization. I have already alluded to Nauman's more expansive understanding of the term above, insofar as the negotiation of space and information has been identified as an important aspect of his installation pieces. In terms of the current discussion, in which the "publicness" of subjectivity is being emphasized, I want to consider of one the subject's primary means of public interface—namely, language.

We surface in the world not as purely perceptual beings, but as communicative ones, who use language and sieve reality through its filter. If subjectivity is understood as something inherently public, then one key aspect of this publicness is its means of interactive exchange: specifically, the purview of speech. As a form of language, speech is intrinsically social or dialogical—after all, it is directed outwards toward another being. Through speech, Nauman's art, I want to suggest, presents subjects as interlocutors, emerging in space and time as linguistic beings pressed into a series of implicit conversations. In fact, examining the range of his work, it is notable that speech and dialogical structures consistently appear, even

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70 Notable in this regard is the fact that despite the frequent recognition in the critical literature of "performance art" as a form of direct communicative exchange, the status of performance as language (or the models of language it proposes) is largely absent from the discussion.
when in written or transcribed form. Textual neon signs and
drawings employ imperatives; voices in rooms and faces on
video monitors speak to us (and each other). Language is
embodied—it is something that is performed and employed by
the subject. In short, expanding upon the Minimalist
proposition regarding the publicness of subjectivity,
Nauman's art, I propose, investigates the subjectivity of
language.

Subjectivity, thus, does not simply involve a consideration
of the body of the artist and viewer; it includes collective
systems of communication and language. The introduction of
the subjectivity of language, thus, bears an art historical
import: namely, it counters the belief that models of
communication are necessarily impersonal, disembodied, and
"purely" informational. In contrast, in Nauman's art
language is conceived of as something that subjects use on a
daily basis in the spaces of the world: in other words, in
experience.\(^7\) This is a notion of subjectivity that departs
from the conventional one in the reception of performance
art, in which the body represents an ideal term and

\(^7\)There are important historical considerations at issue here as well. Conceptual art may be criticized for removing the subject by realizing artworks through informational, didactic structures (or hailed as a more radically critical enterprise along post-structuralist lines for displacing the subject altogether). This debate parallels ones found outside the visual arts, in particular the critique mounted against structuralism in the late sixties by many theorists and philosophers who contended that structuralism ignores both the subject and language's subjectivity, including how its "performance" or use is determinative of meaning, and the contingency of speech's dialogical structures. This led to a reception of the speech-act philosophy of J.L. Austin, as well as to the shift from "subjectless" philosophy to ethics (a turn reflected in Michel Foucault's work).
experience is wholly unmediated. Additionally, it emphasizes that, while the turn towards "language" or linguistic models in the art of the late sixties has been extensively addressed, the plurality of these models is often neglected. In the case of Nauman's work, its passage through and against Minimalism is crucial: Nauman's exploration of the issue of language, I propose, is mediated by the contingencies of experiential sculpture. In other words, the problem of language arises in relation to—not outside of—a consideration of the subjective and experiential aspects of Minimalist sculpture, which in turn inspires a reflection upon the use of language in his artistic precedents.\textsuperscript{72}

In establishing Minimalism as a point of departure, this chapter is not proposing an absolute and singular origin for all of the concerns Nauman's art pursues; rather, it proposes that his work allows us to understand more critically the challenges Minimalism either identified and put in place, or possibly could not and did not acknowledge. "Experience," "subjectivity," "perception," and "temporality" are terms that appear frequently in post-sixties critical writing. But they are frequently loosely conceived, and their meanings

\textsuperscript{72}In particular, I am thinking of the work of Jasper Johns and Marcel Duchamp, who are frequently cited as important references for Nauman's art. While this is indeed true, I would contend that his reception of their work is in conjunction with, or through that of Minimalism: providing a means of critiquing the irreducibility of experience proposed by Minimalism. As a result, an argument such as that made by Robert Pincus-Witten ("Bruce Nauman: Another Kind of Reasoning," Artforum vol. 10, no. 6 [February, 1972])—that Nauman's art shifted from an engagement with Duchamp to "behavioral" phenomenology—is based upon a flawed premise and shaky chronology.
accepted as largely unproblematic. As a result, distinctions between practices cannot be recognized.

In Nauman's art, as the above discussion has sought to emphasize, experience is mediated and impure, language is subjective and embodied, perception and information are both communicative and incommunicative. To tease out the significance of these conditions—and to locate them across formally and technically disparate but conceptually consistent works—is the aim of the remaining chapters.
CHAPTER 2: THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED

In the summer of 1966, after graduating from the University of California at Davis with a Masters degree, Bruce Nauman moved to San Francisco. For the first time in his nascent career, he acquired his own studio—a storefront that was an abandoned grocery store, located on the edges of the city. Sometime in 1967, after working in his new home for several months, he a photograph, documenting a trio of sculptures that was recently completed (figure 13). In the foreground is Wax Templates of the Left Half of My Body Separated by Cans of Grease (1967), a free-standing column made up of a series of flat, "u"-shaped plates, stacked alternately with gallon-size cans of grease. On the floor, just behind this work, is Collection of Various Flexible Materials Separated by Layers of Grease with Holes the Size of My Waist and Wrists (1966), a horizontal sculpture made from the layering of thin sheets of assorted materials pressed into a rectangular stack, which is then punctured by three different-sized holes. Hanging on the wall is the artist's first neon wall-sign, The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths (1967): a spiraling circle of pink, neon tubing encases a cursive line of blue neon letters, spelling out the somewhat comical cliché that also serves as the work's title.
Prior to this period in San Francisco, Nauman's sculptures consisted of narrow poles and elongated tubes, propped up against the wall, or laid upon the floor, and were almost exclusively made with polyester resin and fiberglass (figure 14). Cast from a variety of molds, their textures and surfaces—marked by an intentional negligence of finish, and a range of yellows and tinted pigments—were suggestive of an abstract, but palpable, bodiliness. Such qualities led Lucy Lippard to identify Nauman—who at the time was largely unknown—as a participant in the creation of a new sculptural aesthetic, "Eccentric Abstraction," which, she maintained, countered the perceived sterility of Minimalism. According to Lippard, a group of younger artists—including Nauman, Eva Hesse, Keith Sonnier, among others—employed materials to evoke a "sensual response" and "a mindless, near-visceral identification with form for which the psychological term body-ego seems perfectly adaptable."  

While these fiberglass and resin sculptures (all Untitled), with their uncanny inscription of bodiliness and idiosyncratic forms, pointed to a very different sculptural aesthetic, in Nauman's new studio, the issue of corporeality

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2Ibid., pp. 56, 55.
takes on greater significance and the terms of sculptural making become even more complicated. In addition to the pieces noted above, there is From Hand to Mouth (figure 15), Storage Capsule for the Right Rear Quarter of My Body (figure 16), Device for a Left Armpit (figure 17), Knot an Ear, and Untitled (figure 18)—a plaster cast of a pair of crossed arms, covered with wax and suspended from a thick, knotted rope—to name a several of many examples. In these works, made between 1966-1967, Nauman initiates a new series of procedures, developing a heterogeneous sculptural vocabulary. The question that immediately arises is, how can the concerns of these various works be mapped given their temporal proximity—as announced in the photograph of Nauman's studio—but morphological distance?

Assessed as a whole, the only common thread of these works is that, in them, the artist employs his own body directly, references its presence in titles, or explicitly figures bodily sections or fragments. Not surprisingly, at the time, Nauman's sculptures were received by contemporary

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3See WCR no. 83.
4Reflecting back upon this period several years later, Nauman links the discovery of new artistic strategies to his transformed environment: "The first real change came after when I had a studio," he comments, "I was working very little, teaching a class one night a week, and I didn't know what to do with all that time. I think that's when I did the first casts of my body and the name parts and things like that. There was nothing in the studio because I didn't have much money for materials. So I was forced to examine myself, and what I was doing there. I was drinking a lot of coffee, that's what I was doing." Willoughby Sharp, "Nauman Interview," Arts vol. 44, no. 5 (March, 1970), p. 24. Of course the efficacy of relying upon artist's statements as explanatory frames or evidential truths, needs to be considered with some hesitancy, rather than taken at face value.
commentators as exemplary of a new phenomenon: "body art". Willoughby Sharp included Nauman in his *Avalanche* magazine article, "Bodyworks," an early attempt to theorize artworks based upon the physical, psychological or pragmatic aspects of the body, in which, as Sharp writes, "The artist's body becomes both the subject and the object of the work." Cindy Nemser, a few years later in an *Arts Magazine* essay, "Subject-Object Body Art" developed a phenomenological reading of body art, positioning Nauman as an early avatar of the form.

In recent years with heightened interest in the body as a subject of artistic and critical investigation, Nauman's sculptures are viewed as an important, early precedent. In the ongoing discourse of "body art," the body is viewed as master trope: artworks involving the body are considered of, by and about "the body". The artwork functions as a

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7For example, Kristine Stiles, who has written extensively on the body and performance, writes "I have long contended that the body as material in art after 1950 was deeply tied to the need to assert the primacy of human subjects over inanimate objects, and was a response to the threatened ontological condition of life itself in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the advent of the atomic age." The citation appears in her essay for the exhibition catalogue, *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-79*, ed. Paul Schimmel (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), p. 228. Amelia Jones similarly argues that a transformed notion of subjectivity constitutes the primary motivation for and meaning of "body art" in the postwar era. But rather than contextualizing it in terms of a socio-historical field, Jones maintains that it represents a theoretical/philosophical challenge in postmodernism to what she describes as a unified, "modernist" subjectivity. See her *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). Discussions of body art have also
substitute or surrogate object, its meaning now bound to the truth or essence of "the body", in which a certain givenness of the body is often presumed. In other words, the putative authenticity of the body is the foundation upon which interpretation is generated. Artworks, approached as metaphorical substitutes for the body, in turn, are viewed in relation to a notion of realism, as the following statement by Kristine Stiles makes explicit: "The body is the medium of the Real," she writes, "however multifarious that Real becomes and is manifest."\(^8\) The very discourse that supports the "realism" of body art, however, is itself based upon a notion of truth—one emerging from an extensive use of the rhetorical trope of metaphor, which, as Paul de Man elaborates, is not a neutral figure of speech in that it bears the implication of truth. Constraining metaphor to its linguistic partner, metonymy—which links things through contiguous series—de Man observes, "The inference of identity and totality that is constitutive of metaphor is lacking in the purely relational metonymic contact: an

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set the interpretive grounds for the discourse of performance; the terms "performance" and "body art" are frequently used interchangeably (although Jones, in her study, makes a point of distinguishing them). Kathy O'Dell, in her Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance and the 1970s (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), focuses on "masochistic performance" work of the seventies, in which she maintains, "the body and its actions served metaphoric roles." (p. 9)\(^8\) Stiles, Out of Actions, p. 228. Marcia Tucker's early essay on Nauman's art also demonstrates this approach, writing "...Nauman turns to his physical self to discover what the body is and what it does." Jane Livingston and Marcia Tucker, Bruce Nauman: Work from 1965 to 1972 (Los Angeles and New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1972), p. 36.
element of truth is involved in taking Achilles for a lion
but none in taking Mr. Ford for a motor car."^9

In considering Nauman's body sculptures of the mid-sixties,
this chapter probes these issues of truth, identity and
realism. While ultimately I propose that Nauman's works have
something to do with a notion of realism (or "reality"), I do
so from the perspective of their position in the context of
mid-sixties sculpture. What will be suggested here is that
the significance of Nauman's body sculptures rests in their
identification and investigation of the repression of the
referent—or the reality to which signs refer—in modernism
and postmodernism.

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The Wax Templates, seen in the foreground of the studio
photograph, was destroyed by the artist, but Nauman made
several other versions of it between 1966 and 1967, based
upon the same principle. The most well-known is the
sculpture Neon Templates of the Left Half of My Body Taken at
Ten-Inch Intervals (1966, figure 19), a work produced after
the wax one. Formally, the two sculptures are quite

^9de Man's comment is made in relation to a passage from Proust's A la
Recherche du temps perdu. de Man Allegories of Reading: Figural
Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust (New Haven and London:
Yale University Press, 1979), p. 14. What is being emphasized here is
that discussions of "body art", such as in the writings of Stiles and
O'Dell noted above, often heavily deploy a metaphorical language of the
body, one that for my concerns here, is both notable and consequential
for the reception of Nauman's art.
distinct: in terms of materials (organic vs. technological); modes of construction (stacking of discrete parts vs. the threading of one unit); and physical orientation (free-standing vs suspended from the wall). Both, however, reduce the body to a series of seven units, the solidity of each broken through a curved impression.

The title of the sculpture—Neon Templates of the Left Half of My Body Taken at Ten-Inch Intervals—identifies Nauman's body as its source of measure. The individual template units are taken to represent a series of sections of one side of his body, the arched neon tubes formed as a result of his body making a physical impression. Eliminating all figurative attributes of the body, Nauman's Templates appear to be an almost hyperbolic display of indexicality; rather than picturing the body, it is registered as physical trace in sculptural form.

In two essays written in the seventies, Rosalind Krauss theorizes that the displacing of the iconic sign—in which the pictorial image resembles the object to which it refers—by the index, whose meaning derives from a physical proximity, constitutes a paradigmatic shift or rupture in the history of representation, one which she traces to the work of Marcel Duchamp. In a series of works—Tu m', the Large

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Glass, With My Tongue in My Cheek—Duchamp does not graphically represent objects, but registers them as trace upon the surface, performing the operations of the photographic. As Krauss explains, the photograph, "through the absoluteness of [its] physical genesis," is distinct from a "true" icon, thus it "short-circuit[s] or disallow[s] those processes of schematization or symbolic intervention that operate within the graphic representation of most paintings." In contrast, the indexical sign demonstrates an opacity of meaning, its intelligibility dependent upon a written caption, or other material that exceeds the internal contingencies of form. Borrowing Roland Barthes' phrase, Krauss describes Duchamp's Large Glass, for example, as a "message without a code": demonstrated by the artist's production of an extensive set of "captions" in the form of a box of notes which accompany the work.

Krauss' larger point is that Duchamp's investigation of indexicality serves as an important precedent for the stylistically plural, but structurally unified, art of the seventies. Large-scale installation pieces; performance, body art, conceptual art, photo-realism, etc., despite obvious differences, Krauss maintains, nonetheless demonstrate a common allegiance and shared logic: "substitut[ing] the registration of sheer physical presence for the more highly articulated language of aesthetic

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11Ibid., p. 203.
conventions (and the kind of history they encode)." ¹² Making extensive use of documents and other forms of evidence, conceptual art, performance and earthworks, moreover, operate as depleted signs, their meanings contingent upon a set of external codes.

Krauss' analysis proposes not simply a theoretical argument regarding the nature of representation and signification, but makes claims for the historical shift to the index as a defining aspect of postmodern art of the sixties and seventies. While disrupting convention, however, Krauss asserts that this work maintains an allegiance to abstract models of representation, albeit defined in substantively different terms than orthodox modernism. ¹³ With Krauss' reading, thus, we have a potential model with which to interpret Nauman's Templates through the terms of the index, an explanation deeply at odds with the symbolic readings dominating the discourse of body art. Rather than operating as a metaphoric term, the body is presented in all its material physicality, and as a process rather than image. Such a reading is further supported through the fact that Nauman's work clearly demonstrates a significant precedent in

¹²Ibid., p. 209.
¹³In the second part of the "Notes on the Index," Krauss elaborates that through the condition of indexicality, a "shifting conception of abstract art" arises, one which, paradoxically takes its cues from photography. Examining a series of works created and installed at the inauguration of P.S. 1 in Long Island City, Krauss argues that, rather than acting autonomously, pictorial representation now imprints the physical reality of the external world onto its surface in juxtaposition with its environmental surroundings.
Duchamp's art (which Krauss locates as the historical initiating point for a discussion of indexicality): we see it in the casting of body parts; the use of puns; a heterogeneity of objects bearing no allegiance to traditional art historical unities of style and technique; the exploration of language; and the use of self as a subject or object of artworks. Furthermore, like Tu M', Nauman's Templates function as an indexical "self-portrait," one which remains a "message without a code," dependent upon a caption—in this case, the title—to provide its abstract forms with locatable meaning.

But while the Templates appear to fulfill the terms of the index, a comment Nauman made when queried about the shift in his work from the earlier fiberglass sculptures to the 1966-67 body sculptures, seems to undermine such a reading: "Now I wasn't just making shapes to look at," he remarks, "by saying 'these are templates of my body', I gave them reason enough for their existence." 14 While many commentators unquestioningly accept that the Templates are indeed indexes of his own body, Nauman's statement inserts ambiguity into such a presumption. 15 If the title of the Templates is

15 In the same essay cited above, Livingston writes, "The conceptual aim of this procedure [of the earlier fiberglass sculptures' implication of bodily positions] was clarified slightly later in Nauman's sculpture when he began to actually use his body as a mold for making sculptural shapes." (Ibid., p. 11, my emphases).
declarative, stating that they belong to Nauman's body—and thus operating as a caption, lending meaning or truth to an image—his words are far less committal. Now consider a second comment the artist made, again referring to the Templates sculptures:

I was trying to figure out how you make something without having to invent, pretend to invent, the formal system—circles, squares and spirals. And then also go into parts of the body, going back to those templets [sic] and things like that—that was the old standard drawing proportional system, where the head was supposed to be one seventh of the body. And so I just divided the body into the same parts and made those templates, using these devices to kind of make reasons.\(^{16}\)

Implicit in this statement is the fact that, despite the title, the piece's reference is not simply Nauman's body or, in fact, may have nothing to do with his body. If the latter is the case, the "caption" (the title) would not supply conceptual content or contextual information, but would distort it; rather than accommodating understanding of the perceived object, the title would stymy it. The possibility exists that the sculptural object is a false index, in which the connection to Nauman's body is not generated in physical but conceptual terms.

What I am introducing here is the question of the "truth" of Nauman's Templates; I raise this issue given its context, as

it is part of a body of work in which there is a continual
play between the "reality" of the piece and the false
evidence appearing in their titles, a point that will be
examined below. But for now, rather than simply relying upon
the artist's public statements—which themselves should be
approached with caution—I want to look to a related drawing,
produced concurrently with the Templates sculptures, which
reveals the procedures involved in their creation (figure
20). I do so in order to introduce the complex relationship
it maintains to systems of representation—exceeding their
simple understanding as indices of the artist's body.

The drawing, made in 1966, depicts a human figure in frontal
view; a series of parallel lines divides the body into seven
equal parts, the size of which are determined by the measure
of the head. These proportional sections, in turn, are
transformed into a simple grid drawn on the right side of the
page. The human body is envisioned as a series of relational
units, based upon a single body part acting as module. On
the bottom of the drawing, Nauman has written, "body is about
7 heads—make 'space (divide)' in 7 units".17 What the

17On the right side of the sketch above the grid, Nauman has drawn a
stack of ovoid shapes with protruding sides; this odd form is not
identified but seems to correspond to a cross-section of the body as if
viewed from above, with the head protruding beyond the oval area of the
shoulders. This cross-section seems to have been employed as the
positive form in making the "indexical" templates that comprise the Wax
and Neon Templates sculptures. In the former, the punctured plates are
then stacked vertically, with seven grease cans serving as a surrogate
"heads" separating each layer; while in the latter, the arcs of neon
tubing, enclosing negative space, are separated at 10" integers,
representing the standard measurement of the head.
drawing reveals is that going "back" to the body in the case of the Templates consists of going back to an "old standard drawing proportional system." In other words, the sculpture explicitly refers to a past representational mode, returning to a far more archaic--and, it should be emphasized, outmoded--form of body art, based in the theory of human proportions.

While the Templates seems to refer to indexicality (or a false indexicality) as an implicit critique of conventions of representation, it simultaneously employs a system created in the very service of traditional illusionism. If the shift from the pictorial or symbolic to the indexical, as theorized by Krauss, implies a paradigmatic break with iconicity and illusionism, the Templates undercuts such a passage by mapping the past onto the present, reaching into artistic tradition while departing radically from it. Viewed in tandem with Nauman's other sculptures of this period, further evidence of this commingling of seemingly antithetical modes of representation can be discerned. While From Hand to Mouth is almost startlingly figurative, resuscitating an outmoded form of realism, others, like the Templates, Storage Capsule, and Collection of Various Flexible Materials, eschew representative elements by suggesting the body not as an image, but as a source of measure, proportion, or physical trace. Still others, like the hanging True Artist sign, eliminate any notion of visual representation or interest in
sculptural materiality, reducing the object to a text: a linguistic statement that, moreover, is made from lengths of neon tubing, a modern, technological material, widely employed for commercial signage and billboards.

In so doing, Nauman's sculptures at once unify the pre- or anti-modern (the illusionistic or the figurative); the modern (abstraction); and the proto-postmodern or postmodern: manifested in the displacement of traditional artistic materials for those of industry (as presaged in Minimalist sculpture); and the refusal of the tactile, visual and perceptual qualities of aesthetic objects, which will become the hallmark of Conceptual art.\textsuperscript{18} Provisionally, one may infer that Nauman's sculptures, by freely adapting available representational strategies, irregardless of place and time, brazenly disavow the historicity of form: or to employ the terminology of Roland Barthes, the \textit{historical responsibility} of forms. "There is a history of forms, structures, writings, which has its own particular time--or rather times," he writes, "it is precisely this plurality which seems threatening to some people."\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18}According to Hal Foster, the trajectory initiated by Minimalism and continuing in post-Minimalism, Conceptual, institutionally critical, performance, body, and appropriation art, constitutes the "minimalist genealogy," which, he contends, perpetuated a negative attitude towards illusionism in any form. "For the most part," he writes, artists and critics in this genealogy remained skeptical of realism and illusionism. In this way, they continued the war of abstraction against representation by other means." Hal Foster, \textit{The Return of the Real: the Avant-Garde at the End of the Century}, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), p. 127.

\textsuperscript{19}Barthes' passage is cited by Yve-Alain Bois in the introduction, "Resisting Blackmail," of his book, \textit{Painting as Model}. As Bois' study
But I want to suggest another possibility, one which approaches the evident idiosyncrasies of Nauman's sculptures in more critical terms. In an essay on the art of James Coleman, Benjamin Buchloh contends that the determinant conditions of "visual modernity" entails a willful amnesia: an "annihilation of all memory of its discursive condition both as visual fiction (e.g. its status within a long and complex system of representational traditions) and as a system grounded (in the linguistic sense) in convention."20 As a result, Buchloh maintains, modernism's ideology of "the new" (its absolutist claims for breaking definitively with the past) entailed a denial of representation's history—most notably its "figurative" and "rhetorical dimensions"—a situation perpetuated by the sixties' American avant-garde, specifically Minimalism and post-Minimalism. In contrast, Buchloh argues, Coleman's work, starting in the early seventies, specifically counters the elimination of rhetorical devices and modes of figuration seen in contemporaneous practices.

For Buchloh, this exegesis of the artistic past is analogous to the one performed by Paul de Man in relation to modern

literary studies.\textsuperscript{21} Buchloh's contends that modernism's forgetfulness--its renunciation of the past--leads to a series of repressions, ones which foster and accommodate an ideology promoting the possibility of an absolute new or origin.

Viewed in this context, Nauman's art, in conjuring a panorama of representational modes and strategies, can be seen not to deny the historicity of form, but instead to contemplate its status. That this investigation takes place in the mid-to-late sixties, I would propose, is not incidental, in that Nauman's art reflects upon the potentiality for sculpture during the very apex of modernism: a moment of its collapse and the elaboration of its continual possibility internalized in the contradictory aims of Minimalism. Nauman's anachronistic amalgam of representational conventions renders visible--and potentially deconstructs--what de Man describes as the "latent opposition between 'modern' and 'historical'," one which he contends informs the consciousness of modern literary studies. Referring to Nietzsche's "Of the Use and Misuse of History for Life," de Man explains such oppositional thinking: "Modernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching at last a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure. This combined

interplay of deliberate forgetting with an action that is also a new origin reaches the full power of the idea of modernity."^{22}

Minimalist sculpture—with its unyielding allegiance to, or self-identification with industrialism and design, as Buchloh has argued elsewhere^{23}—attempts to capture this "true present" de Man describes as characteristic of the very ideals of modernity. In contrast, Nauman's *Templates*, by invoking the theory of human proportions—a system developed in the depths of art historical tradition for the illusionistic depiction of the body—denies the possibility of a completely new origin (a point emphasized by Nauman's statement cited above, which declares a lack of interest in "having to invent... the formal system"), while deploying a new, technological material in the process. At the same time, however, it dismantles or destroys that system's mimetic desire.

The complexity of this negotiation of the past is central to an understanding of the nature of Nauman's project. The body in representation has a rich and lengthy history. The theory of proportions—appearing throughout the history of art, but most readily identified with the Renaissance—proposes that a

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^{22}Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," in *Blindness and Insight*, p. 148 (my emphases).

mathematically quantifiable order underlies the human body, one which can be revealed by envisioning the body in terms of its parts. These parts, in turn, are seamlessly reintegrated to compose a whole and perfect unit, fulfilling the demands for a convincing illusion. Nauman's Templates sculptures, however, remain at the level of the fragment, atomizing organic form, as well as rendering visible the hidden apparatus of the representational system. Five drawings in the series (figures 21-24), produced concurrently with the sculptures, demonstrate this operation. In them, the seven templates are organized in every possible permutation: lying on the floor; stacked upon each other; suspended from the wall like so many Minimalist boxes, rendered imperfect through the "indexical" bodily excisions that violate the geometric forms. Rather than maintain any proper order—or reassembled and transformed into an organic whole—the templates are rearranged into seemingly endless, imaginative combinations. Regularity is sacrificed for an almost comic sense of play, a quality most evident in one of the drawings (figure 24), in which the templates are upended and then stacked vertically, appearing to tumble like a fragile house of cards. Nauman inscribes the drawing on the bottom: "Head/shoulder/ chest/ waist/ thigh/ knee/ calf/ wax templates of my body arranged to make an abstracted sculpture."

²⁴For the fifth template drawing, see DCR no. 40.
What results is an abstracted series of forms, which, while linked to body or its representational codes, are nonetheless estranged from it, yielding a constant interplay of allusion and dissociation. A similar effect is seen in Six Inches of My Knee Extended to Six Feet (1967, figure 25, right image). The sculpture consists of an odd, tubular, shape suspended from the wall which, upon first encounter, appears unremarkable and almost unidentifiable. Its limb-like elongated form, however, tinted with a brownish pigment, is suggestive of the patina of skin, while its title directs the viewer to anchor its meaning to a part of the body.

A drawings of the same name (figure 25, left image) reveals the procedures involved in producing the sculpture. In it, a section of the body--a six inch length of the knee formed by imagining an arched line from one side across to other--is drawn and then numerous copies of the same image are attached together in order to create the "six foot" form. Afterwards, Nauman created a mold from which a fiberglass and resin cast was produced. As a result of these procedures, an already abstract body part--an isolated arc of the knee--is further distorted from its original form. The viewer is unable to associate or connect the sculpture with an experience or sense of his/her own body. Reading the title, and looking at the banal, tubular object, one if faced with a gap between visual perception and cognitive knowledge. After all, one makes sense of the world, and one's external relations to it,
in part on the basis of measure: distances; spatial dimensions, our own bodily proportions of size, height, and weight. The very foundation of phenonemenological experience is the measuring of one's body in terms of and against objects in space: something explicitly exploited and made the subject of Minimalist sculpture which rather than picture the body imagistically, invokes the sentient temporality of bodiliness in the process of visual apprehension as a means of anchoring the viewer's relation to the external world of objects.

But Nauman's sculpture—while mathematically quantifying the body with the precision demanded by the theory of proportions—ironically defamiliarizes such experience. At the same time, the effectiveness of its critique and its meaning, I want to suggest, is intimately dependent upon an association with the body. To clarify this claim, I will recall an observation Leo Steinberg made thirty years ago after first encountering Jasper Johns' Target paintings, which juxtapose a series of anatomical parts—chopped off and enclosed in tiny boxes—against painted fields of readymade symbols and forms. "Could our habit of sentimentalizing the human," Steinberg queries,

...even when obviously duplicated in painted plaster—could this pathetic instinct in us be deadened at sight so as to free alternative attitudes? [Johns] was tracking a dangerous possibility to its limits; and I think he miscalculated. Not that he failed to make a picture that works; but the attitude of detachment required to make it work on his stated terms is too
special, too rare, and too pitilessly matter-of-fact to acquit the work of morbidity. When affective human elements are conspicuously used, and yet not used as subject, their subjugation becomes a subject that's got out of control.25

What Steinberg suggests is that in representation, it is virtually impossible to escape the subject when that subject is the human body, even if it is reduced to a mere disinterred and disconnected part: the very act of "subjugation" functions as a point of the viewer's identification. In his paintings, Johns' exploited this tension, a precedent upon which Nauman's art will build. Beyond the limiting case of Johns' painting, however, I want to characterize Steinberg's point in more general terms--as the pull of referential grounding. This desire for a referent--or rather, its almost unavoidable seduction--is something Nauman's sculptures elaborate, fueling their specific engagement with the body.

The duplicity Steinberg attributes to Johns' work--a literalization of pictorial materials, formal elements and objects which stymies a transposition of meaning (i.e. metaphorical substitution) in concert with the lure of referentiality--is equally operative in Nauman's sculptures, and perhaps even more so. The significance of their invocation of the index takes another another dimension. The

index represents one of the three classes of signs in the semiotic theory of C.S. Peirce, who, unlike Ferdinand de Saussure (whose semiotic analysis was the basis of modern structuralism), develops a system of different types of signs defined through their relation to the referent (or the real object for which the sign stands), which include the icon, the index and the symbol.\textsuperscript{26} Nauman's sculptures specifically call attention to the relationship of the sign to the referent; the realism of his work, I want to suggest, derives not from the givenness of the body as term, but from this question of the referent.

But according to Saussure's linguistic theory, the referent stands outside the notion of the sign, or exceeds it.\textsuperscript{27} One of its central contentions is what Saussure calls the sign's arbitrariness, claiming that there is no necessary relationship between the signifier (for example, the word comprised of the letters "c/a/t") and the mental concept or meaning of "cat" (i.e. the small, furry housepet).\textsuperscript{28} The

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{26}Charles Sander Peirce, "Logic as Semiotics: the Theory of Signs," \textit{Philosophic Writings of Peirce} (New York: Dover, 1955). To recall these three, the image or figure in illusionistic representation constitutes what Peirce calls an icon, a sign which works by resemblance; while the index (as in a footprint) operates through physical contiguity; and the symbol (as in a word) by convention or rule.


\textsuperscript{28}According to Saussure, the sign (that is, the thing that stands in for, or operates in absence of the referent) is comprised of two parts--the material signifier (phonic image) and the signified (concept, a mental image)--which are inseparably united like the sides of a coin or sheet of paper.
\end{footnotes}
foundation for any connection between the signifier and signified, he emphasizes, is by conventional rule.

I refer to Saussure's theory of language—which is governed by an arbitrary and differential system of signs and which excludes consideration of the real object under the contention that it is external to the linguistic system—due to its influence within art historical analysis. Saussure's model has been embraced as a means to overturn "realist" notions of representation: rather than the depiction of an object or a thing in the world, at issue in this semiotic break with traditional ideas of representation, is the signified. In short, a signifier summons not a referent, but a signified.\footnote{For Rosalind Krauss, a paradigmatic moment in modernism's increasing self-consciousness with regards to its representational codes occurred in Cubism's proto-semiotic shift, one which prompted Duchamp's exploration of the "index" in that the question of "whether pictorial language could continue to signify directly, could picture a world with anything like an accessible set of contents" came to the fore. (Krauss, "Notes on Index: Part I," p. 202). In another essay, Krauss furthers the terms of this discussion, maintaining that a key significance of Picasso's pictorial experimentation was to acknowledge that the stuff of painting, or representation, was the mediated world of signs, exploiting its ramifications in a more radically complex manner than previously attempted. (Krauss, "The Motivation of the Sign," in Picasso and Braque: a Symposium, Lynn Zelevansky ed. [New York: the Museum of Modern Art, 1992], pp. 261-287). In Picasso's collages of the period between 1912-13, what is represented is not a bottle or a glass, but signs for these things which are absent, signs which operate in a system of differences. A disconnect ensues between Picasso's Cubism and what Krauss terms the 'reflectionist,' view of art, by which she intends the lingering tradition of illusionism, or rather its hold on art historical interpretation. Picasso's collage, Krauss maintains, explicitly explored the arbitrariness of the sign as theorized by Saussure. As a result, any attempt to anchor its internal play of elements to an explicit object in the real world is rendered illegitimate: a renunciation of the complexity of the workings of the sign, and a retreat into an outmoded form of illusionism, one which is explicitly targeted by the Cubist project. "...semiology is welcomed as a way of demonstrating how, specifically, the structure of any sign—whether word or image—," Krauss writes, "always mediates the real, constructing not"}
critical theory takes on greater force in the context of postmodernism, with some commentators, most notably the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, contending that postmodernity itself is marked by the displacement of reality for an endlessly self-referential play of signs. Baudrillard theorizes this condition under the notion of simulation, which, he argues, is characterized by a dramatic "liquidation of all referentials." The complex mediation of the world by signs gives way in Baudrillard's thinking to a more abrupt disavowal: "It is no longer the question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody." he writes, "It is rather the question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself." In this world of the simulacrum and simulation, what ensues is "never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference."

What this discussion points to is that the tension between the sign and referentiality is a defining aspect of contemporary theory and postwar art historical debate, touching upon crucial methodological issues as well as an

an object--a referent--but a signified." (p. 273, my emphases). For Krauss, the impulse to "construct an object" reverts back to the realm of a "realist (reflectionist) view of art"; and likewise the attempt to decode referents reverts to an iconic model. She writes, "This distinction, which cannot be overstressed, is the great gulf dividing the signified--the signifier's Siamese twin in semiology's structure of the sign--from the referent. The signified is a concept; the referent a (real) object." (p. 273).


31Ibid., p. 170 (my emphasis).
understanding of shifting paradigms of representation. For Hal Foster, the conflict leads to the development of two seemingly irreconcilable representational models—separated by an intellectual, theoretical, and ideological gulf—predominating critical discussions: one derived from the discourse of signs—in which the image is simulacral—and the other, a materialist discourse in which the image is referential. 

Nauman's sculptures, however, I want to propose, overcome such an impasse through another possibility—by allowing for a notion of the referent to enter into that of the sign.

Examining the range of Nauman's objects from the mid-sixties, what becomes evident is that they construct, conjure, or infer referents: not just one, but often multiple referents, some of which are provided, importantly, despite their falsehood and others which actively fill "empty" signs. For example, in the floor piece, Collection of Various Flexible Materials Separated by Layers of Grease With Holes the Size of My Waist and Wrists (1966, see figure 1), layers of crinkled aluminum foil, plastic sheeting, pliable foam, rubber and felt and grease form a horizontal, rectangular sculpture that hugs the surface of the floor. The structure is then punctured by a series of three, differently sized

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32 Foster contests the simplicity of this opposition through a re-reading of Pop, under the model of a "traumatic realism." It is Foster's contention that the "minimalist genealogy," and its dominance in postwar art history, has ignored a competing lineage, stemming from Pop imagery. Hal Foster, The Return of the Real, pp. 126-168.
holes. While the work shares attributes with contemporary post-Minimal sculpture (i.e. demonstrating an exploration of the physical properties of sculptural materials, and their responses to various actions performed on them) these interests are reconciled with an explicit allusion to the body: an allusion associated with the three holes violating the surface, revealing the work's tiered layers. In the accompanying drawing, Nauman contemplates adding "some kind of hole through all the layers/ perhaps at an angle?" (my emphases). But in the final sculpture, the "some kind of hole" becomes three holes which are assigned specific referents—Nauman's "waist and wrists." Thus the holes are

33The use of mundane and recycled materials is also of note. Several years later, in 1968, Nauman met Joseph Beuys at Documenta, and remarked to an interviewer what he found important about Beuys' work, "It has an incredible physical presence, which is what I think most Americans took from him, the physical manipulation of materials. But they cleaned it up a lot. His work has an altogether different kind of presence from that..." (de Angelis, p. 82). Referring to the early sixties sculptures of Claes Oldenburg, Yve-Alain Bois discusses notions of recycling and waste in terms of a dynamic of anti-commodification informing Oldenburg's work. (Yve-Alain Bois, "Ray GUNS" in Formless: A User's Guide, Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss [New York: Zone Books, 1997], pp. 172-178). An interesting comparison can be made to Nauman's early work, including his 1966 photo piece Flour Arrangements (which reshuffles the same pile of flour in an extended sculptural piece); or the related 1967 Composite Photo of Two Messes on the Studio Floor—comprised of the left-over waste from the making of other sculptures).

34In the inscription on a related drawing (DCR no. 22), Nauman lists all of the many materials (as well as potential ones), describes their physical placement, and emphasizes the process of making. He writes: "1. Felt pad/ 2. flexible plastic (semi-rigid)/ 3. lead sheet/ 4. paper or waxed paper/ 5. rubber sheet/ 6. cork sheet/ 7 (wax sheet)?/ 8. aluminum foil/or/layers of different colors of/greases and/or waxes/ ('sandwich'/sculpture/ layers of various thicknesses of various kinds of materials (flexible or/semi-rigid)/ rigid/ wholes should be as much as 2 feet thick. If all flexible or breakable materials/ are used, whole pile can be dented down/ at the center or in some specific shape or impression (i.e. The grease would squeeze out)/ 2'/7'/2'/ paper or waxed paper/ thin plastic/ lead/ rubber/ felt/ lead/ glass/ etc/ a layer of grease should /be on the floor if/ possible (could put/ waxed paper down first./ or perhaps/ 7'/ 7'/ 1'/ 5 kinds of/ materials separated /by grease/ height about 6-8 inches/ (some kind of hole through all/ the layers/ perhaps at an angle?")."
read as indexical signs of parts of the artist's body. But the dimensions of these holes appear to be impossibly narrow, incapable of corresponding to the physical size of Nauman's body, despite its liteness. This skepticism as to the accuracy of the title is reinforced in the sculpture's entry in the catalogue raisonné, which remarks that it is "punctuated with holes purportedly (but not actually) of Nauman's waist and wrists." 35 What is produced is a "hole"—not only formally, but conceptually.

The suggestion that Nauman explores the issue of referentiality leads, therefore, to a reconsideration of the crucial displacement of the signified for the referent in Saussure's theory. The former, according to Saussure, suggests the detachment of the sign from the real, as an independent entity, comprised of the relationship of signifiers and signifieds; while the latter supposedly ignores the workings of the sign, instead grounding the object in the real world. But in drawing from another explanatory model, I want to propose that the question of the referent, raised in Nauman's art, can never totally be eliminated in theories of the sign.

In "The Nature of the Linguistic Sign," Emile Benveniste contends that Saussure's own theory of the sign is tacitly

35Cited in WCR no. 33.
dependent upon a notion of the referent, despite claiming otherwise. He writes:

[Saussure] declared in so many words that the 'linguistic sign unites not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image.' But immediately afterward he stated that the nature of the sign is arbitrary because it 'actually has no natural connection with the signified.' It is clear that the argument is falsified by an unconscious and surreptitious recourse to a third term which was not included in the initial definition. This third term is the thing itself, the reality.\(^{36}\)

Benveniste continues, drawing upon several of Saussure's own examples: the first, the relationship of the French signifier soeur to the concept 'sister,' and the second, the existence in different languages of various phonic sequences (or signifiers) for the same signified, in this case 'ox.'

Even though Saussure said that the idea of 'sister' is not connected to the signifier s-ö-r, he was not thinking any less of the reality of the notion. When he spoke of the difference between b-ö-f and o-k-s, he was referring in spite of himself to the fact that these two terms applied to the same reality. Here, then, is the thing, expressly excluded at first from the definition of the sign, now creeping into it by a detour, and permanently installing a contradiction there.\(^{37}\)

Benveniste does not question Saussure's division of the sign into the bipartite structure of the signifier/signified, but he does maintain that an idea of the referent returns within the constitution of the sign. This claim is made by


\(^{37}\)Ibid.
questioning the notion of arbitraryness—or rather arguing for its limited value—and some of the conclusions which arise from it. Despite the fact that there is an arbitrary or unmotivated relationship between any given sign and the "actual" object or element to which it refers, Benveniste is more skeptical about extending this characterization to the association between the signifier and signified: ".. the connection is not arbitrary," he writes, "it is necessary."

Benveniste explains:

The concept (the 'signified') boeuf is perseforce identical in my consciousness with the sound sequence (the 'signifier') bōf. How could it be otherwise? Together the two are imprinted on my mind, together they evoke each other under any circumstance. There is such a close symbiosis between them that the concept of boeuf is like the soul of the sound image bōf. The mind does not contain empty forms, concepts without names.38

In this passage, a crucial shift can be discerned; namely, the speaker is introduced into the linguistic situation. While Benveniste respects the analytical position of the linguist, and accepts some of his/her claims, he also recognizes the distinctly different perspective of the ordinary speaker who uses language to make sense of reality. In this context, the possibility for the existence of "empty" signs is profoundly limited.39

38 Ibid., p. 45 (my emphases).
39 "For the speaker there is a complete equivalence between language and reality." Benveniste writes, "The sign overlies and commands reality; even better, it is that reality... As a matter of fact, the point of the view of the speaker and of the linguist are so different in this regard that the assertion of the linguist as to the arbitrariness of
By taking into consideration the position of the speaker, the experiential conditions of language—that is, how it functions in the world—comes into focus. In other words, while attending to the demands of the linguistic system, it also summons language's operations outside the confines of this system where its communicative dimensions are at issue. In the above discussion of Nauman's sculptures (e.g. Six Inches of My Knee, and Collection of Various Flexible Materials), it was suggested that acts of mediation—or the viewer's reception of multiple forms of perceptual and cognitive information—is constitutive of the work's meaning. That we do not function in the world without names emerges in that, facing Nauman's ambiguous sculptures, the viewer will seek to link to a "reality" to them: a move encouraged by their descriptive titles. In semiological terms, Nauman's sculptures actively motivate even "empty" signs.

The viewer of Nauman's sculptures engages with the object's internal, visual elements in concert with external information. Rather than marrying a signifier and signified, he/she seeks to unify signs and referents, bringing as well a set of pre-determined expectations. As Nauman once noted, "One way I worked was by using the tension of two kinds of information that don't quite line up—it's not just the designations does not refute the contrary feeling of the speaker."

Ibid., p. 46.
object that you contemplate and experience; it's the object in connection with some other piece of information." While Nauman's sculptures exploit the power of the viewer's intuitive connection between objects/signs and referents, however, they also do not necessarily accommodate or meet one's expectations: furthermore, they frequently and intentionally short-circuit them. The possibility for a reality, complete in its meanings, existing outside the contingencies of the sign, are profoundly curtailed.

Regarding *Wax Impressions of the Knees of Five Famous Artists* (1966, see figure 5)—similar in format to the *Collection of Various Flexible Materials*, but composed of a solid block of material—Nauman once commented:

> Making the impressions of the knees in a wax block was a way of having a large rectangular solid with marks in it. I didn't want to just make marks in it, so I had to follow another kind of reasoning. It also had to do with trying to make the thing itself less important to look at.41

Making sculpture seem "less important" is achieved by pressing into the structure's surface, transgressing sculptural solidity, and disrupting the cleanliness of its surface. But as alluded to in the above comment, the artist was not content with having this result from merely "making marks" which, it is implied, are merely formal elements. In

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40 Cited in van Bruggen, p. 108.
contrast, a series of names of "five famous artists" was attributed to the surface indentations. An accompanying drawing (figure 26) lists potential candidates for the "five famous artists", some of whom are long deceased: Nauman writes, "...assign each knee print an identity-preferably of some (moderately) well known contemporary artists-(perhaps some/ historical artist who has not been dead over 100 years?)/ (Do not use Marcel Duchamp)/ William T. Wiley/ Larry Bell/ Lucas Samaras/ Leland Bell/..." Nauman concludes with a caveat: ".. or/ perhaps all 'knee prints'/ should be the same image but titled as above."

The "wax impressions of the knees of five famous artists," however, is neither made of wax nor represents imprints of "five famous artists" knees; but is a fiberglass cast of Nauman's own kneeprints. As the artist casually noted in another interview, "The full title is, Cast in Wax, or Molded in Wax, or something like that--but it's a fiberglass piece..." Kneeling before a lateral spread of material, Nauman used both clothed and bare knees in order to get a contrast in textures and also to create the visual impression that different knees were used as mark-makers.

In intentionally mislabeling the sculptures, Nauman once bluntly described his motivations as such, "I was interested in the idea of lying, or not telling the truth." To return

\(^{42}\text{de Angelus, p.59.}\)

\(^{43}\text{Ibid.}\)
to the concerns introduced in the beginning of this chapter, the issue of truth is very much at play in Nauman's "body" sculptures—not its fulfillment, however, rather its undermining. The casualness of Nauman's above quip notwithstanding, I want to engage with the seriousness of these "lies" in that they speak to the complex notion of referentiality operating in Nauman's sculptures. Several concerns are of note here.

On the one hand, approached through the question of referent, the body sculptures—typically unified as a category through the term of "the body"—can now be viewed in relation to other works Nauman made during the period, ones which don't explicitly figure bodiliness in any form. *Cast of Space Beneath My Chair* (1965-1968), *Platform Made Up of the Space between Two Rectilinear Boxes on the Floor* (1966), and *Shelf Sinking in to the Wall with Copper-painted plaster casts of the Spaces Underneath* (1966) consist of visually ambiguous shapes or forms, whose titles connect them to the external world of things, objects or spaces. Their quasi-geometric shapes and blocks create an unmistakable association with Minimalist sculpture, but in a somewhat battered form. Minimalism's industrial logic, yielding ideal geometries out of the materials of high industry (i.e. steel, glass, titanium, copper) is replaced with uneven, imperfect masses crafted from concrete, plaster, wood, paint and fiberglass.

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44See figures 3, 4, 6, respectively.
The regularity of shape—or the gestalt—of such Minimalist works ensures the givenness of phenomenological perception; in other words, the immediate identification of the object with a pre-existing world of ideal forms. But replicating the series of distortions seen in the Templates and Six Inches sculptures—in which the final forms belie their origins—Cast of Space, Platform, and Shelf Sinking sacrifice the self-evidence of visual perception. The viewer thus is drawn to the descriptive titles, which associate the abstracted forms with specific references in the material world.

But what is curious in all three sculptures is that they refer to negative space: something below the register of seeing in that we do not perceive it. Interstitial space is, for all intents and purposes, an "empty" sign, which nonetheless is grounded by Nauman in the concrete realm of experience: bound to objects of use (chairs, shelves), or those things culled from the context of domestic, everyday space. But similar to Nauman's other works of this period, Cast of Space, Platform, and Shelf Sinking sculptures, I want to propose, demonstrate a literalism or concreteness (in

45 Thus while not being "about" the body, these incidental things and spaces, which are used and occupied by the body, suggest an intimate identification with it. This reading is further supported by a series of contemporaneously produced sculptures of simple geometric shapes and planes, which function as "devices" for the viewer to 'use' (i.e. interact with physically) or which otherwise command the body or the environment: these include, Device to Stand In, Device to Stand In (Brass Floor Piece with Foot Slot), Untitled (Eye Level Piece), Device to Control the Flow of Air in a Room, all from 1966.
their titles) that is paradoxically accompanied by operations of estrangement (in their ambiguous cast forms of empty, unperceivable spaces). In other words, no simple correspondence is produced between things seen and things known. Despite invoking clear referents, the sculptures leave the viewer with unanswered questions; a reflectionist model of representation is carefully undermined while, at the same time, aspects of realism are continually invoked and exploited. The stakes of this negotiation of representational codes and conventions takes me back to the subject of modernism.

Above I maintained that Nauman's art does not resuscitate the outmoded, but rethinks what has been rejected as outmoded within the contemporaeneity of the present, undermining the "latent opposition between [the] modern and historical," to reinvoke de Man's words. My reference de Man's analysis of literature and literary theory, however, has another benefit, in that the final part of this chapter will argue that there is a literary parallel for Nauman's project of the sixties, one which engages with similar procedures found in his sculptures. In this project of contemporary fiction, the legacy of the novel in modernity and its traditional ties to realism were contemplated and redefined. In the process, the status of the referent came into question.

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In the fifties, a new form of literary writing--identified with the nouveau-roman--arose in France. Self-consciously reflecting upon the state of modern literature and the perceived stranglehold of literary realism, the "new novel" eschewed the conventions of fiction (plot, character development, and narrative structure), leading to the production of an unconventional, and sometimes incomprehensible, writerly style, in which language took center stage and psychological intensity and symbolism--the traditional cornerstones of fiction--were practically non-existent. The writings of these novelists and critics, including, most prominently Alain Robbe-Grillet, were first met with skepticism and sometimes (moral) outrage on the part of critics and the public under the charge that the nouveau-roman abandoned not simply realism, but the "real" world, thereby divorcing literature from human experience. As Bruce Morrisssette writes in an introductory essay to Robbe-Grillet's Jealousy, "Hostile critics threw themselves on the novel. The old guard, with André Rousseaux and Robert Kemp, hastened to denounce it, and to assure the reading public that the so-called 'new path' for fiction promised by Robbe-Grillet in reality led nowhere."46

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In one sense, the nouveau-roman could be cited as exemplary of the implicit separation of the "modern" and the "historical" which Paul de Man condemns in his writings, cited above. The nouveau-roman seems to foster an irresponsible and complete break with historical consciousness under the impulse of the new, and even worse, of fashion. Indeed, de Man explicitly describes it in such terms: "Since the ends of the war," he writes:

French literature has been dominated by a succession of quickly alternating intellectual fashions that have kept alive the illusion of a fecund and productive modernity. First came the vogue of Sartre, Camus, and the humanistic existentialism that followed immediately in the wake of the war, soon to be succeeded by the experimentalism of the new theater, bypassed in turn by the advent of the nouveau roman and its epigones. These movements are, to a large extent, superficial and ephemeral; the traces they will leave on the history of French literature is bound to be slighter than it appears within the necessarily limited perspective of our contemporaneity.47

In a recent study, however, Peter Brooks makes the observation that the tenets of realist fiction were not entirely rejected by the nouveau-roman, but rather were simultaneously co-opted, displaced and reorganized.48 Following this approach, the nouveau-roman can be viewed as intimately engaged—albeit with a critical eye—with literary history.

47de Man, Blindness and Insight, p. 60.
In one section, Brooks explains this point by emphasizing how the new novel actively draws upon the descriptive richness characterizing traditional narrative, while short-circuiting its mimetic function. Brooks' observations are of interest to me here as they uncannily resonate with the effects of Nauman's sculptures. As has been discussed above, in Nauman's body sculptures, there is a tension between the pull of referential grounding—made available through the invocation of the body in descriptive titles and, in some cases, explicit figurative elements—and the accompanying procedures of distortion (from the elongation of measure in Six Inches of My Knee to the creative "lies" of Wax Impressions) that undercut or stymy the viewer's secure identification of the objects and, as such, their "truthfulness." In terms of the nouveau-roman, Brooks speaks to a similar tension or paradox, one achieved, he contends, by a refusal to coordinate the details into a convincing whole so that the reader is left to negotiate a confusing array of fragments:

Accessory details, metonymies of body, parts instead of wholes: these become the privileged objects of the realist gaze. The body itself does not entirely cohere as a descriptive object because of the plethora of "part objects" by way of which it is known. Flaubert's use of such gaze is made clearer in such later novelists as James Joyce and Alain Robbe-Grillet: the latter, for instance, gives an extreme version of how understanding—mental judgment, in Descartes' sense—is prevented, or interfered with, by an insistence on excessive
detail that keeps the mind from grasping larger outlines and wholes within the descriptive field. 49

Brooks identifies the concomitant concreteness of the writing—with an attentiveness to the physical world of bodies and objects—and that writing's lack of center, or the tendency to circumvent logical communication through excess. In contrast, in traditional literary narrative (e.g. the nineteenth century realist novels of Dickens) dramatic details accumulate, progressing towards climax or resolution; and all, importantly, are subordinate to the illustration of a meta-meaning or story, which controls and orders the various parts.

In the nouveau-roman, however, while details and descriptions abound, rather than being integrated or ordered into a whole, they remain left hanging, like so many homeless part-objects. Similarly, while nodding towards the desire for an image—through illusionism, and/or linking abstracted forms to a reality through other means—Nauman's sculptures display equally complex operations of distortion and fracturing: evidenced in their truncated body parts (such as in From Hand to Mouth); the sectional dividing of the body (in the Wax Impressions and Neon Templates); the isolation of one body part (in Collection of Various Flexible Materials and Wax Impressions); and the abstracting of measure (in the Templates series and Six Inches of My Knee). These

49Ibid., p. 102.
procedures of fragmentation, however, are ironically accompanied by a plethora of detail and information supplied by the titles of the sculptures and their accompanying drawings. In other words, a descriptive plenitude offsets the sculpture's abstractions and withdrawals; but paradoxically, this functions to produce a sense of partiality or incompleteness in that the viewer is led towards understanding, which is either false, or fundamentally conflicts with perceptual experience.

A constant shifting between literalness and evasiveness occurs in Nauman's sculptures, one which, as Brooks suggests, is equally characterisic of the nouveau-roman, a form of literature with which, perhaps not coincidentally, Nauman himself was familiar. Around 1966 when Nauman started making these sculptures, he read Alain Robbe-Grillet's Jealousy, a novel that provides an interesting literary precedent for Nauman's approach to artmaking.\textsuperscript{50} The "story" (loosely

\textsuperscript{50}It should be emphasized that Nauman's interest in Robbe-Grillet was not unique, as a number of artists (and not just visual artists) in the sixties were drawn to the novelist's writings—for one, given their radical decentering of authorial voice and renunciation of symbolism. In Nauman's case, he once mentioned to Coosje van Bruggen that he was particularly intrigued by Roland Barthes' introduction which theorizes Robbe-Grillet's "objective realism." van Bruggen cites the first lines of Barthes' essay, which she suggests are the context in which Nauman creates his flickering neon signs: "High on the pediment of the Gare Montparnasse is a tremendous neon sign that would read Bons-Kilomètres if several of its letters were not regularly out of commission. For Alain Robbe-Grillet, this sign would be an object par excellence, especially appealing for the various dilapidations that mysteriously change place with each other from one day to the next. There are, in fact, many such objects—extremely complicated, somewhat unreliable—in Robbe-Grillet's books." In 1966, Nauman made a drawing of for a neon sign piece, which was never made. The drawing itself no longer exists, but we have a photograph that Nauman took, showing it hanging on the wall (reproduced in van Bruggen, p. 152). The word "SUBSTITUTE" is
speaking, given its anti-narrative approach) of *Jealousy*
takes place on an unnamed plantation in an unnamed country
that, brimmed by banana fields and subject to sweltering
heat, is assumed to be some colonial outpost in Africa. From
the title, critics interpreted the book as a psychological
portrait of jealousy, one which engulfs the narrator in face
of the implicit romance brewing between his wife and the
neighbor.

But if indulgence is an issue in Robbe-Grillet's novel, it
does not occur on the level of sexual encounter, or even the
violent rage of a snubbed lover, but within its use of
language: lengthy passages of seemingly inconsequential
detail are strung together, and a painstaking descriptiveness
is given to objects, atmospheric effects, and noises echoing
in the central house. The tone for the writing is set in the
very first passage, which states:

> Now the shadow of the column—the column which
supports the southwest corner of the roof—divides
the corresponding corner of the veranda into two
equal parts. This veranda is a wide, covered
gallery surrounding the house on three sides.
Since its width is the same for the central portion

sketched on a long, horizontal scroll of paper. The first two, the
sixth, and the last two letters of the word, however, are replaced with
black stars. Above the phrase, Nauman has scrawled "stars are black,
letters are white or clear." After making this drawing, he created two
other neon sign pieces based upon this idea of an alternation between
words that are "on" or "off" (WCR nos. 129 and 130). In the first one,
the word "suite", in pink neon, is superimposed over the word
"substitute," in green neon. The words flash on and off intermittently,
and then simultaneously, in alternating sequences. In the second work,
the homonyms "sweet" and "suite", the former in yellow, the letter in
red neon, are again superimposed over the blue neon word, "substitute."
Each word flashes "on" for five seconds.
as for the sides, the line of shadow cast by the column extends precisely to the corner of the house; but it stops there, for only the veranda flagstones are reached by the sun, which is still too high in the sky. The wooden walls of the house—that is, its front and west gable-end—are still protected from the sun by the roof (common to the house proper and the terrace). So at this moment the shadow of the outer edge of the roof coincides exactly with the right angle formed by the terrace and the two vertical surfaces of the corner of the house.\textsuperscript{51}

In its excess and frequency, the cataloguing of objects in fact threatens to become the narrative itself, which seems to be built not of plot or character, but through the presentation and play of language.

Jealousy thus violates the dictates of narrativity, presenting the reader with an absurdly ponderous counting of rows of banana fields, seeming irrelevant description of the plates, dishes, utensils and food laid out on the dinner table, and a recurring, minutely detailed description of centipedes being squashed and the residual stains which sully the white-washed walls of the house. These accumulated details never go behind the things or people described, or to quote Roland Barthes from his introduction: "Robbe-Grillet's writing has no alibi, no density, no depth: it remains on the surface of the object and inspects its impartially, without favoring any particular quality; it is the exact opposite of poetic writing."\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{51}Robbe-Grillet, \textit{Two Novels}, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., p. 14 (my emphasis).
I am interested in the parallels between Nauman's objects and Robbe-Grillet's novels—for one, through Nauman's similar deployment of the language of visual and textual description—because in their reception, Robbe-Grillet's books were viewed as examples of a reinvigorated modernism: that is, an explicit turning away from reality into a world of detached linguistic signifiers. In this radical staging of the workings of the sign, the "real" world, it was argued, ceases to exist, reduced to an endlessly deferred play of signification. As a result, in the case of Robbe-Grillet, literary language seems only to refer to itself or to its own artifice and procedures of representation. Hence Paul de Man's charge that "the affinities between structuralist criticism and the nouveau roman are obvious."\textsuperscript{53}

I want to introduce an alternative perspective, however, developed in an essay by Frederic Jameson, who counters the perspective that the nouveau roman demonstrates an uncritical allegiance to aesthetic modernism.\textsuperscript{54} Jameson's reading

\textsuperscript{53}de Man, \textit{Blindness and Insight}, p. 61.

\textsuperscript{54}Frederic Jameson, "Modernism and its Repressed; or Robbe-Grillet as Anti-Colonialist," \textit{The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986}, vol. 1 \textit{Situations of Theory} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 167-180. In his essay, Jameson attempts a seemingly anachronistic task—a Marxist reading of the nouveau-roman, a form of writing seemingly inseparable from structuralist thought—which itself was inspired by the Marxist interpretation of the nouveau roman undertaken by Jacques Leenhardt. The significance of Jameson's analysis is a methodological one as it aims to consider the putative diametric poles of "Franco-Italian structuralism" and Marxist theory. "It is not very difficult to provide a checklist of these incompatibilities," he writes, "synchronic versus diachronic thought, scientism versus the critique of positivism, the primacy of language versus the primacy of society, the
provides a interpretive framework relevant to the concerns of this chapter, in that what he argues is that Robbe-Grillet's writing performs not a denial of, but a complex play with referentiality--one which, I want to suggest, is similar to that found in Nauman's art of this period.

In his essay, Jameson maintains that language of Robbe-Grillet's Jealousy constitutes "an obsessional construction." Far from an exercise of self-reference, he argues, however, that Robbe-Grillet's writing--in all its "depersonalized autonomy"--is utterly dependent upon the external, material world. In order to generate this reading, Jameson draws upon and unifies the two dominant interpretations of the nouveau-roman: one which views it as an objective realism (demonstrated in its accounting of things); and the other du regard (or of sight, a subjective realism). Jameson proposes to link the depersonalized perspective of the novel--in which an obsessive description of every detail of the surroundings is offered by the novel's unnamed narrator--to a "phenomenological analysis of the Look as a social phenomenon."55 Where this leads him is to the subject of colonialism: a referent that does not disappear, Jameson argue, but is repressed. He writes,

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building of small-scale models versus the intuitive, totalizing, transcultural and transhistorical generalizations, and so on. What is harder is to find some field or object over which these two 'methods' can meet in such a way that their respective explanatory power can be concretely compared." (p. 167.)

55Ibid., p. 172.
We have shown, indeed, that while in the sense of the 'referent' the novel is surely 'about' colonialism, it must immediately be added that it is also trying not to be, and that its formal structure must be described precisely as an effort to repress that referential content and to defuse the implications of its raw material. [...] for every reader knows, when reading sentences about banana trees and native servants, insects and tropical drinks on cool verandas, that the narrative 'intends' Africa as its ultimate object or referent; the real problem remains that of the use to which that 'knowledge' is put.\(^{56}\)

Jameson's argument serves as a useful addendum to the above discussion of Benveniste's critique of Saussure's notion of the sign, in that it too implies a complex notion of referentiality that avoids the pitfalls of transparency, while maintaining a profound skepticism towards the possibility of completely divorcing signs from external, contextual considerations.\(^{57}\) Jameson similarly invokes the distinction between the referent and meaning (or the signified), substituting Roman Jakobson's phrase "referential preconditions" in order to emphasize the limitations of the notion of the signified, and the necessity for contextual readings which nonetheless are attentive to the intricacies of material form.\(^{58}\) While Jealousy constitutes a

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\(^{56}\)Ibid., p. 178.

\(^{57}\)To recall one of Benveniste's central points, despite itself, Saussure's theory of sign contains the referent: "In reality, Saussure was always thinking of the representation of the real object (although he spoke of the 'idea') and of the evidently unnecessary and unmotivated character of the bond which united the sign to the thing signified." Benveniste, Problems in General Linguistics, p. 44.

\(^{58}\)Referring to the distinction between "referent" and "meaning", Jameson writes, "... insofar [...] as the aesthetic of Jealousy proposes something like a pure play of signifiers, a combination and variation of relatively free-floating sentences, this insistence on the book's 'signified,' this search for something like its meaning or message might
sophisticated performance of the complexities of the linguistic sign, it is utterly dependent upon the world, the "reality" which constitutes the novel's preconditions, and the material from which it is drawn—or its signs are crafted and mediated.

The reader of Robbe-Grillet's novels—like the speaker imagined by Benveniste and the viewer of Nauman's sculptures—does not dispense with the objects which are conjured through associations with these signs, but is left to contemplate their use-value. With Jameson's reading, rather than a continuity with a restrictive view of modernism, the **nouveau roman** can be seen to bring into relief its repressed: it does not distract from reality, but represses and distorts reality, in order "to manage its fears."^59

Viewed in these terms, the **nouveau roman** reasserts and reflects upon the tradition or history of literary realism—seemingly outmoded and "out of fashion"—while desublimating modernism proper. Nauman's sculptures operate in similar terms. As in the **nouveau-roman**, they do not passively

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^59 Ibid., p. 179.
reflect but do work on the real; the referent is present, in all its richness and materiality, but cannot be taken at face value.

If through this negotiation with the real, the nouveau-roman excises the literary past, while exceeding its modern(ist) counterparts, in a similar vein, Nauman's sculptures, by exploring the domain of the referent, illuminate what is expressly condemned not just by modernist abstraction, but also in the postwar avant-garde. The seeming randomness of Nauman's aesthetic, technical and formal choices thus gain a sense of purpose or order: collectively countering the enforced divisions and limitations of the dominant modes of artistic—and specifically sculptural—production in the sixties. Nauman's art, in its eclecticism and complexity, reveals the inner contradictions and tensions in place, illuminating that postwar sculpture, despite departing from conventional modernism, nonetheless perpetuates one of its fundamental precepts—namely, a strict allegiance to models of abstraction. In so doing, a series of repressions are re-enforced: not just of the referential (as Jameson discusses in literary modernity), but to return to the subject of the body, also of the figurative.

In a series of molded and cast pieces, produced between 1966-67, Nauman explores sculptural figuration. Among these works are Henry Moore Bound to Fail (1967. figure 27), From Hand to
Mouth (1967, see figure 15) and the Untitled sculpture of crossed arms mentioned above (1967, see figure 18). If sculpture—through its three-dimensionality and its co-presence with the viewer in space—traditionally has led to an intimate identification with the body, it was rendered in figurative or imagistic terms, in which there was a sense that sculptural form was animated from within. Minimalist sculpture, however, broke with both these presumptions: externalizing the object’s meaning and implying a phenomenological connection of the body to the pure geometries of form. Nauman’s creation of sculptures incorporating figuration is thus doubly curious: an anathema to advanced sculpture of the time, and, furthermore, produced at the same time the artist was mining the Minimalist vocabulary of solid blocks and abstract shapes.

Henry Moore Bound to Fail is formed by sheets of wax layered over a plaster base, creating a molded torso of deep folds and creases. Its yellowed surface is mottled and uneven, with scraps of fiber still remaining from Nauman pressing of a sweater into the soft, waxy material. The piece depicts a torso around which a thick rope is wrapped, appearing to strangle or constrain it. The idea for the sculpture originates in the idiomatic expression "bound to fail," which is literalized to represent an actual physical binding of the
A commingling of the body's corporeality and language's materiality can be further detected by carefully scrutinizing the top part of the torso, where the phrase can be made out, literally etched into its waxen surface. But the title of *Henry Moore Bound to Fail* also refers to the English sculptor Henry Moore, who Nauman once noted, contemporary artists feel "they have no use for." Nauman remarks,

A lot of [English sculptors and painters who were gaining prominence] didn't care for Henry's work, which I was not particularly fond of myself anyway.... And I also had the idea that they would need Henry sooner or later, because he wasn't bad. He was a good enough artist and they should keep him around. They shouldn't just dump him just because a bunch of other stuff is going on. And so I sort of invented a whole mythology about all that, I suppose you'd call it.⁶¹

As such, Nauman's sculpture refers less to the person of Henry Moore, as in a portrait, than to the history of sculpture to which he belongs. Inferred in Nauman's comment is the necessity of maintaining a connection to the past of representation itself—an impossibility of absolutely inventing the new in which that relation is severed and rendered useless. *Henry Moore* thus points in a similar

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⁶⁰ Other works in this series include: two life-size photographs, *Light Trap for Henry Moore* (1967, WCR nos. 85 and 86) and a color photograph, *Bound to Fail* (1967, WCR no. 72) which shows Nauman, photographed from behind, with his torso wrapped with rope; there are five related drawings, including one (DCR no. 29) which seems to have served as the model for the photograph of Nauman; and four others (DCR nos. 30, 31, 32, and 33) which depict "storage capsules" for Henry Moore, an idea that will be extended in several "storage capsule" sculptures based upon the measure of a part of Nauman's body.

⁶¹ de Angelus, pp. 64-65.
direction of looking back as the Templates—albeit the latter to theory of proportions and the tradition of illusionistic representation and the former to modern sculpture.

What is at issue here, however, and need of further clarification is the specificity of this project—one contingent upon this invocation of the connection between the body and the tradition of realism or what may be thought of as a realist desire, to which the body serves as a conduit. Turning to another sculpture, From Hand to Mouth, also of this period, I want to elaborate upon this issue. The sculpture is based upon the idiomatic expression "living from hand to mouth," connoting a meager existence. The phrase becomes a means to measure and crop a section of the body, namely the distance between the mouth and hand. Unlike Henry Moore, the work is not molded, but cast. Although many commentators assume the cast is an imprint of the artist's own body, it is actually of his first wife, Judy Nauman (again raising the specter of "truth" in relation to body molds and casts found in Nauman's practice at this time).

As a result of the casting process, extraordinary details of surface and texture abound in From Hand to Mouth, with the patina of naked skin seemingly captured in waxen material. In casting the piece, Nauman employed moulage—a material, he explains, used by the police at crime scenes to cast sensitive evidence, such as tire tracks, shoeprints left in
dirt or other potentially revealing traces the criminal mistakenly left behind. Thus both technique and sculptural materials were chosen to orchestrate an almost eerie sense of verisimilitude.

As a technique, casting possesses the ability to most faithfully capture the original object, imprinting the minutest of particularities directly into the surface. By its very nature, therefore, casting achieves a form of "realism"—but, as with the photograph, it is simultaneously iconic and indexical. During this period, casting was one of Nauman's preferred methods for making sculpture, particularly the "body works" which revisit, moreover, the Duchampian tactic of rendering the body not as a whole, but as a series of parts (as in his Female Fig Leaf of 1950); or, as mentioned above, Jasper Johns Target with Plaster Casts (1955), in which a truncated face, a penis, an ear, a severed foot, among other parts, are enclosed in a row of lidded boxes placed in a row atop the painted target.62

Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois have proposed that the body as part-object, appearing extensively in postwar art,

62 Other works could be included in this list as well: Louise Bourgeois' sculptural phalluses; or Robert Morris' Untitled (Fist) (1963) and Wax Brain (1963), which, just a few years prior to Nauman, explored imprinting and casting the fragmented body. As the catalogue entry to these Morris sculptures suggests, such works "...challenge the fantasy of the whole body, refiguring it instead as so many sites—of movement, of torsion, of intellect. Kim Paice, catalogue entry in Robert Morris: The Mind-Body Problem, exhibition catalogue (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1994), p. 162.
represents "a mechanism to resist meaning, to attack the illustrative or the thematic." As such, for the authors, the part-object is an operation of the informe: the undoing of categories and conventional meaning theorized by Georges Bataille. Nauman's *From Hand to Mouth*, with its technique of casting in moulage and by figuring a large bodily section, however, seems to point to another direction. For one, its approach more emphatically suggests a relationship to realist figuration. If we think in terms of the sixties, this sculptural mode is most readily associated with such artists as George Segal and Duane Hanson: the latter whose trompe l'oeil sculptural casts, with their humanist convictions and commitment to a figurative tradition bear little in common with Nauman's uncanny aesthetic (figure 28). Hanson's sculpture, in fact, exemplifies an attempt to make a claim for the continuity of a counter-modernist figurative tradition. As such, a comparison with his art provides an opportunity to differentiate the approach taken by Nauman's sculpture, which mobilizes descriptive exactitude and figurative elements to antithetical ends, ones very much indebted to a distortion of reality, rather than its reduplication—recalling the operations of the nouveau-roman.

In Hanson's figurative casts, every element—from the faithful casting of the body and the careful paint

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64 Ibid.
application mimicking flesh to the dressing of the final
sculpture in the subject's own clothing that, over time, has
imprinted the body's form in its worn folds, is orchestrated
in order to convey the sense of a convincing whole--adding up
to a complete portrait. The viewer believes in the fiction,
fooled at first encounter by the faithful rendition and then
wooed by the sheer technical wizardry that led to that
initial belief. The analogous literary realist model for
Hanson's work may well be the nineteenth century novel, in
which, as Peter Brooks relays, "accessory details are always
legible as signs of the whole, as keys to such inward
concepts as 'character'." In Hanson's old ladies, tourist
couples and children playing, the figurative casts represent
clear substitutes for a human presence, acquiring a persona.
Upon encounter, the beholder feels a tinge of voyeurism
peering into their eyes and scrutinizing the details of their
bodies and dress, as if he/she is invading the private space
of a real body.

In contrast, Nauman's From Hand to Mouth lends analogies with
the partial views, the sense of frustrated expectations, and
repressions of the nouveau-roman. An almost random
fragmentation truncates the form, undermining the integrity
of the body. Upon further scrutiny, other oddities become
apparent: the insistent verisimilitude of the hand and the
mouth, isolated by the long stretch of the arm; an odd

65 Brooks, Body Work, p. 93.
sculptural polychroming in a putrid tone; and its physical positioning, hanging like a homeless relief upon an empty expanse of wall, which, according to Nauman is to be installed at "body height." What draws the viewer's eye in and captivates his/her attention, are the very small details rendered visible from the sculpture's technique of casting: the mouth and the hand; the pursed lips which appear posed in silence; the head's slight tilt; the fingers curving upwards, recoiling in order to clutch an absent object or the empty wall upon which the sculpture is hung. The already partial body becomes further truncated, read by the viewer as a series of separate aspects. Rather than a complete portrait, the sculpture offers a only a provisional, abridged representation, replete with exacting descriptive details, which at once conjure and repress the figure, leaving the viewer to make sense of its many aspects.

Viewing From Hand to Mouth, it becomes impossible to deflect the body definitively as a referent, while at the same time, its meaning fails to collapse into a transparent identification with that referent. Rather, other considerations come into fore: not the least of which is the obsessive drive in the history of representation to depict the body, to capture it in representation, to render its tactility and sentient presence in formal terms. In other words, our desire for "truth" in representation often leads

66 Cited in WCR no. 81.
to (and begins) with the body, a factor with which, I want to suggest, Nauman is not only familiar, but explicitly exploits. For Peter Brooks, this preoccupation with the body represents the cornerstone of modern narrative (by which he intends from the eighteenth to the twentieth century). Brooks writes,

[...] modern narratives appear to produce a semioticization of the body which is matched by a somaticization of story: a claim that the body must be a source and locus of meanings, and that stories cannot be told without making the body a prime vehicle of narrative significations.\(^{67}\)

According to Brooks, the body is a primary ground of literary signification—and as such, the driving force of narrative itself. As narrative constitutes the definitive form of the realist tradition, a desire to capture bodiliness is particularly acute in literary realism, which, Brooks writes, "makes an unprecedented use of description directed to the external world, of which the body is seen to be a part."\(^{68}\)

In one sense, thus, the body leads not to reality, but to the artifice of representation itself, of which realism is one example (or many examples). With its effort to renegotiate the terms of referentiality and representation—which will lead a few years later to a reconsideration of narrativity after its complete withdrawal—it is perhaps not surprising

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\(^{67}\)Brooks, *Body Work*, p. xii.

\(^{68}\)Ibid., p. xiii.
that Nauman's work invokes the body, coded within the complex operations of the sign. The "reality" of Nauman's sculptures—like that of the nouveau-roman—demands that the viewer/reader/speaker connects its raw material to the world from which it is simultaneously estranged. In the process, false indexes, lies, and other distortions are deployed in the service of managing that reality, as opposed to reflecting it passively. To cite Robbe-Grillet, regarding the "realism" of his own writing:

> Partial objects, detached from their use, moments immobilized, words separated from their context, or cross-conversations, whatever rings a little false, that lacks "naturalness"—it is precisely this which rings truest to the novelist's ear.69

Robbe-Grillet's words provide a coda to this discussion, speaking, that is, to the "truth" of Nauman's sculptural bodies.

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CHAPTER THREE: KEEPING SCORE: PERFORMANCE IN NAUMAN'S ART

One of the central developments in mid-to-late sixties artistic practice in the wake of Minimalism is the elimination of the art object by a form of direct embodiment. This shift away from discrete objects—or a consideration of pictorial or sculptural materiality at all—to the body is thought to culminate in performance art, in which the body (most typically of the artist) performs various actions or activities, either for an audience or a camera.

Having staged, pictured, and manipulated himself before an audience and a film and video camera quite early on—in 1965, while still a graduate student at U.C. Davis, Nauman produced his first performance pieces, *Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube* and *Wall Floor Positions*—Nauman maintains a particularly significant profile in the discourse of performance. In its reception, Nauman's art is routinely cited as one of the most important precedents for the advent of performance in the visual arts. Indeed if any "signature" image can be attributed to the diversity and eclecticism of Nauman's practice, perhaps it is that of the young artist, clad in

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1See, for example, Carl E. Loeffer and Darlene Tong eds., Performance Anthology: Sourcebook of California Performance Art (San Francisco: Last Gasp Press and Contemporary Arts Press, 1989).
socks, a white t-shirt and dark jeans, performing stilted and eccentric movements in the confines of his dusty studio.\(^2\)

Yet the issue of performance and Nauman's art is one of a complexity and difficulty not appropriately examined in the existing literature. Why this is so stems from the limitations of the critical models available in which performance has been and continues to be theorized. While in recent years, an increasing amount of attention has being paid to performance in the visual arts, there has been relatively limited scrutiny of the legitimacy of approaching performance as a discrete category at all, and the implications of such an assumption.

Specifically, in the literature, performance is often discussed as a new medium—which is simultaneously "postmedium" in the sense that it refutes the technical materials of art—a form "invented" in the late sixties (and institutionally validated in the early seventies)\(^3\)—that takes

\(^2\)I am referring here to Nauman's appearance in his four Studio Films (1967-68), discussed later in this chapter, and the series of early performance videos (1968-69).

\(^3\)Robyn Brentano traces the institutional legitimation of performance to 1970, when Allan Kaprow established it as an academic subject at the California Institute of the Arts; Brentano also claims that the term "performance art" first appeared in 1970, although she does not provide a source. Robyn Brentano, "Outside the Frame: Performance, Art, and Life," in Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, *Outside the Frame: Performance and the Object: A Survey History of Performance Art in the USA Since 1950* (Cleveland: Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, 1994), p. 57, 30. Henry Sayre cites a similar date, remarking that the historical frame of his study was determined accordingly. He writes, "The year 1970 does seem to me a convenient 'starting point'--it marks the year, for instance, that 'performance' first established itself as a distinct and definable medium in the feminist arts program run by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro at Cal Arts in Los Angeles— but it is by no
it place next to the visual arts' traditional mediums of sculpture, painting, drawing and architecture. With the identification of performance as a medium or discrete form, a retrospective history is created: one which searches back into early modernism, with such examples as Zurich Dada and Russian Revolutionary theater now admitted into a genealogy of performance.\(^4\) One result of the formation of this separate history is the advent of "performance art" itself as a distinct discipline—a hybrid of the visual and theatrical arts—spurning the institutional formation of performance art departments.\(^5\)

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\(^4\) This is the approach taken early on by Rose Lee Goldberg in her *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present*, (New York: Abrams, 1979), one of the first attempts to anthologize a history of performance. In the Foreword, Goldberg writes, "Performance has only recently become accepted as a medium of artistic expression in its own right. Because of this, the full range of certain earlier artists’ activity has often been overlooked and their use of the performance medium not investigated adequately." (p. 6) Goldberg's approach has been very influential to subsequent critics and authors; although this study departs from her approach and conclusions, this is not without acknowledging its value and contribution. See also Moira Roth, "A History of Performance: Syllabus and Readings," *Art Journal* vol. 56, no. 4 (Winter 1997), pp. 73-83.

\(^5\) The formalization of Performance Art as a separate discipline (exemplary here is Peggy Phelan, who distinguishes performance from visual art proper; see her *Unmarked: the Politics of Performance* [London and New York: Routledge, 1993]) has also led to a broader field of "performance studies," which takes an aggressively interdisciplinary approach, examining everything from social rituals, political institutions, literary works, and pornography to activist organizations and communicable diseases such as AIDS. Like those working in Cultural
But in art history, there is another consequence, one which bears upon the historicization of sixties art after Minimalism and its ongoing reception—as well as the reception of Nauman's art. By interpreting performance as a distinct medium or category, its emergence in the late sixties is placed in response—and often in direct opposition—to Conceptual art. While both are thought to represent instances of the artwork's "dematerialization," they nonetheless are positioned as constituting its antithetical sides: performance that of the body, "action," and enactment; and Conceptual art that of discourse, ideas, and language. Moreover, while performance's status as an art of live presentation, bringing together artist and viewer in a specific time and place, is seen to suggest a certain material relation to the "real" world and bodies, Conceptual art's radical withdrawals—of visuality and perception—leads to the mis-conception that language itself is immaterial and anti-experiential. As a result of these presumptions, recent

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7For another perspective on the false or problematic dichotomy between performance and Conceptual art, see Frazer Ward, "Some Relations Between Conceptual and Performance Art," Art Journal vol. 56, no. 4 (Winter, 1997).
efforts at rethinking the legacy of sixties' art often take
great pains to distinguish performance works from Conceptual—
or more generally, linguistically-based practices—even when
faced with their inevitable overlap and sometimes absolute
commensuration.8

Through an examination of Nauman's work, however, the
validity of this approach is put into question and its
limitations exposed. In this and the following two chapters,
I explore Nauman's reception of avant-garde work in the
performing arts--namely experimental dance, film, and music--
which, in the sixties, interrogated the multifarious aspects
of performance: from the status of the performer and the live
event, to the definition of sound, and the function of the
musical/choreographic score. As a result, Nauman's

8A vivid example is seen in two recent, large-scale historical
exhibitions, "Reconsidering the Object: 1966-1975" and "Out of Actions:
Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979," organized by the Los
Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. Both exhibitions examined a similar
historical framework, and the transformation of the artwork that occurred
within it. But while the works included often overlapped, making a case
for the tenuousness of the distinctions between Conceptual art and
Performance art as categories, a division was nonetheless imposed,
leading to often confusing exclusions. See Ann Goldstein and Anne
Rorimer, Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1966-1975 (Los Angeles: Museum
of Contemporary Art, 1995) and Paul Schimmel, Out of Actions: Between
Performance and the Object 1949-1979 (Los Angeles: Museum of
Contemporary Art, 1998). In a review of the latter exhibition, I
commented upon these artificial boundaries, emphasizing works which were
included in "Reconsidering the Object," but were excluded from "Out of
Actions": "...Richard Serra, Dan Graham, Barry Le Va, and Robert
Smithson are not relevant, but Gordon Matta-Clark is exemplary.
Problematically, the Judson Dance Theater is excluded, despite its major
importance to artists such as Robert Morris and Bruce Nauman in their
development as performers (both incidently are barely present in the
exhibition). John Cage's score, Water Music (1952) is included, but the
collaborative activity of Cage, Merce Cunningham, and Jasper Johns is
not mentioned, although the contemporary dance work of Robert
Rauschenberg is shown." Janet Kraynak, "A Play of One Act," Documents
sculpture, I contend, acquires multiple spatio-temporal forms—from the photographic to the textual—which themselves undermine the putative distinctions between texts and acts, performance and language. Thus the larger ambition of these chapters is to argue for the necessity of a more expansive understanding of performance in art history.

I will initiate the discussion by examining the reception of avant-garde dance in Nauman's art during its early incorporation of performance strategies. I propose that the self-reflexive approach of experimental dance vis a vis the performer and performance, and its attempt to defeat what it deemed "theatricality", provides a valuable explanatory model with which to address the meaning and function of performance in Nauman's art.

Extended Time:

In 1969, the Whitney Museum mounted "Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials." The exhibition represents an early institutional attempt to grapple with an alternative—and still emerging—sculptural aesthetic that includes site-specific installations, ephemeral works, and other temporalized sculptural objects. Nauman's contribution was his first large-scale, architectural sculpture, entitled Performance Corridor (1969, figure 29).
The Corridor is a crude construction, fabricated from several sheets of plywood that are crossed with a series of diagonally placed supports. Gauged against the sturdiness of industrial fabrication and perfect geometries associated with high Minimalist objects, it appears aesthetically unremarkable and fragile in construction, recalling the proto- and early Minimalist plywood structures by Robert Morris, such as Pine Portal (1961) and Box for Standing (1961, figure 30). Beyond its physical attributes, however, Nauman's Corridor shares another quality with Morris' works, in that it was not conceived as a sculpture per se, but as a "prop": an object, associated with the performing arts, that is intended to be used or otherwise generate a form of physical engagement. Nauman himself draws attention to this distinction between a "sculpture" and a "prop" in the following letter, sent to the exhibition's curators, James Monte and Marcia Tucker:

The piece as I explained is less a sculpture than a prop for the performance of a dance or studio experience which I video-taped.

In the museum situation it seems to severely restrict and then re-enforce [sic] the available audio, visual and kinesthetic response of any one who walks in or around the walk—probably the function of any artwork—

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9See Morris catalogue, pp. 100-101.
10Nauman's letter accompanied his drawing of the Performance Corridor which was annotated by the artist with technical specifications. Whitney Museum of American Art Archives, Anti-Illusion Procedures/Materials records, Box 676B, Folder 2-3 (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art).
In the letter, Nauman alludes to the origins of the Performance Corridor, which was built as a prop for his video-performance, *Walk with Contrapposto* (fig. 31), filmed in his studio in 1968. In the video, the artist is seen sauntering down the narrow mouth of the structure with his arms raised and hands clasped behind his head and his hips swinging wildly from side-to-side. The tight proportions of the Performance Corridor's interior were determined by the span of Nauman's hips as his body moved through the structure's space. The Corridor's shape and proportions are a result of an index of the body's measure and range of movement. Once in the museum setting, the viewer is charged with replicating Nauman's original performance, negotiating its restrictive space irregardless of one's own physical size or girth. Both the making and meaning of the Performance Corridor are thus the result of a dance.

During the same exhibition, Nauman created another "dance" piece: this one, a performance executed live at the museum. The work was part of a series entitled "Extended Time Pieces," presented on select evenings and conceived of as an aspect of the exhibition itself. The events featured the contributions of several of the exhibition's participating artists, amongst whom were important figures in experimental music, film, theater, and dance. Philip Glass presented a concert of his *Two Pages*, followed by an "Extended Time
Piece" by Richard Serra. Michael Snow showed two new films, *One Second in Montreal* and <---->, and the critic Max Kozloff gave a lecture entitled "The Poetics of Transcendence." The composer and musician Steve Reich presented a concert of several pieces, including *Pendulum Music*, which was performed by Nauman, Richard Serra, James Tenney, and Michael Snow.

For his own "Extended Time" piece, Nauman sought the collaboration of the dancer and choreographer, Meredith Monk, whom he had met in 1968 in San Francisco.\(^1\) During the performance, Nauman and Monk were situated in a partially enclosed space, facing the audience with their backs to a wall set about a foot behind them. Falling backwards, their bodies hit the wall at a sharp angle, the impact of the falls broken by their outstretched arms and hands. Upon impact, the slapping hands produced a resounding thud which, in turn, generated a chain of reverberations, extending from the temporary architectural structures to the building of the museum itself. After rebounding, Nauman and Monk repositioned themselves and repeated the sequence. Focusing

\(^1\)Monk was a second generation Judson Dance Theater performer. In an interview with Willoughby Sharp, Nauman mentions meeting her in the late sixties: "Well, the first time I really talked to anybody about body awareness was in the summer of 1968. Meredith Monk was in San Francisco. She had thought about or seen some of my work and recognized it. An awareness of yourself comes from a certain amount of activity and you can't get it from just thinking about yourself. You do exercises, you have certain kinds of awarenesses that you don't have if you read books. So the films and some of the pieces that I did after that for videotapes were specifically about doing exercises in balance. I thought of them as dance problems without being a dancer, being interested in the kinds of tension that arise when you try to balance and can't." Willoughby Sharp, "Interview with Bruce Nauman," *Avalanche*, no. 2 (Winter, 1971), p. 26.
on their own respective movements, the performers remained
detached emotionally and physically from each other, and thus
were frequently out of sync, their falling yielding uneven
patterns of discordant noise. The same repetitive gestures
were executed by Judy Nauman (the artist's first wife), who,
standing in a corner formed by a third partition abutting the
left wall, was hidden from the audience's view. Without
knowledge of how many performers were actually on stage, the
audience was left to ponder the source for this confusing
array of sounds and to account for the discrepancy between
the visual and audible information.

The artist Dan Graham, who attended the performance, later
remarks upon the bafflement the piece induced—a sense of
collapsed expectations which contributed to its unique
pleasure. Graham notes,

[...] it seemed as though someone else might be
pounding on the walls, perhaps in response to Nauman's
jarring the building, but where?.. Noting a general
shift of people in the direction of the bleachers and
seeing that it was possible if one moved in this
direction to have a different view (also liking the
fact that it was possible to move freely and still
concentrate on—enjoy— the piece), I decided to move to
the bleachers.\textsuperscript{12}

From Graham's testimony, the unusual qualities of Nauman's
performance emerge: the audience was made to relocate in
order to view the dance, part of which was concealed from

\textsuperscript{12}Dan Graham, "Information: Conceptual Art/ Magazines/ The Sixties," in
their visual range--thus the performance exploited invisibility as much as visibility, a seemingly paradoxical strategy.\textsuperscript{13} But in addition to this unconventional structure, Graham makes another interesting observation, alluding to the sculptural or spatial aspects of the performance, by analogizing the performing bodies of Nauman and Monk to the fluorescent tubes, situated in the corners and on the walls, in Dan Flavin's light sculptures.\textsuperscript{14} In Flavin's Minimalist works, a dialogue is established between the tubes and architecture, which serves to extend the sculptures spatially into its physical surround, asserting an alternative perceptual experience for the viewer. In Nauman's performance, however, bodies replace fluorescent tubes: yet bodies which operate as analogues to inanimate things and thus are radically objectified. Additionally, where tubes are static and immobile, the bodies stand, fall, and rebound: playing a game of repetitive, hypnotic movements.

\textsuperscript{13}The paradox to which I am referring is that invisibility--or a withdrawal from the visual field--is historically and theoretically associated with linguistically-based Conceptual art. In a recent essay on Conceptual art, Stephen Melville writes, "... one will then be inclined to understand the non-availability of much conceptual work--either its appearance only through the detour of documentation or its absolute non-appearance--as a resistance to or refusal of current conditions of visibility." According to the author, the "political fantasy" of this refusal is for what he calls a "telepathic community--say, a community that is not riven by the fact of beholding and so one in which work is not defined by its ability to engender an audience." If anything, however, performance is most readily associated with such a desire to "engender an audience." Stephen Melville, "Aspects," in Ann Goldstein and Ann Rorimer, Reconsidering the Object of Art, pp. 228-145. 

\textsuperscript{14}Graham writes, "... it is simply their physical reactions in relation to the architecture so that their body members are added architectural members making an impact upon the time-space (like a Flavin fluorescent tube in relation to the already existing architectural frame)..." Rock My Religion, p. 49.
Nauman's *Performance Corridor* and *Extended Time Piece* constitute a hybrid form—what may be thought of as sculptural dance. Conventionally, performance is understood as a consequence of the limitations of Minimalist sculpture—an overturning of its aesthetic principles, moving into a territory previously unexplored and announcing the end or impossibility of the sculptural object. But these two works suggest something slightly different: by recognizing Minimalism's foundation in performance (and specifically, avant-garde dance), performance comes to represent not the defeat of, but the very possibility for the development of sculpture. This pre-history, rather than a relic of the past, must remain in view, as it is crucial to understanding the approach to performance Nauman's art adapts.

*Early Minimalism and Dance:*

During the mid-sixties, a relationship between the "new dance" and the "new sculpture" was recognized and, subsequently, has been alluded to frequently in the literature. Actual collaborations between dancers and visual artists occurred—for example, Robert Morris and Simone Forti. In addition, a theoretical compatibility

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15 For an early example of this, see Annette Michelson, "Yvonne Rainer, Part One: The Dancer and the Dance," *Artforum* vol. 12, no. 5 (January, 1974).

16 See below for discussion of Morris and Forti. Such forms of collaboration in the sixties were preceded in the prior decade by ones between John Cage, Merce Cunningham and Jasper Johns at Black Mountain
between dance and sculpture was elaborated by the dancer and choreographer, Yvonne Rainer, in her important essay, "A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A." Written in 1966, Rainer's text asserts the shared aims between Minimalist sculpture and the experimental dance in which she was a participant—in particular that of the Judson Dance Theater. In this new dance, tasks and ordinary activities (running, walking, throwing balls, moving chairs and other objects) replaced elegant dance movement, elaborate stories, and stylized choreography. Authorial intention and emotional display were eliminated in favor of chance procedures and unaffected presentation.

In the introduction of her essay, Rainer creates a chart with two columns: one for dance and one for objects. The top list consists of things to "eliminate or minimize" from dance and

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18 In the Summer of 1962, Robert Dunn's choreography classes, which were taught since 1960 at the Living Theater upon the invitation of John Cage, came to an end. Some of its participants—including Steve Paxton, Deborah Hay, and Yvonne Rainer, among others—subsequently searched for a venue to present their work, bringing them to the Judson Memorial Church in New York's Greenwich Village. The Judson Dance Theater's inaugural concert was presented July 6, 1962. I am indebted to Sally Banes' comprehensive, historical study of the Judson Theater, which provides this chapter with much invaluable information about the group, as well as insights into their efforts to redefine dance. See Banes, Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater 1962-1964 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993).
sculpture, followed by a bottom one that includes alternative characteristics. Replace "phrasing" (from dance) and "the role of the artist's hand" (from sculpture) with "energy equality and found movement" and "factory fabrication," respectively. Similarly, replace "development and climax" and "the hierarchical relationship of parts" with "equality of parts, repetition," and "unitary forms and modules." Replace "performance" in dance with "neutral performance" and "illusionism" in sculpture with "nonreferential forms."

Rainer's essay, as well as her dances, allow for an analogy between a reconceived idea of the dancer and the new conception of the artist undertaken by Minimalism—the latter who is no longer rarefied maker of specialized things, but a worker or planner who relies upon industrial materials and outside labor to create seemingly mundane things.19 Similarly, the dancer is no longer one who executes beautiful and technically dazzling skills, but a "normal" body who walks and talks. The dances—in which movements are presented in often repetitive sequences—follows a similar principle as the serial organization of Minimalist sculptural forms: the interpretive acts of composing and expressing are eliminated in such non-relational structures.

19For some of the Minimalist sculptors—including Carl Andre and Dan Flavin—the factory production of Russian Constructivist sculpture during its "Productivist" phase, where the artist was envisioned as a factory worker, was equally relevant. See Chapter 1, note 31.
Rainer's essay provides an important perspective on or interpretation of Minimalism, bringing the shared aspirations between avant-garde dance and sculpture into relief. But while distinctions within Minimalism may often be overlooked, it is worth emphasizing that the strain of Minimalism which is most relevant here is less the one that derives from Donald Judd—with his theory of "specific objects"—and more from the early activities and interests of Robert Morris. Like Rainer, Morris aimed to defeat illusionism, in his case to render sculpture more material—a materiality that was directly related to an idea of bodiliness in which the body is put forth as a basic element of perception and an objective presence, renouncing subjective identity.

Inspired by his first wife, the dancer and choreographer Simone Forti, Morris' direct involvement with performance informed his proto- and early Minimalist work. In fact, Morris' first large-scale sculpture, *Column* (1960), was made originally as a prop for a dance performance at the Living

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21While Morris' reputation is as a central Minimalist artist, his pluralistic practice serves as an example for those who sought to escape the constraints of traditional object-making. The history of Morris' art and working procedures in fact constrasts sharply with his fellow Minimalist artists—including Donald Judd and Carl Andre—in that it demonstrates a wide range of techniques and includes references to disciplines outside the visual arts: chief among which is experimental dance. Maurice Berger discusses the distinctions of Morris' practice from his fellow Minimalists in his study, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism*, and the 1960s (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).
Theater. The piece consists of a hollow, plywood box which was set upright upon the stage. Standing inside the box, Morris originally intended for his body to topple it over; yet during rehearsal, the impact of the fall caused him to hit and injure his head. As a result, for the performance, Morris stood off-stage, forcing the box to fall-over by means of a string tethered to its side.

The dimensions of the Column’s structure were determined by Morris' own body, creating an identification between the body and geometric proportions. The sculpture in essence represent a surrogate body enacting the two postures: that of standing (the vertical) and that of lying down (the horizontal). Through its performance, an interest in the weight, mass, and gravity of sculptural form is directly related to that of corporeality. As Morris develops his sculptural work, this concern with spatial placement will take on increasing significance: often determinant, as in the case of his series of L-Beams (figure 32), the meaning of the works themselves.\textsuperscript{22}

The Column’s two positions--upright and supine--however, also reference the absolute reduction of bodily movement to its

\textsuperscript{22}As Rosalind Krauss has argued, Morris' L-Beams, although identical in size and shape, are "read" differently by the viewer due to their orientation in space: lying down on the side, upright, or overturned. L-Beams thus brings into sharp relief the variability of experiencing or perceiving, in contrast to the constancy of form. See Rosalind Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility: Reflections on Post-60s Sculpture," Artforum vol. 12, no. 3 (November, 1973).
most basic possibilities. It is thus informed by the reductive approach to movement developed by experimental dance in which the building bricks of dance—bodily gesture and position—were laid bare for scrutiny. As mentioned above, at the time, Morris was married to Simone Forti, one of the key figures in the mid-sixties avant-garde dance. Prior to moving to New York in 1960, Forti had been a student Ann Halprin's (1956-60), and a participant in Halprin's Dancer's Workshop in San Francisco.23 Once relocated to New York, Forti became an important mediator between the art and dance worlds, as well as introducing Ann Halprin's experimental approach to a broader community of dancers, several of whom later became founders of the Judson Dance Theater, including Rainer.24 While in San Francisco, through

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23 Halprin was part of immediate post-Cunningham generation of dancers who furthered the use of improvisational techniques and ordinary activity: what Halprin herself once described as the "non-representational aspects of dance." Halprin also notes that "...introducing the idea of tasks liberated the dancers even further from clichés dance movement." Ann Halprin cited in an interview by Richard Kostelanetz in his The Theater of Mixed Means: An Introduction to Happenings, Kinetic Environments, and Other Mixed-Means performances (New York: Dial Press, 1968), p. 67, 68. Additionally, Halprin explored alternate venues for dance, removing it from the stage setting to the studio or rehearsal room and the outdoors and frequently sought collaborations with visual artists, filmmakers and composers, including La Monte Young and Terry Riley.

24 Through Simone Forti, Rainer was introduced to the teachings of Ann Halprin. Subsequently, in 1960, Rainer took a trip to the West Coast to participate in Halprin's summer workshop. Rainer recalls, "Three weeks of extraordinarily lively activity. I met Trisha Brown, Lamonte [sic] Young, A.A. Leath, and John Graham. And the formidable, dynamo-like energy of Ann herself." Rainer's statements appear in "An Imperfect reminiscence...", in Rainer, Work, p. 5. Returning to New York, Rainer and Forti (who was then married to Robert Morris) shared a studio on Great Jones Street. This cross-pollination of artists from different fields, sharing and elaborating new technical and theoretical approaches, also provided a then rare communication between artists on the West and East coasts: an example which parallels Nauman's own position as a "West coast" artist, who largely lived and worked outside.
Forti, Morris studied and performed with Ann Halprin. This involvement with the dance community continued in New York, where Morris subsequently staged his own performances.²⁵

Morris' Minimalist sculptural aesthetic—large, weighty, unadorned forms which press the beholder's body into a physical/perceptual engagement—incorporates central ideas elaborated by Forti in her approach to dance. Of particular importance is Forti's notion of the "dance construction," which defines movement within a spatio-temporal continuum.

In a series organized by the composer La Monte Young, held in Yoko Ono's loft on Chambers Street in May of 1961, Forti staged a dance entitled Five Dance Constructions and Some Other Things.²⁶ The dance, rather than a single, discrete performance or act, or a series of dances following a linear presentation, consisted of a selection of pieces performed simultaneously in different parts of the loft, employing the space of the room as an integral aspect of the dances themselves. Masses of bodies read as shapes and mundane games served as the basis of choreography. During the performance, the audience circulated around the series of dances, some of which involved the audience members

²⁵Amongst Morris' performances were, most notably, Arizona, performed at Judson Church in 1963; Site (1964), a collaborative piece first performed with the artist Carolee Schneeman in an event organized by Judson dancer, Steve Paxton, at the Surplus Dance Theater; and Waterman Switch, which Morris performed with the dancers Yvonne Rainer and Lucinda Childs.
²⁶See Sally Banes, Democracy's Body, p. 17 ff.
themselves (like *Herding*, in which the dancers literally herded the audience and led them back and forth throughout the loft). In *Huddle*, a group of dancers clung together in a single mass, while one would break free and climb over the human pile.

As suggested by its name, the "dance construction" proposes that a putatively temporal art, dance, incorporates spatial parameters, acknowledging the contingent relations of bodies to space which underlies its making. The understanding of what dance means and entails thus was fundamentally altered. In Forti's dance construction performance, the audience was required to circulate around and within the performance space, rather than view it from afar, up on a stage. In turn, Morris' Minimalist sculpture translates bodies into built form, while the exhibition space is conceived as a theatrical *mise-en-scène*.²⁷

Morris' Minimalist sculpture is informed by his familiarity with dance and experience as a performer. The reciprocity of making sculpture and performing in Morris' practice directly informs the subsequent legacy of Minimalism—in particular its phenomenological interests, in which the temporality of viewing is proposed and a charged atmosphere of a theatrical,

²⁷In his first, seminal exhibitions at Green Gallery (in 1963, and 1964-1965, respectively), large-scale, geometric sculptures were organized in the gallery space in which viewer was intended to perambulate: a structure that repeats that of the audience's relation to the masses of bodies comprising Forti's dance constructions.
sculptural space is created. But importantly, a clear distinction remains in his practice between these two areas of activity. Morris' exploration of performance took place largely through a rather traditional theatrical format--live in front of an audience--while his sculptures are exhibited in a gallery space as objects.\(^{28}\) Even those originally created as performance props--*Column* and *Box for Standing*--remain as ciphers of past performances when exhibited, removing not just the artist's body from view, but also not permitting the viewer to recreate the "dance". Morris' subsequent sculptures--like the series of *L-Beams*--while demanding the viewer's physical engagement, are not defined as performances. Nauman's art, however, can be seen to respond to this limitations by attempting to more assertively reconcile sculpture and performance. In order to achieve this, Nauman began to create pieces that present or define "sculpture" itself as the execution of movement.

Nauman's "Dance Constructions":

In 1965, Nauman creates his first works in which sculptural materials and processes were entirely displaced onto the body
and its enactments. These two pieces, entitled *Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube* (figure 33) and *Wall-Floor Positions* (figure 34) were first presented as performance works in front of a live audience at U.C. Davis, and then later recreated in 1969 and 1968, respectively, as video works with the same names. Each one is based upon a similar principle: the shifting of bodily position in relation to external, inanimate elements—a fluorescent tube in the former and the architectural planes of wall and floor, in the latter.

*Wall Floor* is organized as a set pattern of seven predetermined positions, in which Nauman first stands, facing out, in front of a wall and then leans, squats, and eventually lies on the floor. The video has slight alterations, in that he performs all movements on the floor; he rotates his body 180 degrees, raises a leg up onto the wall, and places his open hand emphatically upon the floor. After each new position, he holds the pose, counting-out a specific time lag prior to moving to the next combination. His body, contorted between the intersecting space of the horizontal plane of the floor and the vertical one of the wall, appears uncomfortable in its movements. The sense of bodily discomfit is reinforced in the video's format, in that

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29 The early date of the two performances is also notable in that 1965 is a year that falls within the height of Minimalism's dominance. As noted in Chapter One, however, the linearity of this history—i.e. from Minimalism to post-Minimalism (or Process art) to performance and Conceptual art—is itself problematic, as many of these activities or strategies were being developed simultaneously.

the screen's frame is filled with Nauman's body, with its limbs bent like a contortionist attempting to cram himself into a small box.

Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube is also based upon a series of discrete poses: seated on the floor, lying back, and crouching. With each new pose, the artist shifts the position of the bright tube—sometimes dragging it across the floor, other times elevating it. At certain points, his body seems to merge in the blackness of the background, while the tube prominently glows, creating soft edges and blurred bodily outlines.

Referring to Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube, Nauman once noted, "I was using my body as one element and the light as another, treating them as equivalent and just making shapes."31 Through the body's shifting relationships to architecture and objects, forms are yielded out of the vicissitudes negative space, given bodily contours.32 While the demand to mold or build sculptural structures is bypassed in these pieces, an explicit identification with sculpture remains; in short, with his body, Nauman performs the creation of sculptural spaces and shapes.

32As such, these performances were guided by similar principles as Nauman's contemporaneous Untitled fiberglass sculptures which lean, collapse, fold up onto themselves, split, and rest upon the floor; as well as the later sculptures in which negative space is materialized in cast form, such as Cast of Space Under My Chair (1965-1968).
Nauman's body is approached as a tool: a readymade object, not unlike the found objects purchased by Marcel Duchamp. An explicit reference to Duchamp's readymade is found in Nauman's series of photographs, entitled *Self-Portrait as Fountain* (1966, figure 35) and *The Artist as Fountain* (1966-67, figure 36), in which the artist's body is the "fountain" (i.e. Duchamp's urinal), spouting liquid in a high arc from his mouth. "If you can manipulate clay and end up with art," Nauman once expressed, "you can manipulate yourself in it as well. It has to do with using the body as a tool, an object to manipulate."³³ A tool, however, is an object which possesses a function; it does something. Nauman's performances picture and stage the artist's body, but in defining the body as a tool, they diminish its status as an emotive being (as the entry in the Castelli-Sonnabend Film and Videotape catalogue notes, the body images appear "clinically neutral").³⁴ Much of the literature on performance focuses upon what the body means, but *Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube* and *Wall Floor Positions* demand an interpretive shift, towards what the body does: from symbolic reference to its pragmatic functions.

³³Nauman continues, "That's what the photographs and the drawings for making faces are about." Quoted in van Bruggen, p. 109. Here he is referring to a series of photographs, made in 1967, including *Eating My Words, Feet of Clay, Finger Trick with Mirrors*, and a series of eleven holographic images printed on glass (*First Hologram Series A-E*, 1968) in which the artist pulls, pinches, pokes and otherwise manipulates parts of his face.

The performances demonstrate the process of creating sculptural shapes and spaces with the body. Thus in replacing the materials and procedures of sculpture with the body, the temporality of making, a key concern seen across the range developments in sculpture after Minimalism, is introduced.35 While there is a tendency to classify these developments through the shared notion of the temporalized artwork, within this group are found often conflicting ideas regarding temporal structures and definitions. Within discussions of performance, this issue is of particular significance in that performance is associated most frequently with the live event—and thus a temporality of “presence.”36 This is of limited interest to Nauman, however, evidenced in that fact that across the span of a long and highly prolific career, he performed live only five times, the last one in the early seventies.37 The association of

35In the wake of the Minimalism's preoccupation with built, permanent forms—and the subsequent corporatization of the minimal aesthetic—the following generation of artists stressed temporality, impermanence, and peripatetic forms of working. This shift away from static to temporal forms was motivated by a range of interests: from a desire to further de-commodify the art object, to a demand to extend the purview of aesthetic meaning to include social, political, and ideological concerns.

36As the artist Terry Fox once noted, "The only people this art [performance] exists for are the people who are there. And it's the only time it the art exists." Quoted in Carl E. Loeffer and Darlene Tong, Performance Anthology, p. ix.

37These live performances include Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube and Wall Floor Positions at the University of California, Davis in 1965 and the Extended Time Piece, performed with Meredith Monk and Judy Nauman, at the Whitney Museum in 1969—all of which are discussed above. Also included is an Untitled performance from 1970, which was a three-way collaboration with Meredith Monk and Richard Serra, performed at the Santa Barbara Arts Festival. In this performance, each participant performed a separate task: Monk moving, singing, and talking; Serra spinning and lifting Monk; and Nauman rolling on the stage—an execution of his proposal, "Body as Cylinder" outlined in Nauman, "Notes and
performance's meaning with an original moment is largely circumvented—and potentially critiqued—in his practice. In contrast, an analysis of movement and bodily actions leads the production of complex temporal structures in Nauman's work.

In The Studio:

I think of it as going into the studio and being involved in some activity. Sometimes it works out that the activity involves making something, and sometimes the activity is the piece.38

In 1966, Nauman creates a work by pouring flour on the floor of his studio. Each day, over the period of a month, he rearranged the pile, documenting its daily permutations in photographs. From these photographs, seven images were selected, becoming the photo-piece Flour Arrangements (figure 37). The title of the work derives from transposing the word "flower" in the phrase "flower arrangements" with its homonym "flour." The activity of pouring and configuring stacks of flour thus originates in a linguistic pun, one which the artist enacts. In one interview, Nauman is asked if his use

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Projects," Artforum vol. 9, no. 4 (December, 1970), p. 44. Describing the performance Monk remarks, "We were like the three stooges." (See WCR no. 191). The catalogue raisonnée also states that Monk and Serra collaborated with Nauman another performance, Untitled, in 1971, at the Moore College of Art in Philadelphia. See WCR no. 164 for an explanation of the piece, and WCR no. 162 for reference to it being performed live.

of the pun in represented "a way of going beyond just making an object". He responds:

That's more or less it. I was very involved with making objects. But also at about that time I did *Flour Arrangements*. I did those to see what would happen in an unfamiliar situation. I took everything out of my studio so that Flour Arrangements became an activity which I could do every day, and it was all I allowed myself to do for about a month. Sometimes it got pretty hard to think of different things to do every day.\(^{39}\)

On the one hand, the resulting work represents a seminal instance of post-Minimalist sculpture—sharing the disintegration of sculptural form and interest in the physical responses of materials as in the "scatter" sculptures of Carl Andre and Barry Le Va or the process works by Richard Serra, such as *Splashing* (1969, figure 38). But *Flour Arrangements* also demonstrates other developments and concerns, ones which point to Nauman's performance aesthetic.

First, as in a series of contemporaneous color photographs—such as *Eating My Words* and *Bound to Fail* (figure 39)—and body sculptures—such as *From Hand to Mouth* (see figure 15)—*Flour Arrangements* constitutes a linguistic performance:
Nauman literally performs a colloquial phrase or plays with language (i.e. enacting a pun). Language thus provides a source for actions, following what the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein terms "language-games."\(^{40}\)

\(^{39}\)Ibid., p. 24.
of play inherent in its name, the "language-game" suggests situating linguistic signs within their actual functioning in the world; this aspect of use is what Wittgenstein terms the "grammar" of words.\textsuperscript{41} Wittgenstein contends that the purpose of language is to effect a response from another, or to produce a result. Thus communication implies something other than the passage of the interior states of mind from one speaker to another--namely the effecting of an action.\textsuperscript{42} In one section, he offers the activity of shopping as an example of a language-game, "Now think of the following use of language", Wittgenstein begins:

I send someone shopping. I give him a slip marked 'five red apples'. He takes the slip to the shopkeeper, who opens the drawer marked 'apples'; then he looks up the work 'red' in a table and finds a colour sample opposite it; then he says the cardinal numbers--I assume that he knows them by heart--up to the word 'five' and for each number he takes an apple of the same colour as the sample out of the drawer. It is in this and similar ways that one operates with words.\textsuperscript{43}

Nauman's \textbf{Flour Arrangements} effectively employ a language-game as the potential source for a performance--a performance

\textsuperscript{41}In the \textit{Investigations}, Wittgenstein emphasizes this point quite strongly, "... nothing is more wrong-headed than calling meaning a mental activity!" Ibid., section no. 693.

\textsuperscript{42}As Marie McGinn, in her study of the \textit{Investigations}, explains: "Wittgenstein's use of the concept of 'grammar' is [...] different from the traditional one. His use of the concept of 'grammar' relates, not language considered as a system of signs, but to our use of words, to the structure of our practice of using language. The concept of our 'practice of using language' is here intended to invoke the idea of language, not as 'some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm,' but as a 'spatial and temporal phenomenon' (PI 108), i.e. as the phenomenon of \textit{language-in-use}.' McGinn, \textit{Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations} (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 14.

\textsuperscript{43}Wittgenstein, \textit{Investigations}, section no. 1.
that is, simultaneously, a bodily and textual enactment. The significance of this overlap will be explored below.

Secondly, in *Flour Arrangements*, the format of an ongoing, structured daily activity leads the sculptural object to be conceived entirely in photographic terms. The resulting art "object" is not the creatively arranged piles of flour—and was never exhibited as such, as in the case of a work such as Serra's *Splashing* or Robert Morris' *Continuous Project*, *Altered Daily*, with which its shares attributes, but both of which were shown as sculptural installations. In addition to an examination of the inherent properties of sculptural materials, *Flour Arrangements* is concerned with the unique

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44 At the time, Nauman was reading the *Investigations* and remarked to Willoughby Sharp that the use of punning in his art derived less from Duchamp than from Wittgenstein:

Nauman: "..when I made a lot of that work [i.e. of body parts and casts], it had more to do with Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* which I was reading at that time. That work had a lot to do with the word-game thing."

Sharp: "What particularly impressed you about the *Philosophical Investigations*?"

Nauman: "Just the way Wittgenstein proceeds in thinking about things, his awareness of how to think about things. I don't think you can point to any specific piece that's the result of reading Wittgenstein, but it has to do with some sort of process of how to go about thinking about things."

Sharp, "Nauman Interview," p. 27.

45 Nauman's exploration of this strategy is thus contemporaneous to Dan Graham's conception of the artwork as a reproduction in a magazine, a displacement seen as seminal to the formation of conceptual art. See Graham, "My Work for Magazine Pages: 'A History of Conceptual Art.,'

46 *Rock My Religion*, pp. xviii–x. In Chapter 4, I address more thoroughly the status of photographic technologies in Nauman's art, extending the present discussion with an understanding of Nauman's performance as a simultaneity of production and reproduction, presentation and representation—arguing that the art object is its documentation, rather than recognizing a literal and conceptual separation between the two.
temporality of the photograph in which the moment of presentation is collapsed with that of representation. As a medium, photography—unlike sculpture—is immanently identified with time, a point emphasized by the extended time-frame of *Flour Arrangements*’ production. But significantly, the piece fails to present a coherent, linear unfolding of time, as the images were edited: moments were thus left out, while the remaining ones are presented in a sequence that does not allow the viewer to understand their actual order. This fragmentation of the process is reinforced by the seeming random presentation of the final images; varying in size and format, they are arranged in two skewed rows, yielding an oddly shaped, overall configuration.

Thus *Flour Arrangements*—a linguistically based, photographically realized work that is, simultaneously, a sculpture—also constitutes a *performance*, serving as a key work in an investigation of Nauman’s performance aesthetic. Thematically, the piece brings into relief the issue of artistic labor: or those activities which preoccupy and consume time—pacing, thinking, and, as Nauman once wryly noted, drinking coffee\(^{46}\)—and are executed on a daily basis,

\(^{46}\)Nauman remarked, "The first real change came after when I had a studio. I was working very little, teaching a class one night a week, and I didn't know what to do with all that time. I think that's when I did the first casts of my body and the name parts and things like that. There was nothing in the studio because I didn't have much money for materials. So I was forced to examine myself, and what I was doing there. I was drinking a lot of coffee, that's what I was doing." Sharp, "Nauman Interview," p. 24.
but are not considered "artwork" (in the sense of the noun and the verb). In *Flour Arrangements*, the activity is not simply building sculptures, but the substance of flour alludes to the dust and detritus collected on the studio floor, which must be swept, collected, and discarded in the process of making objects. This reading emerges more clearly by examining the contemporaneous *Composite Photo of Two Messes on the Studio Floor* (1967, figure 40)—a sprawling, photomontage, "sculpturally" arranged in an elaborate wall installation. In *Composite Photo*, the residue of other sculptures—including *Flour Arrangements*—is pictured: scraps, dirt, and other "messes" that the artist has swept into piles and pushed into the corners of his studio. Both *Flour Arrangements* and *Composite Photo*, thus, employ prosaic activities as the basis for artworks. In this context, they can be viewed as a direct precedent for a seminal series of performance works Nauman made between 1967-1968, the Studio Films, which render this dimension more explicit by picturing the artist performing simple actions in his studio.

In the four Studio Films, a stationary camera, secured on a tripod, filmed Nauman as he swaggered the perimeter of a taped square on the studio floor (*Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square*, figure 41)\(^{47}\).

\(^{47}\) *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner* was the source for Nauman's later video, *Walk with Contrapposto*, which employs similar bodily position and movements; to recall, the *Performance Corridor*, exhibited at the Whitney's "Anti-Illusion" exhibition, was originally made as a prop for the video *Walk with Contrapposto*. These inter-relationships between works are important in understanding the temporality of Nauman's
shuffled his legs from side-to-side on the same square, tapping his feet to the constant beat of a metronome (Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square, figure 42); bounced balls from floor to ceiling in metered sound patterns (Bouncing Two Balls between the Floor and Ceiling with Changing Rhythms, figure 43); and played a violin while pacing around the studio (Playing a Note on the Violin While I Walk around the Studio, figure 44). In one sense, the metronome heard in Dance/Exercise is emblematic of all four films: its incessant droning yielding a constancy of duration, testing the viewer’s ability to endure the repetitive gestures which seem to go on and on as the film runs its course.

The Studio Films’ dispassionate approach and regularity of actions, executed in repetitive sequences, seem to adapt with uncannily precision the new vocabulary of experimental dance: a reference to which the artist makes in the following:

Let's see the earliest performance things that were filmed were things like you sit in the studio and what do you do. Well, it turned out that I was pacing around the studio a lot, so that was an activity that I filmed that, just this pacing. So I was doing really simple things like that. Being interested in the sound of pacing and just the activity of pacing around the studio. Then that book [Gestalt Therapy] made me more aware that you can do these physical, you can do these exercises or any kind of simple activity, and then I met Meredith Monk who was a dancer up in San Francisco. She had seen some of the work on the East Coast and we

"performance", which rather than determined by presence, consists of structures of repetition and recall. The performances--citing and repeating past ones--are, in a sense, "inauthentic," thus again distinct from the common understanding of performance.
talked a little bit about it and that was really good to talk to someone about it. Because I guess I thought of what I was doing sort of as dance because I was familiar with some of the things that Cunningham had done and some other dancers where you can take any simple movement and make it into a dance just by presenting it as a dance.  

Nauman's comments and films respond to the alternative dance aesthetic initiated by Cunningham and then extended in the sixties by the Judson dancers. In them, we can perceive Yvonne Rainer's stipulations for a new form of dance, one Rainer identified as a "de-theatricalization" of dance, emphasizing the negative connotations of "theatricality" that she associates with the tradition of classical ballet and modern dance, in which the expressivity of the dancer and her/his gestures is the focus. For Rainer, "theatrical" dance had outlived its purpose: "The display of technical virtuosity and the display of the dancer's specialized body no longer make any sense," she writes, "Dancers have been driven to search for an alternative context that allows for a more matter-of-fact, more concrete, more banal quality of physical being in performance, a context wherein people are engaged in actions and movements making a less spectacular demand on the body and in which skill is hard to locate."

49 Rainer writes, "In the case of [Martha] Graham, it is hardly possible to relate her work to anything outside of theater, since it was usually dramatic and psychological necessity that determined it. Rainer, Work, p. 64.
50 Ibid., p. 65.
The Studio Films take this "de-theatricalized" approach, as the physicality of the body and its energies, rather than the psychological make-up of the performer or its persona, is of interest. During the course of their playing, Nauman averts his gaze away from the viewer, never directly looking into camera, thus self-consciously avoiding any sense of connection or empathetic identification with the viewer. His body is awkward and ungraceful in its movements, and he wears regular street clothes with no pretense of being a "skilled" dancer. There is no attempt to extend body's lines with grace nor to perform elaborate technical tricks; rather, we witness an unrelenting and slow repetition of a set of ordinary activities.

Approached this way, the Studio Films can be seen to incorporate a key concern of Rainer's (and her fellow Judson dancers') dances--namely, an interrogation of the very meaning of the performer. For Rainer, the creation of an alternative dance aesthetic was in part inspired by the demand for a radical change of the status of the performer in dance. Trio A, one piece of her five-part dance, The Mind is a Muscle (1966, figure 45), is exemplary of Rainer's approach, in that it refuses the overt display of body's elegance in favor of its brute physicality: a body which seems to work, in a quasi-mechanical sense. The dance presents a series of postures and actions in a seemingly aleatory sequence, determined by nothing else but how long it
took to execute the tasks. Like other Judson dances of period, Trio A executed new types and contrasts of movement--some highly awkward, some bursting with energy, others flat, seemingly unremarkable. This was the ethos of their "task-dance" aesthetic--the workmanlike associations of the name quite intentional--where dances were composed of functional and ordinary activities: such as walking, talking, building, moving objects, and rearranging things and bodies in space.

Rainer viewed her new approach to the performer as a means of ridding narcissism and idealism from dance, in which the dancer is elevated as an unnaturally perfect body and an entire range of human activities or movements are rejected as unacceptable material for dance. As a result, in Rainer's dances, the body of the dancer no longer possesses the same meaning as in traditional dance. In part, this project was fueled by Rainer's burgeoning feminist consciousness, yielding a desire to render the body a more neutral, non-sexualized presence as a means of countering the persistent sexualization and objectification of the female ballerina.\(^1\)

\(^1\)One can simply look to the history of art for confirmation of the sexualization of the female dancer, seen most notably in the portraits and theater scenes by Edgar Degas, which imply--not so subtly at times—that the ballerina is a surrogate prostitute. In a recent study, Susan Leigh Foster traces the increasing objectification of the ballerina to dance's roots in the theater. Originally a mere subservient aspect of theatrical performances--in which dances would fill in or illuminate aspects of the plot and scenery--with the advent of the "action ballet" (as it was originally called), the body now was burdened to express and communicate the whole narrative. As a result, not only was ballet spectacularized, but arduous demands and physical constraints were placed upon the female dancer, whose body became the conduit of desire. Foster writes, "The body treated as a kind of painting, upon which the passions could be rendered in so many strokes." Susan Leigh Foster.
In the program statement, written by Rainer for *The Mind is a Muscle* (April, 1968 at the Judson Church), these sentiments are expressed:

If my rage at the impoverishment of ideas, narcissism, and disguised sexual exhibitionism of most dancing can be considered puritan moralizing, it is also true that I love the body—its actual weight, mass and unenhanced physicality. It is my overall concern to reveal people as they are engaged in various kinds of activities—alone, with each other, with objects—and to weigh the quality of the human body toward that of objects and away from the super stylization of the dancer.\(^{52}\)

While Rainer's attempt to "neutralize" the body may seem, from today's perspective, to be severely compromising in that it aims to deny sexual difference, it must be approached in terms of its historical place and significance. On the one hand, in presenting a body unmarked by sexuality or gender, an "equality" of bodies would be conferred (along the lines of the feminist call for equal rights). Rather than invert a hierarchy of gendered bodies, Rainer and her fellow dancers perceived the need to eliminate such distinctions in order to call attention to the power relations implicit in them: only after such a critique was performed, could the question of difference be reintroduced. As a result of this strategy, the body's status itself as the potential site or carrier of symbolic meaning was undermined. Rather than being a

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\(^{52}\)Rainer, *Work*, p. 71 (my emphases).
surrogate object, the concreteness of the body's actions were emphasized.

In an early, important essay, Annette Michelson argues that Rainer's dance work entails a critique of the subject, writing that a central contribution of Rainer's dance and choreography is found in ".. an initial investigation of the notion of the Performing Self and an acknowledgment of its questionable character for the contemporary artist." Nauman's Studio Films profitably build upon this precedent, pushing to the extreme the degree to which his body is revealed while denying any access to his interior self. With glazed expression and stilted movements, his body is reduced to a surface image and a series of bared actions, almost refusing to signify in the conventional sense.

Importantly, Michelson links this attempt to dispose of the traditional burden in dance to convey "character" to the exploration of time in Rainer's dances. Michelson maintains that Rainer presents dance movement not in "synthetic" but in "operational time": the former is linear and developmental, allowing for climax and resolution, and the development of

54Paradoxically, the recognizable and recurring image of Nauman from his early performance films and videos--including photographic stills which have been widely reproduced--reinforce this sense of unavailability. In direct contrast to the condition of media culture--in which the circulation and repetition of images produces a spectacularization of identities and personas (as Warhol so brilliantly demonstrated)--the repetition of Nauman's image undermines such a spectacle of the self and culture of voyeurism, while emphatically picturing himself, even his most intimate body parts.
character—in short, narrative time; while the latter is "the time of experience, of our actions in the world"—an anti-linear time, associated with serial progressions, structures of repetition. Through a layering of the past and present, the flow of time itself is interrupted.

Following Michelson's approach, we can look to Roland Barthes identification of an anti-narrativistic tendency in experimental literature of the fifties and sixties, in which the value and meaning of the traditional fictional construct of "character" as a psychological entity is questioned. For Barthes, this overturning of the traditional narrative form of the novel represents a shift from the "constative" to the "performative" plane. The former is bound to illusionism and symbolic meaning; the latter to an untransformed realism, in which, as he writes, the "meaning of the utterance is the very act by which it is uttered," and "the whole of discourse is identified with act of delivery..."55 In reconceiving the possibilities for the novel, Barthes demands a consideration of the total "narrative situation" or those elements which exceed its content and literary form to include "non-linguistic factors."56 But the question that arises for me from Michelson's and Barthes' analysis in terms of the

56Barthes writes, "Narration can only receive its meaning from the world which makes use of it: beyond the narrational level begins the world, other systems (social, economic, ideological) whose terms are no longer simply narratives but elements of a different substance (historical facts, determinations, behaviors, etc.)." Ibid., p. 115.
current discussion, is why, persistently, is there an implicit identification of character with psychology rather than with actions?

Beckett Walk:

I knew this guy in California, an anthropologist, who had a hearing problem in one ear, and so his balance was off. Once he helped one of his sons put a roof on his house, but the son got upset because his shingles would be lined up properly, while his father's were not only laid out in a zigzag, but also the nails were bent and the shingles split. When his son got upset about the mess his father had made, the anthropologist replied: 'Well, it's just evidence of human activity.' And that's what Beckett's stories partly deal with— for example, Molloy transferring stones from pocket to pocket... They're all human activities; no matter how limited, strange, and pointless, they're worthy of consideration.57

In 1968, Nauman made the video, Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk) (figure 46). In the video, the artist is seen, hands clasped behind his back, performing a series of leg swings. Kicking his leg up in front of his body, he rotates forty-five degrees, and then falls forward, the impact of his foot hitting the floor creating a discernible thud. These forward kicks are intermingled with ones in which he lifts his leg up behind his body, repeating the same series of turns and falls.

In the video, the body is presented as an imperfect machine. The video stages an obsessive accounting of the functions of

57Nauman quoted in van Bruggen, p. 18.
the body's parts and the qualities of its actions—however "limited, strange and pointless" they may be. As the title of the work suggests, and as alluded to in his above statement, the video presents Nauman as a Beckett character, whose body mimics those ticks and actions described by the eponymous protagonist in Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*. In the novel, Molloy continually experiences his own body as a source of alienation rather than possession, something which he can dispassionately observe from afar, changing states and producing strange odors and awkward gestures. At several points, Molloy describes the fragmentation and loss of his bodily parts, with the sense that his limbs are external, uncontrollable entities: stiff and weighty, almost unresponsive to mental or physical exertion, which Molloy describes with a lucid, dispassionate tone.\(^{58}\) Like the displacement of "character" (in a psychological or emotive sense) for the intense physicality of the body in Rainer's dances, Beckett's *Molloy* recounts, with excruciating detail,

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\(^{58}\) For example, the following excerpt: "And the confines of my room, of my bed, of my body, are as remote from me as were those of my region, in the days of my splendour....And when I see my hands, on the sheet, which they to floccillate already, they are not mine, less than ever mine, I have no arms, they are a couple, they play with the sheet, love-play perhaps, trying to get up perhaps, one on top of the other. But it doesn't last, I bring them back, little by little, towards me, it's resting time. And with my feet it's the same, sometimes, when I see them at the foot of the bed, one with toes, the other without. And that is more deserving of mention. For my legs, corresponding here to my arms of a moment ago, are both stiff now and very sore, and I shouldn't be able to forget them as I can my arms, which are more or less sound and well. And yet I do forget them and I watch the couple as they watch each other, a great way off. But my feet are not like my hands, I do not bring them back to me, when they become my feet again, for I cannot, but they stay there, far from me, but not as far as before." Samuel Beckett, *Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York and Toronto: Everyman's Library, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), p. 71-72.
a profound experience of corporeality, while refuting traditional character development and motivation, as well as conventional plot structures. The organic unity of the body is disassembled, now comprised as a series of fragmentary parts, tenuously interconnected, where each one's action is isolated and then described.

In one sense, the fragmentation of Molloy's body serves as an analogue to Beckett's fractious undermining of narrative fiction—an attack on the unity of the novel in which all of the attendant aspects are supposed to be harmoniously thread together. Similarly, in their performances, the Judson dancers staged the body as parts: a foot which shifts; a hand that twitches; and a head that nods. In her study of the Judson Dance Theater, Sally Banes discusses Yvonne Rainer's early experience in Robert Dunn's choreography class, where, she observes, at one point Rainer created a chart listing body parts (head, hands, voice, spine, foot) accompanied by a set of five potential actions each part could perform. "The head could shake, roll, nod slowly, look at the feet, or nod quickly; the hands could touch the knee, shake the fingers, brush the hip, clap, or rub together..." and so on. This focused isolation of body functions served as the foundation of many Judson dances, producing an unconventional, bodily presentation of studied awkwardness—such as Rainer's Divertissement and David Gordon's Mannequin, the latter which

prompted the dance critic, Jill Johnston, to invoke the
spector of Beckett in an evocative description:

For my free time David Gordon did two extraordinary
dances on that program. Like the body bent off center,
the head awkwardly strained back, the elbows squeezed
into the ribs as the flattened hands and forearms made
the painful beauty of spastic helplessness. As though
the body were straining, yelling, against an
involuntary violence. Molloy and Malone should be so
lucky. 60

The new approach to movement, the body, and the performer,
explored by Rainer, Gordon, and the other Judson dancers
constitutes a significant precedent for Nauman's performance
pieces. In this form of non-narrative performance, the body
is dissociated from character and is also presented as a
potentially irrational term. As a result, the self-evidence
of the body is undermined.

Such transparency, in which bodily identification anchors
experience is, however, propogated by the phenomenological
aspirations of minimalist sculpture, and somewhat
uncritically absorbed in more idealistic interpretations of
performance. Here, the status of the performer in new dance
can be identified as a way that Nauman's performance pieces
critique, rather than repeat, the notions of bodiliness in
Minimalism. But there is another consequence. By
interrogating the role and function of the performer,
experimental dance drew attention to the procedures of making

60Ibid., p. 55.
a dance--i.e. the putting together of gesture and sequences of movement--into the very context of a dance concert. Such a reading can be extended to Nauman's performance aesthetic, which similarly draws attention to those elements normally thought to be external to the event itself. Composition, rehearsal, scores, and choreography, I want to suggest, become the very material for performance.

Keeping Score:

Prominently visible in the Studio Films is a taped square on the floor of Nauman's studio. In two of them--Walking in Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of A Square, and Dance/Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square (see figures 41 and 42)--this figure serves as a template: a grid upon which body moves and its energies are regulated and tamed. In the first, with almost painstaking precision, Nauman carefully walks toe-to-toe down each side of the square, swinging his hips in an exaggerated contrapposto, staring impassively ahead with a glazed expression. And in the second, he executes series of rapid leg thrusts, while continuously working his way around the figure's perimeter.

At first glance, the taped square may seem to be peripheral--in that, as viewers, our focus is drawn to Nauman's awkward body. But I want to bring attention to it, proposing that
its meaning and function can be understood in the context of
dance. The taped figure is a visual sign of a fundamental
aspect of dance: namely, choreographic notations that which
translate, in graphic form, actions, gesture, timing, and
directional movements.

From their inception, the performances at the Judson Dance
Theater reflected upon choreographic notations and scores,
moving them from the silent background to be the very
subject-matter of dance. In their first performance, Concert
of Dance #1, several pieces took this approach. In Ruth
Emerson's ironically titled Narrative, each dancer,
according to Sally Banes, was "given a score that indicated
walking patterns, focus, and tempo, and also cues for action
based upon other dancers' actions." Elaine Summers' dance,
Instant Chance, employed numbered, multi-colored and
diversely shaped Styrofoam blocks, each one representing part
of the score: shape determined the type of movement; color
the speed; and number, the rhythm. During the performance,
the dancers threw the blocks in the air, following whatever
instructions appeared upon this "throw of the dice." For
Emerson's other dance, Daily Wake, a newspaper served as the

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61 Emerson notes, "The title, 'Narrative,' was cleverly ironic, as the
dance in form, structure and timing overturned the properties of
narrative at every turn: there was no progression, no climax or
resolution in either gesture or theme." Cited in Banes, Democracy's
Body, p. 42.
62 Ibid., p. 41.
score: poses determined by photographs, and floor patterns by the paper's graphic layout.  

The creative approach to choreographic sources and methods led to envisioning the dance performance itself as a display of the score. As a result, the moment of composing and that of performing were presented as one and the same, interrupting a logical sequence of events. Boundaries dividing skills were also disrespected, rendering the task of choreography (the creation and transcribing of dance) and of performing (the execution of movement) almost indistinguishable.

Likewise, Nauman's Studio Films literally visualize the choreographic template, his body calling attention to it by tracing the square's outlines. Additionally, Bouncing Two Balls, a performance based upon a game, effectively declares "this is a dance about bouncing two balls between floor and ceiling with changing rhythms"—performing, in other words, a set of instructions. What I want to suggest here is that the Studio Films, by reflecting upon the role of the performer and the status of the body, are as much about choreographic language and the score as about embodiment. Or

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63Ibid., p. 47, 53.
64This thinking was reinforced in the program notes for Concert of Dance #1, as choreographers and performers were listed together.
rather, they point to and emphasize the relationship between embodiment/enactment and notation. In short, they interrogate and can be understood through the concept of the performative.

Above the term performative was used in relation to a presentational mode of performance, in which, it was argued, the meaning is equivalent to the how of performing rather than to the what or the meaning of the gestures: an anti-narrativistic approach, also seen in contemporary film, music, and literature. But here I want to introduce the specific origin of the performative in linguistic philosophy. First developed in the fifties by the linguistic philosopher, J.L. Austin, performativity concerns the relationship between speech or language and action. In his *How to Do Things with Words*, a collection of lecture notes, delivered originally at Harvard University in 1955 and posthumously published, Austin develops a theory of language that interprets language as a form of human action within the context of ordinary behaviour. The starting point for Austin's notion of performativity is a distinction he draws between two types of utterances: constative ones, which, he explains, merely describe something, and performative ones,

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66 This origin in linguistic philosophy is doubly significant in that, in recent years, the terms "performative" and "performativity" have become somewhat fashionable, often employed in a general sense to connote a type of theatricality or subjective extroversion. The current discussion departs from this form of generalization, exploring instead the more precise meaning of performativity and the origin of the notion in a theory of language.
which perform the action referred to in the uttered statement. The latter, he contends, have been sorely neglected, however, by philosophy. Austin establishes two conditions qualifying performatives:

A. they do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false,' and
B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, or 'just,' saying something.

Austin's theory thus explores the potentiality for words—i.e. linguistic elements—not merely to signify and/or reference something, but to do: to be active and materially consequential. A common example is the declaration "I promise," which, by its utterance or vocal delivery, results in the creation of a promise. In his theory, Austin distinguishes between two types of performatives: illocutionary ones, which, by virtue of their uttering, perform some action or bear a material result (like a promise, or, as Judith Butler argues, hate speech); and perlocutionary utterances, in which acts occur as a

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68 Ibid., p. 5 (my emphases).
69 Butler writes, "Linguistic survival' implies a certain kind of surviving takes place in language. Indeed, the discourse on hate speech continually makes such references. To claim that language injures or, to cite the phrase used by Richard Delgado and Mari Matsuda, that 'words wound' is to combine linguistic and physical vocabularies. The use of a term such as 'wound' suggests that language can act in ways that parallel the infliction of physical pain and injury." Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), p. 4.
consequence of speech. In both cases, speech is an active agent, rather than a descriptive entity that passively reflects thought or ideas.

The significance of Austin's notion of the performatrice is that a class of linguistic signifiers are constituted as acts or events, resulting in an emphasis of language's force and materiality, as opposed to, for example, the meaning or significance of the words or statements. In the late sixties, Austin's theory of the performatrice generated an importance beyond the confines of linguistic philosophy, as it became highly influential to scholars who were concerned with the contingencies of language, but found the semiotic/structuralist theory of language, as derived from Saussure—which analyzes the linguistic sign, and how language's systems and rules are determinant in the

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70To explain further, the illocutionary performatrice suggests, as Austin writes, that "by saying something we do something" (author's emphasis, Austin, How to Do Things With Words, p. 91). The very delivery of the speech is the action (such as "I now pronounce you husband and wife"). In perlocutionary performatives, words are instrumentalized in order to produce some result; the utterance itself is not the same as the act (for example, acts of persuasion, convincing by speech for someone to perform an action).

71Jacques Derrida, in an analysis of Austin's theory (which led to a now infamous, bitter exchange with the American analytical philosopher, John Searle), explains that: "Austin's notions of illocution and perlocution do not designate the transport or passage of a content of meaning, but in a way the communication of an original movement (to be defined in a general theory of action), an operation, and the production of an effect. To communicate, in the case of performatrice, is to communicate a force by the impetus of a mark." Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," in Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 321. In a subsequent volume, Derrida's essay was reprinted, along with another essay, "Limited Inc a b c" and an afterword, in which Derrida elaborates upon his reading of speech-act theory, responding to the criticisms waged by John Searle and other detractors. Derrida, Limited Inc., ed. Gerald Graff (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988).
production of meaning—to be limiting. In the "linguistic turn" of the sixties, instigated by structuralism, the linguistic sign is said to bear an arbitrary relationship to the world (i.e. the referent), leading to language being approached as a self-contained, formal system, while its pragmatic and social dimensions are largely ignored. In contrast, the performative emphasizes how speech operates as a social agent.

Importantantly, even those who are most readily associated with structuralist/post-structuralist analysis and are key figures in its dissemination—such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault—themselves identified a need to consider more carefully the sphere of action elaborated in the notion of the performative, upon which they expanded. Regarding Derrida, the philosopher Rodolphe Gasché writes: "...in doing what he does in these later texts [from Glas on] Derrida undercuts the distinction between saying and doing, between argumentation and performance... In short, the later Derrida poses his philosophical concerns in action, rather than in strict discursive fashion [...] the performative nature of deconstruction is evident from Glas on—performative, however, in a way unlike the speech act defined by its opposition to the constative—increasingly makes Derrida's later work responses, active engagements or processes of negotiation. This explains the marked concern with questions of responsiveness and responsibility, the question of the Other, and the question of ethics in general that appears with insistence from Glas on." R. Gasché, Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 10-11. A similar "ethical turn" can be discerned in Foucault's later work, in particular that which deals with socio-cultural determinations of sexuality, and notions of social responsibility. See his History of Sexuality: Volume I: an Introduction, trans. Robert Burley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990). Lastly, in developing his theory of practice—in which the subject, speech, and social context were emphasized—the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu looked to the thinking of Austin, as he remarks in the following: "If you really read Austin, doubtless one of the philosophers I admire the most, you would understand that the core of what I tried to reintroduce into the debate on performatives had already been suggested by him." Cited in François Dosse, History of Structuralism: Volume 2, the Sign Sets, 1967-Present, trans. Deborah Glassman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 303. In all of these examples, what is evident is a turn towards a performativity in intellectual thought occurs in the late sixties and early seventies, providing an historical perspective on a theoretical construct, one which is significant for my reading of Nauman's art.
In focusing upon the performative or operative dimensions of language, an alternative understanding of "language" itself can be discerned. Language is understood not outside of—or in opposition to—material contexts and action, but in relation to them. But in turn, the introduction of the notion of performativity into a theory of performance in the visual arts, serves to question many accepted—or at the very least unchallenged—ideals about performance: for one, that it is an unmediated art form in which embodiment assumes a certain irreducibility. Performance, understood accordingly, is seen beyond representation itself—that is, operating outside of forms of mediation, including photographic reproduction, linguistic systems, or other types of "objecthood." Material evidence or other representational forms are considered ancillary to the performance itself: or, in the very least temporally and conceptually distinct. As the following passage from the recent exhibition, "Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979," declares:

[The exhibition] represents an exploration into the visual arts, and the paintings, sculptures, installations, objects and documentation that form the residue, the work of art, that resulted from performance work.  

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73For a critique of this position, see Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive Limits of 'Sex' (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), in which the author interrogates the materialization/construction opposition.

74Schimmel, Out of Actions, p. 11 (my emphasis).
The implication is that artworks (i.e. material forms) may come out of "performance work," but the "performance" itself remains outside the domain of objecthood. Similarly, in an essay from the same catalogue, Kristine Stiles contrasts "action" to "objects," writing:

So far, I have emphasized the term "action" rather than the more generic term performance to maintain attention to the difference between action and objects, and to stress process at the foundation of what has become known as Performance Art.\(^75\)

In other words, the art object, variously defined--from a discrete sculpture to a photo "documentation"--constitutes a residue, the thing left-over, external to "performance" or the "actions." In a more extreme reading, Peggy Phelan, a performance art scholar, insists that performance not only exists completely outside of reproduction, but if it does, this "residue" is illegitimate, having no place within the purview of "performance":

Performance's only life is in the present. Performance can't be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction, it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance.\(^76\)

\(^75\)Ibid., p. 235.
In these theories of performance, there is a clear distinction between objects and performances, one which leads to the latter being understood as a "medium," rather than a means of challenging its parameters and definitions. While I am not suggesting that no artists share or sympathize with this view, this framework does not apply to the diverse range of artistic practices that incorporated performance strategies—and certainly is not relevant for Nauman's. With the notion of performativity, those things thought to be outside of the confines or boundaries of "action" can be understood as immanent to it.

The self-reflexive or analytical approach of experimental dance explored this territory, in that what constitutes the event proper was expanded: to include the marking of movement or rehearsal (conventionally prior to the actual performance); the choreographic score or plan (the textual representations which conceptualize performance); and documentation (the records, both written and photographic, which preserve the performance). Extended to the visual arts, the multiplicitous forms the artwork acquires in the late sixties—from bodily enactments to textual inscriptions, as seen in Nauman's practice—through a theory of the performative, can both be viewed in relation to performance. As a result, the art historical separation of performance and linguistic models is rendered unstable. Rather, what emerges are performance dimensions within linguistic strategies--
including those typically associated with Conceptual art. One example of the breakdown of this dichotomy is seen in definition of the artwork as a textual notation—a strategy mostly discussed in relation to Conceptual art, but which, in Nauman's work, emerges through performance.

Diagrams/ Instructions/ Proposals:

In the Beckett video mentioned above, Nauman's body moves through the series of choreographed movements across the screen, creating patterns upon the floor of the studio. If visualized, these invisible traces would result in a series of geometrically inscribed lines. But unlike the Studio Films, in which the lines are drawn on the floor with tape, here we don't see them. But we see them elsewhere, as these pathways are pictured in a related drawing, entitled Beckett Walk diagram (figure 47).

The drawing diagrams the sequences and combinations of movements Nauman follows in the video with lines, arcs, arrows, creating a plan of geometrical and graphic forms. On the top of the drawing, in Nauman's hand-writing, are annotations describing the performed movements: "right leg swings and steps/ left leg pivot and/ step/ first/ swing to r 3 times/ then L 3 times/ Repeat." This same Beckett Walk diagram, in smaller format, appear in another drawing, which,
at the top, Nauman has labeled "Films w/ Sound" (figure 48). Next to the Beckett walk diagram, Nauman has written "leg swings," accompanying this pattern with four others, each depicting a series of interlocking squares: the one at the top of the drawing is marked with arrows, suggesting directions of movement. This group relate to another "dance" which Nauman performs in the video Stamping in Studio (figure 49), made at the same time as the Beckett walk video. In Stamping in the Studio, the artist traverses the floor of his studio, following a set plan of movements in rapidly quickening paces. Like in the related Slow Angle Walk, Nauman's feet are heard pounding out repetitive rhythms which increase in complexity through the course of the sixty minute tape.

The drawings accompanying these two videos map a performance, translating movements, bodily traces, and directions into diagrammatic marks. In so doing, the Beckett Walk and Stamping diagrams reference not the tradition of drawing in the visual arts, but the performing arts: in appearance, structure and function, they approximate a choreographic score.77 Rather than mapping ideas, they map actions.

77See, for example, the scores for Yvonne Rainer's dance, Diagonal, part of her multi-sectioned piece, Terrain (originally performed at the Judson Church in April, 1963); or the more complex floor plans for Rainer's and Steve Paxton's dance, Film, which was a part of Rainer's The Mind is a Muscle (April, 1968). These dance diagrams are reproduced in Rainer, Work, p. 28; pp. 104-105, respectively.
Unlike a traditional musical or choreographic score, created beforehand to organize movements or sounds, however, Nauman's drawings were made subsequent to the video performances themselves. This can be deduced from the fact that the Beckett video is dated November 16, 1968, and Stamping in the Studio November 6, 1968, while the related drawings, discussed above, carry a slightly later date—of 1968-69. As such, not only were the experiments of the Judson Dance Theater an important precedent, but also that of experimental music and theater, which, during the fifties and sixties, reflected upon all of the components of performance—including scripts, notations, scores, and choreography—often reconceiving their meaning and function.

Most notable in this regard is John Cage, who, in addition to opening up the boundaries of musicality, was instrumental in highlighting the spatial, notational, and graphic aspects of the musical score. In an interview with Richard Kostelanetz, Cage emphasizes a departure from the traditional function of the score. Speaking of his composition, Variations V, Cage suggests that the idea was not just to question "sound" but to upset the conventional relationship between the score—the graphic language of music—and performance:

Cage: Well, the score is a posteriori—written after the piece. Do you see the implications of this?

Kostelanetz: But then that's not the score.

C: Nonsense, that changes our idea of what a score is. We always thought that it was a priori and that the
performance was the performance of a score. I switched it completely around so that the score is a report of a performance. These are remarks that would enable one to perform Variations V.

K: That would make the score a surrogate for a critical review.

C: No, these are not critical remarks. They are explanatory remarks. Critics are never explanatory. These are remarks that would enable one to perform Variations V. ⁷⁸

In inverting the normative relation between score and performance, Cage questions the former's secondary status, granting the score an autonomy previously unavailable to it: not unlike the Judson Dance Theater's eradication of the implicit hierarchy separating choreography and performance. ⁷⁹ Like the Judson dancers who sought to create an alternative approach to dance, for Cage, experimentation with the structural and visual format of the score in part was necessitated by his radical new approach to sound and musicality. New types and meanings of sound and alternative

⁷⁸The interview with John Cage is in Kostelanetz, The Theater of Mixed Means, p. 62.
⁷⁹Moreover, Cage's thinking informed the experimental dance of the Judson Dance Theater, as its founding members--including Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, and Simone Forti--had participated in Robert Dunn's choreography workshop, which was held at the New School for Social Research, beginning in 1960, upon the request of John Cage. Dunn himself had taken Cage's composition class at the New School and thus introduced Cage's thinking to the young generation of dancers. As the following observation about Simone Forti by Sally Banes suggests, the implications of Cagean improvisational approaches went beyond the notion of defeating traditional ideals of authorship; rather what also occurred was an overcoming of the temporal split in which the creation of dance piece was in the past, and its performance in the present: "Forti enjoyed Dunn's workshop sessions, where chance methods became meaningful to her not so much as a repudiation of personal control.... but as a technique of invoking a past experience-- the moment of composition-- in present performance." Banes, Democracy's Body, p. 11.
approaches to performance, would logically require new
graphic forms with which they can be annotated.

Cage's use of chance procedures significantly influenced the
following generation of artists, composers, musicians, and
dancers. But what is also important is that, through
improvisation, composition is allowed to take place in the
context of the performance; as a result, an alternative
system of notation had to be devised. In an essay on Cage,
the philosopher and musicologist, Daniel Charles, examines
the notational systems developed by Cage and his followers in
the sixties. Charles describes the new form as an action
notation, distinguishing a mark which merely describes what
the pitch or tone should be, from one which outlines the
actions to be enacted by the performer. He writes:

Following the arguments of David Tudor, who felt that
the refinement achieved in conceiving and creating new
timbres called for a complete renewal of current
graphic notation—in particular, the creation of the
equivalent of the pictograms and ideograms used by Far
Eastern civilizations—the need for a number of new
signs was rapidly felt. So we have the blossoming of
the 'action' notation, specifying the gesture to be
made rather than the result to be obtained, and an
'experimental' technique of sign indeterminacy, where
the score did not specify how the polyphony was to be
generated but simply prescribed its appearance. The
performer was left to create it as he could with the
means available, that is to the extent of his
possibilities when faced with the enigma of the sign.²⁰

²⁰Daniel Charles, "Figuration and Prefiguration: Notes on Some New
Graphic Notations," in Writings About John Cage, ed. Richard Kostelanetz
Like Beckett's literary prose cataloguing Molloy's bodily gestures, the Styrofoam "scores", dictating movement, placement, and speed, tossed-up during Ruth Emerson's dances, and Nauman's performances of instructions, the "action notation," as described by Charles, outlines a performative linguistic system of gestures and actions. Nauman's diagrammatic drawings, such as Beckett Walk, can be similarly understood, as they visualize a set of instructions of or for a performance, recording in graphic notations bodily actions. Other pieces, made contemporaneously, however, will reinforce this aspect more readily, by realizing the work itself as a notation—in the form of proposals or instructions.

 Mostly made in 1969, Nauman's proposal works are unadorned texts—some scribbled by hand in pen, others typewritten on sheets of paper. In often straightforward language, they list a set of requirements for the piece and describe actions to be performed. One of them, Untitled (1969) was Nauman's contribution to the 1969 "Art by Telephone" exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. The piece is comprised of the following instructions, which were dictated by phone to the museum and subsequently enacted by a museum staff member:

Hire a dancer and have him phone me from the museum. (Female dancer is satisfactory.) The dancer is to carry out or perform the following instructions: the dancer should stand with his arms held straight and from his shoulders like a T. with his legs crossed. He

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81 See WCR no. 163.
should hold the telephone between his legs. He should then jump up and down following the cadence I give him, for as long as he can until becoming too tired. For the exhibition, the tape is to be played back on a fairly large screen monitor placed in about the same location as the conversation takes place. (Probably an office or a phone booth.)

In this piece, the gestures to be performed are explained in detail, leaving the resulting effect to chance or circumstance. In the context of the Judson Dance Theater, I discussed the motivation to employ such techniques in terms of a means to de-personalize movement and neutralize the performer, who is now charged with executing mundane tasks (e.g. move right; run on a diagonal; lift a chair). In Nauman's case, however, the proposal or instruction led to removal of the artist entirely from the performance. Without Nauman's body required to execute the actions, an identification between the artist's persona and the performance is circumvented. Instead, the performance is displaced onto another body, a hired performer, who becomes a collaborator in the creation of the work, while Nauman's role is redefined from "performance artist" to choreographer.

While the above Untitled proposal was executed by someone at the museum, however, several of Nauman's proposal pieces from this period are characterized by absurd and/or impossible requirements, so that they cannot exist in any form beyond
the notational one. For example, Nauman's *Untitled* (1969), reads as follows:

A person enters and lives in a room for a long time—a period of years or a lifetime. One wall of the room mirrors the room but from the opposite side: that is, the image room has the same left-right orientation as the real room. Stand facing a wall. There should be no progression of images: that can be controlled by adjusting the kind of information the sensor would use and the kind the mirror wall would put out. After a period of time, the time in the mirror room begins to fall behind the real time—until after a number of years, the person would no longer recognize his relationship to his mirrored image. (He would no longer relate to his mirrored image or delay of his own time.)

Clearly a person is not going to live in a room for "a period of years or a lifetime," so the piece remains at the level of a proposition. Similarly, another 1969 *Untitled* proposal, calls for "Drill[ing] a hole about a mile into the earth and drop[ping] and microphone to within a few feet of the bottom." Here again the improbability of executing the instructions is obvious, as to drill such a hole would be onerous and prohibitively costly, in the very least. In both cases, the text constitutes the performance, and the artwork is realized, therefore, as a text: a mere collection of linguistic signifiers on a page.

The proposal for drilling the hole was one of Nauman's contributions to the exhibition, "Art in the Mind," held at Oberlin College in 1969. The exhibition explored the

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82See WCR no. 166.
emergence of Conceptual art, a set of practices which radically questioned traditional notions of visuality and aesthetic experience. In this effort, a central strategy was the realization of the art object as a linguistic statement or proposition—one often consisting of notes, statements, texts, and diagrams printed on cheap paper or hastily xeroxed. Many of these pieces, like Nauman's proposals, are decidedly acerbic in tone and outline absurd exercises or pursuits in rational, unambiguous language—for example, Douglas Huebler's proposition to "photographically document...the existence of everyone alive in order to produce the most authentic and inclusive representation of the human species that may be assembled in that manner." In fact, the very notion of the artwork as an instruction or proposal is considered, art historically, to be paradigmatic Conceptual art: exemplifying its reductivist tendencies, or the desire displace the sensible aspects of the artwork by the presentation of language. Utterly indifferent to visual concerns, in their reception, these informational works, it is often suggested, demonstrate an interest in cognitive processes, logical positivism, and systems philosophy.

84As Benjamin Buchloh writes in his important essay on Conceptual art, "Because the proposal inherent in Conceptual art was to replace the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone (the work as analytic proposition), it thus constituted the most consequential assault on the status of the object: its visuality, its commodity status, and its form of distribution." "Conceptual art: From an Aesthetics of Administration to a Critique of Institutions," October 55 (Summer, 1991), p. 107. Buchloh's essay discusses the notion of the artwork as a linguistic proposition, emphasizing important distinctions amongst Conceptual artists.
Referencing Duchamp's readymade, "art" is analyzed as a definition and cultural concept, rather than made a source of sensory or perceptual gratification.

The artwork as proposal could then be cited a key form that embodies of the contrary aims and aspirations of Conceptual art and performance. But the advent of the artwork as proposal in Nauman's oeuvre derives precisely from, I would argue, his engagement with performance.85 Many of Nauman's proposal pieces--like his studio performances and the Extended Time Piece at the Whitney--reference and/or are conceived as "dances," and follow the precedent of experimental performance.86 No distinction is drawn between the various forms in which Nauman's performances are materialized. Executed "dances" demonstrate choreographed notations and textual instructions internalize performance structures. In Nauman's case, the realization of the art object as an instruction or proposal may be viewed as a

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85 And as such, they are similar to the Fluxus artists' use of the instruction format, such as George Brecht's Incidental Music (1961); and La Monte Young's Composition No. 5 (1960), the latter in which the instructions dictate that butterflies be released in the performance area. The extensive use of instructions by Fluxus as the basis for performance thus serves as an important, alternative context from its more common understanding in relation to Conceptual art of the late sixties and early seventies. Benjamin Buchloh discusses the significance of Fluxus--and its lack of acknowledgement in subsequent practices and current scholarship--in his Conceptual art article cited above. See also his comments in the roundtable, "Conceptual art and the Reception of Duchamp," October 70 (Fall, 1994), p. 132 ff.; and Chapter Five of this dissertation, which discusses the relationship of Nauman and Fluxus in more detail.

86 For example, another Untitled piece, (WCR no. 164), also starts with "Hire a dancer," and proceeds to explain a series of exercises, including "Body as Cylinder" and "Body as Sphere."
"performative" performance: emphasizing how language is not divorced from, but implicated in the range of human behaviour.\textsuperscript{87}

Performance Space:

By attending to all components of performance—including the notational/choroegraphic, and acts of composing, recording, and performing—the multiple possibilities for the sculptural object Nauman's art realizes during the late sixties can be understood in relation to a theory of performance. The chasm between sculpture or "objects" on the one hand, and performance or the body, on the other, is in part overcome. That this divide was a dilemma for Nauman, as his work developed, is evidenced in the following exchange with Willoughby Sharp:

Sharp: What you are saying in effect is that in 1968 the idea of working with calisthenics and body movements seemed far removed from sculptural concerns. Would you say that those boundaries and the distance between them has dissolved to a certain extent?

Nauman: Yes, it seems to have gotten smaller.

\textsuperscript{87}In so doing, distinctions can be made between, for example, a Joseph Kosuth linguistic proposition, and a Nauman performance proposal (even the unexecutable ones). While both take the form of texts, they share little conceptually or theoretically: Kosuth's propositions are interested in the tautological principle "the artwork as idea as idea" (and thus linguistic self-reference); while Nauman's investigate the performance dimensions of language—that is, action as linguistic immanence.
S: What you have done has widened the possibilities for sculpture to the point where you can't isolate video works and say, they aren't sculpture.

N: It is only in the last year that I have been able to bring them together.

S: How do you mean?

N: Well, even last year it seemed pretty clear that some of the things I did were either performances or recorded performance activities, and others were sculptural--and it is only recently that I have been able to make the two cross or meet in some way.... The first one was really the corridor, the piece with two walls that was originally a prop in my studio for a videotape in which I walked up and down the corridor in a stylized way for an hour. At the Whitney Anti-Illusion show I presented the prop as a piece, called Performance Corridor. It was twenty inches wide and twenty feet long, so a lot of strange things happened to anybody who walked into it....

The perception that lines can be drawn in the sand separating "performance" from "sculpture" was perceived by the artist to be the limitation of certain modes of working. While, as this chapter has argued, there is an extraordinary self-consciousness displayed in the structure and presentational aspects of Nauman's performance pieces, in their reception, these details are frequently overlooked: analysis beginning and ending with their status as "performances." Large-scale interactive sculpture--like the Performance Corridor, the first piece discussed in this chapter, and mentioned above by the artist--represents an important possibility in Nauman's development: overcoming this separation, with the added

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88From Sharp, "Interview with Nauman," p. 28-29.
benefit of making the viewer the performer, as opposed to the artist himself.\textsuperscript{89}

During the early seventies, the production of large-scale installation works dominates Nauman's practice for several years. These works consist of architectural structures combined with various elements, including video cameras and monitors, colored lights, and sound. Many can be viewed as an offshoot of the earlier films and videos, but now with the audience as the recorded subject--his/her image reflected back on him/herself while walking around the circumference of a structure (as in \textit{Going Around the Corner Piece}) or partially visible on a television monitor (as in \textit{Live/Taped Video Corridor})--both discussed in Chapter One. Within this group, however, I want to focus on those installations that are accompanied by texts written by the artist: texts that act as instructions for the viewer, while demonstrating more literary or poetic uses of language than seen previously in the proposals discussed above. In one sense, these installations represent a merging of the various performance forms Nauman had explored earlier: the enacted "dance" or performance pieces and instructions/proposals.

\textsuperscript{89}Regarding his video, \textit{Walk with Contrapposto} and the \textit{Performance Corridor}, Nauman remarks: "I began to think about how you relate to a particular place, which I was doing by pacing around. That was an activity which took place in the studio. Then I began thinking about how to present this without making it a performance, so that somebody else would have the same experience instead of just having to watch me have that experience." Cited in van Bruggen, p. 238.
Floating Room (1972. figure 50) is an architectural structure comprised of four walls with an open doorway on one end. Placed in the center of a gallery, the entire sculpture is suspended several inches off the floor. The structure is illuminated from the inside with intense, fluorescent light, which fills the interior space and creates an almost celestial glow seeping out from its edges. Set in a unlit gallery space, an overwhelming contrast between the dizzying intensity of light and darkened exterior is produced. Like many of Nauman's installations, the piece throws the beholder who enters it off-kilter, preventing an ability to orient oneself logically in space due to the intense light and the unfamiliar experience of walls that fail to touch the floor and thus to create expected angles. The sense of estrangement is further exacerbated in that, while the interior space is uncomfortable, to leave is to descend into darkness.

When it was first exhibited at the Castelli Gallery, Floating Room was accompanied by the following text, written by Nauman:

We are trying to get to the center of some place: that is, exactly halfway between each pair of parts. We want to move our center (some measurable center) to coincide with such a point.

We want to superimpose our center of gravity on this point.

Save enough energy and concentration to reverse. (The center of most places is above eyelevel).
The text instructs the viewer to center him/herself to an abstract point somewhere, "halfway between" a pair of parts. Floating Room demands a dual form of interaction: one of reading words, and the other, of experiencing the phenomenological conditions of the illuminated, suspended room. In other words, to "see" the installation, the beholder must simultaneously negate acts of reading and experiencing. The physical constraints that the architectural elements place upon the viewer's interaction are accompanied by a text which, beyond simply mediating visual and perceptual experience, to a large extent dictates or determines that interaction.90 Floating Room underscores the contingency of one's experience reality in language, in which information becomes a primary means through which the world is perceived.

In another installation, Cones Cojones (initially conceived in 1973 but not produced until 1975, figure 51), a similar approach is taken, but with an extraordinary economy of means. The piece consists simply of a series of concentric circles created out of masking tape and secured to the gallery floor. Nauman indicates that these rings refer to a series of cross-sections of huge cones originating in the center of the earth (a point that is, incidentally,

90 In other installations, sound and video images act in a similar fashion—with the former, controlling space through the pressure of audio recordings and, in the latter, the viewer's image of him/herself thrown back, often in partial views, on video screens.
perceptually invisible and physically inaccessible). The viewer enters into the gallery space and is supposed to imagine him/herself centered within these rings of earth. A long text accompanies the installation, one which directly addresses the beholder. In one section, Nauman inveighs:

Fit into an enormous space where a great deal of time is available as the continually rapidly expanding distances are enormous. Stay inside the cone; avoid the walls; compact yourself; avoid compression. Now time is short.  

The texts for Floating Room and Cones Cojones are exemplary of others written for installations during this period: richly descriptive, vividly imaginative, wildly abstruse, and unflinchingly literary. But like the prosaic instructions behind the Studio Films, the Beckett Walk, or the Untitled proposals, the words function in relation to the production of an experience, here on the part of the beholder. They are instructions, but of a slightly different kind, utilizing modes of writing not seen in the straightforward, analytical statements associated with orthodox Conceptual art. Rather Nauman's work defines language itself as an experiential term: performative, bodily, active and subjective.  

The consequences of these distinctions are significant. For one, they emphasize the complexity and diversity of linguistic models employed in artistic practices in the late

91 Text reproduced in van Bruggen, pp. 208-209. 
92 See Chapter 5 for a more extensive discussion of the subjectivity of language.
sixties, and their potential relationship—rather than opposition—to performance. As is in the case of other artists (such as Mel Bochner, Marcel Broodthaers, and Vito Acconci, to name a few) in Nauman's work reality is not clarified through language, nor is communication approached as a logical process: "The experience becomes less and less clear." Nauman remarks, "The difficulty is intentional." Poetically imaginative texts appear in the context of mediated performance spaces in which information manipulates as much as informs, and perception is funneled through a technologically charged environment. "Something more complicated goes into my work," Nauman comments, "It apparently gives freedom [to the viewer] but really doesn't allow freedom. Even if you choose to participate, the experience is never that clear." In this sense, Nauman's room installations offer a more compromised view of contemporary experience, in which neither information nor one's own body provides security or solace: Molloy and Malone should be so lucky.

94Ibid.
A Rose Has No Teeth: Bruce Nauman 1965-1974

by

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B.A. Art History
Vassar College, 1987

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARCHITECTURE: HISTORY
AND THEORY OF ART

AT THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

JUNE 2001

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Nauman made the four Studio Films—Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square, Bouncing Two Balls Between Floor and Ceiling with Changing Rhythms, Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square, and Playing a Note on the Violin While I walk Around the Studio (see figures 41-44)—in the winter of 1967-68 in a studio located in Mill Valley, California, that he sublet from his former teacher, Bill Wiley. Short in length, each one running for about ten minutes, limited in scope—a single task or series of related tasks are repeatedly executed—these four works, made on 16mm stock, all feature the artist performing a set of movements in the isolation of his temporary studio. The white square, taped to the floor and the similar clothing—black jeans and either a white or black t-shirt—worn by the artist, unifies the four films in a specific place and time.

The studio in which Nauman is situated is characterized by a casualness or almost studied drabness, reinforcing the informality of his attire and bodily carriage. Half-empty, somewhat messy, its unremarkableness asserts, however, a certain prominence. In the films, the studio space appears not only as backdrop to Nauman's performing body, but emerges as a presence within our visual field. In three of the four films, in fact, Nauman's body disappears from view—sometimes
only briefly, sometimes for relatively long stretches of time, creating a lapse in action or incident. Watching them, one becomes aware that Nauman's disappearance is a result of the fixed position of the camera, which, rather than moving in space and following the action, is mounted on a tripod. As a consequence, the viewer's attention constantly oscillates between the gestures of Nauman's body and the details of the unexceptional space—haphazardly strewn objects laying on the floor or against the wall, remnants of discarded sculpture, the accumulated dust of labor, and a mirror in the central frame (see figure 41). With only the evacuated room in view, attention becomes focused, moreover, upon the sound, a by-product of Nauman's performed actions. A single shot of the studio, recurring in three of the films, could be viewed as a visual analogue to the Cagean notion of silence: an "empty" space that is nonetheless full, in this case, permeated with sound.\(^1\)

For the duration of *Dance of Exercise on the Perimeter of A Square*, however, Nauman's performing body remains clearly in

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\(^1\)Regarding *Playing a Note of the Violin*, Nauman once commented, "The camera was set up near the center of the studio facing one wall, but I walked all around the studio, so often there was no one in the picture, just the studio wall and the sound of the footsteps and the violin." Cited in van Bruggen, p. 230. Nauman's films and videos, as will be elaborated further in the following chapter, incorporate key ideas from John Cage's investigations: in this case, the idea of "silence" as a fundamental impossibility (as Cage emphasizes, due to the existence of ambient sounds, found sounds and those created internal to the body itself). In the Studio Films, "emptiness," (the blandness of the studio space, "emptied" of activity when Nauman exits) takes on meaning: the seemingly insignificant elements of background and secondary sounds being almost unnoticed until Nauman moves out of the frame.
view, and the entire taped square appears in the screen's frame. Scrutinizing the stills from the film, this seemingly unremarkable observation takes on greater significance, in that it becomes evident that a wide-angle lens was used for the filming; thus despite the fixed position of the camera, Nauman never exits the screen frame. In *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter*, on the other hand, Nauman's body itself seems to represent a surrogate camera. In the course of the film's playing, his body shifts constantly from near space to far space--essentially demonstrating the capacity of the camera to "zoom" in on an image. In other words, by moving from background to foreground in the screen frame, Nauman's body mimics the in and out movements of a camera's lens. This perpetual play is more notable in the film's still images that variously depict the body close-up, partially cropped at the waist, or completely in view. Within one film, two visual perspectives thus are conveyed: a wider view contrasted to that of the close-up, in which the tight focusing on the subject shifts the viewer's attention from the background space to the human body.

These seemingly incidental details--fixed camera angles, close-ups, and a wide angle lens--are significant, in that they allow me to introduce a contrasting perspective to that found in most commentaries on Nauman's early films. Given their grainy quality, monochromatic hues, and single vantage
point—and reinforced by the deliberate restraint of Nauman's bodily presentation—the films are most frequently approached as straightforward documents. In other words, they are viewed as records of performances, which are made publicly available and preserved in time through the medium of film. I want to suggest, however, that, despite their putative neutral, documentarian look, the Studio Films, upon careful scrutiny, reveal a nuanced and extraordinary attentiveness to the act of filming; they depict not just the performance of exercises or tasks, but the operations of the recording apparatus itself.

Through an investigation of the constitutive role of the filming process in Nauman's films, this chapter raises questions about adequacy of the document as a model with which to understand the role of visual technologies—including photography, film and video—in performance or other "ephemeral" work of the sixties and seventies. In Nauman's Studio Films and early videos, I contend, vision itself is engineered through the operations of recording, implying a distinctly different imperative than a documentary one. Through the use of photographic technologies, Nauman's art displaces natural vision by one of mediation—thereby engaging with, I want to suggest, the altered perceptual and temporal structures emerging in postwar culture.
Time/Movement:

In *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square*, the taped square operates as a template to generate a series of actions, enforcing a plan that restricts the body's range of physical movement. The square, placed around a smaller one in the center, acts as a path for Nauman in circulating around its perimeter. Proceeding in a slow, deliberate pace, while shifting his weight to the opposite leg, his hips swing from side to side, inducing an exaggerated contrapposto. As he approaches the front left side of the square, he disappears; for a few seconds, only a static picture of the taped square on the floor and the evacuated space of the sparsely appointed studio are visible. Moving continuously, he reappears, his image reflected in a mirror propped up against the back wall, a doubling of vision that stands as a cipher for the reproductive capacity of recording. After circulating the square for one full rotation, the entire sequence is then repeated with Nauman moving backwards. The film oscillates between an evenness of movement and its occasional suppression—an interruption caused by the artist's exiting the screen. This structure is repeated in *Playing a Note on the Violin*, in which the artist attempts to play two notes on the violin while constantly circulating around the studio: for long stretches in the

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2See the bottom frame in figure 41.
film's playing, his movements taking him beyond the screen's frame.\(^3\)

Thus in contemplating the Studio Films' status as films—that is, an elaboration of a cinematic process—a paradox emerges. Filmed with a stationary camera, the Studio Films suppress the potential mobility of a camera, which not only normally follows the action, but also constantly makes internal adjustments in the process of filming. Action, moreover, is intermittently suspended through the occasional interruption of a still image: the recurring one being a picture of the empty studio. As such, action—a key characteristic of the filmic medium—is effectively reified into image, the purview of photography: the still image interrupting temporal flow. In so doing, the Studio Films merge a cinematic vision (characterized by movement and the depiction of diegetic space) and a photographic visuality—based upon the still image and the realization of a flattened, non-tactile space.

If one considers the distinctions—technical, conceptual, and perceptual—between the mediums of film and photography, the most fundamental is film's ability to capture movement and, in turn, the experience of extended duration. This is not to suggest that photography does not deal with notions of time. As Roland Barthes once observed, photography possesses a

\(^3\)See the right frames in figure 44.
unique temporality, compressing into one image the present, the past, and the future—and thus demonstrating an uncanny coincidence of presence and absence, or thereness and loss.\(^4\) Hence the mnemonic capacities considered immanent to photography—its ties to memory and passing—and its ability to preserve ephemerality in a frozen image, thereby suspending or deferring time indefinitely. Film, however, is not simply a temporal medium as it demonstrates movement: not just images of action but in action. Movement, in fact, constitutes a key feature of cinema, distinguishing it from other photographic technologies.

The removal of movement from film, thus, would seem not only paradoxical but non-sensical. Why not simply create a series of still images? In so doing, Nauman's Studio Films suggest a more specific reference: not simply the medium of film, but its history and transformation as a representational form. During the sixties, when Nauman began making his filmed performances, an increasing formal self-consciousness

\(^4\)Barthes theorizes this effect—or this "intensity" of Time—through the concept of the punctum, which indicates a future-past, as described in the following: "In 1865, young Lewis Payne tried to assassinate Secretary of State W.H. Seward. Alexander Gardner photographed him in his cell, where he was waiting to be hanged. The photograph is handsome, as is the boy: that is the studium. But the punctum is: he is going to die. I read at the same time: This will be and this has been; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. What pricks me is the discovery of this equivalence. In front of the photograph of my mother as a child, I tell myself: she is going to die: I shudder like Winnicot's psychotic patient, over a catastrophe which has already occurred. Whether or not the subject is already occurred, every photograph is this catastrophe." Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, the Noonday Press 1981), p. 96.
dominated experimental or avant-garde film. Filmmakers like Hollis Frampton, Paul Sharits, and Michael Snow produced films which manipulated and exploited properties and processes of recording as a means of dismantling the codes and conventions of film and the filmic apparatus. In their works, the graininess of the surface, the exaggeration of the cinematic flicker of successive shots, and the use of contrasting soundtracks abounds. Also in evidence is an extensive investigation of the spatio-temporal continuum of film, one often carried out through a restriction of movement.

The issue of movement in film is of particular significance, as through it, narrative development--cinema's traditional cornerstone--is accommodated: that is, a story unfolds in time. 5 Through a self-reflexive analysis of film's formal conventions, "structuralist" film, as it came to be known, was intent upon undermining the illusionism dominating classical cinema. 6 By restricting narrative content, specifically filmic properties could be foregrounded and the artifice of its representational apparatus revealed. In

5Regarding the experimental filmmaker Michael Snow, Annette Michelson writes, "Snow's work came at a time in the history of the American avant-garde when the assertive editing, superimposition, the insistence on the presence of the film maker behind the moving, hand-held instrument, the resulting disjunctive, gestural facture had conducted to destroy that spatio-temporal continuity which had sustained narrative convention." Michelson, "Toward Snow: Part I," Artforum vol. ix, no. 10 (June, 1971), p. 32.
6See Annette Michelson ed., Special Issue on Film, Artforum vol. x, no. 1 (September, 1971).
order to achieve these ends, movement was either limited or discontinuities in movement were created.

While the manipulation of the filmic medium is characteristic of a number of filmmakers of this period, the work I want to introduce here (and specifically with regards to the implications of containing filmic movement) is that of another visual artist—namely, Andy Warhol who, like Nauman, created films. Warhol's first cinematic endeavors, produced in the early to mid-sixties, share several key elements with Nauman's films, including the displacement of action by still imagery, and a diminishment of authorial presence by limited directorial intervention. From the endless reel of a sleeping man in Sleep to the close-up view of a couple's smooching lips in Kiss, Warhol's films demonstrate little variation during the course of their playing. For example, Empire—a film made in 1964, predating Nauman's films by only a few years—consists of a single centered shot of the Empire State Building: the only "action" in this otherwise unchanging picture being the shifting light and atmospheric conditions as dusk moves into nighttime. Nightfall, moreover—the only "event" occurring in the film's protracted eight hour length—is shot in high speed, so that for the majority of the film nothing appears or happens beyond the projection of an isolated, unvarying image of the building.
In an early commentary on Warhol's films, Gregory Battcock identifies in *Empire* the quintessential elements of Warhol's early film, writing, "In *Empire* Warhol has clearly dismissed the idea that 'movement' is an essential characteristic of movies. Movement can, after all, be presented and experienced in other media—the dance, theatre, now even sculpture—so Warhol has chosen not to deal with it in this film essay on the reidentification of the essential message of cinema." Battcock's comment reveals a key distinction being explored here: that of movement from *time*. If the former, for all intents and purposes, is eliminated from Warhol's *Empire*, the latter nonetheless becomes its primary "content". Removing visual interest and any pretense of action, Warhol's films foreground an experience of time.

Looking over the films of Nauman, Warhol and the community of experimental filmmakers in the sixties, one begins to notice that an investigation of temporality gains particular prominence. In his study of cinema, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze speculates that *time* constitutes the central, critical focus or subject of postwar film in general. During this period, Deleuze proposes, there was a "crisis of the action-image"—the mainstay of classical, narrative cinema, and, in its place, arose the "time-image". The historical experience of World War II led to a phenomenological crisis in which the sense of being-in-the world was radically

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altered. In its aftermath, representational structures were transformed from within—manifested in the dwindling predominance of the "action-image" in which a logical relationship between acts and situations can be discerned. In contrast, in the "time-image" different structures of time—including non-linear development, flashback and recurrence—emerge: "Time," Deleuze declares, "is out of joint." 8 Seemingly "irrational cuts" interrupt its flow and sound, light, and other cinematic elements gain prominence, bristling against the story and a set of characters, which no longer function as the central organizing elements of the film.

For Deleuze, this postwar shift in the cinematic image also bears, however, philosophical implications, ones which are of interest to the current discussion. The "time-image," he maintains, constitutes a radical departure from classical ontology—which, from the Greeks to Kant, subordinated time to movement. Deleuze writes,

"Time ceases be derived from movement, it appears in itself and gives rise to false movements. Hence the importance of false continuity in modern cinema: the images are no longer linked by rational cuts and continuity, but are relinked by means of false continuity and irrational cuts. Even the body is no longer exactly what moves; subject of movement or the instrument of action, it becomes rather the developer of time, it shows time through its tiredness and waitings."

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9It should be noted that Deleuze's argument suggests that the crisis of the "action-image" in the postwar era represents not a retreat from, but
Building upon Deleuze's reading, the extensive use of extended durations in postwar avant-garde film—in which events unfold in real-time as opposed to edited, narrative time—gain meaning.¹⁰ Like Warhol's films noted above, Nauman's Studio Films display the actual durations needed for the execution of particular tasks. Nauman's body displays limited and, to appropriate Deleuze's characterization, false movements, making the viewer aware of the irregularity of the films' temporal structures—time, no longer a logical result of movement, gains an uncanny autonomy.

The Studio Films are presented in real-time with no artistic intervention in the form of editing or splicing. As a result, the exchange between the film/artistic object and the

an intensification of reality, however defined radical differently than in conventional realism. Neo-realist film (e.g. of Visconti, Antonioni and Fellini) represents a transitional stage, overturning the synthetic integration of film built upon action-images, in which "objects and settings had... a functional reality, strictly determined by the demands of the situation." (p. 4) Importantly—and related to my discussion of Nauman's sculptures in the second chapter of this dissertation—Deleuze references Robbe-Grillet's objective or descriptive realism in formulating his interpretation: "... when Robbe-Grillet provides his great theory of descriptions, he begins by defining a traditional 'realist' description: it is that which presupposes the independence of its object, and hence proposes a discernibility of the real and the imaginary [...] Neo-realist description in the nouveau-roman is completely different: since it replaces its own object, on the one hand it erases or destroys its reality which passes into the imaginary, but on the other hand it powerfully brings out all the reality which the imaginary or the mental create through speech and vision. The imaginary and the real become indiscernible." (p. 7).

¹⁰Battcock's discussion of Empire is again relevant: "In commercial film, events are rarely presented in their full time span. Time is distorted in such films—usually by compression. The time in Empire is distorted in a different way [...] the action of the first reel is clearly speeded up, possibly so that the change from day to night, the major 'event' in the film, could be summarily disposed of in order to clear the way for the timeless 'real' time of the unchanging image of the building." Battcock, p. 236.
spectator is explicitly altered. By forcing the viewer to witness events in real-time, as opposed to narrative-time, Nauman places a particular burden upon the spectator, who now has to endure the slowness of the film's non-action, with none of the dramatic turns, the climaxes, and lulls of conventional cinematic display. The specific capacities of the filmic medium in conveying this experience is emphasized by Gregory Battcock, again in his discussion of Warhol's *Empire*:

Time is perhaps the single element that distinguished film from the other visual art forms. In looking at still objects, the viewer chooses his own time. In dance and the theatre, time is, to some extent, controlled by the director and the performers. Warhol then, may not force the viewer to look at his films—in which case there is only one thing left to do, and that is, to sit through them.¹¹

Nauman's films—while only ten minutes in length—produce a similar control in which to endure them is the crux of the viewing experience. Pleasure is curtailed and one's capacity to select the conditions of engagement is eliminated. As a result, while ostensibly the films' subject is a performance of movement, what they actually convey is an acute experience of temporality. In contrast to the "movement-image", which, Deleuze remarks, "is itself in the present and nothing else,"¹² the time-image displayed in Nauman's films seems to possess no time or, rather, its infinite suspension.

¹¹Ibid., p. 236-37.
¹²Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 35.
Speaking of *Bouncing Two Balls*, the artist notes, "My idea at the time was that the film should have no beginning or end: one should be able to come in at any time and nothing would change." 13

In order to produce this viewing experience, Nauman made a number of decisions regarding the nature of the performed actions and the conditions of the film's subsequent screening. When he made the Studio Films, he could only obtain sixteen millimeter reels in short, ten-minute segments. 14 Despite this limitation, Nauman dramatizes the anti-climax of real-time through the film's internal structure, which is ordered by an even repetition movements and steps. For example, *Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square* depicts the same sequence of thrusting legs over and over from every possible position within the restricted physical structure of the template, taped to the studio floor. This leveling of action to a plane of evenly executed movements or a droning pulse is heightened by the sound of Nauman's feet tapping the floor—which is timed to a metronome's annoying, incessant ticking. Moreover, to convey a more radical sense of ongoing duration, Nauman originally intended that all of the Studio Films be screened as continuous loops, although in the exhibition of the works,

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14 In an interview with Jan Butterfield, Nauman discusses the size of the reels he was renting from the Art Institute. See Jan Butterfield, "Bruce Nauman: the Center of Yourself," *Arts Magazine* 49, no. 46, February, 1975.
this was never done, due to technical difficulties.\textsuperscript{15} A clear aim of the films is for the viewer to perceive time palpably: to grant time a material presence within the context of an art object cum film.

If Warhol's films demonstrate a remarkable similarity to Nauman's, this is not merely coincidental; in a later interview, Nauman explicitly remarks upon his indebtedness to Warhol's films\textsuperscript{16}:

From the earliest tapes that I did, coming in a certain way from some of Andy Warhol's films. They just go on and on and on, you can watch them or you can not watch them. Maybe one's showing already and you come in and watch for a while and you can leave and come back and eight hours later it's still going on. I liked this very much, it also comes from some of the music that I was interested in at that time. The early Phil Glass pieces and La Monte Young, whose idea was that music was something that was there, I liked that very much, that kind of way of structuring time. So part of it is not just an interest in the content, the image, but the way of filling up space and taking up time.\textsuperscript{17}

In diminishing content through narrative suspension, the operations of narrativity are recoded or rethought in the Studio Films. As noted above, the burden now shifts from the author/artist to the spectator who is charged with reading

\textsuperscript{15}See Butterfield (Ibid., p. 53) for Nauman's discussion of screening his Art Make-Up and other films as loops. See also Sharp "Interview with Bruce Nauman (p. 36), for Nauman's reference to contrasting his films with the idea of "making movies".

\textsuperscript{16}And also to experimental music of the period: "The way I used the videotape," Nauman remarks, "was to incorporate [Glass', Riley's and La Monte Young's] ideas about the way time should be." Butterfield, "Bruce Nauman: the Center of Yourself," p. 53. The relationship of Nauman's work to music is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{17}Chris Dercon, "Keeping Taking it Apart: a Conversation with Bruce Nauman," Parkett, no. 10 (September, 1986), p. 55.
the films' codes and signs as opposed to being controlled by its story and/or melodramatic plot twists and turns. The transformation of spectatorship—from beholder to more active participant—thus takes place through the medium of film. As a result, an explicitly non-natural, mechanical form of perception is in place. The recording device operates not passively, but actively: framing Nauman's body as it pursues its tasks, shaping the viewer's visual field, and realizing an uncanny temporality of repetition and recurrence.

Documentary Time:

Nauman's Studio Films demonstrate a complex intersection of performing and recording. As a result, the predominant, conventional art historical understanding of this coupling—most often relayed through the notion of the "document"—can be questioned. The extensive use of technological forms of visual reproduction—photography, film and video—in sixties practices (including performance, site-specific sculpture, and Conceptual art), has been largely framed as the result of a documentary imperative—the desire to preserve now inaccessible, transient events in order to convey information of these works' existence through time. In accepting these objects as "documents", however, a set of presumptions are operative, ones which frequently go unchallenged. For one, in relying upon the terms of the document, the mediums of
photography and film are considered in purely instrumental terms—not altering, but simply replicating the "original" event or object. Furthermore, it follows, these photographs, films and videos are seen as mediated and, therefore, inauthentic forms of experience that are subordinate or ancillary to the authentic experience of the originary event. In other words, the witnessing of the performance or site-specific installation is always the primary means of interface: the documents providing only a supplementary and, thus, implicitly less rich access to something that is by-now lost to time.

In the case of performance, the inadequacy of the document is of particular focus in the literature, in that performance itself is thought to depend upon the live interaction of artist and audience, one which cannot fully be captured in the documentary evidence—which is, by definition, partial.¹⁸

In this formulation, however, a linear notion of time is operative: first comes the event and then the document, the two separated by a gulf of time. But as discussed above, one of the key features of Nauman's films—and their point of intersection with an historical shift in cinematic paradigms—

¹⁸For example, Kathy Odell writes, "For the performers, photography was an imperative, the chief record of their otherwise ephemeral performances. These photographic 'documents' have a style all their own, tending more often than not towards grainy black and white shots taken in half-lit performance spaces. Despite the anachronistic, snapshot-like quality of the pictures and the fact that any individual image represents only a split second of the performance, photographs are widely circulated as the principal relics and records of these events." Kathy Odell, Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance art and the 1970s, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 13.
is precisely their undermining of such narrative models of
time, resulting in an experience in which "time is out of
joint," to reiterate Deleuze. The "time-images" comprising
Nauman's films alter temporal structures and their attachment
to logical movement, showing not the progress of time, but
its continual, undifferentiated playing; they demonstrate
hiccups of time in which we see the body "in its tiredness
and waitings," rather than in a display of motivated action.

Nauman's Studio Films--supposed "documents" of a series of
performances--explicitly explore and thematize cinematic
(that is filtered) vision, reflecting upon its qualities of
recording and transmitting imagery, and the relations of time
generated through these processes. They do not simply
transmit or represent pictures and temporal sequences, but
actively construct them through the filmic medium. The
technique, in other words, is not a means to an end-- but
creates and orders the very experience as well as its
subject-matter: think of the camera angles and the different
perspectives in Bouncing Two Balls and Dance or Exercise on
the Perimeter of a Square, and the audible sounds against the
image of empty space in Playing a Note on the Violin. In
experiencing these works, what becomes increasingly evident
is that Nauman's performances do not exist as such outside of
their putative "documentation". There was no "original"
event to attend--and even if there were, such fluctuations of
time, movement, and imagery would not be available through
the natural vision of live witness. In other words, through its reproduction, the imagery emerges—suggesting the impossibility of an unfiltered exchange.

In Nauman's work, the recording medium—from the imagery and illusions of film to, as will be demonstrated below, those of video—serves to regulate the content, to the point where, I want to argue, through the sieve of recording, the bodiliness of these works emerges and is defined. In other words, the very status of the body in the visual field is contingent upon the technical means of reproduction—an interpretation, furthermore, that is largely at odds with conventional understanding of the body's status in performance. With Nauman's turn to video, this dimension of bodiliness is dramatized—facilitated by the unique capacities of the medium itself.

Video Time:

In 1968, Nauman received an Artist Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. With these funds, he moves from his relative isolation on the West coast, where he had lived since his graduate student days, to New York, where he will spend the next year. Earlier, in January of 1968, he had his first exhibition at Leo Castelli's gallery—a formidable coup for a young and at the time largely unknown
artist, especially given the competitive and tight community of the New York art world. In a move that will become typical in later years, however, Nauman does not remain in the urban hub of Manhattan or its outer boroughs, but retreats to the far eastern end of Long Island to Southampton, staying at a house co-owned by the artists Paul Waldman and Roy Lichtenstein. During this time, the winter of 1968–1969, Nauman makes his first series of video works, recording them in Waldman's and Lichtenstein's Southampton studio.

19In the following, Nauman mentions the artists he knew previously and then came in contact with through Castelli: "..after I moved out [to New York] I had that relationship [with Castelli], and then Richard [Serra] and Keith [Sonnier] started showing with Leo, and I knew them, and we were in a lot of group shows together. I knew them, I knew Walter de Maria and Sol Lewitt [sic], other people from traveling mostly. Different shows. Frank Owen and Steve Kaltenbach were people that I'd know on the West Coast that were both living in New York." de Angelus, pp. 53-54.

20As Nauman remarks, "Paul [Waldman] had been teaching at Davis when I was there for a short time. I had never studied with him but I'd go in and talk to him. So he offered me the house—it was their summer house, and they didn't use it very much anyway—it was too complicated: everybody with separate families and the house just wasn't big enough. And they built a studio and then neither of them would use the studio because they couldn't use it together—one of those deals. So anyway, I used the studio and the house and made the videotapes there, because I didn't really have access to film equipment any more." Ibid., p. 53.

21Precise dates, or the order of the videos' production, is difficult to come by (as errors appear even in the carefully researched catalogue raisonné). An interview by Willoughby Sharp from 1971 reproduces stills from eight of these videos, along with specific dates—which I presume are of their making. Some of the titles are slightly different, and would eventually be changed: Violin Tuned D.E.A.D is dated April 27, 1968 (in the catalogue raisonné it is dated 1969); Slow L Walk (to become Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)), November 6, 1968; Stamping in the Studio, November 16, 1968; Bouncing in a Corner (which would be renamed Bouncing in the Corner No. 1), November 27, 1968; Walking in Contraposto [sic] (which would become Walk with Contrapposto), February 25, 1969; Bouncing in a Corner (renamed Bouncing in the Corner No. 2; Upside Down), February 27, 1969; Lip Sync, March 27, 1969. Given that Nauman made these videos in a relatively short time span, and while he was in Southampton, Violin Tuned D.E.A.D was most likely produced in April of 1969, not 1968 as Sharp's article indicates. Sharp, "Interview
Just prior to this move to New York, Nauman had completed the four Studio Films, but on the East Coast he no longer had access to the film equipment readily available to him in California.\textsuperscript{22} Nauman's developing relationship with Castelli gallery, however, proves to be invaluable, as Leo Castelli, upon Nauman's suggestion, purchases the newly available portable video camera.\textsuperscript{23}

The Sony portapak was still a novelty in 1968, having been introduced to the consumer market in the United States only in 1965. The camera was quickly taken up by host of practitioners—artists, guerrilla journalists, independent filmmakers—who made "tapes" which were then screened in various contexts, bypassing media corporations and the television broadcast industry.\textsuperscript{24} Castelli's purchase facilitated video's introduction and dissemination in the art

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\textsuperscript{22}"The films were basically the same as the tapes. It has also to do with the availability of equipment. When I was living in San Francisco, there were a lot of filmmakers. When I moved to the east coast, I didn't know any filmmakers. It was hard to get equipment. Then Sony video-equipment started to be fairly inexpensive. I was living outside of New York City, so it was very easy to work on video tapes. I didn't have to rely on film labs getting equipment and giving it back, things like that..." Dercon, "Keeping Taking it Apart," p. 56.

\textsuperscript{23}"I told Leo that I would like to get some equipment, and he put up the money for it (about $1200)." Butterfield, "Bruce Nauman: the Center of Yourself," p. 53.

\textsuperscript{24}The vernacular term "tapes," a nomenclature adapted at the time, intends to conjure the decidedly low-tech qualities of video's electronic imagery, the crudeness of the technology, and the admittance of anti-aesthetic imperatives through its the inescapable reference to the commercial world of television.
world, as he lent his portapak to his gallery artists, including Richard Serra and Keith Sonnier, who borrowed the camera after Nauman had experimented with it for approximately a year. In a relatively brief time-span, between 1968-1969, armed with Castelli's camera, Nauman produces a series of his first videotapes.  

Three of these works—*Stamping in the Studio* (1968, see figure 49), *Pacing Upside Down* (1969, figure 52), and *Revolving Upside Down* (1969, figure 53)—demonstrate a clear relationship with the earlier Studio Films in terms of fundamental structure and content. In all three, the artist is seen alone in the studio with a stationary camera recording his performance of a series of repeated movements presented in real time. In *Stamping in the Studio*, before a figure appears, the first perceptible element is not a visual, but an audible one—namely, the sound of feet as they incessantly pound out syncopated rhythms. Nauman's image then comes into view, with his arms held down to his sides.

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25"Leo bought the equipment and I used it for about a year and then gave it back to the gallery and then Keith Sonnier used it, Richard Serra used it, everybody got to use it." (de Angelis, p. 53) In the early seventies, in testimony to these efforts and Castelli's early role in supporting work on video, the Castelli gallery mounted several group film and video exhibitions, which included work by the artists Nauman mentions: "Works on Film" ran from 25 September to 9 October, 1971 and included Nauman's *Art Make-Up* films from 1967-1968, as well as work by Robert Morris, Richard Serra, and Keith Sonnier; a group sculpture and video exhibition that ran from October 7-21, 1972 included cassettes by Nauman, Joan Jonas, Richard Landry, Robert Morris, Richard Serra and Keith Sonnier; in 1973, from September 28 to October 27, there was another group video exhibition that included Nauman (*Tony Sinking into the Floor Face Up and Face Down*), Linda Benglis, John Chamberlain, Hermine Freed, Joan Jonas, Paul Kos, Richard Landry, Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Keith Sonnier and Lawrence Weiner.
and his eyes fixed ahead. He continues to pound his feet in a steady one-two beat while marching constantly with quick, short steps in patterns around the area of the studio: first moving diagonally and then in spirals. During the course of the sixty minute tape, the percussive stamping becomes increasingly complicated, developing into a syncopated ten-beat phrase.

Furthering a key element of the Studio Films, *Stamping* juxtaposes sound against vision, yielding a synesthetic experience of visual sound. Recalling John Cage's exploration of the associative axis between visuality and audition in musical performance, Nauman's videos focus our attention upon different sensorial elements in relation to one another. In some cases, this is achieved through an active dissociation of visuality and aurality within and outside the boundaries of one work. For example, in 1969 Nauman makes a work entitled *Record*: an album containing a series of soundtracks, which are the by-products of his studio performances. On the cover of *Record* is a still image from *Stamping in the Studio* (which is also one of the included tracks) thus emphasizing the significance of sound components to the experience of the video.

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26The most well-known example is Cage's seminal work, 4' 33'', discussed in the following chapter.
27The album includes: Side A/ Soundtrack from First Violin Film; Playing all Four Strings on the Violin; Violin Problem Two; Playing Two Notes Very Close Together; Side B/ Rhythmic Stamping; Four Rhythms in Preparation for Video Tape Problems.
Again in these videos, a stationary camera is employed: in *Stamping*, the camera is inverted, so that all the while Nauman is seen walking across the ceiling of the monitor's screen. At certain points, we see only a fragment of his moving form, other times a mere shadow, and sometimes just the empty floor/ceiling. Such a format—an inverted camera and occasional shots of the vacant studio—is replicated in the other two videos. In *Pacing Upside Down*, a small taped square, recalling the template seen in the Studio Films, is affixed to the screen image of the ceiling—or literally the floor upon which Nauman paces. Holding his arms above his head, he paces around the square in ever-increasing circles, so that eventually he disappears beyond the screen's range. In *Revolving Upside Down*, Nauman's image appears further in the distance, a wider perspective of the studio in view (figure 54). With his hands clasped behind his back, he kicks his leg out and swings it either forward or backwards, falling over into a bent-down position and then rotating in an awkward pirouette.

In the course of their playing—which run for an hour—imperfections come to the surface: the insistent blurriness of the video images with their array of fine, horizontal lines, and the intermittent missteps he makes. But there is something else that is notable: the qualities of the executed actions and the perceived presence of the body. The Studio
Films, as discussed in Chapter Three, presented an economy of movement in direct reference to the task-dance aesthetic of contemporary avant-garde dance, specifically that of the Judson Dance Theater. In these three videos, however, Nauman abandons his previous quieted approach to movement in favor of a staging of an almost frenetic physicality. The videos dramatize the body's actions: scampering, pounding, and pacing, executing physical momentum, swinging his legs wildly with less control and exactitude. Bodily exertion, rather than restraint, is palpable perceived. At one point in Stamping in the Studio, the quickening of the beat of the footsteps increases so rapidly that it threatens move out of control; in Pacing Upside Down, the image of the inverted body, holding its hands above the head, circling endlessly for an hour, yields a distinct sense of exhaustion. While the Studio Films are also based upon constantly repeated movements, they seem to emphasize mental over and above physical exertion. For example, Bouncing Two Balls displays an exercise of concentration—that of maintaining a beat or pattern with the bouncing balls. In the videos, however, the physical rigors associated with the activities seem to be more readily asserted. Rather than a containment of movement and its subordination to time, the videos display its excess.

In terms of the conventions of performing or theater, Nauman's videos seem not to look to the bodily neutralization and control of contemporary, experimental dance, but to a
much different (and older) tradition: that of Aristotelian theater, and specifically, the notion of katharsis. In Aristotle's theory of tragedy, katharsis represents a state of embodiment; rather than merely relaying texts, words are embodied by the actor, who purges him/herself of emotion in their telling.\textsuperscript{28} The viewer or audience--made to identify with the cathartic activity--experiences in turn a heightened sense of being a body. In the theory of Katharsis, a dyadic relation between seeing and feeling is proposed, producing a profoundly corporeal sense of pleasure.

The premise of theatrical kartharsis would thus seem to be in direct contradiction to the critical imperatives of contemporary performance, dance, and theater being investigated by Nauman's contemporaries in the sixties. Furthermore, in visualizing the arduous exertions of the body, Nauman's videos seems to cross a certain threshold: a movement from object to subject.\textsuperscript{29} As such, many commentators have asserted that significance of Nauman's video

\textsuperscript{28}Aristotle states: "Let tragedy therefore be defined as the imitation of an action that is serious, complete and possesses magnitude, with embellished language used variously in its different parts, presented through acting and not through narration, accomplishing through pity and fear the katharsis of such emotions." Cited by Andrew Ford, in his essay "Katharsis: the Ancient Problem" in \textit{Performativity and Performance}, Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick eds. (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), p. 110.

\textsuperscript{29}Here I am referring explicitly to Yvonne Rainer's discussion of the objectification of movement and the neutralization of the performer as a surrogate object, discussed in the last chapter. While Nauman's early work in performance is clearly indebted to such thinking, his subsequent videos develop in a different direction, willing to assert the body and challenging its status as an entity replaceable with sculptural materials.
performances—and others of the sixties and seventies—lies in a reintroduction and reconstitution of subjectivity: that which was putatively banished not only form the objective goals of modernist abstraction, but perpetuated in the abstracted realm of Minimalist sculpture and its Conceptualist progeny. The technical apparatus and spatial structures of the video medium have been emphasized in facilitating this interpretation. Video, unlike film, it is frequently noted, conveys an intimacy: a one-on-one viewing situation before a small monitor, as opposed to the collective viewing of a film projected at a distance on an expansive wall. The intimacy of video is in evidence also in terms of its production: the artist positioning him/herself between the recording camera and the monitor. Additionally, due to video's instantaneity, or the simultaneity of recording and feedback, he/she is able to watch him/herself in the course of being filmed. These two issues—intimacy and instantaneousness—have become the sine qua non of critical discussions of video: the determining features leading to its understanding as a highly subjective medium that engages with the psychology of the performer.

30The irony here, of course, that Minimalism itself, as emphasized in Chapter One, introduced the notion of subjectivity into sculpture; however, in its reception (and its legacy in certain forms of Conceptual art), this subjective or bodily dimension is often lost or perceived to be wanting. As such, performance is often placed in contrast to the restrictive aesthetic of Minimal and Conceptual art: a movement from built forms and objects to the artist's (and viewer's) body and subjectivity.
31Nauman frequently watched himself performing, essentially monitoring his own image as it was being recorded/displayed. See de Angelus, p. 72.
In one of the earliest theorizations of video work, Rosalind Krauss maintains that the unique features of video led her to develop a psychological, heuristic model: specifically, that of narcissism. For Krauss, video stages a condition of self-reflexivity: the camera and monitor acting as a parenthesis framing the performer who is situated between them. The self is both split--i.e. externalized as image--and then redoubled, in that its image is immediately reflected back onto oneself. The simultaneity of recording and feedback thus "reprojects the performer's image with the immediacy of a mirror," she writes. As such, Krauss maintains that rather than the technical transformation of material, the primary "medium" of video is a manipulation of psychological states. She writes:

.. video's real medium is a psychological situation, the very terms of which are to withdraw attention from an external object--an Other--and invest it in the Self. Therefore, it is not just any psychological condition one is speaking of. Rather, it is the condition of someone who has, in Freud's words, 'abandoned the investment of objects with libido and transformed object-libido into ego-libido.' And that is the specific condition of narcissism.

Krauss' reading of the psychological overtones of video and its tautological nature finds support in the fact that, beyond the technical contingencies of the monitors and

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33Ibid., p. 45.
34Ibid., p. 54.
simultaneous filming, there is the undeniable presence of the body in most all early (and recent) video works. The body is spectacularly staged; the insistent visibility of the artist's body a foil for the viewer's own (often cathartic) identification. Krauss notes that "the human body [is video's] central instrument." As a result, she maintains, "the object (the electronic equipment and its capabilities) has become merely an appurtenance."  

While Nauman's early videos all depict his body or parts thereof, they nonetheless refute the legitimacy of Krauss' narcissistic model, which has continued to maintain a significant influence upon more recent literature on "video art". This is due to the fact that the heightened physicality of Nauman's videos--their the sense of bodily  

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35 Ibid., p. 45, p. 54 (my emphasis). To exemplify video's "narcissism," Krauss refers to Vito Acconci's Centers (1971), a twenty-minute video that records Acconci pointing at the center of a t.v. monitor. Positioned in the center of the screen, and by pointing out at the camera ostensibly pointing at himself, Acconci seems to perform solipsism. In other works, such as Trademarks and Openings (both 1970), Acconci continues along this vein, staging himself probing or manipulating his body in front of a tightly framing camera. Concerning his videowork, Acconci himself once wrote, "Where am I in relation to the viewer--above, below, to the side? Once my position is established, the reasons for that position shape the content: I can improvise, keep talking, fight to hold my stance in front of the viewer. (At the same time, I'm fighting the neutrality of the medium by pushing myself up against the screen--I'm building an image for myself lest I dissolve into dots, sink back into grayness." Acconci, "10-Point Plan for Video," in Video Art: An Anthology, Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot eds. (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 8.  

36 See, for example, the anthology Illuminating Video: an Essential Guide to Video Art eds. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture in association with the Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990), in which many of the contributions reference Krauss' essay; in the foreword, David Ross specifically highlights it as a key text in illuminating "the implications of video's essential psychological character and sexual nature." (p. 11).
intensification—is accompanied by a concomitantly extreme exploitation of *filmic manipulation*. In other words, the staging of bodiliness goes hand in hand with an increasing insistence upon the mediation of the technological device. In addition to the body's activation, the camerawork itself is activated. The viewer witnesses a series of actions, sieved through the screen of recording: the interface and identification between performing/recording itself enacted and displayed.

This content—also evident in the Studio Films' "camera vision" as discussed above—is even more pronounced in the videos. Most obviously, all three of the videos—*Pacing Upside Down, Stamping in the Studio, Revolving Upside Down*—are filmed with an *inverted* camera: this reversal of position pointed out in their titles. Nauman's body appears to hang precariously from the ceiling; with its orientation flipped, however, the body not only relinquishes its upright stature, but is transformed into a *sign* of the physical reversal of the camera's position. In other words, the viewer is made aware of the fact that he/she is looking at a recorded image. Nauman's videos, beginning in 1968, may very well foreground a heightened spectacle of the body, but, at the same time, they demonstrate a focused attentiveness to the conceptual and structural impact of photographic/ cinematic devices: framing, cropping, close-ups, and camera inversions. "The camerawork became a bit more important," he remarks to
Willoughby Sharp in 1971, "As I became more aware of what happens in the recording medium I would make little alterations."  

In Nauman's videos, the viewer experiences the medium. He/she does not simply watch a performance, but is made aware of its mediation through a technological device. The videos thus present a model of visuality that is explicitly mechanical or technical, which, it will be argued below, mitigates and largely produces the bodily content and imagery of the videos themselves.

Close view:

Above I mentioned the low-tech aesthetic of early videotapes, the murky texture of the images, their protracted length, and the pervasive sense of accident and imperfection. In part, these qualities derive from technical limitations, as when Nauman began producing videotapes it was not possible for an amateur to do any editing. Unlike film editing's easily replicated cut and splice technique, the medium of video requires expensive professional equipment, capable of actually merging the taped sequences of its electronic signals. In an essay examining the technical aspects of the video medium and their theoretical implications, David Antin

37 Sharp, "Interview with Nauman," p. 25
describes this process, which, he elaborates, is time-consuming, costly, and demands a certain degree of technical sophistication:

.. video pictures have to be edited electronically by assembling image sequences from some source or sources in the desired order on the tape of a second machine. The images are electronically marked off from each other by the electronic signal recurring (in the US) thirty times a second. If you want to place one sequence right of images right after another that you've already recorded onto the second tape, you have to join the front edge of the first new frame to the final edge of the other, which means that motors of both machines have to be synchronized to the thirtieth of a second and that there must be a way of reading off each frame edge to assure that they recorded sequences are in phase with each other. Half-inch equipment is not designed to do this, and the alignment of frame edge with frame edge is a matter of accident.\(^38\)

It is thus not surprising that Nauman's early videos are largely unedited. But the internal misalignments and the crudeness or non-existence of editing in Nauman's videos should not necessarily be understood as a limitation, but a formative aspect of their meanings.\(^39\)

Judgments regarding the "low-tech" or homemade qualities of videos are often rendered through their comparison to

\(^{38}\)David Antin, "Video: The Distinctive Features of the Medium," in Schneider and Korot, Video Art, p. 181.
\(^{39}\)Nauman once noted "I don't think I would ever edit [the videotapes] but I would redo the whole thing if I didn't like it. Often I would do the same performance but change the camera placement and so on." (Sharp, "Interview with Bruce Nauman," p. 30). The rough-hewn aesthetic of the videos moreover develops further such issues as non-synchronous sound, created by accident in the earlier films (e.g. the wild track in his film Playing a Note on the Violin), and which is preserved and repeated in some of the later videos. In these works, audible components of noise and rhythm are set against visual images, and a blank studio or unidentifiable space is pictured against off-screen noises.
television--an observation made by David Antin that is relevant to the current discussion. In contrast, by representing the internal fissures of the images, "art videos", Antin contends, set themselves explicitly against the television broadcast which works precisely to diminish technical flaws, lessening what he calls the "shocks of transmission." In order to achieve a seamless world of illusions, in which the artifice of construction is suppressed, the television camera is engaged in an incessant fine-tuning, making minute adjustments which diminish the violence of cuts, edits, and shifts from one camera to another. All of these formal devices become largely imperceptible to the television viewer. They are, however, explicitly legible to the spectator of "art" videotapes, which bear the marks of amateurism or the homemade: qualities found in abundance in all early video work--even that of Nauman's, which does not seek to critique mainstream t.v.. While Nauman's videos depart from the socio-political work created by other video artists during this period, what they share, on a structural level, is the inescapable, implicit relationship of the video medium to the commercial world of

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41 Examples of video work that investigates the institution of television and mainstream medium includes the group Ant Farm's Media Burn (1971), in which a pile of TV sets was destroyed by a car while a man introduced as John F. Kennedy read a statement ("Mass-media monopolies control people by their control of information... Now, I ask you, my fellow Americans, haven't you ever wanted to put your foot through your television screen?") Also of note is Richard Serra's Television Delivers People, a video including statements such as "You are consumed... You are the product of television." (see Korot/Schneider, Video Art, for further discussion of this work).
television. In other words, regardless of their "artiness", videos such as Nauman's do not escape analogies with television--and specifically with the dictates of image making and management it represents.\textsuperscript{42}

In Nauman's videos, their lack of technical polish is heightened by the tediousness of actually watching tapes. In the exhibition context, the viewer comes upon an already running tape, which can be at any point--not the beginning, nor the middle, nor the end, but somewhere along a continual plane of time. As mentioned before, initially the Studio Films were supposed to be screened in loops; now, with video this was all but assured, in that videotape can easily be played in a constant, uninterrupted loop, presenting action not in narrative, but in a circular and never-ending time. As the tape plays on and on, the spectator's senses are numbed by the bathos of Nauman's pacing and stamping, again rendering the dimension of time palpably material.

\textsuperscript{42}Vito Acconci emphasizes, moreover, that despite the television monitor's "sculptural" quality, which accommodates the creation of video installations, it nonetheless maintains its reference to the domestic object--as television is a central piece of furniture in the home. "Once a TV set, however, is placed in a sculpture installation," Acconci writes, "the TV set tends to dominate: the TV set acts as a target--the rest of the installation functions as a display device, a support structure for the light on the screen (the viewer stares into the television set, as if staring into a fireplace). [...] The reason for this might be that the conventional location for a television set is in the home; when it is come upon elsewhere, whether inside a gallery/museum or outside or outside, in a store window or a supermarket, the viewer is stopped in his/her tracks: the situation is like that of a visitor from another planet happening upon a TV set--only in this case it is the 'other planet' (the home, the living-room) that comes upon the viewer, out of the privacy of his/her home and in public." Vito Acconci, "Television, Furniture, and Sculpture," in Hall and Fifer, \textit{Illuminating Video}, p. 133.
The sense of monotony in viewing Nauman's tapes is not unique, however, as the refrain often mouthed is that art videos are "boring." This determination is made in relation to television's entertainment value, a point emphasized by Antin, who notes that television is the benchmark against which video artworks are evaluated: "[videotapes are] not judged boring by comparison with paintings or sculpture," he writes, "they're judged boring in comparison with television, which for the last twenty years has set the standard of video time."\(^{43}\) The associations between video and television—in the very least due to their shared use of a television monitor—is inescapable, even in those more "formally" oriented videoworks, like Nauman's, which are not interested in pursuing social commentary regarding the status of broadcast media. The medium of television, from the beginning of video's development as an art form, has informed not only its reception, but also the conventions of recording and image-making employed. I want to pursue this line of

\(^{43}\)Antin, "Video: The Distinctive Features of the Medium," p. 178. In the divisions created within the realm of video work, Nauman's tapes are considered almost exclusively in an "art" (i.e. formal) context, exploring the medium—as opposed to those which self-consciously intervened in the social realm or institutional context of television. Antin's reading, however, provides a more subtle negotiation of these terms, a point that emerges from an interview in which Nauman was asked if wanted to use videotape to gain access to network television. He responds: "I'd like CBS to give me an hour on my terms. I'd like to do color work which I haven't done yet because of the expense involved.... I'm not interested in making compromises in order to do that, although I still want to do it. I would like to have an hour or half an hour and present some boring material." (Sharp, "Interview with Bruce Nauman," p. 31.) Here there is the implication that "boring" tapes, those which undercut action, implicitly undermine standard television fare.
argument in relation to the issue of camera shots, mentioned above in the discussion of the Studio Films.

In the cinema, the individual images which collectively make up a film are classified according to a set of terms: panning, wide-angle, close-up shots, etc.. Together, and in relation to one another, depending upon editing procedures, the film's totality is created: a rich panopoly of contrasting textures and views, ones formally analogous to aspects of the narrative or film's content (for example, an extreme close-up of the face may suggest internal contemplation, or a psychologically intense scene). In the essay cited above, Antin remarks, however, that, in video, one single class of camera "shots" is privileged: that of the close-up. In part, this format results from the particularities of video's electronic imagery, which is not only a much different material than film's celluloid, but possesses wildly contrasting (and some would say inferior) qualities. Antin explains:

Because of the poor resolution of the television image (552 bits of information presented in photosensitive phosphors) and the normal screen size, the bread and butter shots of television are almost all subforms of what film would consider a close-up. Common shot names illustrate this-- knee shot, thigh shot, waist shot, bust shot, head shot, tight head shot. Or else they count the number of people in the frame-- two shot, four shot, etc.44

What is notable is that, in television, camera shots are essentially defined in terms of the human body. In contrast, film terminology contains a host of associations with the visual field. Reinforcing this point is Vito Acconci's observation that, due to the dimensions of the video screen, the close-up of a face, for example, results in an image that approximates that of an actual face; while in the cinema, the face becomes a "landscape", offering a vista of curves and valleys. Acconci writes, "... on a movie screen a close-up face is at least fifteen times the size of an actual face (so that the face on film is a landscape, like John Wayne's face, a face to walk around on--"

...the face is distant, out-of-reach, like a landscape out a train window, untouchable, like Greta Garbo's face; or the face is a monument or a monster--it comes up from the ground or the grave, it comes from another time), on a TV screen a close-up face is approximately the same size as an actual face: 'his'/ 'her' face and 'my' face are face-to-face--we're in the same world--this is here and now.45

This proportional disparity between the video and film image effects the viewer's perceptual status: the former's closeness yielding a bodily identification; while the latter's distance betraying a detached visual address. Film history and theory is replete with arguments concerning the intimate relationship between the camera and the human eye: the power of the camera to "improve" human vision and thereby becoming an appurtenance to it. (Dziga's Vertov's famous

concept of the kino-eye, or "camera-eye", is one relevant example). But something quite different is operative in video; rather than an extension of vision, it extends the body. Video, it may be inferred, represents not a visual but bodily appendage.

The medium of video, I want to propose, is a particularly adept tool in fostering the development performance not due to its documentary capacity but because its model of visuality and its representational paradigm is linked to the body, or corporeality, in explicit and implicit ways. The viability for video to operate as a document is, moreover, tenuous, given that videotapes, being prone to degeneration and disintegration, are inherently unreliable for the task of preservation. Rather, video accommodates performance owing to the medium's immanent relation to the human body. Nauman's videos register this possibility as, in them, the subject (Nauman's body) and the object (the video apparatus) are intrinsically intertwined, together producing the content of the works. It is, in other words, a necessary or motivated coupling.

Vertov writes, "The utilization of the camera, as a cinema eye--more perfect than a human eye for purposes of research into the chaos of visual phenomena filling the universe. The eye lives and moves in time and space, perceiving and recording impressions in a way quite different from the human eye... The movie camera is better." Dziga Vertov, "Resolution of the Council of Three, 10/IV-1923," in The Avant Garde-Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: New York University Press, Anthology Film Archives Series 3, 1978), p. 2. Vertov's analogy between the film camera and the eye is visualized in a shot from his film, The Man with the Movie Camera, in which a camera lens is superimposed upon an extreme close-up of an eye.
Partial views/images:

Through the close-up—which is, after all, the human or body shot—the body’s image is fully visualized and given center stage, focusing our interest. But importantly, in Nauman’s videos what is presented is not a wholistic, organic body. Rather it is one comprised of fragments or parts, dictated by the list of possible close-up shots: thigh, waist, head, torso, etc. In Nauman’s videos, a certain dismantling is produced; not necessarily a psychic collapse of self with image, but an internal fissuring of the organic unity of the body’s form and functions. Accordingly, the camera angles employed in his videos operate to truncate the body; either by cropping it, so that only an isolated part appears; reversing the normally upright, vertical orientation of the human body, thereby turning it literally on its head, upside-down, or side-ways; or by reducing the body’s physical capacities to one, isolated task, thus fragmenting the body not in terms of its form, but its functions or actions.

In two of Nauman’s videos, these operations of fragmentation and fissuring are prominently staged: Bouncing in the Corner, no. 1 and Bouncing in the Corner, no. 2 (figure 55), the first one made in 1968 and the second in 1969. Situated in the corner of intersecting walls, Nauman holds his arms
straight down to his sides and proceeds to fall backwards. As his body hits the wall, he breaks the impact with his bare hands, producing a loud slapping thump, creating a constant visual/audible rhythm. In both versions, the body's capacities are reduced to the singular activity of bouncing. Moreover, Nauman’s head is cropped from view by the camera's frame, capturing only a partial image. In the second version, as his body rights itself before repeating the falls, it seems to come out at us even further in space, producing an undulating advance and recession, not unlike the shifting movements of a camera lens moving from wide angle to zoom. Furthermore, in both versions, the camera is rotated: in the first on its side, the other upside down; so that Nauman's body is denied its fundamental posture as a human being.

This rotational operation of horizontality, giving over to the pull of gravity, has been identified and theorized by Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois as one of the workings of the informe.47 The fall from a "human"—humanist, transcendental—state to a base, brutally bodily one is interpreted in the axial shift from the vertical to the horizontal. In several essays written over the past decade, Krauss equates the vertical axis with that of modernist opticality: the suspension of time and the decoporealization

of vision, imagining eye as a disembodied entity. In contrast, "horizontalization" entails a recognition of the interdependence of perception and the body, as well as the durational aspects of visual experience. During the mid-sixties, Krauss argues, Minimalist sculpture, in particular, responded to modernism's exclusions, insisting upon the mobile, sensate viewer, redefining the perceptual apparatus in phenomenological terms.

One could situate Nauman’s videos in this context, as to some extent, they further these goals: the insistence upon extended durations which demand that the viewer witness the artwork in time, and the rendering of the body--Nauman’s own--formless. But rather than simply continuing Minimalism's aspirations for a bodily vision, Nauman's work, through the use of video, represents an implicit critique of its limitations: specifically, the implications of the resolutely abstract notion of corporeality proposed by Minimalism's imagined phenomenological subject. In Nauman's art, the use of film and video allows for a set of imagery that explicitly picture the body, rather than merely imply

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48In chapter six of The Optical Unconscious (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993) Krauss discusses a "reading" or reception of Pollock's horizontality in the work of Robert Morris, Andy Warhol, and Eva Hesse. Unlike Helen Frankenthaler or Morris Louis, who "elevate" Pollock's skeins to the vertical plane of the wall, these other artists kept them on the floor, literally and figuratively, Krauss maintains.

49Krauss proposes that Nauman’s videos, Bouncing in the Corner II and Lip Sync, in line with Duchamp's Anémic Cinéma, "exploit repetitive movement within a fixed frame to work the devolutionary pressure of the pulse effect against the stable image of the human body." See Krauss and Bois, Formless: a User's Guide, p. 135.
its presence. Despite their procedures of fragmentation and the extensive manipulation of the camera—both which serve to undermine the body's form—vestiges of imagery are clearly in view. Referring to the lack of clarity or resolution in video's electronically transmitted pictures, Nauman alludes to the function of the image in the following statement:

Well it seemed okay for the work I was doing. You just have to think in terms of the image you're going to get. I didn't need a highly resolved image. At that time, I was interested in the ambiguous quality of the image. The work isn't autobiographical. It isn't really about me. When I was doing it, it was mostly with images of myself but almost every image is either upside down or the head doesn't show at all or it's only the back. So it was only important to have an image of a human figure, even if I was using myself at the time.⁵⁰

Nauman's videos depict a recognizable a body; but this is not necessarily about Nauman's body, nor or an enactment of his subjectivity. The sole criteria is rather that a human figure be legible—that is, an image of a body appear. Again consideration of the contingency, or history, of the mediums employed comes to the fore. The filmmaker Hollis Frampton made the following observation, regarding the place of film and video in the history of representations:

I think it is clear that the most obvious antecedents of cinematic enterprise, at least in its beginnings, are to be found in painting, an art which, justly losing faith in itself as a technology of illusion, had gradually relinquished its hold on a three-dimensional space that cinema seized once more, for itself, on its first try [...] Early accounts of the situation tell us that the image had power to move the audience... clean out of the theater, and instruction be damned. The video image

⁵⁰Dercon, "Keep Taking it Apart," p. 56 (my emphases).
assumes the frontality that painting has since had continual difficulty in maintaining.\textsuperscript{51}

The analogy Frampton makes between cinema/video and painting is provocative—not the least because he himself produced radically anti-illusionistic structuralist films, which worked to undermine the very potency of representational imagery in controlling the film's content. What I take from Frampton's statement, however, is irregardless of the attempt to retreat from the world of illusionism, both film and video are fundamentally bound to it—and this is not to the flattened planes of photographic images, in that they possess a different spatiality: a density, or to use Frampton's beautifully evocative description, a "highly plastic temporality."\textsuperscript{52}

Film and video, in the history of representations, both recall and exceed the illusionistic capacities of painting, capable of capturing the depths of three-dimensional space. But implied by Frampton's phrase—"a plastic temporality"—the factor responsible for film and video's illusionistic superiority is not their imitative potential, but their capacity for motion and to generate temporal experience. Painting is a static form; film, however, is a form that develops in time, a medium integrating touch, space and movement.

\textsuperscript{51} Hollis Frampton, "The Withering Away of the State of Art," \textit{Artforum} vol. xiii, no. 4 (December, 1974), pp. 50-51.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. 50.
These factors regarding the nature of film and video provide insight into why Nauman, over the course of his career, has maintained an only infrequent involvement with photography; furthermore, when he wanted to make still images (of himself making faces) he employed holograms—then a new technology that is capable of replicating film’s dense, diegetic space (figure 56). But also relevant to this discussion is the other factor shared between film and painting: that of illusionism, the very condition banished by Minimalism’s sculpture of time. Nauman’s videos and films reassert recognizable bodily imagery, employing the very mediums which rendered painterly illusionism, according to Frampton, obsolete. Film and video—both technological forms of representation, but the latter immanently bound to a commercial context and the realm of mass culture—become the vehicles through which Nauman’s art explicitly pictures modernism’s repressed body.

_Slow motion:_

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53 In a 1979 interview, Nauman notes, "I find still photography limited for my interests. I don’t know how to get everything I want into a photograph. I am a little more comfortable with film. In general and recently, I have been frustrated in my attempts to do something in two-dimensional media; I can get a certain amount of what I want into it, and then I feel blocked." Russell Keziere and Ian Wallace, "Bruce Nauman Interviewed," Vanguard (February, 1979), p. 17.
The flexibility and low cost of the medium of video facilitated experimentation with camerawork and processes of recording. But Nauman does not cease to work in film; rather bringing to it lessons absorbed from his video work. Paradoxically, once he began to demonstrate greater facility with technical manipulations, the limitations of video became more apparent. So in 1969, he rents a high speed industrial camera, which he uses to make four films: Black Balls (figure 57, Bouncing Balls (figure 58), Pulling Mouth (figure 59), and Gauze (figure 60)—known as the "slo-mos."54

The slo-mos share two central characteristics: first is an extraordinary reduction of motion (more extreme than is possible with video) as the camera speed shoots from a thousand to four thousand frames per second, while the films are projected at normal speed. As a result, the action—which "actually" only took a few seconds—is extended into a length of eight or nine minutes, proceeding at the pace of pouring rubber, with every slight shift barely perceptible to the viewer. Second, each film features a single shot, an extreme close-up view of a body-part or area: the privileged camera shot, that is, of video.

54 "The reason they are films again is because they're in super slow motion." Nauman comments, "I've been able to rent a special industrial camera. You really can't do it with the available video equipment for amateurs. I'm getting about a thousand frames per second. I've made four films so far." Willoughby Sharp, "Nauman Interview," Arts vol. 44, no. 5 (March, 1970), p. 26.
In Black Balls the artist gradually covers his testicles with thick black ink. In Bouncing Balls, he raises his penis, exposing his testicles which he proceeds to "bounce", a parodic self-citation of the early Studio Film, Bouncing Two Balls Between the Floor and Ceiling, the game translated into a sexual pun. In Gauze, he carefully extracts a five-yard length of gauze from his mouth, allowing it to fall down to the floor invisible from view. In Pulling Mouth, he inserts his hand into either side of his mouth, pulling it apart with force, the discomfort appearing on his partially visible face. Furthering the direction initiated in the videos, a body part here is clearly in view. But there something else the slo-mo's depict: they focus upon two of the body's erotogenic zones—the mouth and genitals—and, furthermore, due to their distillation of movement, erotic desire is enacted in the constant motion of the hand grabbing at the testicles, and the slow caress of it covering them with black paint. The body's libidinal energy is translated in visual terms: an interplay of motion and touch made possible through the cinematic mediation, recalling Duchamp's roto-reliefs, in which pulsatile vibrations visually replicate the in and out motions of coitus, producing what Rosalind Krauss identifies as a carnality of vision.55

55Rosalind Krauss argues that Duchamp's roto-reliefs tie the erotics of vision to a mechanical perception or a machinic visuality. See Krauss, "Moteur!" in Krauss and Bois, Formless: a User's Guide, pp. 133-137. In his essay cited above, Hollis Frampton makes a similar observation regarding the effect of technology in Duchamp's work, which, he suggests, is elaborated or heightened in later video art: ".. in the mandelas of feedback, graphically diagrammed illusion of alternating
But if the slo-mo films recall the carnal vision operative in Duchamp's roto-reliefs and his later Etant-Donnés (a posthumously unveiled installation comprised of an image of a splayed naked female figure at whose exposed crotch the viewer peers—or peeps—through a tiny hole carved in a door), they do so in the historical context of the "neutral doer" of task-dance and the phenomenological, universal subject of Minimalism—in which bodies are defined neither by history nor language. From the imaging of the body in the Studio Films, to its increasingly palpability in the videos; here we encounter an explicitly gendered body—one which we also encounter in other works of Nauman's contemporaries: for example, the erotic stagings of Carolee Schneeman or Hannah Wilke, made in the late sixties and early seventies; and Valie Export's and Vito Acconci's transgressive, public displays of putatively "private" sexual parts and acts, which

__thrust and withdrawal, most often spiraling ambiguously like a Duchampian pun, video confirms, finally, a generic eroticism [...] And as the feedback mandala confirms the covert circularity, the centripetal nature of the video image, it offers also an obscure suggestion. If the spiral implies a copulative interaction between the image and the seeing mind, it also may become... a navel—and this an omphalos, a center, sucking and spitting vortex into which the whole household is drawn, and within which it is consumed." Frampton, "The Withering Away of the State of Art," p. 53.

56For example, Schneeman's 1968 Naked Action Lecture at the ICA in London in which she stripped in the context of an "art istorical [sic] lecture"; or her later 1975 performance, Interior Scroll, in which she removed length of tape from her vagina; and Wilke's 1974 Gestures, a video which recalls Nauman's slo-mos and videos, in that it shows a close-up of her mouth and lower portion of her face, while she manipulates her flesh in erotic manner. I am not claiming necessarily a continuity of concerns, as there are clear differences in both Schneeman's and Wilke's works from Nauman's; rather simply that the identification of the body as a sexualized/gendered subject is in operation beginning in their work in the late sixties and continues in the seventies.
aggressively refute the integrity of public/private space, and the gender relations of those structures.\textsuperscript{57} Similarly, Nauman's slo-mos present a marked, \textit{gendered} body---in specific, focusing upon the male genitals. In other words, Nauman's body is defined rhetorically---or inscribed with language---a body which enacts its sexualization through the constant gestures of touch and caress, made palpable through the screen of recording.

As in the videos, with their grainy surfaces, activated camerawork and tight close-ups of body parts, and the Studio Films, in which the stationary camera represses motion, thus foregrounding an experience of time, Nauman's slo-mo films exploit the possibilities of the technological apparatus employed in their production. The body---the "subject" of performance, embraced as the mark of its authenticity---emerges as a condition of its reproduction: a close-up fragment, ever-playing along an endless loop of time.

\textsuperscript{57}I am thinking here of Acconci's 1972 \textit{Seedbed}, in which he masturbates (or feigns masturbating) under a ramp in the Sonnabend Gallery; and Valie Export's 1969 \textit{Genital Panic}, in which she entered into a porno theater, wearing crotchless pants and carrying a automatic rifle, inviting the patrons to try the "real thing." Similarly, in her 1968 \textit{Touch Cinema}, she strapped a mini wooden "theater" onto herself, over her bare breasts, and passers-by were invited to touch.
CHAPTER 5: "YOU MAY...WANT TO....HEAR"

There are two rooms, one which is sealed, removed from public view, and the other open, inviting the viewer to enter into its space. Inside the first, closed room, a closed-circuit video camera, mounted sideways, slowly oscillates, filming the empty space; and an audiotape plays a pre-recording of Nauman slapping his thighs in a pre-determined pattern ("palms twice, back of hands twice..."). In the other room, a monitor sits upon the floor, showing videotaped images--seen sideways, due to the camera's rotated placement--of the sealed room. Entering this room, the viewer is met with the inverted images of the other space and faint sounds of thighs being slapped ("palms twice, back of hands twice,...").

Above is a description of Bruce Nauman's installation, Audio Video Piece for London, Ontario (1969-1970, figure 61). As a sculpture incorporating architectural parameters, inviting us to circulate within its spaces and to see with our moving bodies not just our static eyes, a second-hand, written description bears significant limitations. In this case, the inadequacies are heightened in that the viewer is invited not just to see but to listen: to attune one's ears to the muted sounds emitting from the enclosed room. During the late sixties, Nauman's art frequently speaks to us, playing sounds addressed to our ears. The abundance of auditory elements in
fact beg the question of how to interpret their function and meaning. What do make of the fact that the viewer is besieged by sound, invited, that is, to listen to an art object?

The employment of sonic elements in visual art objects is not unique to Nauman nor to the postwar era, as artworks incorporating sound appear episodically throughout the twentieth century.¹ The Futurists had sound poetry and Luigi Rossolo's important manifesto, "Art of Noises," written in 1916, which would prove to be highly influential to later composers and musicians. And Dada had theatrical displays of sound poetry and Kurt Schwitter's Merzbau. Marcel Duchamp, continuing his transgression of disciplinary and sensory boundaries, also made two explicitly acoustical pieces, Erratum Musical (1913) and With Hidden Noise (1916).²

Despite isolated examples, however, a sustained investigation of sound in the visual arts—simultaneously within different

¹In a fascinating study, Douglas Kahn details the history of sound and aurality, the shifting nature of "hearing" due to new technologies, and the role of these phenomena within the developments of modernism and postmodernism. Kahn emphasizes that art history, however, has been notably silent in relation to issues of sound: "Modernism has been read and looked at but rarely heard." Kahn remarks. Douglas Kahn, Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), p. 4. Kahn's investigation into this relatively unmined territory has been very important to my thinking in the development of this chapter.

²Duchamp's Erratum Musical is a "chance" composition generated from the random selection of notes from a hat. With Hidden Noise is a sculpture, consisting of a little ball of twine trapped between two metal plates, into which Duchamp's friend and patron, Walter Arensberg, inserted a noisemaker. See Pontas Hulten ed., Marcel Duchamp: Work and Life (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), p. 38, 63, respectively.
groups and factions—did not arise until the early sixties, under the impact of the avant-garde composer John Cage. During this period, a range of artists began to incorporate sounds, mechanisms for its production, and/or musical thinking into the conception of objects. This exchange of ideas was not uni-directional as Cage frequently acknowledged his indebtedness to Duchamp's found objects and chance procedures, with their dismissal of conventional notions of authorship. In the essay, "26 Statements Re Duchamp," Cage summarizes his approach: "One way to write music: study Duchamp." 

It was also through the precedent of Cage's de-naturalization of conventional structures and rituals of the musical performance or concert that many artists began to incorporate performance strategies in their work. In fact, it may not be an overstatement to suggest that Cage's example was in part responsible for the incursion of performance in the art of the sixties as his legacy extended into a new generation of musicians and composers who, in turn, were in dialogue with

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3John Cage, A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press), p. 70. Through Cage's writings and music, many postwar artists considered the significance of Duchamp's practice: for example, Jasper Johns, whose paintings incorporate readymade signs and symbols within a gestural, pictorial surface; and Alan Kaprow, whose Happenings, of the early sixties, demonstrate a participatory logic and use of improvisation. Additionally, although Robert Morris himself reflected upon the significance of Duchamp's practice, incorporating key Duchampian ideas into his work, Cage was another mediating source—as evidenced by the correspondence between Morris and Cage uncovered by Branden Joseph during his research in the Cage archives. Joseph compiled and edited these letters in a special issue of October devoted to Cage's legacy (October no. 81, Summer 1997, pp. 70-79).
artists from other disciplines. On the one hand, within the context of performance, musicality and audition arises as a pressing concern. On the other hand, through notions of music, I contend, the very idea of performance can be approached in terms articulated outside the body/acting dyad that underlies the majority of the literature on performance. As such, in this chapter I want to examine the intersection of music and performance during this period as a basis for a discussion of the use of sound in Nauman’s art.

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An important precedent for Nauman's examination of music/sound and performance is the artistic collective, Fluxus. Beginning with their first concert in Wiesbaden in the early sixties, the Fluxus artists—including George Brecht, Nam June Paik, La Monte Young and Yoko Ono, among others—rigorously explored the implications of Cage's musical experimentation, admitting ordinariness into the performance situation, and investigating the production of sound and visual effects through chance procedures. These foundational ideas merged into a hybrid artistic form, in which the visual, the auditory, and the graphic coalesced; and performances and sculptural objects commingled.\(^4\) Across

the span of twentieth century art, Fluxus, Douglas Kahn declares, was "the most musical avant-garde."^5

For the Fluxus artists, the performance situation was the primary catalyst for the production of artworks: that is, the event itself came under scrutiny. In highlighting aspects of the performance which were intended to remain invisible or inaudible, many Fluxus pieces can be viewed in relationship to Cage's most famous (and notorious, due to the audience's reaction) piece, 4'33". Performed first by David Tudor 1952, 4'33" consisted of the performer (in this case, Tudor) entering onto the stage and taking his place at the piano. Raising the piano's lid and then outstretching his forearms and hands—the conventional signal to the audience that the performance is to begin, and thus silence is required—Tudor proceeded to play not a single note. Sitting motionless, he then closed the lid after precisely four minutes and thirty-three seconds, amidst the hushed reception of the bewildered audience.

^5"Fluxus was the most musical of the avant-garde (or experimental or neo-avant-garde) art movements of this century. Surrealism had gone as far as working up antipathy toward Western art music; other avant-gardes incorporated music but rarely created it; and, with the exception of Italian Futurism, achievements in music certainly could not stand next to those of the visual arts, literature, performance, and cultural thinking in general. Fluxus became the beneficiary of this 'tardiness of music with respect to the arts' John Cage once noted, a tardiness stemming from the relatively minor role music played in the important avant-gardes that preceded it." Douglas Kahn, "The Latest: Fluxus and Music," in In the Spirit of Fluxus, eds. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, exhibition catalogue (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), p. 102.
During the course of his "playing", nervous concert-goers began to fidget in their chairs, cough, and rustle their programs, creating an unplanned "concert" of those noises that are conventionally thought to interrupt or disturb the music. Such was the intent of Cage's piece, which highlighted that ambient sound could qualify as legitimate material for music, and that silence constitutes a relative impossibility due to unintentional noises created in the world: including the audience's breathing, now rendered barely audible in an otherwise "silent" room.

The constitutive elements of 4'33"--including the performer's entrance, the raising of the piano lid, the elevation of the hands and arms, and the bow and exit--became the base material for many Fluxus pieces. Often entitled "concerts", Fluxus works aimed to deconstruct, or parody, the musical performance and its attendant rituals and structure, isolating typically unnoticed behaviors and actions, including pulling out chairs, and turning the pages of the score. For example, in George Brecht's Symphony no. 3, Fluxversion I (1964) the musicians in the orchestra await the conductor's "signal" to begin their performance, a typical action in most concerts. Upon his cue, however, the orchestra's members do not pick up their instruments, but fall off their chairs.
It is notable, however, that while the Fluxus artists expanded upon many of Cage's ideas, including the use of untraditional instruments and other non-musical objects with which to create sound, they remained largely indifferent to his exploration of the potentialities of technologically mediated sounds. Although some Fluxus works did employ audiotapes and radios, there was very limited development towards the realm of electronic music. In fact, purusing the range of Fluxus pieces, what emerges is a seemingly conscious attraction to the anti-technical or the outmoded: exemplified in the raw materials used, including pianos, strings, butterflies, water, chairs, bottles, scraps of refuse and even food (the latter seen in Score No. 4 of George Brecht's Incidental Music, in which dried peas were dropped one by one onto a keyboard, producing a "ping").

In contrast, in Nauman's art, electronic or pre-recorded music and noises—a range of mediated sounds—predominate. Several years after the first Fluxus concerts, Nauman began to incorporate audio elements into his artworks. Like many

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6The potentiality of electronic sound became a pivotal starting-off point for many of Cage's followers in sixties' experimental music, including Philip Glass and Steve Reich, among others.
7Douglas Kahn makes an important observation regarding this anti-technological tendency in terms of the Fluxus concept of the "everyday." He writes, "What was often termed 'everyday' in the Fluxus vernacular, however, oddly denied the increasing incursion of media technologies and mass media into daily life. The Fluxus events taken to be emblematic of the everyday were in fact reduced to a generally asocial state in the same way that the Cagean aesthetic promoted a reduction of worldly sound to musical sound." (Kahn, op cit, "The Latest...", fn 24, p. 120).
8The implications of Nauman's use of technologically mediated sounds are discussed later in this chapter; for now, it should be noted that it constitutes a significant factor in my development of an historical reading of sound.
of the Fluxus participants, Nauman also had first-hand knowledge of Cage's music, but, unlike such artists as George Brecht, who studied with Cage in his now-famous seminars at the New School for Social Research, his familiarity derived from the composer's writings, collaborations with dancers and artists, and his musical legacy in the sixties' experimental avant-garde. Nauman's background as a musician may have encouraged an initial reception of these ideas. While still an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin, he studied musical composition and played a variety of instruments, noting to one interviewer, "...I was still playing a lot of music at that time, so I also took some music theory courses, thinking maybe I wanted to be a musician and I needed to know more about that."

During a later interview, Nauman is queried about his knowledge of Cage's music:

...I knew about Merce Cunningham and about the writings of John Cage and I had heard some of his works. It had to do with the attitude involved in transforming normal activity into a formal presentation, which Merce was doing with dance and John Cage was doing with music. So knowing about it was even more important than seeing it.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{9}de Angelus, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{10}Nauman continues: "One thing came up over and over again in the interview with Coosje van Bruggen. I would tell her about something that had been very important to me, in terms of how to structure a performance or some art activity and she would say: 'Oh, but it wasn't like that,' I said: 'It's the way I remember it..' So she calls what I did a 'creative misreading or a creative misunderstanding.'" Chris Dercon, "Keep Taking it Apart: A Conversation with Bruce Nauman," Parkett no. 10 (September, 1986), p. 57.
Nauman's Studio Films are predicated upon the idea of framing unremarkable actions in a formalized context—in this case, by filming them and thus granting them a particular visual and temporal structure. In the last two chapters, these films were discussed in relation to experimental dance and film of the period. But I also want to draw attention to the significant impact of Cage's expansion of notions of musicality—as well as that of Cage's musical progeny—in their conception and execution. Nauman both informally encountered and actively sought out contacts with a number of younger experimental musicians during the mid-sixties. He met Steve Reich in 1968 in Denver, and Philip Glass later on while living briefly in New York. Additionally, living mostly on the West coast, Nauman came into contact with the music of Terry Riley and La Monte Young, but he never personally met either one of them. This group of artists—known conventionally, but perhaps misleadingly as "minimalists"—interrogated the structures and processes of

\[11\] "Steve [Reich] was a friend of Bill Wiley's and I met him through Bill. I think they had done some projects together." (de Angelus, p. 54). In his essay in the Nauman retrospective catalogue, Paul Schimmel also mentions Nauman's introductions to Steve Reich and Philip Glass. Paul Schimmel, "Pay Attention," Walker, pp. 67-82.

\[12\] Speaking of artists who were important to him in the late sixties, Nauman remarks "I think that what was important more than the work and other artists was the number of musicians I knew that I'd known before, but most of them were living on the East Coast—Phil Glass, and Steve Reich, and I knew La Monte Young's music although I'd never known him, but I used to spend time with him at the studio." (de Angelus, p. 54) As La Monte Young was a central figure in the Fluxus collective, it may be possible to speculate, from Nauman's comment, that his reception of Fluxus was most importantly through the musician's work.

\[13\] It should be noted, however, that not only have these musicians individually at various times rejected the label of "minimalist" as inappropriate, but that the term was originally given to them in 1972, well after the demise of Minimalism in the visual arts. For a
musical composition and performance, the potentialities of electronic sounds, and the use of electronic devices in a "live" situation, in which pre-recorded tape loops displace the playing of instruments. It was, in fact, through the example of Reich—in particular his exploration of the repetition and extended duration of sound, noise and feedback—that Nauman was inspired to reflect upon the temporality of movement and the filmic apparatus in the Studio Films.

The Studio Films are the first works in Nauman's oeuvre which explicitly incorporate sonic elements. Through the juxtaposition of visual imagery and audible noises, the

discussion of this issue, see Edward Strickland, "Minimalism: T," reprinted in Writings on Glass: Essays, Interviews, Criticism, eds. Richard Kostelanetz and Robert Fleming (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 113-128. Despite sharing the same descriptive term, one cannot presume that "minimalist" music and "Minimalist" sculpture shared the same ideals, theoretically or aesthetically. In fact Reich's Pendulum Music, which became one of the most famous "minimal" pieces, was presented in the context of "Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials," an exhibition of post-Minimalist, process-oriented work which explicitly sought to critique the limitations of Minimalism. Pendulum Music was representative of the exhibition's format, in that the composition did not exist beforehand, but was generated within the act of performing. As a result, despite being comprised on the same fundamental components, each time it is performed—as in each time a process sculpture is installed—it will be different, contingent upon the whims of the movements, the space, the acoustics, and the duration of the swinging pendulums. Reich wrote about the notion of process in "Music as a Gradual Process" (1968), distinguishing his approach from Cage's in a manner that reveals the compatibility of his thinking with that of process, or post-Minimalist sculpture. "I do not mean the process of composition, but rather pieces of music that are, literally, processes [...] John Cage has used processes and has certainly accepted their results, but the processes he used were compositional ones that could not be heard when the piece was performed. The process of using the I Ching or imperfections in a sheet of paper to determine musical parameters can't be heard when listening to music composed that way." Steve Reich: Writings About Music, (Halifax: the Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1976), pp. 9-10.
viewer of the films attains an increased sensitivity to sound. This awareness is largely contingent, however, upon a form of mediated listening: one which results from the use of a recording. To elaborate, by recording the performed actions, as opposed to demonstrating them before an audience, a soundtrack is produced. Analogous to the significance of the filmic apparatus in creating meaning, as discussed in the last chapter, the soundtrack also functions not merely as a passive artifact or document, but is formative to the meanings and experience of the works themselves. The soundtrack focuses one's attention not simply on the image of Nauman's performing body, but upon the byproduct noises of the performed movements—such as walking, stamping, and pacing—as well as their rhythmic qualities. When the track runs out of sync with the displayed activities, sounds register emphatically in the viewer's consciousness. Even in the absence of sound—as in the silent films (and later videos)—such silence, following Cagean thinking, is materialized or revealed as non-existent, in light of the constant ticking of the turning reels or the hisses of the videotape loop.

14The significance of the films' sound is evidenced by the contemporaneously produced Studio Aids I (1967), consisting of four audiotapes of the recorded noises made while Nauman performed various activities over a period of several days in his studio. These include Jumping in the Studio, dated 5/14-6/1; Violin Tuned D.E.A.D., dated 6/3-6/11; Rolling on the Studio Floor, 6/12-6/20; and Rubbing a Violin on the Studio Floor.
Although the Studio Films and subsequent videos are based upon and create a performance structure--where the art object derives from the artist displaying activities as opposed to making things--I want to suggest that their concerns are distinct from those of Fluxus performance pieces: distinctions which are significant to my development of a theorization of sound, as well as to an understanding of Nauman's art's relationship to the musical thinking and legacy of John Cage. For one, as noted above, Nauman's films/videos manipulate recorded sounds as opposed to performing them in a live presentation. In so doing, they emphasize both a relationship and disjunction between the experiential realms of visuality and aurality. Secondly, rather than playing instruments or found objects, his pieces explore the body as an instrument: something capable not just of demonstrating gesture and movement, but of producing sound. As such, I want to suggest that the key reference for Nauman's work is not Cage's 4'33", but the composer's now legendary visit to an anechoic chamber.

The chamber is a specially constructed acoustical space used for research purposes. As Cage indicates, his initial impetus to be enclosed in the chamber was prompted by his investigations into "silence"--as the room purports to create a purified environment completely absent of external sound. But once there, Cage discovered an internal source, that of the body:
It was after I got to Boston that I went into the anechoic chamber at Harvard University. Anybody who know me knows this story. I am constantly telling it. Anyway, in that silent room, I heard two sounds, one high and one low. Afterward I asked the engineer in charge why, if the room was so silent, I had heard two sounds. He said, "Describe them." I did. He said, "The high one was your nervous system in operation. The low one was your blood in circulation." 15

In the chamber, Cage experienced his own body as an "instrument", one that is forever playing. Thus in addition to confirming his notion of the impossibility of eradicating all sound, he became further aware of the capacities of amplification in assisting the perception of sound. For example, the body's sounds may be ever-present, but they remain inaudible without technical devices or acoustical structures, both which act as microphones to increase their volume. Additionally, the anechoic chamber demonstrated how specifically acoustical materials and spaces allow for the production of particular sounds--some which, like those of the body, are ordinarily imperceptible to the unassisted ear. These spaces do not simply amplify sound, but they create and dictate auditory experiences, beyond the intentions of a subject or author, and outside of the control of the participant who enters into them. Acoustical spaces contain sounds that are, in a way, simply out there, now rendered material and audible.

15Cage, A Year From Monday, p. 134.
Nauman's *Audio Video Piece*, discussed in the introduction to this chapter, builds upon many of these ideas. Like the Studio Films and subsequent performance videos, Nauman's body is presented as an object capable of making rhythmically patterned noises—here in a recording of him slapping his thighs. The amplification of these sounds is achieved through the audiotape which has recorded them. But by *spatializing* these body sounds into the two architectural enclosures—separated by a wall so that one remains "off-limits" to the viewer—specific types of hearing are dictated. The audiotape, now enclosed in an inaccessible space bounded by a thick wall, rather than allowing for a clarity of hearing, forces one to strain one's ears, confusing auditory perception. Heightening this sense of disorientation, the source of the muted noises remains unknown, in that one can't see either a body producing them, nor the tape recorder which plays them. Moreover, the piece seems to flout its operations of concealment, presenting the beholder with scanning images of the closed room, but all they reveal are pictures of an empty space—no body, no tape recorder, no speakers in view.

Such acoustical architecture continually appears in Nauman's installations of the late sixties and early seventies. Rather than concerts, Nauman produces what may be thought of as *sculptures of sound*. In *Sound Breaking Wall* (1969), the
viewer encounters a room built from false walls. Entering the space, he/she discovers a seemingly empty room void of visual elements, not unlike Michael Asher's later "installations" of perceptual negation. In Sound Breaking Wall, however, the room is filled with various sounds of exhaling, pounding and laughing, coming from invisible speakers implanted into the seamless surfaces of the walls. The ensuing effect is that the structure itself seems to pulse with sounds. Enclosed within this disorienting, acoustical space, the viewer hears the breathing and laughing not of his/her own body, but those of an unidentified other--who here is the artist on a pre-recorded audiotape. One's experience of the work oscillates from feeling enclosed in someone else's anechoic chamber (with the breathing), to being a target of derision (with the laughing), and then simply the victim of irritating, relentless noise (with the pounding). Unable to identify the source of the sounds and incapable of controlling their playing, the viewer is subjected to a range of pre-determined effects.

Sound Breaking Wall is exemplary of what I am identifying as sound sculptures. These are works which produce particular

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16 See WCR no. 157. Sound Breaking Wall is made of beaver board, tape, and speakers and, when possible, is built utilizing pre-existing architectural structures. The piece is described by Nauman in a note sent to Count Giuseppe Panza di Buomo, who purchased it. Nauman writes on a photograph of the piece "sound breathing wall"; on an accompanying diagram, he writes "false wall, 9' high, 12 x 12; 2 tapes- 1. exhaling; 2. pounding + laughing." Getty Archives, Panza Papers: Bruce Nauman, Box 1, folder 14 (Los Angeles: the Getty Research Institute for the History of Arts and the Humanities).
types of hearing in space, or the spatialization of sound and
the act of listening. They also lead to new relations
between the senses—a disjunction between vision and audition
in which ultimately, I will argue, the hierarchy between
these senses is both revealed and overturned. Additionally,
however, by situating sound in a sculptural context, the very
structure of its performance is transformed. In Audio Video
Piece and Sound Breaking Wall, Nauman's "presence" as a
performer is reduced to a series of isolated body sounds,
captured on the loops of an audiotape. Again a contrast to
Fluxus assists in clarifying this point: in Fluxus the
performer is visible, presented as the creator or instigator
of sound production. Nauman's sculptures, in contrast,
remove an identifiable author of sound, transforming it into
an ambient presence. Other contemporaneously produced
installations take this one step further, in that Nauman is
eliminated as a performer entirely, replaced by the viewer's
body who becomes the "instrument" and producer of sound. 17
What this leads to is the distinction between performer and
audience is, for all intents and purposes, eliminated: the

17 In an exchange with Willoughby Sharp, the significance of utilizing
the viewer as performer is discussed:

Sharp: "It seems that one could almost divide your work into two
categories: the pieces directly related to your body and the
ones that aren't."

Nauman: "Well, in the works I've tried to describe to you, the
one with the television cameras and the walls, and the others I
have in the studio using acoustic materials, I have tried to
break down this division in some way, by using spectator
response. These pieces act as a sort of bridge."

two now merging in the beholding/listening subject who
circulates the "stage", defined as an environmental,
sculptural arena.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Acoustic Wedge (Sound Wedge--Double Wedge)} (1969-70)\textsuperscript{19}, and
\textbf{Diagonal Sound Wall (Acoustic Wall)} (figure 62) are two such
works in which the beholder is figured as the performer and
maker of sound. In the former, four walls create a series of
narrow, twenty-two inch wide corridors merging at one end.
The interior surfaces of the walls are covered with a thick
layer of acoustical material, while the outsides remain bare.
Pressed into the narrow confines of the spaces, the viewer is
forced to enter sideways. As he/she proceeds down to the
narrowing, "v"-shaped ends of the hallways, the increasingly
compressed space muffles the ambient sound.

In \textbf{Diagonal Sound Wall (Acoustic Wall)}, first installed at
Konrad Fischer gallery in February of 1970,\textsuperscript{20} a large diagonal
wall bisects the interior space of the gallery. The
structure, thickly padded with acoustical material, resembles

\textsuperscript{18}On the one hand, Nauman's removal of the proscenium structure in
performance can be seen in relation to the radical theatrics of
Happenings, the Living Theater, and other groups of the fifties and
sixties. On the other hand, the mobile beholder in the context of a
sculptural environment is indebted to Minimalism's redefining of
"sculpture" from a discrete object into a contextual field, triangulated
by the viewer's body, the sculptural object, and the architectural
container. Here, however, the viewer is also a listener, a point which
will be developed below.

\textsuperscript{19}See WCR no. 170. As noted in the catalogue raisonné, \textit{Acoustic Wedge}
(Sound Wedge--Double Wedge) was created in Nauman's studio 1970, but
not constructed until 1989 upon acquisition by Giuseppe di Panza.

the puckered surface of a mattress pad. In a letter to Konrad Fischer, Nauman describes the effect:

I think the piece will be very good in your space. It not only changes sound, but you must pay attention to the pressure changes in your ears as you move near and away from the wall. Perhaps I have explained all that in the last letter, but it is a rather subtle [sic] effect until you have been in the area for a few minutes.\(^{22}\)

Nauman’s description alludes to the contingency of the structure in determining the experience of hearing; sound is perceived in a specific way due to the shape and surfaces of the wall and how they interact with the pre-existing gallery space. He notes in another context how the viewer, encountering the piece, is met with "odd sense of pressure--pressure in your ear as you walk into the space, into the wedge."\(^{23}\) This experience of creating ear pressure is also the central effect of the related installation, *Acoustic Pressure Piece*, produced in 1971 (figure 63). In both these works, the idea of "pressure" is noteworthy, in that it implies the definition of sound as a physical force, one which literally presses upon the body. In these sound sculpture, thus, the materialization or objectification of sound--a seemingly immaterial phenomenon--is realized,

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\(^{21}\)The earlier studio version used industrial acoustic material, which couldn’t be secured in Germany, so the padding was stitched by hand in the Konrad Fischer version.

\(^{22}\)See Getty Archives, Panza Papers, Box 1, folder 20, for Nauman’s letter to his dealer, Konrad Fischer, describing the piece’s materials; also in the folder are copies of Nauman’s drawings of the piece, as well as installation photos.

\(^{23}\)Nauman’s comments are cited in WCR no. 174.
exerting pressure upon the performing/viewing/listening body. Sound thus engages the beholding subject on different sensory levels: addressed to his/her ears and physical being, asserting itself as a presence.

Nauman's installation sculptures demonstrate an adaptation and transformation of Cage's ideas. The Fluxus artists examined audition most extensively in the context of pieces identified and presented as "concerts." In contrast Nauman's art builds upon a Cage's thinking about the relation of the body to acoustical space, and the use of sound to shape space and act upon the viewer's body. Acoustical materials; architectural elements specifically designed to yield sonic effects; the amplification and manipulation of sound through technological assistance; a continual perceptual disjunction between acts of seeing and hearing; and sound used as a material force—all coalesce into sculptures of sound. Together, these characteristics lead me to a larger claim; in shifting the context of sound from the concert to sculpture, the very basis of thinking about and theorizing audition must be reconsidered. In Nauman's art, the reference of sound ceases to be music at all. Its tie to the subject—-or the interaction between bodies and sound—I want to propose, is crucial to this rethinking.

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In 1968, Nauman makes two of his first sculptures of sound. One, a discrete sculpture entitled Concrete Tape Recorder Piece, consists of an unremarkable slab of grey concrete. Laterally oriented and resting upon the ground, the sculpture resembles a Carl Andre floor piece. But unlike the latter's mute carpets of stone, zinc, and steel, inside Nauman's piece is a tape recorder playing an audio-loop of a deafening scream. Buried within the solid material, one can neither see the recorder, nor hear its sounds.

The second work is Nauman's first large-scale acoustical installation, entitled Get out My Mind, Get out of This Room (1968). It is a very spare piece, comprised of a square room and a single tape recording. The viewer enters into an enclosed, "empty" room, measuring ten feet by ten feet. Again the room's "evacuated" space is filled with ambient noises which confront—or rather, which literally scream at—the unexpected viewer. In various levels of tone and volume,

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24 See WCR no. 104.
25 The placement of an audio component within the interior of a geometric form leads to a comparison of Nauman's sculpture with Robert Morris' earlier, 1961 sculpture, Box with the Sound of its Own Making. Morris' work consists of a walnut box containing a three-hour tape of the various noises resulting from the work's construction. Morris' sculpture and Nauman's later piece allude to Cage's interest in the role of vision in perceiving sound, in that both consciously conceal the source of the noises. However, the self-reflexiveness of Morris' Box (i.e. its noises refer to itself, and not an external referent) sets it apart from Nauman's use of the scream (an issue that will become important to my analysis). It should be mentioned that Morris' sculpture itself represents a response to Duchamp's With Hidden Noise (1916), discussed above.
26 As the piece consists of an audio recording placed in a room built upon its exhibition, there is no illustration.
a voice derisively chides, "Get out of my mind, get out of this room...," over and over in an unrelenting repetition.

Speakers are built into the walls of the small room so as one walks into the area, a voice can be discerned, but its source is hidden. Whereas the concealment of the origin of sound appears in related acoustical works, here what becomes more explicitly apparent is the aggressivity of such an operation—without being able to see the speaking subject, the message's sense of threat is heightened and exacerbated. The ambient voice seems to taunt the unexpectant listener, shifting its tone, level, and the rapidity of its delivery of the words.

In the following, Nauman describes the process that went into its formation:

I had made a tape of sounds in the studio. And the tape says over and over again, "Get Out of the room, get out of my mind." I said it a lot of different ways: I changed my voice and distorted it, I yelled it and growled it and grunted it. Then, the piece was installed with the speakers built into the walls, so that when you went into this small room—10 feet square or something—you could hear the sound, but there was no one there. You couldn't see where the sound was coming from. Other times, we just stuck the speakers in the corners of the room and played the tape—like when the walls were too hard to build into. But it seemed to work as well either way.27

Nauman's statement elaborates how the piece's effect originates from the concealment of the voice and its shifting inflections. Both *Get Out* and *Tape Recorder Piece* share thus several elements: a hidden source of noise; an audio loop; and the presence of a scream—that is, a loud, confrontational or frightening verbal sound. Furthermore, both *Tape Recorder Piece* and *Get Out*, like the room installations discussed above and the Studio Films, further exploit the possibilities of recorded voice. The works could not function in the same way with the use of live sound, in that electronic mediation has the ability to not just record and transmit, but to distort natural voice.

The effect of recorded voice is noted by Steve Reich, who, following Cage's precedent, extensively incorporated electronic sounds and feedback in his pieces. Writing about his unrealized composition, *Slow Motion Sound*, Reich alludes to the limitations of a live performer:

> The possibility of a live performer trying to speak incredibly slowly did not interest me since it would be impossible, in that way, to produce the same results as normal speech, recorded, and then slowed down.²⁸

In relation to his interest in duration and temporality—how, for example, a sustained note "reads" differently than a short clip—Reich examined how recorded sounds can be

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²⁸Steve Reich, "Slow Motion Sound," in *Writings*, p. 15.
manipulated in order to produce a completely different experience of hearing. In other words, similar to Cage's interest in amplification, Reich's deployment of structures of repetition and slowing-down and speeding-up of tape loops actively transform sonic perception. In the following, Reich remarks upon the development of his thinking in relation to contemporary, avant-garde film's transformation of visual perception (another shared point of reference between Nauman and Reich.) He writes:

The roots of this idea [for slow motion sound] date from 1963 when I first became interested in experimental films, and began looking at film as an analog [sic] to tape. Extreme slow motion seemed particularly interesting since it allowed one to see minute details that were normally impossible to observe. The real moving image was left intact with only its tempo slowed down.  

Appropriating contemporary film's tactics of distending filmic temporality and playing with image perception, Reich explored in sound the realm of aural perception. Nauman's installation, Get Out equally exploits the effect of tape recording, in that a voice is recognizable as human, but is removed from a visible speaking subject, therefore becoming an ambient, ubiquitous presence. By being enclosed in a solitary chamber, the viewer's perception of those sounds changes; we hear differently. And through their increased volume—which exceeds the capabilities of natural vocalization—the sounds force us to listen to them. The act

29Ibid.
of hearing ceases to be in the control of the perceiver; rather the artwork asserts itself, demanding a form of engagement.\textsuperscript{30}

Reich's above comment, regarding the impact of experimental film on the development of his thinking, contains another important observation—that electronic devices allow for previously unremarkable details of sound to emerge. In relation to Get Out of My Mind, these details are significant, in that the recorded sounds bear a reference not to music, but to the cacophony of speech.

Speech is a product of human voice—that is a particular type or sub-genre of bodily produced sounds. It is also a form of

\textsuperscript{30}A productive comparison can be drawn between Nauman's use of recorded sound (and speech) in order to produce a direct address with the viewer, and that found in Vito Acconci's work. During a round-table discussion, Acconci discusses this issue in relation to his decision to employ recorded versus live sounds, describing it as a "calling card" to the viewer: "I guess in the beginning, say work of 1969, 1970, I think the way I treated audience then was pretty much as a kind of outsider. Almost as if the audience would be coming across, stopping by, something that they ordinarily weren't supposed to see. Almost as if the audience was a kind of voyeur. After that, I think, realizing that the ground I was working on had to include that audience. Work from maybe '71, '72, possibly '73, started to concern more a way for me to come face to face with an audience. I think from the beginning, somewhere in the back of my mind, was: How to find ways that I could directly address you, you the viewer. So the work of that three year period had a lot to do with how do I appear in relation to you. Almost: how do I present that kind of calling card to you? And most of the work at that time was done live.... I was almost setting up a kind of meditation chamber for myself— or a way where I could face you in some kind of, in some kind of private experience. So since 1973, the stuff hasn't been live. The stuff has been installations with audio tape." In Time and Space Concepts II in Event Art: a symposium, moderated by Lucy Lippard (with Vito Acconci, Daniel Buren, Poppy Johnson, and Carolee Schneeman), Marilyn Belford and Jerry Herman eds. (New York: the Association of Artist-run Galleries and Pleiades Gallery, 1977), p. 2. The unpublished manuscript is in the Carolee Schneeman papers, Getty Archives, Special Collections, Folder 74.9 (Los Angeles: the Getty Research Institute for the History of Arts and the Humanities).
language: the realm of utterances which emit from a subject and are received by another subject. The details of their formal qualities—tone, inflection, accent, etc.—are fully subjective, tied to the being who uses them. As a model of language, speech takes into account the speaking/using subject. It thus functions and becomes meaningful through the material contexts of its utterance—that is, the social situation of intersubjective exchange.³¹ Moreover, these sounds are readable, possessing semantic content. We listen to the words and perceive not just their musical qualities, but their threatening message as well, ordering us to "Get Out."

By situating them in context of a concert, sounds in Cage's practice (and in Fluxus) are appropriated for music, and/or definitions of musicality. Cage questioned the privileging of one class of sounds, famously rejecting any distinctions between types of sounds, even those which were produced "unintentionally" or found merely "in the world". As a result, Cage embraced the notion of sounds "in themselves". But this de-aestheticization of music, or its leveling to the

³¹The social and pragmatic aspects of speech led the philosopher and social theorist Pierre Bourdieu to consider J.L. Austin's theory of speech-acts in his development of the concept of the habitus. Bourdieu felt that in approaching the problem of language through speech, as opposed to writing, focus shifted from the formal linguistic system to its use or practice in the material world. As François Dosse remarks, "By analyzing speech acts, Bourdieu could reintroduce the referent, the concrete social situation that Saussure had marginalized, as well as speech, which had been eliminated in favor of a concern for language-specific rules." See Dosse, The History of Structuralism, Volume 2: The Sign Sets, 1967-Present trans. Deborah Glassman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 303.
realm of the ordinary, had a paradoxical effect: that of framing the external world's sounds in the context of a concert, a score or a performance. In so doing, the original contexts of the appropriated sounds were eliminated to the point of unrecognition. Sound thus exists without reference: they have little meaning outside their status as sound. In the following passage, the implications of Cage's idea of sonic autonomy are astutely summarized by Simon Shaw Miller:

Despite his theoretical assertion 'Let sounds be themselves,' Cage's practice pursued a strategy of what we might call 'musicalization.' I mean by this that he adopted a formalist (or Modernist, in a Greenbergian sense) conception of autonomy where the associative aspects of sound were placed to one side, if not disregarded altogether; 'music' becomes a concept into which all sound is placed. To put it another way, there is no sound outside of music. His work Variations IV (in the Variation series) serves to illustrate this. Here the original context of the pre-recorded sounds is destroyed so that they can be heard in a 'purposeless' way; just as sound. This, the intention is to produce a collage of sounds that stand apart from their normal context.... However, this musicalization of 'life' does not take into account the more prosaic fact that no sounds heard by human beings are ever heard outside society and culture. Experience, memory and the endemic are ignored in the emphasis on 'absolute' sound.32

32 Simon Shaw-Miller, "Concerts of Everyday Living," pp. 7-8. Douglas Kahn makes similar observation, stating that the result of Cage's approach was to elevate ordinary sounds and noise to the domain of music—what he calls the "musicalization of aurality." D. Kahn, Noise Water Meat, p. 102. In the following, Konrad Boehmer also discusses the ramifications of Cage's decontextualization of sound, "The reduction of musical context to the presentation of isolated sound phenomena—single sounds—liquidates musical sound, which possesses significance only through its contextual placement; it is thereby replaced with premusical natural material [...]. In those works by Cage that are fully given over to chance, every sound, no matter where it comes from, is always the right one [...]. Even through dressed up as revolutionary, this isolation of sounds from each other—which is justified by the claim that only in this way can they be themselves—quickly reveals its reactionary side. Similarly, perhaps, to the savage who can only perceive the phenomenal but not the functional aspect of natural events, grasping them as particular and personifying them, Cage's liquidation of context is a
In *Get Out of My Mind Get Out of This Room*, sounds are not, however, appropriated for a concert, a context that, regardless of the types of sounds employed—be it noise, water splashing or a violin playing—serves to render them musical, according to Shaw Miller. In *Get Out of My Mind*, sounds are introduced into the aesthetic purview of sculpture, thus their context is transformed. However, their status as linguistic sounds is here significant. The viewer enters into an acoustical space in which amplification not only forces one to be attentive to the existence of sounds, but to their recognizability as words, which confront the beholder. Speech is distended, repeated, and its volume increased. In the process, however, its content remains legible—or meaningful in the world outside. Linguistic sounds are not "purposeless", in that they serve a pragmatic function. One's response to the content of the message enters into the space of the artwork, enforcing a different relationship between the object and the external world. Rather than a musicalization of the latter's noises and ambient hisses, auditory elements permeate the art object without being completely transformed into something else. Defined through speech, sounds possess an association to their social use. Nauman's room installations constitute not simply acoustical spaces, but specifically phonic spaces: a

distinction I am making in order to propose a theorization of sound in terms of language rather than music.

Speaking/Writing:

"when language begins to break down a little bit, it becomes exciting and communicates in really the simplest way that it can function; you are forced to be aware of the sounds and the poetic parts of the word." 33

The introduction to this chapter alluded to the inadequacy of the written description in capturing the experience of audition, which, it was proposed, is explored in a key group of Nauman's installations of the late sixties and early seventies. In part, this observation intended to serve as a preamble to a core issue I am seeking here to illuminate: the distinction between the spoken and the written word.

In Nauman's art, the musicality of language is foregrounded—what the artist describes above as its "poetic parts", or, as he states in the same interview, its "functional edges". These "poetic" aspects of language emerge through its articulation or vocalization, in which words are situated not

on the page, but issue from the depths of the body.34 As Roland Barthes once queried: "What does the body do, when it enunciates (musically)? [...] it speaks but says nothing: for as soon as it is musical, speech—or its instrumental substitute—is no longer linguistic but corporeal; what it says is always and only this: my body puts itself in a state of speech."

In this passage, Barthes contends that language passes from a properly "linguistic" state to a corporeal one when it is channeled through voice. He speaks of the "movement of the body which about to speak," suggesting a connection between language and bodily gesture and its impact upon meaning, beyond the semantic content of the spoken messages.

The body, as described by Barthes, approaches Cage's notion of the body—as—instrument—explored in Nauman's films and audiotape installations. In these works, Nauman's "playing" body emits not just audible, but visual rhythms, executing patterned beats and sequenced movements. But Barthes' body—as—instrument differs from Cage's in a significant way, in that it is geared not towards the playing of music, but the playing of language. Cage desired to explore the body's potentials as a producer of sounds, ones which he envisioned

34 The intersection of sound and vocalization continually arises, including those pieces which do not contain actual words: as in the scream of the Tape Recorder Piece and in the breathing and exhaling in Sound Breaking Wall, discussed above.

or conceived of as a form of *found music*: that is, a pre-existing source for music, like Duchamp's readymade objects which elude authorship and creative intention. Cage's body sounds, however, exist "for themselves," as he declared. The body "in a state of speech", following Barthes, however, constitutes a fully *signifying* entity. Not just the words used, but the attendant inflections and corporeal gesticulations—the raising of an eyelid, the pointing of a finger, the furrowing of the brow—cooperate to produce meaning. These acts are performed, moreover, between bodies: a speaking subject/body addressing another one in an intersubjective exchange of words and bodily gestures.

*The History of Speech:*

In attending to the contingency of linguistic performance, Nauman's work open up a larger, historical issue. In the history of communication—whether from an anthropological or socio-cultural perspective—a key marker of modernization is the passage from an oral to a written or typographic culture. Since the industrial era of the nineteenth century (with the rise of the printing press), and into the twentieth century (with developments in information technologies and new media), the privileged site of communication in Western culture increasingly became the written word. Writing replaced speech not simply as the central means of
transmitting information, but in the maintenance of historical memory as well. Prior to the widespread use of written documents, collective experience and social histories were relayed from generation to generation in the form of the oral narrative. History was thus preserved and animated in the body of speakers who continually re-enacted its stories. Through these re-tellings, moreover, details were transformed and remade, subject to the whims of dramatic embellishments or the toll of forgetfulness. Enlivened in these ways, history and collective memory existed as dynamic concepts, given to the flux of time and transformation.

In a fascinating study on the social significance of music in seventeenth to nineteenth century Northern Europe, Richard Leppert focuses upon the implications of the erosion of oral culture.\textsuperscript{36} Leppert's argument centers around the contention that the elevation of writing is not simply the result of a technological determinism, but involves an ideological issue. He elaborates how the history of communication is tied to what Donald Lowe, in another study, terms "the hierarchy of sensing". During the course of modernization, in Western cultures (i.e. in the wake of the Renaissance), the sense of sight acquires increasing importance. The development of new typographic technologies for recording and transmitting information, which displaced previously oral means, thus need

to be considered as an outgrowth of this sensorial re-
organization: in that writing appeals to the faculty of
sight, while speech appeals to the faculty of hearing.\(^{37}\)
Since vision is perceived to be the most important, the
written word comes to predominate. By implication, the
faculty of vision absorbs a value that is naturalized, while
in fact being ideologically inflected and historically based.

As a result, the subject him/herself also undergoes a
transformation, in that the receiver of information becomes
now an observer rather than a listener. Importantly, the
source of information is no longer an embodied speaker—\(^{—}\)one
who is linked implicitly to a tradition of past speakers—\(^{—}\)but
the inanimate page or text. Leppert writes:

Lowe points out that in oral cultures, where
information is passed on by word of mouth (e.g. the
West in the Middle Ages), where knowing cannot be
separated form the knower's own memory, hearing enjoys
a privileged position in the hierarchy of sensing. By
contrast, in chirographic cultures (e.g. the West
predominately after the Renaissance), because
knowledge exists in writing, it can be separated from
the memory of a particular subject—though prior to
the development of typography such knowledge is
nevertheless highly restricted. With the printing
press, knowledge can be separated form the person who
knows (e.g. the author) and relocated in the (mass-
produced) book. Whereas in oral culture, hearing (and
touching) predominate over seeing in the transmission
of knowledge, in typographic culture—\(^{—}\)the culture of
reading and not listening—\(^{—}\)sight gains priority over
the other senses.\(^{38}\)

\(^{37}\)For another perspective on the history of visuality—\(^{—}\)and the
relationship between the observer, models of representation, and
modernity—\(^{—}\)see Jonathan Crary, Techniques of the Observer (Cambridge:

\(^{38}\)Leppert, The Sight of Sound, p. xxii (my emphases).
From Leppert's statement can be discerned that, upon the rise of a written culture, bodily intersubjectivity is diminished; the haptic is displaced by the dominance of the optic, or the value of touch is forsaken for that of sight. What is also crucial in this formulation, however is that putatively theoretical ideas are provided a historical model. To be precise, the senses have a history. Their rise and fall in favor must thus be contextualized culturally and historically, as they are windows into the "paradigm" of any particular period or era, to employ the Foucauldian term.

Nauman's installations, however, don't accommodate to the dictates of a strictly visual, written culture, in that an embodied speaker is insistently foregrounded: gesticulating, hearing, touching, and moving. The disembodiment of language, a byproduct of modernization, is undermined—or rather, is revealed. The viewer's body, moving through the spaces, is pressured by the caress of sound, while being made to physically touch and listen. Such is the effect of the 1969 *Touch and Sound Walls*,³⁹ in which two large walls are separated by a span of about forty feet. Behind one wall several microphones are placed, and behind the other speakers are inserted. The viewer enters into the space and is invited to "play" the walls in a game of call and response, enacted with his/her body. Pressing upon the surface of the

³⁹See WCR no. 158.
former wall, the viewer's hands produce a series of reverberations that are barely audible, issuing from the other structure.

The interrelation of the body to touch and sound is orchestrated within the sculptural framework. On the one hand, Touch and Sound Walls explore the terms of phenomenological experience, in that the contingency of perceptual apprehension upon the body's physical movements is demonstrated. But I want to situate this phenomenological interest culturally and historically within the heuristic framework of the sensorial hierarchy and its historical reorganization. What is relevant is that Nauman's installations involve the senses crucial to oral cultures: touching and listening. Despite the absence of actual words or speech, Touch and Sound Walls (in relation to Get Out of My Mind) I want to argue, explores the experiential domain of hearing in addition to seeing—in other words, it engages with the realm of oral communication.

The separation of the senses, discussed in relation to a number of Nauman's works in the beginning of this chapter, is crucial this reading. In commenting on Touch and Sound Walls, Nauman describes the effect of the piece:

Touching and hearing later, there were two kinds of information that occurred that were very close. You couldn't quite separate them, and you couldn't quite put them together. And so the experience has to do with that confusion that occurs. It's very hard to
understand why that turns out to be a complete experience, but it does.⁴⁰

Against the background of Cage's experiments, and those of his progeny, Nauman's art produces a disjunction between acts of seeing, moving and hearing—within the context of an environmental sound sculpture. By de-harmonizing the senses, however, what becomes apparent is the hierarchies separating them, ones which are shaped by ideology and historical occurrences, but are often unnoticed or ignored.

See/Hear:

There is a cultural imbalance between the senses of seeing and hearing, one which favors former and often remains indifferent to the latter. In relation, a hierarchy between speech and writing privileges the written over the spoken signifier.⁴¹ This hierarchy between speech and writing

⁴¹The suggestion that writing has been privileged in a hierarchization with speech might seem not only paradoxical, but illegitimate, given Derrida's ongoing investigation of the exact opposite condition, one which he contends (quite convincingly) is fundamental to the history of western thought. According to Derrida, the scales tip in favor not of writing, but of speech: the latter privileged as the pure signifier, the unmediated embodiment of idea, and the revelation of pure consciousness. In this coupling, "writing" is considered merely a weak substitute or surrogate for speech and its incomplete appendage (a line of thinking expounded at length in Plato's Phaedrus). The metaphysical hierarchy between writing and speech—and the accordant values associated therewith—serves as the basis of Derrida's notion of "logocentrism" first outlined in Of Grammatology, first published in 1967 (trans. Gayatri Spivak [Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974]). Derrida argues that philosophy's logocentrism—the foundational value it grants certain terms of "presence"—results in a
represents a foundational principle of modernism and is internalized within its thinking—tied to its frequently noted vaulting of the faculty of sight.

The optical bias of modernism is most famously revealed in the critical writings of Clement Greenberg. Greenberg contends that the impulse to purify the visual constitutes the driving force of modernism, leading him to discount the work of numerous artists and groups throughout the developments of the twentieth century.  

repression and sublimation of "writing", a term he employs as a shorthand for the secondary status granted to representation in general. Writing, as a mere parasitic reflection, is thought to function only in the absence of speech and thus constitutes itself a term of absence: whereas speech is thought to embody the very values of presence (a belief which, as Derrida argues, is itself a fallacy in that the phonemic sign is as arbitrary and constituted by a structure of difference as the written one. On this point, see Gayatri Spivak's excellent introduction to Of Grammatology, p. xvi). When I contend that the spoken (or performed) word has been sublimated in favor of a fetishization of written language, it is not to this conception of speech, targeted by Derrida's critique, that I am referring. It is not to a notion of speech as the arbiter of metaphysical privilege and the representation of an ideal state of consciousness, valued for its immateriality and ephemerality. In fact, such a notion of presence, and also of "experience" informs the conventional understanding of performance, against which this dissertation has been writing. (Derrida writes: "As for the concept of experience... Like all the notions I am using, it belongs to the history of metaphysics and we can only use it under erasure. 'Experience' has always designated the relationship with a presence, whether that relationship had the form of consciousness of not." Cited by Spivak, Of Grammatology, p. xvii) Rather, I am developing a notion of speech which is more in keeping with Derrida's critical idea of "writing". As will be discussed below, this notion of speech represents an important critique of the limitations of the structuralist project, as explored by a variety of linguistic theorists and philosophers, including Emile Benveniste, who reintroduced the speaking subject into linguistic debates.

42The rigidity of Greenberg's thinking, with its insistence upon a singular goal for entire periods of art history, provides Rosalind Krauss with the basis for generating a counter-narrative to that of modernist opticality. In numerous essays and in her book The Optical Unconscious, Krauss identifies an alternative set of beliefs and impulses which, she convincingly argues, are sublimated in Greenberg's account (and in the work of many artists who slavishly followed his theories). Whereas Greenberg values optical purity, self-evident
the modernist ambition to translate putatively non-visual forms into visual ones. In particular, I am concerned with the project of replicating musicality in pictorial or literary form and the thinking that underlies this development.

For early modernists—in particular the Symbolist painters and writers—music maintained a privileged position as it was thought to be fully abstract. In order to rid representation of its dependency upon the real world and the concomitant demand to capture illusions of space and depth, any potential referential connections had to be eradicated. Music was perceived as the artistic form least encumbered by external references and sonic experience was celebrated as pure and self-referential, existing essentially only for itself. Thus painters like Wassily Kandinsky sought to translate musicality into visual form, tapping into its perceived


43 Douglas Kahn emphasizes that modernist works aimed not to imitate music, but to attain in artworks the same abstract condition as music (Noise, Water, Meat, pp. 105-108). He also notes that only certain types of musical practice were thought to be "pure," excluding such forms as program music, perceived as illustrational (p. 103). Despite clear differences theoretically and ideologically from modernism's musicality, Cage's radical anti-musical experimentation of the forties and fifties maintained a distinctly anti-mimetic bias. Peter Kotik notes: "Instead of expressing 'oneself,' [Cage] introduced an open musical environment in which the listener, instead of being bombarded by the composer's intentions, can find his or her own center. Sounds became themselves, and ceased to illustrate extramusical phenomena." Kotik, "On John Cage," in John Cage, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Praeger, 1968, 1970), p. 13.
abstractness.\footnote{Kandinsky extensively explored the formal analogies between painting and music. In separating color from representational or descriptive functions, and its secondary status \textit{vis a vis} line, Kandinsky defined color as the embodiment and carrier of sensation and expression; the tonalites of music realized as dancing colors across the canvas. Kandinsky believed that color was the singular element intrinsic to painting that operated on the same plane as music, capable of replicating its dynamism, and its variations of tone, timbre, and movement. His \textit{Symphonies of Color} resulted from these experiments; as did his opera, \textit{The Yellow Sound}, a combination of sound, color and light for which he asked the composer, De Hartmann to create a score (the opera, however, was never staged). See Mel Gordon, "Songs from the Museum of the Future," in \textit{Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-Garde}, Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead eds. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 203.} The attempt to capture the abstract experience of musicality in painterly form, however, had an earlier, literary counterpart in the Symbolist poetry of Stephane Mallarmé. Mallarmé believed that by emphasizing the visual or graphic nature of words, literature could capture musical qualities, including movement, harmony and tonal progressions—a thinking that led to the development of poems he called calligrams.

In granting poetic writing the status of the pictorial signifier, Mallarmé maintained that language's real-world associations (and thus referential contexts) were eliminated. Like Cage's de-contextualization of sound, Mallarmé pursued the de-contextualization of words; but unlike Cage, his motivations were to remove language's everyday associations, transforming it into a purely "musical" visual form. The ideology of this approach is revealed in Mallarmé's famous diatribe against the newspaper. His most well-known calligram, \textit{Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard} (1897)
with its double-sided format, in which words flow horizontally from one side to the other, self-consciously sought to counter the mundanity of the newspaper’s column-printed pages. For Mallarmé, the development of the newspaper was not an advancement but a tragic event, leading to the dissemination of non-poetic, vernacular language into the public sphere, which, in turn, compromised the status of literature. With the advent of the printing press—and its mass-produced papers and broadsides—writing became available not only to the literate few, but to the general masses, who could now attain literacy.

Through an association with music, Mallarmé conceived of writing as an escape from the real. The poet's interest in the musicality of language—through such devices as alliteration and assonance—was based in his belief that through sound, words exceeded referential connections.

Christine Poggi, discussing the influence of Mallarmé's

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45In an early study on Symbolist literature, Arthur Symons writes of Mallarmé: "[Mallarmé] made neither intrusion upon nor concession to those who, after all, were not obliged to read him... To the charge of obscurity he replied, with sufficient disdain, that there are many who do not know how to read—except the newspaper." (The Symbolist Movement in Literature, New York: E.P. Dutton and Col., 1958, p. 63).

46Christine Poggi refers to the literary debate in late nineteenth century Paris in the wake the rise of the popular press, and the classist divisions that literacy had served to maintain. Poggi explains that Mallarne's disgust for the newspaper derived from his insistence that it debased the value of writing—which for him existed only appropriately within the purview of literature, not journalistic forums. As such, Poggi writes, Mallarmé "defined his own poetry as the 'other' of the writing in newspapers [...] For Mallarmé, then, the newspaper and the poster exemplified the prevailing tendency to transform language into a mere commodity, thereby rendering its qualitative value as symbol into mere exchange value." Poggi, In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism and the Invention of Collage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 142-143.
thinking on the Italian Futurist poet, Marinetti, in his development of *parole in libertà*, writes: "In describing his poetry as originating in flight, Marinetti was reworking a central metaphor in Mallarméan aesthetics, for the Symbolist poet had frequently evoked a sense of the ideality of writing through images of flight from the earth." Continuing this discussion, Poggi cites Mallarmé from his *Le Mystère dans les Lettres*, where he notes that writing, following music, requires "preliminary separation from speech, of course for fear of contributing to mere prattle." ⁴⁷

In this statement, Mallarmé makes an extraordinary claim: in order to achieve the transcendental state (seemingly) intrinsic to music, literature must first *dissociate the written from the phonic signifier*. According to the poet, music embodies an immaterial, aesthetic condition. On the other hand, speech is prosaic, its purpose being a functional one—that of communication. Speech and music, however, are immanently linked through a shared dependence upon audition. As such, speech must be dismissed by Mallarmé as "mere prattle." In other words, by sublimating sound, language itself attains a state of transcendence, purity, and self-reference. Removed from the ordinariness of everyday use, it becomes "musical".

⁴⁷Emphases added. Poggi continues, "It was writing, then, removed from the banalities of everyday speech, that Mallarmé believed to be a vehicle of transcendence." Ibid., p. 205.
With the above example of Mallarmé, the modernist privileging of the purely visual or optical can be seen to entail a concomitant sublimation of speech. The investment in musicality—seen in Kandinsky and in Mallarmé—was borne of a yearning for abstraction and thus an eradication of any contextual grounding for sound. As a result, in modernism, voice was quieted, displaced by a rigorously visual conception of language and/or a "musical" conception of sound. Without its enactment in speech, language is dissociated from ordinary discourse and from the subject who uses it, eliminating the quotidian. What remains is a conception of language in which utterance plays a limited role.

Nauman's installations, I want to suggest, undermine this tendency, foregrounding a rumination upon language's sound, embodiment, and subjectification. Visual experience is displaced by—or linked emphatically to—audition through the use of manipulated and recorded sounds. Moreover, through speech—a form of language that is functional and ordinary—language is contextually grounded. Thus Nauman's art brings into relief the isolation and privileging of looking as an artistic cum historical phenomena: a situation, I want to suggest, perpetuated in the "anti-visual" thinking of the sixties, to which Nauman's work responds.
In the mid-to-late sixties, the artistic effort to interrogate the linguistic conditions of the artwork results in the elimination of material objects, and/or an extreme reduction of conventional forms of visual pleasure and perceptual address. But as a result, a fetishistic attachment to visuality is maintained, even in its negation. In Conceptual art, the "anti-visual" impulse is, in part, a result of the desire to reveal the linguistic terms of perception and as such, to question the nature of modernist opticality. But "language" is still largely defined in visual terms, paradoxically perpetuating one of modernism's core operations, subordinating the activity of voice--or speech--to the written word.

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To elaborate, in Conceptual art, language is defined almost exclusively as writing. In his poetry, Mallarmé reflects obsessively upon every aspect of writerly operations--from the visual status of the word and letter; to the significance of the physical attributes of the book, including the blank space of the page and the crease of the its fold--asserting an extraordinary self-consciousness regarding the contingency of writing/textuality in the generation of meaning. Such a self-reflexiveness, in fact, was greatly admired by Derrida who investigated Mallarmé's Book in Dissemination. In contrast to Mallarmé, however, Conceptual art sought to undermine the hermeticism of "high art", and to reconsider the production, distribution, and circulation of artworks, as well as their object-status. In order to do, they appropriated the spaces of vernacular language--such as advertisements, magazine pages, notebooks, photocopies and announcement cards. (Dan Graham's Homes for America and Robert Smithson's travel-logs come to mind as relevant examples.) This was an anti-Mallarméan pursuit, in that all these forms were nothing but "low," prosaic and anti-aesthetic. But many of these artists recognized in Mallarmé's poems an important precedent, with regards to the transformation of textual elements into visual form. Mallarmé's modernist aesthetics informed Conceptual art's very conception language's materiality: to some degree, with a limiting understanding, in that by focusing on its inscription on the spaces of the page, language is silenced and the force of its delivery plays no role. (An exception may be found in the work of Marcel Broodthaers, whose relation to Mallarmé is articulated in different terms). On this last point, see Benjamin Buchloh's essay on Broodthaers, "Open Letter, Industrial Poems," in Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs, Benjamin Buchloh ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, an October book, 1988). In another context, Buchloh notes that the the early Conceptual art
In contrast, Get Out of My Mind presents the sounds of speech coming from Nauman's body, placing it, to borrow Barthes' words, in a "state of speech." The phonic qualities and patterns which actively shape meaning—including the utterance of words, the tones employed, and the rhythms and repetition of voice—are emphasized. Get Out of My Mind subjectifies the word, linking it emphatically to the act of utterance and to the ensuing dialogical exchange with the beholder who enters into its space.

Embodied speech, however, is not simply at issue in Nauman's sound sculptures, but these same elements appear in other works, including the performance video, Lip Sync, produced in 1969 (figure 64). The artist's inverted head, suspended from the television monitor, is cropped above the nose and thus appears to be dominated by a set of gaping lips. During the course of its playing, Nauman mouths the phrase "lip sync" over and over in a hypnotic trance. Like Get out, the task of performing words is presented: repeating a single phrase whose meaning is also ironic or illogical, as the soundtrack and image are intentionally out of sync. The disconnection between seeing and hearing leads to a heightened awareness of the relations between the senses.

In Lip Sync, with the image of Nauman's mouth dominating the monitor's screen, the site of speaking is visualized. But also pictured is the act of listening, as prominently displayed on Nauman's ears are a set of large headphones--devices for hearing. A relationship of listening is formed between viewer and artwork, the former also becoming a listener. In both Lip Sync and Get Out, the viewer/listener, however, is not simply a passive witness, due to the works' siting of speech. Rather he/she is engaged in form of exchange--or a conversation--with the artwork.49

The heuristic framework of speech allows for the viewer/listener in Nauman's video pieces and sculptural installations to be theorized not simply an interpellated subject, but as an interlocutor. The coupling of sound with language--versus sound with music--leading me to the subject of speech, thus intends to emphasize not only its audible nature and qualities, but a specifically dialogical conception of language. The centrality of dialogue in Nauman's art is apparent, furthermore, even in works in which

49One may object to identifying this reciprocity between artist/work and viewer/listener a conversation in that the latter remains silent, listening to but not returning speech. In an essay on the subject of 'listening,' Roland Barthes, however, suggests that the very act of listening constitutes an active role in that, even when nothing is uttered in return, the silence takes on meaning, forming a dialogical bond. "Listening to the voice," he writes, "inaugurates the relation to the Other: the voice by which we recognize others. The two bodies--even if mediated by a television monitor, as in Nauman's Lip Sync--are therefore pressed into an implicit conversation. Or as Barthes remarks, "listening speaks." Roland Barthes, "Listening," in The Responsibility of Forms, p. 254.
when words are no longer vocalized, but translated in written form. In textual works produced during this period, words frequently originate not from written, but oral communication.

Poetic Scores:

In 1968, the same year that Nauman creates his first acoustical installation, *Get Out of My Mind*, he also makes a sculptural work, *First Poem Piece* (figure 65). The sculpture consists of a steel plate engraved with a grid. Inscribed over the intersecting points of the gridded lines, and running horizontally across, are variations of the phrase "You, May, Not, Want, To, Be, Here (Hear)*. In some rows, individual words are removed, so that only part of the complete phrase appears: "You May .. Want..."; "You .. Want To Be Here"; "You .. Want To .. Hear". The final word in each phrase alternates between "here" and "hear," the pair representing the grammatical form of a homonym—or words which are indistinguishable when heard. In order for the pun to be produced, not only must the words "here" and "hear" be seen in written form (to confirm that they are different words), but they also must be spoken or heard (even if

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50 In the preliminary drawing for the piece, Nauman originally wrote the words in the spaces; he writes a directive on the side of the sketch, "change over to put words in intersections of lines." (See p. 114 catalogue raisonné plate).
only in one's mind) in order to perceive their sonic relationship.

In exploring the homonym, Nauman's sculpture illuminates the relationship between seeing and hearing, in that the homonym tests the limits of isolated hearing. In other words, one sense is placed in juxtaposition to another, as words that share the same phonic signifier simultaneously must be seen in order to notice the different spellings. But further significant is the semantic content of the words chosen--"here" and "hear" signify a physical location and the faculty of listening, respectively. In making the words interchangeable through their homonymic coupling, First Poem Piece can be viewed in relation the acoustical installations, which merge spatial experience and the act of aural perception through the spectator's mediating body.

At every turn, Nauman's art removes an element so that a total sensorial experience can never be achieved, chiding the beholder or challenging him/her to anchor experience in the absence of information that allows for such grounding. But in addition to the homonyms in the phrase "You May Not Want to be Here (Hear)," in First Poem Piece, is the grammatical structure of the phrase itself--it constitutes an imperative or an explicit form of address, which calls out to the viewer/reader/listener: "You." In other words, the phrase originates not from the written page, but a speaking body,
with the proverbial pointing finger directed outwards, commanding "you" to listen.51

Other works, including drawings and neon signs, which also do not emit sounds, maintain similar cadences of dialogue, conversation, or oral speech. Linguistic statements of address, assertions, demands, commands abound. We are inveighed, as in a 1973 collaged drawing, to "Please Pay Attention Please" (!) (figure 66); or simply ordered, as in the 1973 lithograph, "Pay Attention Motherfuckers" (figure 67). And another drawing plaintively pleads, "Placate My Art" (1973),52 while re-organizing the statement's letters into a series of combinations, words, and phrases ("Plac/Ate/Art/Clap Ate/My Rat/My Rat/Ate/Clap"), which read musically, creating songs from anagrammatic shuffling.53

Critics frequently note the extensive dependence of Nauman's art upon word puns, mechanisms of alliteration, and word play (including homonyms and anagrams) in his sculptures, drawings and neons. But rather than simply exemplary of an interest in "language," in Nauman's art, phrases and words, often specifically suggest verbalization, in which the force of

51 This is repeated in Nauman's Second Poem Piece which employs the same gridded format, upon which the phrase "You May Not Want to Screw Here (Hear)" is inscribed (WCR no. 156). In both these works, the "you" form of address is accompanied by the word "here": a description of a non-place, or rather a word that acquires meaning through its attachment to a physical site, indicating "this place."
52 See DCR no. 275.
53 Related are two other drawings, Placate My Art/White (1974, DCR no. 306), and Placate My Art/Red-Same as #3 (1974, DCR no. 307).
delivering and hearing is emphasized.\textsuperscript{54} The significance of the reference to verbal forms is that words are implicitly linked to the subject—an implied narrator who performs them and a listener who receives them.

Language, therefore, is fully embodied—it is a dialogical form, suggesting implicit relationships between speakers. The reintroduction of the speaking subject, which, I am contending, occurs in Nauman's art has a philosophical precedent in Emile Benveniste's theory of language.\textsuperscript{55} During the height of the Structuralist project in the sixties, in which language's system—its syntactical rules, the differential relationship between signs, and the division of the sign into the signified and signifier—was the focus of linguistic theory, Benveniste turned his attention to the enunciative act.\textsuperscript{56} Benveniste's thinking reveals how Structuralism largely eliminates the speaking subject who uses language and, in so doing, bypasses the interpretive activity of the utterance. In contrast, Benveniste analyzes the situation of the utterance and the speaker's organization

\textsuperscript{54}While many commentators do not specifically qualify the forms of language in Nauman's art, there are notable exceptions, including Marcia Tucker who, in her essay, "PhENAUmanology," discusses Nauman's use of verbal sounds. Similarly, Robert Storr discusses the verbal forms of language in Nauman's art and their relation to the linguistic play of Beckett, Robbe-Grillet and Wittgenstein. R. Storr, "Beyond Words," (Walker, pp. 47-66).

\textsuperscript{55}Emile Benveniste, Problems in General Linguistics, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971). I am indebted to Leah Dickerman for calling attention to the value of Benveniste's theories to my analysis of embodied speech.

\textsuperscript{56}Problems in General Linguistics was published in 1966; however, Benveniste began focusing on the subject and the verb as early as 1946. See François Dosse, History of Structuralism: Volume II, pp. 42-53.
of speech in a theory of deictics, in which pronouns (I, you, we) and adverbs suggestive of time and place (here, now) function.

Benveniste's focus upon the subjective experience of language leads him to consider linguistic temporality: in that the word "here", as seen in Nauman's sculpture above, refers not to a fixed place and time, but the situation in which the interlocutor encounters it. As Benveniste writes, "Linguistic time is distinguished by its organic tie to the exercise of speech." What he suggests is that language possesses a unique temporality, one determined by the speakers and interlocutors positioned within its use. Each new interaction with "now", for example, results in another present, and with "we" another groups of subjects.

Nauman's art, I propose, continually makes use of deictic speech, with pronouns, verbs, and shifting temporal and place markers in abundance, subjectiving language and placing the art object in dialogue with each beholder who encounters it. Run From Fear (and Fun From Rear) orders a neon sign from 1972 (figure 68), and You Can't Help Me declares a drawing from 1974. Also relevant are the two 1972 drawings, Sugar

57 This is also true of oral narrative, whose re-enactments operate outside the solidity of a fixed present and, as such, outside of a linear temporal structure. Language, in oral narrative, has its own time--linked to the enunciative acts of the speakers relaying and hearing it.
59 See also the related drawing, DCR no. 254.
60 See DCR no. 304.
Ragus (figure 69) which contain a seemingly nonsensical, palindromic phrase. The words, however, originate from a football cheer, as Nauman relays in the following:

..it comes from an old college football cheer. Some guy used to get up in the stands and yell, "Give me an 'R'"-- and everybody would give him an 'R.' After spelling out the reset of the letters "R-A-G-U-S" in the same manner, "What's that spell? What's that spell?" and the crowd yelled back, "Ragus!" Then he'd say, "What's that spell backwards?" and everybody would yell, "Sugar!" I don't know how the cheer started, but that's where I got it from.  

A cheer is a form of gestural language, in which the performers articulate verbally, as well as enact through their bodies, words and letters, tying dance and linguistic activity in choreographed display. The interlocutors then echo their commands, raising fists and voices in a vocalized frenzy. Sugar Ragus demonstrates the temporality of language discussed by Benveniste, in that the initiating cries imply the delay of response: that is, a structure of intersubjective exchange with a group of speakers engaging in a relay of call and response.

By exploring in written form this sense of oral utterance, these sculptures, drawings and neon signs perform with words what the acoustical installations enact through sound. In relation Benveniste's situating language in and through speaking bodies, Nauman's art propose a decitcs of language.

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But deitic speech—which was discussed above in relation to textual pieces—is also found in other sculptural works, which utilize these words as scripts to be enacted in voice. Word play, anagrams, and homonyms—grammatical forms of utterance—are used as theatrical scores.\(^{62}\) For example, the 1968 Steel Channel Piece\(^{63}\) consists of an industrially fabricated slab that is employed as a physical support and contains an audiotape, recalling the contemporaneous Tape Recorder Piece. On the tape Nauman's voice is heard, uttering anagrammic combinations of the three words "lighted", "steel", and "channel" in German. The First Poem Piece's structure of repeated variations of a phrase is here vocalized, embodied in the shrills and utterances of speech.

This format is continually revisited in Nauman's art, up to recent works in which the words spoken in videos and/or video installation are transcribed into neon sign pieces. For example, the dialogue performed by two speakers in the multi-channel 1986 video, Good Boy/Bad Boy (figure 70) is transcribed into a neon wall piece of the same name, made in 1986-87.\(^{64}\) All of the one hundred phrases spoken in the video are scripted in multi-colored, neon tubing. The sequence begins: "I was a good boy. You were a good boy. We were good boys. That was good. I was a good girl. You were a

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\(^{62}\)Also referring to the importance of enunciation in relation to visual representation is the 1973 drawing, Articulate Art/ Tar a Lucite Rat. (DCR no. 277)

\(^{63}\)See WCR no. 125.

\(^{64}\)See WCR no. 370.
good girl. We were good girls. That was good. I was a bad boy.....", continually changing the pronouns, from "I" to "you" to "we" to "he" and so on: shifters that represent intersubjective exchange. The dialogical basis of the works also emerges in the very structure of the video installation, in that two speakers are pictured on television monitors, directly talking to the viewer. Referring to the piece, Nauman himself alluded to the significance of this structure: "Good Boy/Bad Boy is addressed to you. Also the idea with the television, the image being almost life-sized, with only the head, makes a much more immediate, direct connection. And the idea that the words were spoken information was important."65

In this statement, Nauman identifies the importance of verbal versus written language to the piece in its desire to generate a dialogical bond with the beholder. Like the earlier video, Lip Sync, the camera hones in upon the head/face, the bodily site of speech. The question that remains, however, is what is the significance of this use of imperative speech? Why does Nauman's art continually command our attention, providing incentives or demands to listen (one drawing explicitly urging, "I Can't Hear You."65). Above was suggested that Nauman's art identifies and overturns modernism's muting of language (and its perpetuation in the

65Cited in Dercon, "Keep Taking it Apart," pp. 54-55. The complete text of the neon/video is reproduced on p. 59.

66The drawing is titled, I Can't Hear You/ Very Bright Red (1974, DCR no. 305).
linguistic turn of the late sixties), offering an embodied speaker/performer/listener, in which the linguistic meaning is contingent upon its social function. I argued that the separation of the senses was important to this process, rendering an awareness of their interrelationship and the hierarchy that culturally, historically, and ideologically divides them. But other factors, mentioned in the beginning of chapter, need to be assimilated within this argument: first, how the separation of vision and hearing leads to the viewer/listener's spatial disorientation; and second, that, in Nauman's art, one seems to be almost physically attacked with sound.

With this question, I want to return to a subject introduced earlier in the chapter: Nauman's sustained interest in the technology of sound. From the very beginning, Nauman's art demonstrates an attraction to new technologies--fluorescent tubes, neons, holograms, and video. Likewise, when it comes to audition, Nauman's work builds upon Cage's use of amplification and recorded sound. But perhaps even more important to Nauman was the mediation of Cage's ideas by the next generation of musicians and composers. These artists extensively channeled sound through machines, employing the byproduct noises of feedback, buzzing speakers, and microphone echoes.
One of most well-known examples of this tendency is Steve Reich's Pendulum Music: for Microphones, Amplifiers, Speakers and Performers. Not only was Nauman aware of this piece, but he performed it at the Whitney Museum in 1969 for the series of evening concerts organized in conjunction with the "Anti-Illusion" exhibition. The piece consisted of four performers—Nauman, Richard Serra, James Tenney and Michael Snow—who each held a microphone suspended from a long cord attached to boom stand. Each performer then proceeded to pull back their mikes one by one, while Reich turned up the volume on the amplifiers. The microphones were then released at the same time, so that, as Reich describes it, "a series of feedback pulses are heard which will either be all in unison or not depending on the gradually changing phase relations of the different mike pendulums."

In Pendulum Music, the supposedly contaminating sounds from electronic devices are presented as the "notes" of a musical piece, and, as such, the fundamental material for creating a composition. Byproduct noises, which cannot be controlled by the performer or composer, play almost by themselves, initiated from the simple pull of a microphone cord.

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Nauman's art objects appropriate this approach, exploiting the potentials of interruptive noise—and not just in acoustical installations which assault the viewer with palpable sound, but through the choice of technical medium. During an interview with Joan Simon, Nauman speaks of specific properties of the technology used in his neon sculptures, which visually display a relay of pulsing colors. Nauman emphasizes the ambient hisses of their mechanics and how these sounds confront the viewer:

...the neon pieces that have transformers, buzzing and clicking and what not; in some places I've installed them, people are disturbed these sounds. They want them to be completely quiet. There is an immediacy and intrusiveness about sound that you can't avoid.\(^{69}\)

Visually, the neon signs are intrusive—with their garish colors of high-keyed pinks, greens and yellows, and their flickering lights, parodying the pulse of sound. But, as Nauman emphasizes, the mechanisms themselves are noisy, emitting a constant, low-level din. Art objects, however, are supposed to be quiet: not only to generate contemplative experience, but also to allow the viewer to determine the terms of the aesthetic exchange. Nauman's neon signs disrupt this experience, assaulting the spectator with undesired noise,

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\(^{69}\)Simon, "Breaking the Silence," p. 147. In relation to his video installation, Violent Incident Nauman adds: "At one museum, when it was in the middle of the show, you heard the sound before you actually got to the piece. And the sound followed you around after you left it. It's kind of funny the way Violent Incident was installed at the Whitechapel. Because it was in a separate room, the sound was baffled: you only get the higher tones. So the main thing you heard throughout the museum was 'Asshole!'" (Ibid.).
forcing his/her ears to listen when the eye expects simply to see. Approached in these terms, the effect of the neon is similar to that of *Get Out of My Mind/Room*, in which the explicit aggressivity of sound is tied semantically to the threatening content of the screaming words. It refuses to be silenced; just as the neon signs refuse to turn-off their ambient sounds and pulsating colors.

The noise of Nauman's works indicates a larger reference for sound: one specific to a media age. In one the most influential texts of the postwar era, the Situationist Guy Debord outlines the transformation of everyday life into spectacle, ruminating upon the inescapable assault of imagery into public space and into the spaces of consciousness. But he failed to note the *sounds* of this spectacularization. And art history, continually silent with regards to the hermeneutics of sound, places critical focus upon the visual conditions of modernity and postmodernity, while its sonorosity is largely ignored. Nauman's neon and acoustical sculptures, however, replicate the spatial, sonic and experiential conditions of the media age, confronting the beholder with a form of undesired listening. In other words, sound exists as a pollutant, invading our environment and our bodily relation to it. The pollution of noise, a potent byproduct of technologization and commercialization, has become so ubiquitous that it represents an almost unremarkable feature of the (post) modern landscape. These
are sounds that are "bigger" than us, that cannot always be seen, and can never be controlled.

Nauman's art, through sound, examines the relationship of bodies to a specifically mediated environment, emphasizing how one's auditory relationship to space is equally important as one's visual and physical relationship. Along these lines, Roland Barthes describes how the act of listening contributes to a sense of comfort and placement in the external environment.\(^{70}\) He writes, "domestic space, that of the house, the apartment [...] is a space of familiar, recognized noises whose ensemble forms a kind of household symphony: differentiating slamming of doors, raised voices, kitchen noises, gurgle of pipes, murmurs from outdoors."\(^{71}\) As noted above, John Cage, in his experiments with acoustical chambers, reflected upon the spatial conditions of listening—but he did so in an abstract way in order to interrogate the properties and definitions of sound and hearing. In contrast, Barthes' reading proposes a contextual framework for these conditions, linking the relative familiarity of sound to a sense of being at home (the heimlich) in which audition does not disturb, but comforts. With the incursion of media into the spaces of daily life, however, such a familiar sense of listening withers away. To cite Barthes:

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\(^{70}\) "The appropriation of space," he writes, "is also a matter of sound." Barthes, "Listening," in *The Responsibility of Forms*, p. 246.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., p. 246.
If the auditive background invades the whole of phonic space (if the ambient noise is too loud), then selection or intelligence of space is no longer possible, listening is injured; the ecological phenomenon which is today called pollution—and which is becoming a black myth of our technological civilization—is precisely the intolerable corruption of human space, insofar as humanity needs to recognize itself in that space: pollution damages the senses by which the living being, from animal to man, recognizes its territory, its habitat: sight, smell, hearing. And indeed there is an audio pollution which everyone, from hippie to pensioner, feels (through certain myths of nature) is deleterious to the living being's intelligence, which is, *stricto sensu*, its power of communicating effectively with its *Unwelt*: pollution prevents listening.\(^{72}\)

Barthes' comment not only alludes to the sense of defamiliarization accompanying an onslaught of undesirable noises, but also to its result—a form of auditory "injury". In other words, in no longer being able to discern sound properly, our capacity to listen is deleteriously effected.

Nauman's sound sculptures, I propose, refer to technology's corruption of space—now conceived not simply in visual, but also in aural terms. In *Audio Video Piece* and *Sound Breaking Wall*, among other works, listening is "injured"; the beholder experiences listening as a disorienting act, unable to coordinate his/her senses, and, thus, unable to be situated harmoniously in space. One hears the relentless exhaling of loud breathing in the latter and the repetitious slapping of thighs in the former, but is given little information about the source of these sounds.

\(^{72}\)Ibid., p. 257.
In this light, the restrictiveness of Nauman's architectural spaces now takes on further meaning, relating to the pollution of space. With an insistent, almost dictatorial control—in which sound, wall structures, video imagery, and colors orchestrate the viewer/listener's interactions—Nauman's sculptures disallow any "free" manipulation. This lack of control is intentionally built into the structures themselves, which echo one's inability to avoid the overwhelming surfeit of extraneous sounds permeating the external world. The beholder is immediately engaged, seemingly addressed before one's attention or gaze turns towards the artwork. In contrast, the modernist contemplative art object waits to be perceived, residing in silence on the wall or floor until the viewer seeks out an encounter on his/her own terms and time.

Nauman's works grab at our attention through the use of actual sounds, but also, I propose, due to the employment of speech. In Please Pay Attention Please, I Can't Hear You, and Get Out of My Mind, deictic speech—the you, I, he/she,

73In a 1972 interview, Nauman states: "I don't like the idea of free manipulation, like you put a bunch of stuff out there and let people do what they want with it. I really had some more specific kinds of experiences in mind and without having to write out a list of what they should do." Unpublished interview with Lorraine Sciarra (Claremont, California: Pomona College, 1972), p. 9. In another interview, speaking of the Green Light Corridor, Nauman notes: "I think it has to do with fear, but it also has to do with the way we normally control space, or fill up space." He continues, "I don't like to leave things open so that people feel they are in a situation they can play games with." Jan Butterfield, "Bruce Nauman: The Center of Yourself," Arts Magazine vol. 49, no. 6 February, 1975, p. 55.
here, then, and nows—mimic the effect of advertising's relentless solicitations in which "YOU!!" are addressed as the consumer already constructed in its words before you see the ad or any purchase is made. The media environment pollutes cultural and social space not just with unavoidable, loud sounds, but with the (figurative) screaming voice of commercial signage, billboards and ads. Invading the public sphere, they command our attention on the street, at the beach, and before we see a movie, through the interpellative force of intersubjective speech. The commercial association of these grammatical forms is explicitly alluded to in the neon sign format; as a technical medium, it bears inescapable associations with advertising signs, blaring out their messages in bright colors that flicker on-and-off in an interminable beat. In fact, Nauman's first neon sign, *The True Artist Helps the World By Revealing Mystic Truths* (1967, figure 71)—a spiraling construction of colored tubing suspended from the wall—was made in his San Francisco studio, a converted grocery store, where an abandoned "Groceries" sign was left hanging in the window and an old neon beer sign remained on the wall. Nauman's *True Artist* sign—hanging on the store's wall, hooked up to a visible mechanical contraption, with a palette of kitschy blues and pinks—asserts a connection to the practical use of neon and its place in the commercialization of a postwar consumer landscape.
The historical emergence of a media culture operates against the predominant tendencies of aesthetic modernism: in the latter, the written word is privileged, whereas the former exploits the potentialities of spoken language. Nauman's sound sculptures reflect upon this historical and cultural transformation, presenting the operations and spaces of oral communication. They tell us that hearing, sound, and speech possess both a history and a social significance, commanding in loud voice, "you may want to hear."

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An examination of sound in Nauman's practice can thus can be seen in relation to other issues developed during the course of this dissertation, suggesting a common thread amongst seemingly disparate interests and objects. As it was suggested in Chapter One, Minimalism provided a source of both inspiration and critical reflection, leading Nauman to consider the ideas of experience and interactivity within the specific conditions of the sixties—in which the culture of

74In fact an interesting comparison could be developed between Barbara Kruger's later "postmodern" text pieces and the exploration of sound and speech in Nauman's art. Although her work was situated theoretically in terms of the properties of the "sign" (how language constructs rather than merely reflects reality) it is worth emphasizing that Kruger's favored format since the late seventies—the advertising poster—employs exclusively dialogical modes of language (e.g. "Your Body is a Battleground"). The aggressive address of Kruger's work operates in similar terms to Nauman's (and, I would maintain, is partially indebted to it), with the strong visual qualities of the black, white, and red signs accompanied by insistent intersubjective communication, in which the beholder is commanded to pay attention through deictic speech ("you," "your," "whose," "mine," "our," "don't" etc.) further signaled by its italicized lettering—i.e. a visual cue of a citation or spoken remark.
technology and consumerism was accompanied by a philosophical unravelling of the subject. The transformation of sculptural space into acoustical, phonic spaces constitutes a potent realization of this investigation. The intervention of sound--or undesired listening--and an emphasis on the public nature of speech--or rather, the ubiquity of interpellative speech in a media culture--represent the influx of social and material conditions into the context of an "art" space. Importantly, however, sound and speech are presented as disorienting forces; in this way, they possess a similar function as the misleading titles of the early sculptures, the impossible circumstances of performance proposals, and the misaligned video images that thrust the viewer into a state of bodily misrecognition. All of these examples point to the fact that the opacity of Nauman's art should be viewed not as a barrier, but as access to its meanings--or rather, a performance of its meanings, stating, however ambiguously (and thus appropriately) that communication always contains the potential to fail, manipulate, or miscommunicate.

It is a theme that continues to preoccupy Nauman, leading me to conclude with a work he makes in 1996, thirty years after the ones that initiated this discussion--a video installation, World Peace Projected. Upon the walls of a room, five images are projected: a head shot of a woman

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smoking a cigarette; a tighter face-shot of a younger woman; a profile of a woman at a lectern; another profile of a man's head; and a final image of a woman performing sign-language. Encircled by the projections, the viewer stands in the middle of the room while listening to their superimposed soundtracks, in which the individuals in the videos repeat the same set of phrases over and over, comprised of the verbs "talk" and listen" in combination with an endless shifting of personal pronouns: "They'll talk to us, we'll listen to them," "I'll talk to them, you'll listen to us," "you'll talk to them, I'll listen to you," and so on.

While the same words are spoken from person to person, the meaning dramatically alters due to the conditions of their utterance. Some are loud, screaming the phrase in a short clip; others are soft and halting, deliberating between the phrases in a reassuring manner. By virtue of the formal shifts in the speech patterns, in conjunction with a series of bodily gestures--from dragging on a cigarette to cocking the head gently to one side to use of sign-language--the words are understood to be either a threat, or a bid for peace and reconciliation. In other words, "peace" (or conflict) is the result of its representation--or its utterance--which does not just deliver, but transforms meaning.
In Nauman's installation, the very real stakes involved in these linguistic manipulations can be discerned, forcing the viewer to listen and, therefore, to pay attention to the subtle power they contain. The "projection" of "world peace" is literal—by virtue of the video projection on the walls—and figurative—in that as a "projection," it remains a future possibility, contingent upon the ways imagery and speech are managed. Thrust in the midst of projected imagery and recorded sounds, the beholder is at the center of this world, but, at the same time, oddly peripheral to it. Nauman's *World Peace Projected*, like the many installations and objects that came before it, does not merely tell us to reflect upon the paradox of this condition, but uncannily replicates its effects. The meaning, Nauman seems to convey, is in the performance.
APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATIONS
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