APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Thesis: Patterns of Mind and the Way of the Body

Name of Candidate: Mandy Morrison
Master of Fine Arts, 2020

Thesis and Abstract Approved: _____

Timothy Nohe
Professor
Department of Visual Arts

Date Approved: _____

Curriculum Vitae

Name:	Morrison, Mandy
Degree and date to be conferred:	MFA, 2020
Secondary education:	Cheyenne Mountain High School, Colorado Springs, CO, 1975
Collegiate institutions attended:	Rhode Island School of Design, 1975-80, BFA, 1980 University of Illinois, Chicago, 1992-94, MFA, 1994 University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 2016-2020, MFA

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: Patterns of Mind and the Way of the Body

Mandy Morrison, M.F.A., 2020

Directed By: Timothy Nohe, Professor
Department of Visual Arts

The themes presented in this thesis are an exploration of the embodied-ness of our nature and how it is affected by the structures that define existence. I also touch on aspects of post-World War II architecture and the artistic influences that have affected my thinking, and the direction that my work has taken in recent years.

Indeed, much of my concern has to do with the relationship of the body to architecture, in particular the corporeal experience as it relates to movement, efficiency, and issues around labor and shelter. In this thesis, I examine the ways in which such themes have given rise to my practice and its focus on community, alienation, and the urban space.

What this thesis and video project explore are the many dimensions that capitalism, hope, cost, and the residues of relentless attempts at improvement have had on physical spaces and the individual spirit.

Patterns of Mind and the Way of the Body

By Mandy Morrison

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, Baltimore County, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in
Intermedia and Digital Arts
2020

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

My work and the themes presented in this thesis are an exploration of the thought and physical being within the embodied-ness of our nature and how it is affected by the physical and psychological structures that define our existence. While we may find our deepest reservoirs of satisfaction within the spiritual realm, in daily life, most are defined at least partially by a physicality that is influenced by patterns of thought and habit, as well as the physical and digital spaces we frequent.

I came upon this awareness early realizing that as a white female, I was treated differently from my white male counterparts. Certain expectations were foisted upon me, both as a child and as an adult, and were reinforced by cultural and social norms and media images. At the same time, in the late 1960s, women in Western society were vocally confronting the inequity in their treatment as individuals, and advocating for the overturn of patriarchal society. Some of the artists mentioned in this thesis were a part of this predicament and became spearheads for change. Over time, their aggressive rejection of prescribed behaviors and attitudes has influenced my process and thinking.

Other observations made over the years regarding the relationship of the body to architecture, movement, and efficiency have given rise to my ideas and practice in performance as it relates to class, community, alienation, and the urban space. Over the past several decades, with the use of technology as part of the workplace, those who are considered "unproductive" have been cast off and set aside from the larger economic spectrum of society, particularly as the body is also ever

more beholden to housing costs and economic demands related to technological requirements and disruptions.

One example is the steep rise in homelessness. With a population in the U.S. now surpassing 550,000, homelessness hits the minority population particularly hard.[1] While people of color are disproportionally smaller in the population against their white counterparts, they make up the majority of the homeless in the U.S.[2] In many U.S. cities. certain physical acts, such as loitering outside of a place of business, or lying down, denote homelessness, hence a threat to an acceptable social order.

This is in line with historic Black Code and Vagrancy laws (which ultimately lead to Jim Crow) passed in the post-reconstruction, south to restrict the movement, and opportunities of African Americans making them available for "a labor economy based on low wages and debt".[3]

Additionally, this is reinforced by the implementation of 'hostile architecture', with impediments such as seating structures that prevent one from lying prone. [4] Hence, the body, through the display of physical behaviors acting outside of acceptable social norms has been marginalized, changing both access and the very meaning of public space.[5]

[1] https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report/
[2] https://www.statista.com/statistics/555855/number-of-homeless-people-in-the-us-by-race/
[3] https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/eras/civil-war-reconstruction/jim-crow-laws-andracial-segregation/
[4] James Petty, "The London Spikes Controversy: Homelessness, Urban Securitization and the Question of 'Hostile Architecture'", *International Journal for Crime, Justice, and Social Democracy,* (2016) 792
[5] https://facts.net/history/culture/homelessness-facts

Inner Space: The Body

Expulsion: HIS (PISS) Versus HERS (POOP): What Stinks

As a young girl, I wondered why women became mothers, nurses, or teachers, while men became all kinds of things. Men could also unzip their flies and piss – seemingly anywhere. Yet women and girls had to go through a contortionist ritual to hide their stink, both the act and its deposits. I tested this in my suburban neighborhood at age five. Happily at play on a street corner and too lazy to go home and use the bathroom, I carefully considered my options. My brothers, I noted, could piss in the front yard. Why then, could I not discreetly lay my waste right where I was? So I spread my crinoline-lined dress – in lady-like fashion – in a circle around my knees. Crouched beside a big tree, and applying pressure to my abdomen, I took a dump. As I rose to walk away, an older woman who had been waiting for the bus yelled, "That's disgusting!" I felt instant shame. There was no comeback to this stabbing reprimand for my action. But what was made clear in that moment was that what had come out of me – in public – was not OK. Why? All my life I had watched males in my family open their flies and let loose their expulsions. So, why not me?

Over the years I understood that female expulsions (poop, piss, tears, words, and later blood) could be framed as unruly or unacceptable – "missteps." And gradually, I began to understand how each carried its own form of shame.

In the mid-1990s, I saw a performance by the Dutch collective *Dogtroep* in which metaphors for female expulsion had prominence in the work and were given wide birth. On a large proscenium, various female costumed performers, suspended in swings high above the stage, emitted a

cacophony of sounds made more sonorous by instrumental accompaniment as torrential streams of water cascaded over them and onto the stage.

Fig. 1 Dogtroep, 1994, performance still

The palpable message was that amongst their collective, all forms of expression were loud, free-flowing, and as abundant as rain. It was an overt redress to the silencing of women made visual in a performative work of art.

Seeing this performance allowed me to extrapolate visual and conceptual insights into the measured differences between the public expulsion habits of men and women and especially how they are perceived. In other words, why men's "shit" (literally and figuratively), their voices, and their options varied so widely, while women's were so often circumscribed.

Inner Talk: The Phenomenology of Experience

How we come to understand the world and our place within it, is formed by an unending dialogue that occurs between one's subjective experience and one's perception of that experience. The conversation between consciousness and experience is how one comes to conclusions about the outer world, which then informs one's inner dialogue.

The Women's Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s was based in the lived experiences of largely white women who were dissatisfied with enforced gender roles. Their evolving awareness was tied to pushback against gendered norms, and more specifically to a new understanding of physical movement. At the time, the structures that delineated movement were largely controlled by cultural, legal, and religious systems that segregated women's bodies as "other." Even women who worked outside the home in the professional sphere were often confined to subservient or administrative roles, which limited their ability to move beyond a circumscribed physical space. Their typically subordinate roles confined them, for example, to desks from which they answered phones, kept files, and made appointments for a male boss.

This spatialized professional subordination created a dynamic of perpetual deference between boss and worker, male and female. The pattern of movement for the male office employee had a wide circumference within the office that might extend to traveling outside the office. For the female, the focus was on her quotidian organizational capacity and support for her superiors within a confined space that also relegated her to the lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder.[6]

[6] Female staffers on the 1968 Senator Robert F. Kennedy Presidential campaign were referred to as the "Boiler Room Girls." The term "boiler room" was used to describe a windowless work area in Kennedy's Washington, DC electoral offices. "Boiler Room Girls," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 15, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boiler_Room_Girls.

Domestic Space

Structural Influences on the Sentient Body

I work with performance and video to represent ideas that link the experience of the body with space, architecture, and capitalist structures as they apply to movement. I am interested in this terrain inasmuch as "bodies" and their inherent meanings develop additional, varied meanings based on the bodies' relationship to and entitlement within public, private, and digital media spaces.

Rooms

One of my earliest artist influences was photographer Francesca Woodman, a fellow student, with whom I attended art school. I was both flummoxed and intimidated by her performative photography process, which was raw, naked, and confrontational in its navigation of intimate spaces. She would create simple as well as elaborate tableaux with her or others' nude bodies as the subject. Always with a firm grip on "woman" and "body" as the locus of a visual conversation, she was simultaneously critically objectifying herself, and exploring some of the darker hues of male-female duality. It was a portrayal of nakedness that was unsettling: her figure crouching and being swallowed up by wallpaper, the flesh on her arms being pinched by clothespins, or a nude female trapped in a glass display case with a male onlooker draped over its top. She punctured familiar patriarchal narratives using the body as an empowering means of

expression.[7] And she used the locus of the domestic sphere as an interchangeable metaphor for the female body.[8]

Fig. 2 Francesca Woodman, *Space 2, Providence, Rhode Island*, 1976, gelatin silver print

Another influence was Joan Jonas, particularly her video *Vertical Roll* (1972). In it, a close-up of Jonas's face looks out from an analogue TV set, with the vertical hold button turned off so that a horizontal black bar and Jonas's hovering face repeatedly roll upward. The action constitutes a disruption of the common fixed-screen media image. As the image continues to roll upward, Jonas's face repeatedly gazes out at the viewer while a kitchen spoon is banged (presumably by Jonas) against (what appears to be) the glass of the TV screen. The noise of the banging synchronizes with the rolling black bar. Made in the throes of the feminist movement in the early

[7] Beatrice Seligardi, *Experiencing the Female Body in Visual and Literary Spaces: Francesca Woodman's Providence-Rhode Island and Don DeLillo's The Body Artist*

[8] https://hyperallergic.com/533550/removing-suicide-as-the-filter-for-experiencing-francesca-woodmans-photography/

1970s, *Vertical Roll* speaks to female entrapment within a capitalist male narrative where media images portray women as homebound subservient domestics and caregivers to others.[9]

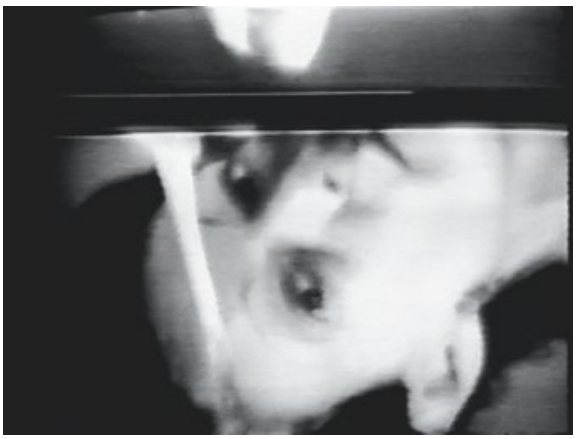

Fig 4 Joan Jonas, *Vertical Roll*, 1972, video still

In the past, the domestic environment had been a site of significant economic labor. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, much of the required food and domestic production necessary for daily life was carried out locally in and around the home ("cottage"), whether urban or rural. Cottage industries such as spinning wool gave married and unmarried women marketable agency. Before the Industrial Revolution, the word "spinster" originally denoted "unmarried girls and women who spun wool."[10] As this was work that could be done in the home, for working-class women, such skills were a great asset in attracting an eligible suitor.[11]

[9] Pamela M. Lee. *Double takes: Pamela M. Lee on the art of Joan Jonas* (Artforum International. Summer, 2015)

[10] Mary Jo Maynes, "Gender, Labor, and Globalization in Historical Perspective: European Spinsters in the International Textile Industry, 1750-1900," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2004): pp. 47-66.

[11] Ibid

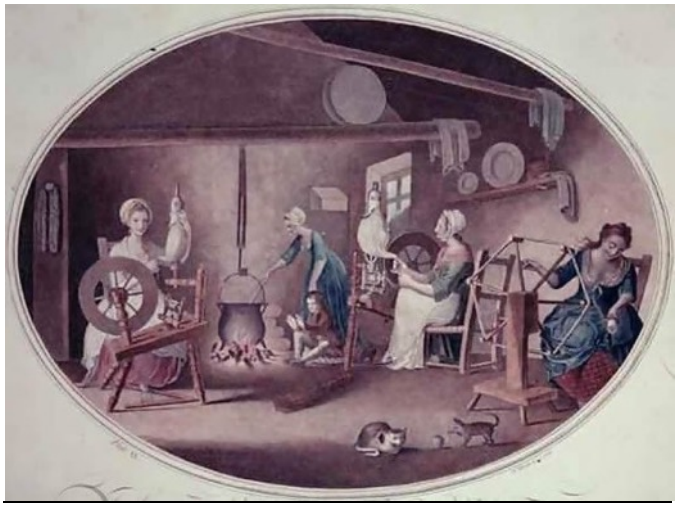

Fig. 5 Women Spinning Wool, a "Cottage Industry," 1783

Labor as Performance

In the late 1960s, after the birth of her first child, artist and stay-at-home mother Mierle Laderman Ukeles noticed that her quotidian labors of domestic service and childcare had the potential to carry weight as artistic production. In 1969, finding herself marginalized as a woman/artist/mother, she wrote the "Manifesto for Maintenance Art," acknowledging the low status and drudgery of often unpaid labor of those who feed, serve, pick up, clean, wash, and mend.[12]

Through her claim that all physical manifestations of maintenance is "Art," she began inserting herself publicly into physical acts of cleaning, and in the ensuing years she carved out a separate path for her creative process by aligning herself with the labor of civil servant sanitation workers in New York City.

[12] Patricia C. Phillips, *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Maintenance Art* (New York: Prestel, 2016), XX.

In her recognition of the relationship between the material needs of the physical body, and the required actions of maintenance, she also acknowledges the structural limits placed upon workers in daily life. In her 1984 "Sanitation Manifesto," she states:

> Sanitation is the working out of the human design to accept, confront, manage, control, even use DECAY in urban life.
>
> Sanitation, face it, is the perfect model of the inherent restrictiveness imposed by living inside our corporeal bodies via material "necessity," in urban civilization (and its discontents) in finite planetary "reality."[13]

Fig. 6 Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Touch Sanitation Performance*, 1979-80

[13] Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artist Writings*, 2nd edition (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2012), 735.

Mediated Space

Physical Humor and Socio-Economic Class in the Theater of Romance

As cinema was gaining popularity with mass audiences during the silent film era, it was a talent for physical comedy that set many actresses apart from their peers. Various demonstrations of cunning, desperation, or ineptitude would prove to be their saving grace in deeming them worthy of the ultimate prize: a suitor. In the 1912 film S*he Cried*, Florence Turner portrays a worker at her first day on an assembly line. In each department where she is placed, she slows up the process of production and gets reprimanded, prompting her to cry — a ploy she hopes will get her moved to a less demanding department. Finally, she is placed with the person who should be her harshest critic: the company's tough boss (Red Grogen).[14] Her emotional physicality plays out at its most extreme:

> After she completely collapses into tears when he barks at her, everyone's surprised when he goes out of his way to comfort her. The next day everyone wonders where Grogan is until a telegram arrives saying he's taken the day off to get married. The last scene shows Turner and Grogan riding in a horse cart after their wedding with her sobbing for joy and he muttering "Oh, shut up."[15]

The physicality of these performances and the dramatic facility of a working class woman, whose foibles are later to be rewarded with class ascension (through marriage) attracted contemporary viewers. Such was the nature of silent film comedy at that time: There were no stand-ins or stunt people for more physical requirements of the script. Performers in demanding slapstick comedic roles, including the actresses, were required

---

[14] Steve Massa, *Slapstick Divas: The Women of Silent Comedy* (Albany, Georgia: BearManor Media, 2017), 9, 32.

[15] Ibid.

to do feats that required great physical exertion and daring, whether it was swimming in turgid waters, pushing heavy objects, or in some other way being confronted with overwhelming physical obstacles. These actions were meant either to invoke/provoke humor in the audience or to attract a worthy suitor in the film.[16] For the women of slapstick, their economic survival to some degree depended on laughter-producing physical agility.

Slapstick

Riffing from such strategies, my 2018 installation piece *Housekeeping* conflates the corporatized hotel room context with class, the physical repetitions of labor, aging, and repressed sexuality. Additionally, the piece employs slapstick gestures, opera, the audio of advertising, and challenging physical displays that puncture the propriety of delineated behavior protocols in generic spaces. It is a collision between public and private space, as well as class representations of bodies in these environments.

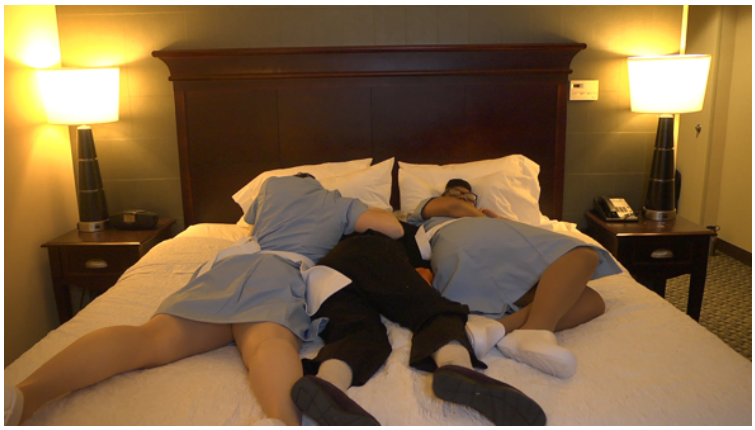

Fig. 7 Mandy Morrison, *Housekeeping,* 2018, video still from single-channel installation

Housekeeping straddles both overt and covert forms of class resentment. The action involved in *Housekeeping,* plays with the noun "housekeeping" when assigned to hotel

[16] Ibid.

maids or cleaning services, tasked with the job of cleaning intimate spaces set within anonymous hotel environments. While "house" may denote the intimacy of the domicile, and the "keeping" has connections with the habituated maintenance of the body, hotel housekeeping is neither intimate, habituated, or familiar. With rotating shifts of hotel workers –often women of color- [17] every room nearly the same, and every guest temporary, hotel housekeeping involves the repetitive tasks of maintaining facilities of cleanliness for the private, anonymous use of paying hotel guests.

In the video, the "guest," a middle-aged woman of the professional class, sits both centrally in the frame and as a disengaged character. Yet she exhibits signs of transgressing the class, gender, and age roles expected of her. Her suit conveys a business stay, yet this exterior is gradually shed as she is at times both embattled with and embraced by the much younger maids –one black and one white- as they make her bed, clobber her with brooms and mops, or ride her bareback.

Public Space: Work and Movement

Movement in Public Space

Focusing on the body's contextual relationship to specific types of physical environments, my 2017 installation *ModBrut* plays with the contemporary paradigm of physical mobility in a planned architectural environment – in this case, the university campus (University of Maryland, Baltimore County). As the body's relationship to such space requires the practical flow of forward motion, I developed insertions of performative

[17] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm

actions carried out by students and faculty that defied normative patterns of movement on the campus. Viewers of the installation saw "flow" subverted – though not physically interrupted – by these actions. Within the installation, there was physical disruption of the image created by projecting the video onto angular sheets of foam core protruding from the walls. The audio consisted of ethnographic observations recorded by several participants. Given the task of identifying their experiences of specific sites on campus, they reflected on their own experiences of the modernist campus both before and after participating in the piece.

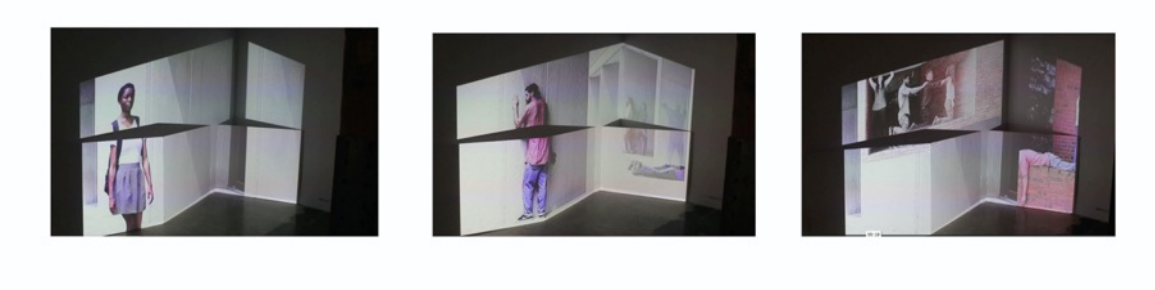

Fig. 8 Mandy Morrison *ModBrut,* 2017, documentation from single-channel video installation

Choreographies

This set of ideas has a history. I once worked at an urban newspaper that required I arrive at 7 A.M. each morning to gather clippings and photos from various departments, pull articles from the paper's database, and send them out over the Internet. All of the tasks were to be accomplished before 9 A.M. Prior to taking the job, the previous editor had sequenced a list of tasks, so that everything could be accomplished within the allotted time. Not an early riser, I sought to streamline the tasks. Within a month, I had managed to shave everything down to a sequence taking less than forty minutes. As I went through this daily routine on autopilot, I noticed my habit of movement in the building from department to department. It was the exact sameness in actions, flow and speed from day

to day that caught my attention. Just as the precepts of Taylorism[18] influenced the factory production line of the automobile in the early 20th century, the repetitions of my tasks in the office building aligned with capitalist precepts of efficiency. As such, these repetitions were in conflict with the disruptive creative acts of movement that define contemporary performance and depart from established norms.

In a previous career as a print designer, one of my jobs had been to take an original print and create a repeat so that a converter could lay the photo-screened pattern, fitting it like a puzzle piece, on a standard print production roller. These actions would result in a seamless finished printed product. I likened the repeat process of the production print roller to the circularity of my movement at the newspaper, as my routine of repetitive actions from day to day at the newspaper mimicked the repeat pattern, which was fitted to the industrial roller.

It was during this time at the newspaper that I saw footage on TV of a dance work by Paul Taylor and Robert Rauschenberg from the 1950s portraying a lone man on a stage, who gets up and down from a chair in response to the commands of a disembodied voice. The voice announces the time at regular intervals. I was interested in the ways the piece mimicked the demands of contemporary society and showed the interplay between

[18] Taylorism - a factory management system developed in the late 19th century to increase efficiency by evaluating every step in a manufacturing process and breaking down production into specialized repetitive tasks. www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Taylorism

segmented time and work-life, and how that relationship dominates our everyday experience.

The Body, Labor and Capital

As David Harvey describes, in his book *Spaces of Hope,* capitalist initiatives, and the structural architectures supporting them, take every possible measure to control the physical body as a form of labor. In the time-based efficiency of Taylorism the body's act of doing in a specified work-space is being sold as a commodity that ultimately serves a consumer agenda. And to this end, the body –defined by the prerogatives of capitalism- ends up as a physical tool; it's soul purpose being in its capacity to 'produce' and to purchase manufactured commodities.

> The laborer (a person) sells labor power (a commodity) to the capitalist to use in the labor process in return for a money wage, which permits the laborer purchase capitalist-produced commodities in order to live in order to return to work ...[19]

The shrewd requirements of such demands end up enforcing the idea of a body that has the ability to repetitively deliver a certain product, yet that lacks cognitive agency. For it is the suspension cognitive faculties and decision-making that will subordinate the laborer to capital every time.

> On the one hand capital requires educated and flexible laborers, but on the other hand it refuses the idea that laborers should think for themselves. [20]

In doing so capitalism reduces the body's possibility for autonomy to that of a mindless mechanized system of physical efficiencies. In this way the body is made a mere function

[19] David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope,* Chapter 6, "The body as an accumulation strategy", (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 102

[20] Ibid, 103

of capitalism and its support structures.

> Productive capitalist requires, *inter alia*, the mobilization of 'animal spirits,' sexual drives, affective feelings, and creative powers of labor to a given purpose defined by capital.
>
> It means: harnessing basic human powers of cooperation/collaboration; the skilling, deskilling, and reskilling of the powers of labor in accord with technological requirements; acculturation to routinization of tasks; en- closure within strict spatiotemporal rhythms of regulated (and sometimes spatially confined) activities; consumption of the commodity labor power in the labor process under the control of the frequent subordinations of bodily rhythms and desires 'as an appendage of the machine;'(…)[21]

Hence the spaces in which bodies must work, shop and live have requirements that need to serve a capitalist agenda.

Architectures

Modernity's Abstractions

The modernist agenda in architecture and urbanism, beginning in the early 20th century, was to pare down and control movement and streamline the physical requirements for the industrialized workforce and for the body in the domestic sphere. By the middle of the century, some architects' works and theories began to counter this approach. Christopher Alexander, Professor of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, from the 1960s to the 1980s, took an alternate view. He asserted that communities should be built from the inside out, giving autonomy to the proclivities, needs, and interests of the local community.[22]

[21] Ibid
[22] Stephen Grabow, *Christopher Alexander: The Search for a New Paradigm in Architecture* (Boston: Oriel Press, 1983), XX.

However, an architectural style invested in the community's needs was in conflict with the urban renewal prerogatives of the government and the homeowner lending policies implemented by the banks and Federal Government in most U.S. cities and their neighboring suburbs. Contemporary architect and design justice advocate Bryan Lee Jr. states:

> For nearly every injustice in the world, there is an architecture that has been planned and designed to perpetuate it.[23]

Banks' "red-lining" and covenant practices were routinely discriminatory based on race, religious practice and zip code.[24] Additionally, urban renewal driven by an agenda of efficiency and control advanced modern architectural models for public housing and primacy of highways, and served to diminish the communal autonomy of minority populations. This left many at the mercy of the public housing system and/or predatory lender. The economic health and prosperity of communities was undercut and over time this created publicly sanctioned areas of disenfranchisement.[25]

> From 1951 to 1971, 80 to 90 percent of the 25,000 families displaced in Baltimore to build new highways, schools and housing projects were black. Their neighborhoods, already disinvested and deemed dispensable, were sliced into pieces, the parks where their children played bulldozed.[26]

In this way, the physical agency of these populations became circumscribed as the outgrowth of low-income conditions and trends toward deindustrialization. Poverty and crime then justified brutal control through the policing of these neighborhoods. Additionally, affordable housing and favorable mortgages for whites, led to the flight of

---

[23] Bryan Lee Jr. "America's Cities Were Designed to Oppress", 06/04/2020, https://www.citylab.com/
[24] https://www.mappingprejudice.org/what-are-covenants/
[25] CSI Staff, "Structural Racism and Baltimore: Understanding the Roots of the Uprisings", Center for Social Inclusion, May 5, 2015, https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/structural-racism-and-baltimore-understanding-the-roots-of-the-uprisings/
[26] Ibid

the white middle-class to the suburbs, severing them from urban centers and a sense of shared purpose before and in the aftermath of de-industrialization.

To a large extent, the suburbanization of America, which requires the ownership of a car, has contributed to the great class and socio-economic divide. However, it is a divide that is historically sanctioned. Walter Benjamin in his essay "Illuminations" remarks:

> The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" on which we live is not the exception but the rule (…) One reason why Fascism has a chance is that in the name of progress its opponents treat it as the historical norm.[27]

Bifurcations: The Social Construction of Technology

And so we must confront the history of "progress". What has been happening to cultural life in terms of the internet and digital technology in the early 21st century is similar to what occurred in American cities with the advent of the automobile. Prior to the automobile, the street had been a public utility used primarily by pedestrians, venders, children, and streetcars. While pedestrians saw cars as intruders and viewed their own right of way in terms of justice, the automobile's advantage was its pure horsepower. As the automobile became more prevalent, many city dwellers saw its use as a misuse of the street. But beginning in the 1920s, motorists and their contingent of supporters fought back. They wanted a new kind of city, the kind that gave the primacy of the street to the car. [28]

---

[27] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations, "*Thesis in the Philosophy of History", (Schocken Books, NY, 1968), 257, VIII

[28] Thad Williamson, "Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City." *Contemporary Sociology* 42, no. 2 (March 2013): 263–65. doi:10.1177/0094306113477381hh.

By the mid-1920's, urban traffic engineers promoted utilitarian efficiency, and a 'multi-model' transportation system was enforced, making streets, primarily "thoroughfares" for both streetcars and automobiles. This undercut access to what once had been a space shared equally with the pedestrian public.[29]

This coincided with minority and immigration populations settling into the urban space, and simultaneously, being segregated to specific areas of the city. These new city dwellers were denied equal rights to property enforced by discriminatory lending practices that began just before and during the New Deal.[30] By reducing the importance of the street as a shared public space, the new paradigm of car ownership placed a premium on atomized access to large shopping complexes that encouraged mass consumption.

I would posit that beginning in the mid-20th century, contemporary urban and suburban planning was realizing the danger Professor Alexander later warned against, for it aimed to control and separate, and thereby marginalize certain segments of the population. The ascent of the suburbs meant that urban communities once segregated ethnically or economically by neighborhood, were now additionally segregated by physical proximity and by requirements of mobility necessitated by the automobile.

---

[29] Ibid

[30] Jane Kim, "Black Reparations for Twentieth Century Federal Housing Discrimination: The Construction of White Wealth and the Effects of Denied Black Homeownership", *29 Boston University Public Interest Law Journal* 135 (Winter 2019)

The non-pedestrian, sidewalk-less streets that connect one mall to the next at the service of outlying suburbs presages late 20th century Internet culture. Theorist Amelia Jones eloquently describes the interconnectedness of such shopping "nodes" between this post-modern structure and the disruptions of the emergent World Wide Web:

> [I]ndustrial cities (with their vertical aspirations, navigable and beautifully mapped lines of public transportation, and centralized economic and business zones) has been replaced by the vast decentralized arrays of automobiles, suburbanized, late twentieth century and early twenty-first century globalized cities, punctured by dream-like immersive commercial spaces paralleling (and saturated by) the networked logic of html coding and unavoidable eruptions of capital on every consumer screen via pop-ups and the very structures of Microsoft software.[31]

My 2017 installation *Boxed* addresses the body's marginalization within this contemporary urban paradigm. Ownership of private property confers "rights" on certain bodies, and a denial of rights for those without access to private property. With the lack of a genuine "commons," those whose bodies are not part of the mobilized economic continuum are cast off to exist within the cracks of contemporary post-modernist structures.

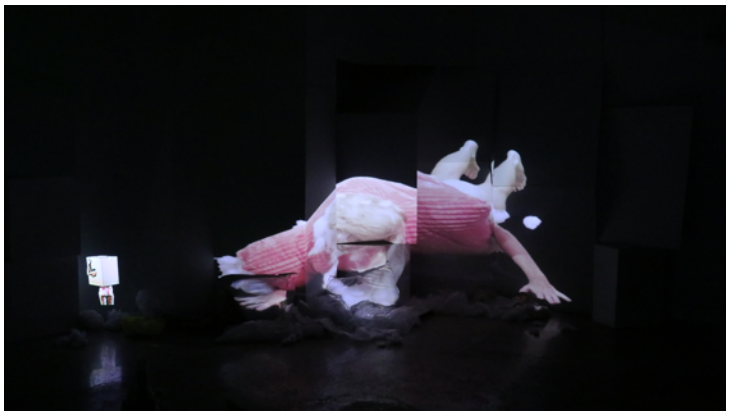

Fig. 9 Mandy Morrison, *Boxed*, 2017, documentation, two-channel video installation

[31] Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 88.

In *Boxed*, abject images of "throwaway bodies," like cast-off furniture and consumer goods, re-establish themselves amidst the undersides of bridges, overpasses, doorways, and alleys. Housed in disposable cardboard, and replicated and quartered in the manner of industrialized meat-packing plants, for the market of consumption, these are bodies whose physical and psychic lives have been bifurcated by modernist urban prerogatives.

Urban Promises

My current piece, *Spirits of Promise and Loss*, 2020, is a multi-channel animation that uses photographic images of the Old Town Mall in Baltimore as a backdrop for the behaviors and movements of ghost-like characters that populate a decrepit model of utopian possibility. This pedestrian mall, and others like it, placed parking of cars on the fringes of the walkway, providing storefronts that faced one another on an open thoroughfare given over to pedestrians. Old Town Mall, which opened in 1968 was for a number of years "considered a success", and was one of numerous experiments across the U.S. in urban mall development in the 1960s and 1970s that strove to bring suburban shoppers back to downtown urban centers in decline. [32]

> The surrounding community used the mall as a center point; retailers had a steady stream of customers and young men and women worked their first jobs at Old Town Shops.[33]

[32] Alexandra Lange, "Who's afraid of the pedestrian mall?" Sep 30, 2019 https://www.curbed.com/2019/9/30/20885226/best-pedestrian-mall-design

[33] Olivia Hubert-Allen, "Nothing new with Old Town Mall", Sept 27, 2012 http://darkroom.baltimoresun.com/2012/09/nothing-new-with-old-town-mall/#1

However with their failure to maintain a vital pedestrian population, over time, early optimistic attitudes toward these malls began to change. Such was true of Old Town Mall.

> By the 1980's the area again began to slide into slide into disrepair. Drug trafficking was on the rise and economic woes plagued the community.[34]

My interest in representing — and animating —– this public site of abject neglect was to explore the experience elicited by an outdoor space where so much attention was once given to possibility and place making. Now, a ruin, Baltimore's Old Town Mall bears all the signs of communal affinity, yet without the street life, population, or pedestrian traffic it once boasted. And so, an environment that once thrived now exists – ghostlike – in a state of ambiguity, and on the outskirts of regular commercial activity.

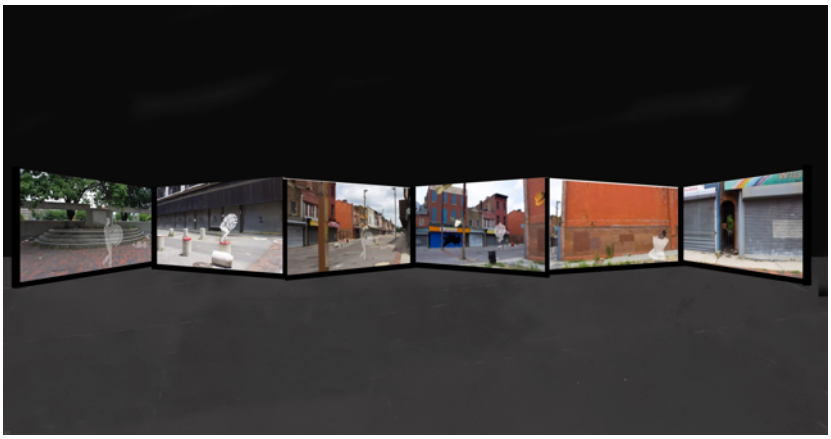

Fig.10 Mandy Morrison, *Spirits of Promise and Loss*, 2020, schematic

William Kentridge, a South African artist who creates films from animated drawings, generating characters that transmit ideas about South Africa's racial apartheid history, states this about his work:

> There is a common area between the artist's studio and the fundamentals of psychoanalytic process. Both are based on the idea that there are things we know

[34] Ibid

that we do not know that we know, and that all certainties about what we know we usually hide in other things. One needs sometimes to show the power of the irrational world as a demonstration of the limits of the rational world, which lacks solidity.[35]

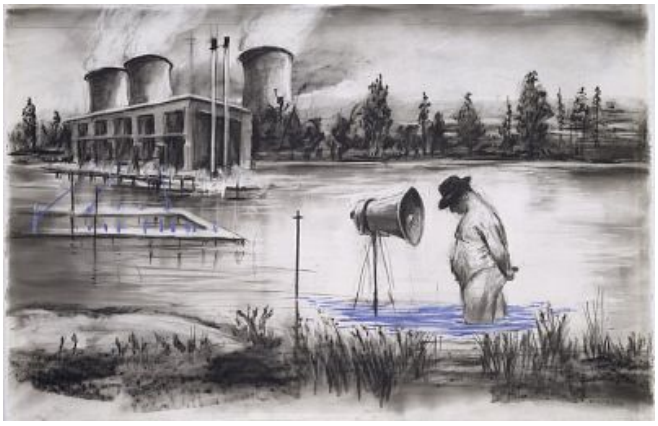

Fig. 11 William Kentridge, *Stereoscope*, 1999, pastel and charcoal on paper

There are inexplicable counterpoints in *Spirits,* such as when a bound figure is swallowed into a black hole, then re-emerges from that hole as a slumped-over faceless figure.

As hopeful situations can often deteriorate into chaos, only to re-emerge as something slightly less pernicious, the reality is that progressive concepts don't always ameliorate all of society's ills. For there are ambiguities about the very nature of what progress encompasses, in terms of its meaning as well as its intentions for societal improvement.

This piece is a highly physical encounter. Viewers enter a darkened space approximately twenty feet wide and over fifty feet long and encounter a six-channel rear-projected video installation, which stands four feet tall and over forty feet long. The latter exists as a free-standing structure with each panel hinged at an angle from its adjoining panel. The entire structure is placed across the space like a decorative screen. Fading in and out on the

[35] quote from interview by NATASHA KURCHANOVA in www.studiointernational.com

screens are projections of different photographed views of Old Town Mall, inhabited by a series of animated characters with a ghost-like presence.

Each animated character in the piece takes on varying aspects of the mall's features. The dancing figure becomes both a kind of Icarus and a vague demon in the final panel. The quaking unsheltered bodies in the first panel eventually dissolve into puddles and bits of trash. The female figure covered in paper in the third panel, who moves through the streets despondently, in the last panel eventually loses her head. The baggage character often seems weighed down, despite playfully ignoring their baggage. The drummer, who appears in almost every panel, signifies the rhythm of productivity and capitalism's demands. The bound female, crawling on her knees, peeks around corners and eventually disappears into a hole.

Culturally, a "marching drum major" is culturally defined as "the leader of a marching band, drum and bugle corps, or pipe band, usually positioned at the head of the band or corps."[36] In metaphorical terms, such a character would repeatedly beat a drum in order to lead, march, and move a group forward in military-style unison. Yet in this case, the ghostly character continues beating the drum while walking fast and moving forward without a following, amidst the layered sounds of traffic, gunshots, police sirens, fireworks, and the shuffling movements of various other ghosts. The layered audio

[36] From Wikipedia

juxtaposes the former life of the mall against its more current counterpart: that of commercial and pedestrian abandonment.

Violence, as it is visually portrayed, comes in the form of a nondescript grey male silhouette who breaks out of a shuttered store, as hats from a former millinery fly out of a top-floor window. The audio – of shattered glass – denotes the fragility of a system assumed to be secure until a disruption disturbs this illusion.

While the gunshots in the audio track do not initially denote threat (they could be celebratory firecrackers), they convey the nature of surprise that often accompanies unanticipated violence. The grey male (shooter) figure takes aim at the baggage character as it hops across a series of cement stumps. As the shots are fired, the baggage character escapes upward, carried aloft by wind currents, into the atmosphere.

The six-panel installation becomes a piece of architecture unto itself. This free-standing folding screen references Asian screens, which historically depicted landscapes dotted with scenes from daily life. Heavily built and originating in China in the 4th century BCE, such screens were originally used as partitions or room separators, and were not meant to be easily moved.[37] The screen concept spread throughout Asia, with Japan later adapting the screen for different purposes. Making the screen lighter, thinner, and with paper and silk, Japanese users employed it as a backdrop for tea ceremonies and dance.[38] Centuries

[37] http://www.wallswithstories.com/uncategorized/a-brief-history-of-folding-screens.html

[38] Ibid

later, with increased trade between East and West, screens imported from Asia became popular in major 19th century European cities. With their popularity in the West, their use and meaning took a definitive turn:

> [This] was particularly well timed, as it corresponded to a period of revived interest in decorative arts incorporated into interior architectural designs. Eventually, western screens became a feature in any well-appointed setting.[39]

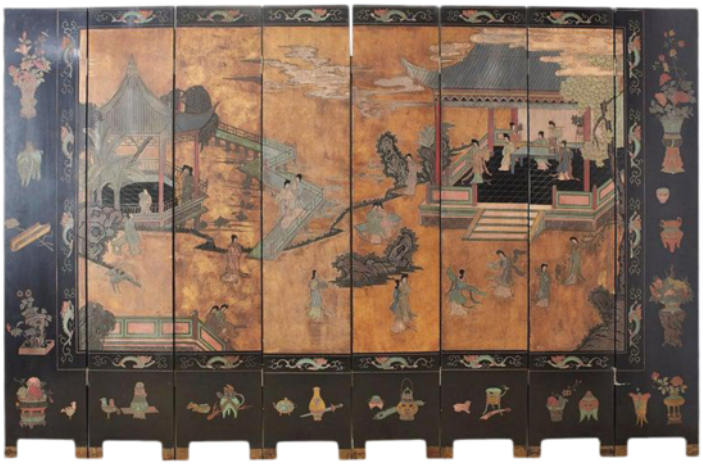

Fig.12 China, Eight-Panel Screen, early 20th century, lacquer

In using the centuries-old concept of a folding screen to portray a 20th-21st century urban landscape of economic abandonment, my piece straddles meanings on two fronts. The first has to do with the ascension of Asia, and particularly China, as an economic powerhouse in the 21st century. In a scholarly article on the affects of Chinese manufacturing and import growth, a group of economists states:

> [E]xposure to Chinese import competition affects local labor markets not just through manufacturing employment, which unsurprisingly is adversely affected, but also along numerous other margins. Import shocks trigger a decline in wages that is primarily observed outside of the manufacturing sector. Reductions in both

[39] Dianne Lee van der Reyden, (revised from) "The History and Care of Folding Screens: Case Studies of the Conservation Treatment of Western Oriental screens" *Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education*, In: The conservation of Far Eastern art: preprints of the contributions to the IIC Kyoto congress, Kyoto, 19-23 September 1988

> employment and wage levels lead to a steep drop in the average earnings of households. [40]

The most dramatic shifts due to Chinese imports are declines in U.S. wages, which, over time, rip holes in local communities.[41]

The second has to do with the ways in which artistic portrayals of marginalized socio-political realities are often nestled in the context of an interior aesthetic experience.

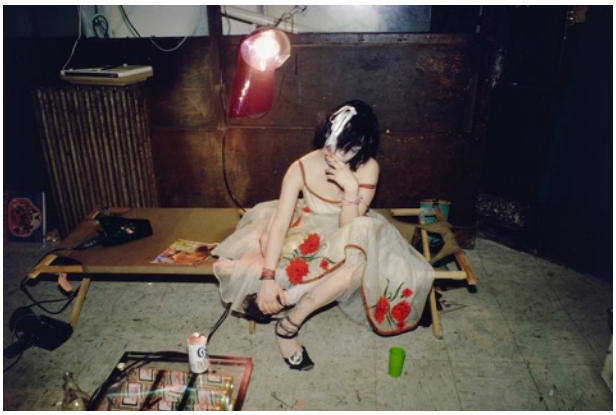

Fig. 13 Nan Goldin, *Trixie on the Cot, NYC, 1979-79*, cibachrome

A well-known contemporary artist whose work speaks to this concept is Nan Goldin, whose early photographs are immersed in the abject sexual and addictive transgressions of a youthful urban bohemian class.[42]

The art context –of the gallery or museum- sets up a physical space for embracing such photographic images, and in turn a lifestyle that may otherwise be viewed as aberrant or contrary to accepted societal norms. By comparison, 18th-century

[40] David H. Author, David Dorn, and Gordon H. Hanson, "The China Syndrome: Local Labor Market Effects of Import Competition in the United States", October 2013 *American Economic Review*, 103(6): 2121–2168, http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/aer.103.6.2121

[41] Ibid

[42] https://www.arteviste.com/arteviste/2016/11/21/a-review-of-nan-goldin-the-ballad-of-sexual-dependency-at-moma-new-york

Romantic British artist William Blake's colored prints of mythic figures mined the extremes of both Christian godliness and psychic banishment, using mythic narrative as a way to underscore the heroic and debased nature of the human endeavor. [43]

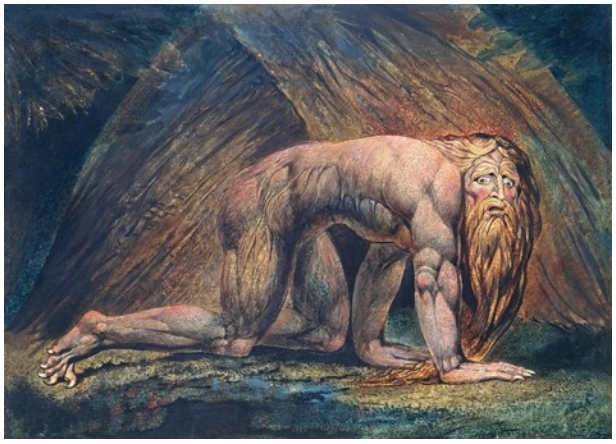

Fig. 14 William Blake, *Nebuchadnezzar*, 1795-c.1805, Color print, ink and watercolor on paper

Fig. 15 Mandy Morrison *Spirits of Promise and Loss*, 2020, screenshot

In this way *Spirits* provides an aesthetic platform that is both backward and forward-looking. While playing on the historic decorative aspects of the Asian screen, the piece is a contemporary choreographed media work, mining the residual manifestations of human extremes, while speaking to that which exists in a post-capitalist urban entropy, and underscoring current class and cultural partitions.

[43] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar_(Blake)

An art piece that is also a space separator, it is a physical artifact, that speaks to many of the conditions and anxieties of our time.

Bibliography

Alexander, Christopher with Ishikawa, Sara, Silverstein, Murray.
A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction, Oxford University Press, 1977.

Author, David H., Dorn, David, and Hanson, Gordon H.
"The China Syndrome: Local Labor Market Effects of Import Competition in the United States", (October 2013) American Economic Review 2013.

Cheng, Anne Anlin. *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface*.
New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Gay, Roxane. *Hunger, A Memoir of (My) Body*. New York:
Harper Collins Publishers, 2017.

Grabow, Stephen. *Christopher Alexander: the search for a new paradigm in architecture*.
Stocksfield; Boston: Oriel Press, 1983.

Hamilakis, Yannis, Pluciennik, Mark and Tarlow, Sarah. Ed. *Thinking through the body: archaeologies of corporeality.* New York, NY, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2002.

hooks, bel. *where we stand: class matters*. New York and London: Routledge, 2000.

Jones, Amelia, *Self/Image: Technology Representation and the Contemporary Subject.*
London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Kozel, Susan. *Closer: Performance, Technologies, Phenomenology.* The MIT Press, 2007.

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

Massa, Steve. *Slapstick Divas: The Women of Silent Comedy,* BearManor Media, 2017.

Maynes, Mary Jo "Gender, Labor, and Globalization in Historical Perspective: European Spinsters in the International Textile Industry, 1750-1900," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 4, Johns Hopkins University Press, Winter 2004.

Norton, Peter D., *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City*.
Cambridge, Massachusetts, London England, The MIT Press, 2008.

Peters, Jeroen. "Blind Machinations and Grotesque Counter-Movements: Notes on Boris Charmatz' Regi", *Cultureel Centrum Masmechelen* 42, B3630 Masmechelen, 2006.

Rowlands, Mark. *The New Science of the Mind.* A Bradford Book, The MIT Press: Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England, 2010.

Shusterman, Richard. *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaethetics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.