

**Gordon Matta-Clark's slices through space: artwork towards a
critical understanding of the spatial**

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the ways in which the artwork of American artist Gordon Matta-Clark offers geography the potential to think anew about space. His oeuvre presents a sense of the dynamism of the urban landscape, literally cutting through its continuous spaces of encounter by dissecting static architectural forms. The reception of his work has, thus far, endeavoured to think through the artistic, architectural and socio-political critique raised by his multidisciplinary approach. This paper claims that these accounts overlook the nuances of his experiments with space and signification. It investigates how two pieces; *Fake Estates* (1974) and *Office Baroque* (1977), produce a critical understanding of the spatial. Drawing on the work of Jacques Derrida, it argues that these pieces demonstrate the impossibility of representing space, such that it is revealed as something which is always open, dynamic and sensual. Both pieces use space as an interpretive device to challenge and problematise traditional structures of knowledge, such that thinking about Matta-Clark demands a shift in tone and in the nature of making claims. To this end, the normative structure of the dissertation is experimented with to demonstrate an understanding of the rules, or lack thereof, that Matta-Clark is operating with, as well as illustrate that such processes do not end with the artwork.

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“I DON’T KNOW WHAT THE WORD ‘SPACE’ MEANS ... I KEEP USING IT. BUT I’M NOT QUITE SURE WHAT IT MEANS.”

(Gordon Matta-Clark, int. Kirshner: 368)

1.0 Introduction

This dissertation offers a geographical reading of the work of the American artist Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-78) as it relates to space. Famed for his sculptural ‘cuts’ on buildings slated for demolition, such as *Conical Intersect* (1975) and *Splitting* (1974), Matta-Clark challenged Modernist aesthetic traditions through his site-specific works and conveyed the urban landscape in a constant state of transformation. He is considered influential within art history for undermining conventional notions of the art object, as well as for his radical political intentions, insofar as he sought to protest socioeconomic conditions of capitalism. His opposition to functionalist precepts put forward by Le Corbusier also had significant impact in the field of architecture (Ursprung, 2012). While such focuses have been extensively documented within each field, and undoubtedly repay a close reading, this dissertation claims that they do not fully account for the nuance of his spatial experiments. Bracketing their concerns temporarily, I suggest, allows us to open up a different way of understanding Matta-Clark’s artwork that addresses these limitations. Using his rumination about the meaning of space as the starting point for this dissertation, I invite the reader to think through what remains of two pieces: *Fake Estates* (1974) and *Office Baroque* (1977). Notwithstanding their dematerialised nature, I claim an experimental collection of photography, film and text curated by the artist himself – which have been given scarce critical attention – offer new insights, both for our understanding of Matta-Clark and geographical space more generally.

Drawing on the thought of Jacques Derrida to advance these reflections, this paper aims to develop a roadmap for understanding these pieces as they relate to space. This is neither to claim a prescriptive and overarching theory of space in Matta-Clark’s works, nor that he was in any way influenced by such philosophy. My intention, rather, is that this paper be read as part of the growing field of ‘critical creative spatialities’, that is, the ways in which art offers geography the potential to think anew about space (Hawkins, 2011: 468; Cocker, 2007). I aim to show a geographical engagement with art offers the potential to illuminate the contingent and unfinished nature of the spatial, and of knowledge production more generally. In this regard, it builds on Massumi’s (2011) claim that art offers transformative

potential for social scientists. It is not, as has previously been explored, to produce a reading of his work as a form of radical urbanism, attentive to its socio-political context and subversive impact. Not doubting the potential of such approaches, historically popular in cultural geography (see Pinder, 2005; Harvey, 1991) – as indeed, they provide some important conceptual anchors from which this analysis flows – this dissertation attends to how the viewer is enfolded in a constant questioning of the nature of space and representation. The central question my dissertation addresses is thus:

How is an understanding of space produced through Fake Estates and Office Baroque?

This move away from an understanding of Matta-Clark rooted in art history and architecture is partly facilitated by a methodological approach that positions the artwork as a subjective encounter, as well as a ‘post-structuralist’ theoretical leaning. Rather than merely attending to the internal referential context of Matta-Clark’s spaces and how they relate to notions of form, style and influence, I broaden my interpretive scope to consider the artwork as co-constituted through the thinking and feeling body. The virtue of such an approach enables an exploration of the ways the pieces work as objects as well as analytics through which we can think about space. This engagement with the pieces thus becomes a transformative and creative event and opens the space for new meanings to emerge, where the course of ‘doing’ enables our own creative geographic methods (Hawkins, 2011). In this regard, I build in Matta-Clark’s questioning of ontological modes of surety within the structure of the dissertation by subverting its normative structure for conceptual ends.

The claim here will be each artwork problematises traditional ways of understanding and representing space by illustrating the impossibility of its representation. In *Fake Estates*, I argue that a critical understanding of the spatial is produced in relation to the closure of the representational structure. This refers to the exposing of disruptions inherent in the map and other similar fixed descriptions. Space is thus deduced as always unfinished and an ongoing process that is open to difference and iteration through the inability of these modes to capture it. In *Office Baroque*, Matta-Clark’s use of absence and voids works to create an understanding of space as contingent upon the embodied and sensual. The creative alterations to each representational medium work to incorporate imagination, memory and sensation. The folding in perception is such that space is always read anew and exists as a multiplicity.

This paper consists of five sections and a conclusion. Section two – Gordon Matta-Clark – provides a brief introduction to the artist and artworks in question and explains their relevance to geography. Section three – the methodology – outlines the use of visual and creative approaches underpinning the dissertation. Section four – a literature review – charts existing literature on Matta-Clark in relation to space, indicating important conceptual anchors from which the ensuing analysis flows and the main interpretive logics through which his work has been understood. It also critically analyses the relevant dimensions of theoretical frameworks used. This works to differentiate the subsequent discussion from previous literature on Matta-Clark and provide the reader with the conceptual armature to think alongside the empirical reflections raised. Section five – the discussion – is comprised of two chapters, each devoted to an artwork. It provides an alternative account of Matta-Clark's oeuvre to the previous work outlined in the literature review.

2.0 Gordon Matta-Clark

Matta-Clark was born in New York in 1943. He was the son of the Chilean Surrealist painter Roberto Matta and Anna Clark, an American artist. Supported by his father who briefly worked for the renowned functionalist architect Le Corbusier, Matta-Clark attended Cornell School of Architecture (1962-68). Under the purview modernist historian Colin Rowe, the course revolved around tenets of functionalist architecture with which Matta-Clark took great issue. During his studies, he was also under the tutelage of Robert Smithson, known for Earth Art. On graduating, he moved to New York City, where he would reapply his architectural education to what he saw as the systematisation of form at the expense of social capacity. He produced a prodigious corpus despite his short life, including his famous dissections of buildings, which explicitly addressed economic decline and historical tensions marked by paradigmatic shifts from modernism to postmodernism. These projects were, in part, driven by a rejection of what he perceived as a “rigid mentality” that pervaded both architecture and art as disciplines (Lee, 2000: 13). How mindless it was, he mused, that “architects install walls and artists decorate them” (ibid). He was, in contrast, interested in the intersectional space between disciplines, in the ambiguity of structure and form.

Though a brief summary of his works will no doubt do injustice to his project overall, an overview is necessary to explain why Matta-Clark warrants geographical interest. His aim, in part at least, was to “expand the mythology of space” (Matta-Clark, int. Kirshner: 377). His early works in particular attempted to maximise its social utility. *Garbage Wall* (1970) for instance, used makeshift materials to create shelter for the homeless. *Fake Estates* (1974) used voids in a novel way to question the archetypal capitalist ordering of architectural space, such that its ‘absurdity’ and arbitrary nature was exposed. The same administrative conditions that enabled his cuts – *Office Baroque* (1977), *Conical Intersect* (1975), *Splitting* (1974) and *Bronx Floors* (1973) – were responsible for their demolition, which lent his oeuvre a distinct, ephemeral temporality. Bois and Krauss (1997: 191), rather perceptively, liken his later ‘cuts’ to a “Swiss cheese full of holes reflecting one into the other and in all directions”, discombobulating the viewers sense of horizontal and vertical space. His cuts also worked to disrupt notions of buildings as static and timeless, but rather metonymic of wider processes of urban renewal. Matta-Clark also used conventional measurement techniques associated with Euclidian representations of space to expose their own limits. His work thus offers a sense of the dynamism of the urban landscape, cutting

through its continuous spaces of encounter, evoking what Thrift (2006: 139) terms the “material schematism” of space.

3.0 Methodology

Developing a methodological approach aimed at understanding how Matta-Clark's artwork can be used usefully by geography has been a complex process. This is partly attributable to the infancy of critical creative spatialities as a field, which lacks a developed set of analytic tools (Hawkins, 2011), but more so to the idiosyncrasies of the artist himself. This is, insofar as the initial sculptural form of *Office Baroque* is destroyed and the state of the plots comprising *Fake Estates* are unknown. What remains are a collection of photographs, film and text, which provide the only empirical material for analysis. This presents a further layer of complexity, given that these collections are works of art themselves (of works of art). At the same time, engaging with Matta-Clark did provide an opportunity for experimental methods of thinking through and presenting his work, building on creative geographical methods (DeSilvey, 2012; MacDonald, 2013). The following chapter will briefly discuss the reasons for the selection of the artworks and the methods used, couched within a wider geographical approach to art.

3.1 Source Selection

The research process began with an interest in Matta-Clark's artwork more generally, out of which emerged the subsequent research angle. As noted, the dematerialised nature of much of his corpus reduced possible empirical entry points. It was decided that choosing two artworks would illustrate the material and conceptual diversity of Matta-Clark's oeuvre, while allowing for sufficient depth of analysis. Given there were a number of potential combinations, the reasons for choosing the particular artworks from his corpus were based primarily on their relevance to the spatial. Their material composition was also particularly provoking, insofar the collections are more-than-just-representations, working as tools to investigate space in their own right through their subversion of conventional formats. Though assuming multiple mediums, it was decided not to limit empirical focus to one and thereby reduce the potential for nuanced critique. Practically moreover, this gave a depth of material to engage with. Finally, the leftover fragments as they relate to *Fake Estates* and *Office Baroque*, and their role within Matta-Clark's oeuvre more generally, have received significantly less critical attention relative to his other pieces in their initial forms, which have been extensively analysed. As I go on to illustrate, these 'relics' of Matta-Clark are actually not relics at all, but part of the ongoing process of either artwork and continue to disarticulate meaning. These factors greatly enhanced potential for new insight.

3.2 Visual Methods using Reflexive Diary

This dissertation used a visual methodology as its primary approach, enabling an engagement with Matta-Clark beyond a visual analysis of his art (Tolia-Kelly, 2011, 2012; Hawkins, 2011). Though my initial intention was to use a visual analysis framework, it became apparent that this limited the scope of data collection. Not doubting the importance of such semiological approaches for an understanding of the cultural and socio-political relations imbricated in the artworks (Rose, 2001: 91-92), such a focus was secondary to the experience of the works, how they made me feel and think. This was, in part, due to their material variety (i.e. film, photography, text). As Hawkins (2011: 109) argues, artworks are not merely objects but “modes of becoming in the world”, insofar as they are co-constituted through the subject by sensing as well as knowing. For the purposes of this dissertation then, art is taken to be an “ensemble of practice, performances, experiences and artefacts rather than a singular ‘object’” (Dixon, 2008: 7; Hawkins, 2010c).

As such, a reflexive diary (see McGuinness, 2009) was used to widen the research parameters and detail my experience of the pieces both during and after viewing, which I refer the reader to throughout to evidence certain sets of considerations. This enabled reflection on the work done by the artworks to subtly interpolate the viewer within the scene, engage them in dialogue and constant questioning of its elements. The specific focus on valences of space and time emerged out of more general reflections, as demonstrated in the diary. In this regard, following Dewsbury (2010: 324), my body was positioned “directly in the field as a recording machine itself” whereby thoughts, feelings and energies all counted as data. This strategy is concurrent with a move away from interpretation in traditional terms in geography to reflect the embodied “process played out between subject and object” (Rebentisch, 2012: 11), which problematises notions of a detached spectator (Anderson and Harrison, 2010). Widening the interpretive lens to consider Matta-Clark has, in theory, the potential to produce meanings beyond the artist’s intention (Pollock, 1996; Rendell, 2006), though I nevertheless attempt to align the subsequent arguments with his own writings to ensure these interpretations are something he intended us to take out.

Questions of my own subjectivity and visibility are thus highly relevant for unpacking the aesthetic experience (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990: 21). As Berger (1980: 9) argues, seeing is mediated through our own value schema, such that artworks embody “a

way of seeing". As such, interpretation is never neutral but carries with it assumptions relative to our location in space and time, as well prior experience and expectations. While the nature of interpretation is always contingent, limited to my own 'point-of-view', it need not be a limiting factor. This is, insofar as it allows for research outcomes to be evaluated as well as the tracing of my own perspective via the diary (Finlay, 2002; Etherington, 2007). The virtue of such a reflexive approach moreover, was a prolonged engagement which yielded deeper insight, giving validity as well as ethical transparency (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 191). The unfolding of the research process alongside conversations, lectures and readings for instance, caused me to reflect on the work in different ways and made me conscious of the ongoing formation of my own subjectivity, subject to wider influences (Reissman, 2016). Such an appreciation is not only limited to the formation of my own subjectivity of course. It also reveals the selective nature of films and photography which become material for our own argument insofar as the purposeful arrangement of shots is what Matta-Clark chooses to make visible.

3.3 Creative Methods: experimenting with composition

An understanding of the aesthetic encounter as co-constituted also opens up the potential for creative methods based on the course of learning, or the "creative doing" of the researcher (Hawkins, 2011; Tolia Kelly, 2012). Though the dissertation did not begin with the aim of using creative methods, given the arguments developed, it would, perhaps, be remiss of an essay on Matta-Clark's ontologising of space not to question the frameworks within which we represent his work. Arguably, thinking carefully through Matta-Clark's artwork demands a shift in tone and the nature of making claims, insofar as part of the work done by each artwork is to problematise representation and the stability of traditional knowledge structures underpinning them. The plurality of meaning, the trace of the other, as I aim to show, are never finished. Any attempt to untangle and present a positive nominalisation through a classical academic paper as such, is, to fix and thereby contradict. Moreover, our ways of knowing what exist are already imbricated in relations themselves and therefore are without neutrality.

Consequently, I attempt to mobilise Matta-Clark's questioning of the surety of ontological modes to a conceptual end through subverting the conventional format of the dissertation itself. To do this, I take inspiration from Matta-Clark's own word play by experimenting with sentence structure, spelling and font. These irruptions, distributed

through the discussion, as well as in the contents page, work to evoke similar instability. The frequent and purposeful deployment of words such as ‘somewhat’, ‘perhaps’ and ‘seemingly’ can also be considered part of a conscious rhetorical strategy designed to support my understanding of the nature of interpretation and contingency in epistemological terms, that is, the limits of my own subjectivity. These strategies are not intended to be exact imitations of Matta-Clark’s plays, but attempt to grasp something of what happens through engaging with his art. Indeed, the thinking about the nature of representing his work enabled further exploration of the work done by each artwork.

Such conceptual experimentation developed out of engagement and dialogue with the artwork builds on an increasingly popular strand of the creative methods in geography (Last; 2012; Pred, 1995). These explore the potential of innovative modes of research communication in questioning and transcending normative disciplinary writing practices (Foster and Lorimer, 2007; DeSilvey, 2012). As De Leeuw and Marston (2013) argue, it is imperative that these strategies have critical force, rather than merely paying homage. The value of such an approach to Matta-Clark is twofold. First, it acts to convey my own aesthetic experience and demonstrate an understanding of the concepts and rules, or lack thereof, he is working with. Second, such techniques work to ground worldly relations themselves and open a “new space of encounter” (Jonker and Till, 2009). This is, insofar as writing itself is a space, a mode of inquiry as argued by Richardson (1994), deployed here to continue processes that do not end with the artwork.

4.0 Literature Review

The following chapter attends first to the critical reception of Matta-Clark. An extensive review is beyond the scope of this dissertation; thus, it outlines the main interpretive logics through which his work has been understood. This highlights the most relevant contributions for this dissertation and the areas that have been insufficiently examined. The second section outlines the core tenets of the theoretical frameworks used, providing the reader with the armature to think alongside the empirical reflections presented.

4.1 Reception

The first interpretive logic underpinning the reception of Matta-Clark's work has focused on the artistic critique raised. Crow et al. (2006) and Graham et. al (2010), for instance, have emphasised how Matta-Clark's site-specific works function to challenge typical notions of the art object – a disillusionment attributed to his education at Cornell. Lee's (2000: xiii) seminal monograph *Object to be Destroyed* explores how his corpus lends itself as a critique of the "ontological security" of the art object. She speculates, as do Bois and Krauss (1997), that Matta-Clark's relationship with Smithson at Cornell was a formative influence, exemplified by his own entropic and site-specific works – which the latter made famous. In doing so, she is specifically writing against early commentaries which attempt to connect Matta-Clark's antipathy toward artistic convention to the then concurrent trend, the art object as dematerialised (Pincus-Witten, 1985; Lippard, 1973).

Though Lee provides important conceptual anchors in this regard, and indeed, her starting points are much the same as this account, insofar as Matta-Clark's "shifts in scale and vertiginous mode[s] of address refuse interpretive consolidation" (2000, xiv), her account overlooks dimensions of Matta-Clark's oeuvre as a series of performances within a wider process – which he emphasised so heavily. More pertinently, she does not attend to his experimental use of different mediums to document his works. As she writes (2000: 296), "we will not speak about the artist's photographic montages". The reasons for this are unclear, but it is seemingly implied they do not count as 'real' Matta-Clark works, insofar as they are only representations. The work of Zacharias (2011) and particularly Fer (2007) addresses this oversight. They argue that his experimental use of these artistic mediums through photocollage, montage and Cibachrome serve as conduits for spatial exploration as well as representing material questions in their own right. Indeed, Fer's (2007) thesis directly

connects these stylistic photographic plays, which included cuts themselves, with Matta-Clark's architectural alterations. It is their understanding of Matta-Clark's art as still present and crucially a *process* that continues to produce meaning, rather than a collection of dematerialised objects and relics accessible only through photography and film, that provides critical currency for the following account.

The second main interpretive logic charts Matta-Clark's anti-formalist agenda and his socio-political critique of the overly functionalist built environment. Emphasising the particular historical juncture from which his work emerged – marked by rapid deindustrialisation and urban renewal – critics have argued that his artworks are not only an attack on Modernist functionalist architectural precepts put forward by Le Corbusier, but on capitalism more generally (Bois and Krauss, 1997; Bessa et al., 2017). Such accounts, employing semiotic analytic frameworks, emphasise the politically loaded choice of sites and violent transforming of buildings consigned as urban waste. Symptomatic of the “urban condition” (Matta-Clark int. Kirshner: 360), these projects aimed to disrupt the very capitalist framing that produced them as static and merely functional (Hovagimyan, 2016). His brand of radical urbanism has drawn comparisons to the Situationist International movement (1957-72), who similarly aimed to challenge the urban subject by reorganising space (Schumacher, 2008). While his artworks often had a social end, they had wider purpose in altering the “regulating system devised to organise one's perception of a whole” (Matta-Clark int. Wall). Lee (2000) argues, using the work of Bataille as well as Lefebvre (1991) – a common analytical move in much of the critical reception – that his violent structural alterations are less to do with the buildings themselves as the capitalist order imposed on them. In other words, architecture is merely Matta-Clark's artistic substrate, a vehicle to challenge the social injustices of the system within which we are embedded – view also taken by Atlee in Sussman (2007: 71-82).

Confining Matta-Clark within this straightjacket of political meaning is arguably to overlook much of the nuance of his works, especially their spatial dimensions. As noted, the reliance of cultural materialist accounts on theorists associated with a brand of Marxist thought – and I am aware of the violence inherent in grouping and labelling them as such – produce a cluster of similar accounts that employ an understanding of space that privileges the interaction between labour and capital (Deutsche, 1996). Though the art history literature raises some important concerns about the socio-political framings of the architectural and capitalist critique, however I do not think this exhausts the artwork, especially for a

geographical understanding of space. Here, Walker's (2009) monograph – a central study this dissertation builds on – offers a modulation of popular accounts that position Matta-Clark as merely in opposition to Modernism and basic riposte to the systematisation of form and prioritisation of functionalism within Modernist architecture. Drawing on similar ideas outlined by Bois and Krauss (1997: 191), Walker argues Matta-Clark uses established architectural rules and methods against themselves as tools to disrupt binary artistic-architectural thinking. As such, Matta-Clark works both *within* and against the Modernist frame, rather than only in opposition to it. Though grounded mainly in architectural theory, these ideas have real cogency with the following theoretical frameworks outlined.

In sum, the critical reception of his work has extensively documented his work as a form of radical urbanism oriented at undermining Modernist artistic and architectural principles, as well as the injustices of capitalism more generally. Not doubting the insight gained by this way of framing, it has failed to fully account for the difference and nuance his works engender in relation to space and signification.

4.2 Exposition of core theoretical frameworks

The theoretical framework used to advance the subsequent reflections owes much to the thought of Jacques Derrida. His philosophy is concerned with understanding the conditions of possibility that gives presence and meaning. Though Derrida's framework was not designed to explain such artwork – in this regard there are some salient conceptual-empirical disconnects – there is, I suggest, some real cogency with Matta-Clark's use of signification and notions of structure and *différance*. Any exegesis of his work, and a brief one at that, cannot help but do some injustice to his ideas, thus I limit the following to a focussed discussion of these concepts.

4.2.1 *Différance*

As noted, Derrida's project questions the conditions of possibility for the comprehension and comprehensiveness of truth, the potential for its closure and representation. In this regard, he is explicitly writing against the Western tradition which he claimed sought a unity to things that we name as nouns, a meaning there to be grasped. His aim was to displace the underlying ontological presumptions responsible for giving form and meaning a fixed and stable appearance, in order to "modify the terrain of our work and thereby produce new

configurations” (1995: 24). To develop his theory of deconstruction, best understood as a practice of reading according to Lüdemann (2014: 27), he problematises the relationship between speech and writing, proposing that “there is nothing outside the text” (1976: 58). He argued that fixed and singular meaning was only possible on the basis of repetition of signs such that meaning is imagined as directly behind these signs. This logic of iterability was, at the same time, both to repeat *and* differ. This is, insofar each time something is repeated, it differs slightly as the context is different and so on. If a mark is repeatable, then it must, in principle, be infinitely repeatable and open to infinite (different) future contexts (Loxley, 2007: 77). Thus, its meaning can never be fully exhausted. As such, a sign or representation is never fully at one with itself, its essence is both to come and already gone. For instance, the claim that a word ‘is’ something fails to comprehend as it invokes a stability and wholeness that is not there. Instead, underneath every presence, meaning, truth and representation, is a flickering of *différance*.

Derrida’s notion of (the movement of) ‘*différance*’ articulates the difficulties of representing and knowing difference. In *Of Grammatology* (1976: 158) he identifies (the movement of) *différance* as that which comes first, which allows us to name, know and grasp any thing as that thing. For Derrida, this movement (*différance*) can never be named and known without ceasing to be *différance*. The trace of *différance*, which is constitute of any thing, is always effaced through its grasping, naming and fixing. In other words, its non-identity escapes any knowing or representing, it is both present and absent simultaneously. As such, the meaning of a sign is never at home with itself, by virtue of its internal difference from itself. This otherness of the other can only be marked by our not knowing, by the way it vanishes or is effaced – hence it only appears by dissimulation. To put this in plainer terms, any statement that claims *différance* is something is to miss the point.

4.2.2 Structure

The structure, for Derrida, is invoked to stop this movement of difference. In ‘Structure, Sign and Play’, Derrida (1995: 279) writes that:

“Structure, or rather the structurality of the structure ... has always been neutralised or reduced [in Western science and philosophy] by a process of giving it a centre or referring to a point of presence, a fixed origin.”

In other words, the establishment of a structure is contingent upon the fixing of a centre, which gives it coherence. As such, the centre is always based on an exclusion of elements; indeed, this is what lends it form, truth and meaning. What is significant here for our understanding of Matta-Clark and representation, is that the structuring principle limits the “play of its elements within the total form” (ibid). This is, insofar as the potential for the movement of difference is prevented. This is to invoke an order and structure to what is, in fact, only ever a proliferation of differences, hence the paradoxical terming of the structure as “contradictorily coherent” (ibid).

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Fake Estates

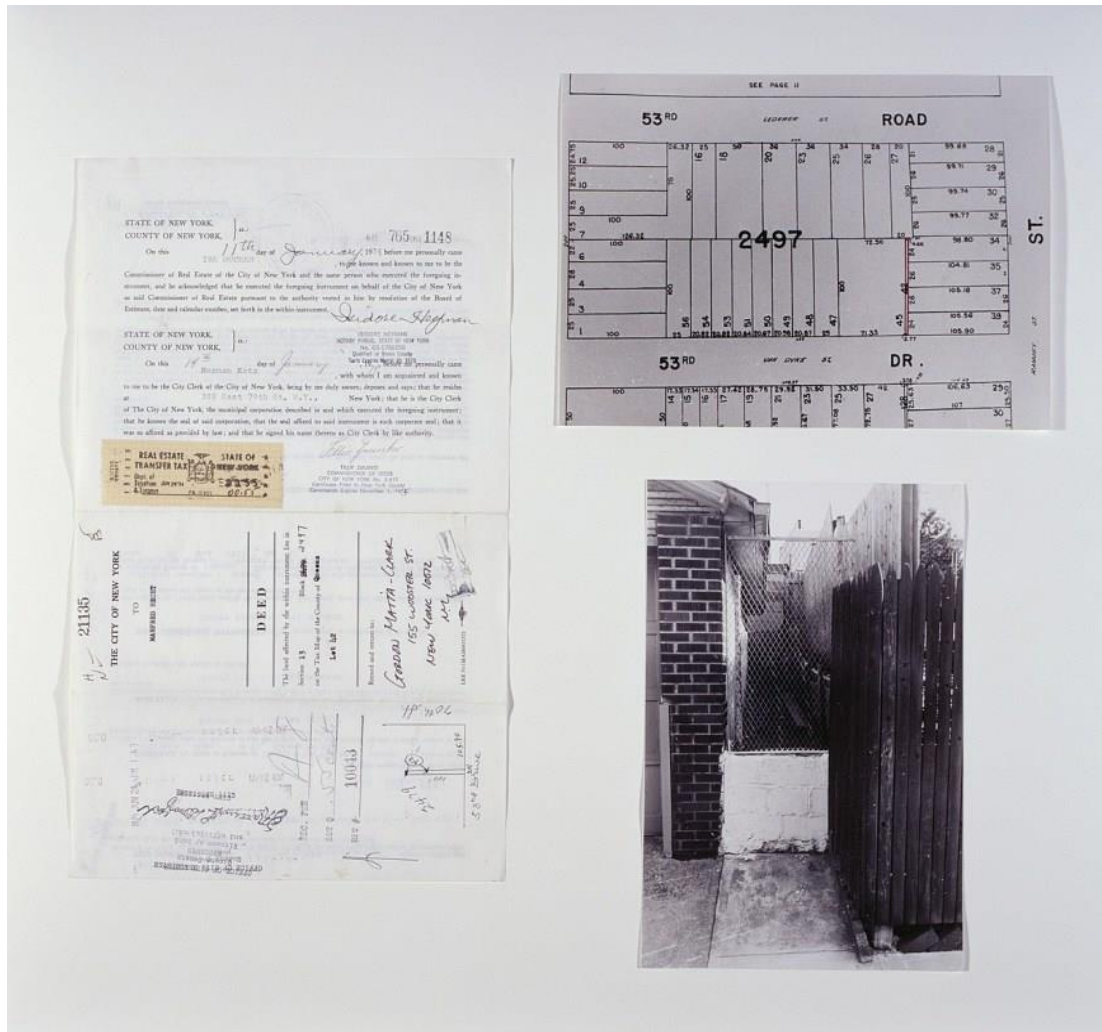


Figure 1: Reality Properties: Fake Estates, "Little Alley", Block 2497, Lot 42 (1974). Bottom right: Black and white photographs; left: Deed of property; top right: architectural map of area. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

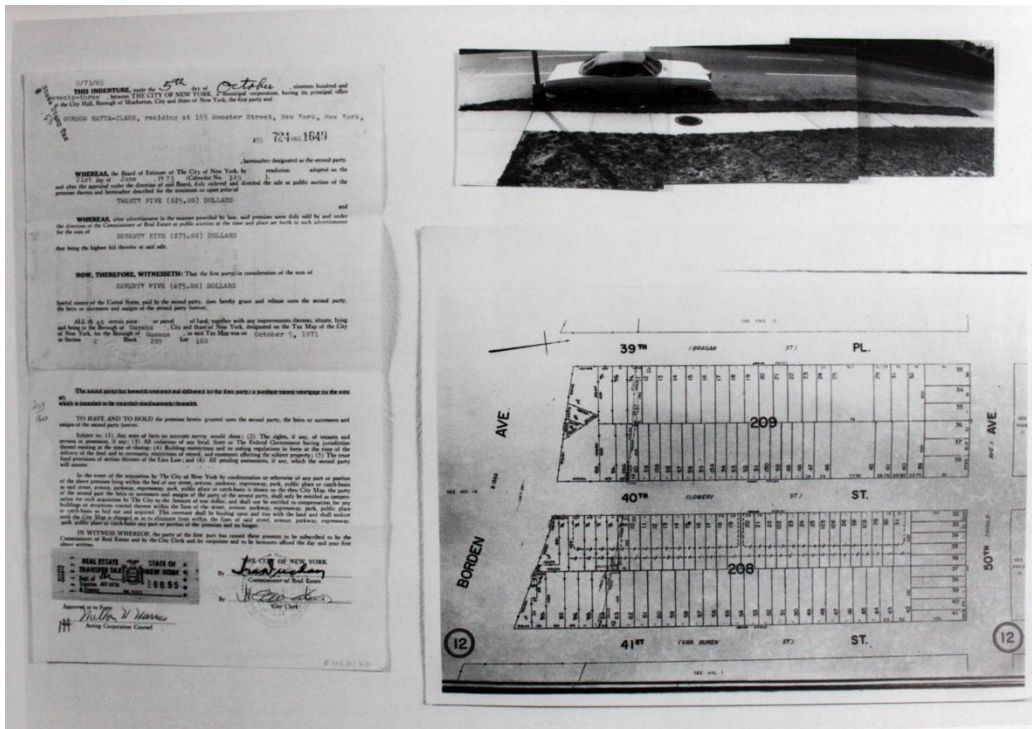


Figure 2: Reality Properties: Fake Estates, "Sidewalk Grass", Block 1107, Lot 146, (1973). Top right: Black and white photograph; left: Deed of property; bottom right: architectural map of area. Private collection

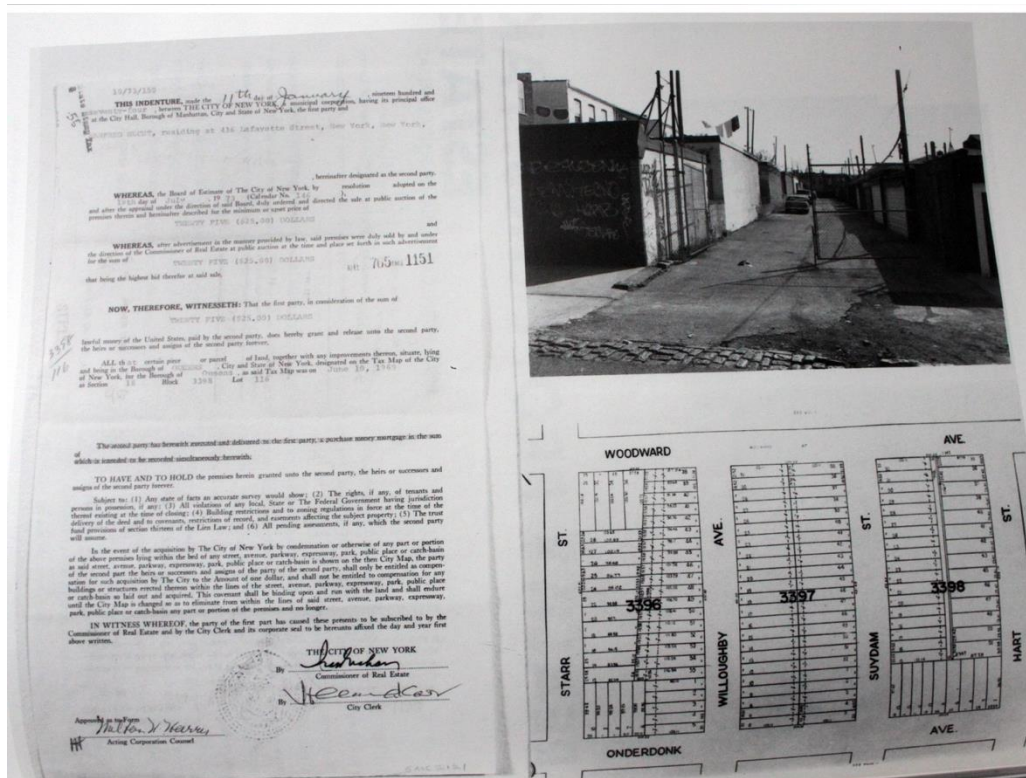


Figure 3: Reality Properties: Fake Estates, "Long Alley", Block 3398, Lot 116, (1973). Top right: Black and white photograph; left: Deed of property; bottom right: Architectural map of area. Genrali Foundation, Vienna

“WE WORK TO DISPROVE THE COMMON BELIEF THAT ALL STARTS WITH THE PLAN.
THERE ARE FORMS WITHOUT PLANS – DYNAMIC ORDERS AND DISORDERS”

(Matta-Clark, int. Kirshner: 390)

Reality Properties: Fake Estates (1973) consists of a collection of photographs, plans and documents that detail an assortment of properties purchased by Matta-Clark from the local authority in New York for \$25-75. These leftover spaces included curb sides and alleyways, arising from surveying errors and zoning anomalies. The reception of *Fake Estates* has, albeit briefly, focused on the paradoxical nature of the spaces, presented as existing outside the architectural realm and interrupting the assumption that real estate is a closed system that is fully mapped out (Lee, 2000; Johung, 2008). However, in labelling them simply as counter-sites to the regulated spatial order overlooks, I suggest, Matta-Clark’s more nuanced achievement here. I claim his representation of the plots speaks to a more disquieting aspect of the work, one which is not necessarily in keeping with the socio-political critique his work is thought to raise. I argue that the visual composition of the piece works to problematise the representation of space, which is always inaccessible. This is, insofar as the possibility of knowing space as different is effaced through its structuring, indeed, it appears only through its dissimulation. In this regard, only through the encounter with representations limits is space revealed as open and dynamic. Using a vignette, I proceed with a brief exposition of the piece, which problematises representation, before reflecting on the merits of the work in developing an understanding of the spatial.

V1: “Matta-Clark’s purchase of the plots admits them within the real estate economy, demonstrated by the three modes of description: a documentary photograph, an amended architectural map of the city grid and legal papers detailing proof of purchase. He is seemingly articulating how his plots can be represented in multiple forms, contingent upon particular dimensions of the spatial. Yet these are all supposedly comprehensive and exhaustive representations. By juxtaposing them, the viewer is seemingly encouraged to question and reflect on what is missing from each ostensibly coherent register. Their failure to represent the plots in their entirety hints at the spatial as something more than what is represented. Indeed, the assumption that space can be captured by the map is disrupted through its own amendment to include to the plots.” (Diary, 31.02.19).

When read together, rather than producing a self-consistent representation of the space, each description is revealed as based on an exclusion of spatial elements. While

individually coherent and thought of as universal, the juxtaposition of each mode reveals contradictory spatial claims to the plots. For instance, the map presents the spatial as a fixed and horizontal surface, whereas the contract outlines its physical dimensions and economic value (Figures 1, 2, 3). Their totalising and definitive claims to the plots are consequently undermined, insofar as they are shown to be based on limited spatial dimensions. In demonstrating the disruptions inherent in each, their coherence as tools to represent the spaces are undermined. Indeed, each medium works to disarticulate and contest the other, such that the plots are refused any sort of decidability or unified meaning. The failure to represent the plots also challenges the viewer's imagination of space as something captured and made legible by the map. By illustrating its limits, as well as the other modes of spatial description, the viewer is compelled to consider space as something more than what is represented – a dimension of the work returned to further on. Through its very visual composition, Matta-Clark appears to mimic the original premise of the piece. This is, insofar as the previous omission of the spaces from real estate discourse is aligned with the impossibility of their representation as newly legible plots.

In this regard, space is used as an interpretive device to problematise the accuracy of the representation. The highlighting of omitted space from the map, for instance, speaks to the limits of the structure of knowledge it rests on. Here, Derrida's notion of the structure is particularly pertinent. As he notes, the "structure ... has always been reduced by the process of giving it a centre" (1966: 279). In the case of the map, it is this centre, or point of origin which gives it presence and form and, at the same time, forecloses the potential for the movement of *différance*. In making these spaces legible within the real estate economy, the fixing of the map around a centre is exposed. Indeed, its presence is displaced by the instability of defined boundaries between public and private property. As such, Matta-Clark seemingly demonstrates what Derrida terms the "contradictory coherence" of the structure (*ibid*). This is, insofar as the map's attempt to invoke a complete and consistent claim to the space is shown to be merely a "palimpsest covering over alternative spatial configurations" (Huggan, 1989: 24). It might also be said that the use of maps to re-represent the very spaces that were occluded adds a further dimension, insofar as it is used to critique its own claim to coherency. Hence, the map is not wrong in and of itself, but rather it is shown to produce a certain type of knowledge claim that is inherently reductive and closed in the face of the plurality (of possible spatial configurations).

Space, as presented in *Fake Estates*, is seemingly inaccessible, existing beyond the bounds of representation. Such a claim jars with the, albeit brief, reception to the work. Both Lee (2000: 158) and Johung (2008: 39) argue the plots act as counter-sites to the regulated spatial order, existing outside of the architectural realm and acting as interruptions to the illusory framing of space according to capital. These arguments hold some currency, as indeed, the epistemological limits of representing the spaces through real estate discourses also demonstrates its arbitrary nature. However, it would seem that in privileging the materiality of the spaces, in tandem with their potential for offering a Marxist critique in undermining normative understandings of property value (Lee, 2000: 159), that both overlook the significance of the act of representation. This is, insofar as by giving space form within the real estate economy, Matta-Clark forgoes their exceptional nature, as outside the architectural space, and with it, the possibility of knowing them as such.

To help us think through this claim, let us consider Foucault's notion of heterotopia – “an absolutely differentiated space” – which is ostensibly analogous to Lee's (2000: see pages 157-161) understanding of *Fake Estates* as exposing the arbitrary nature of real estate. Indeed, both seemingly function to “create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory” (Foucault, 1986: 25-27). However, by acquiring and representing the plots, Matta-Clark subsumes them within the economy of real estate, demonstrating the limits of Foucault's argument in this case in the process. They are no longer “absolutely differentiated”, but merely a part of the formal system. Indeed, what distinguishes the plots as outside architectural space rather, is only ever their *previous* omission. Matta-Clark can only hint at this, insofar as their strangeness only conveyed in relation to what they existed against. Their fixing within the real estate economy negates the possibility for their absolute differentiation, as simply outside. Thus, Matta-Clark's achievement here is not as simple as merely exposing ‘other’ space in binary terms, but rather, following Blanchot (1967: 307-8), to highlight “space which is ever only the proximity of another space, the closeness of the faraway, the beyond”. These spaces, whether or not Matta-Clark's intention, work to question the possibility of the absolute otherness of space.

This tension is perhaps better marked out through Derrida's notion of (the movement of) ‘différance’, as introduced in the literature review. As noted, the trace of *différance* always escapes any knowing or representing. This otherness of the other can only be shown by its non-identity, that is to say, it only appears via dissimulation. What is significant here for our

understanding of *Fake Estates* is that in the attempt to distinguish an “absolutely differentiated” space, if this indeed his aim, Matta-Clark precludes the very possibility of their arrival through identification, mapping and description, which translates them into the formal system of real estate. Düttmann (2001: 3) addresses such a contradiction, explaining that “the moment we relate to that which was never before, we have transformed it into something recognisable, as if it had always been”. As such, these previously omitted plots are never returned, but are only ever proximal, phantom spaces – unreachable by these modes of representation. Indeed, we might say that the spatial is trapped, and therefore limited by, the structures Matta-Clark is attempting to critique. Hence, the nature of space remains inaccessible, always displaced through its fixing.

In this regard, any attempt to grasp the nature of the spatial through *Fake Estates* must transcend the representational boundaries of the artwork. As Heathfield (2000: 21) notes, “in the moments of representational crash performance opens meaning and sends the spectator elsewhere”. Indeed, this also resonates with Hawkins’ (2012) claim that the aesthetic experience is a creative and transformative event and holds open the possibility for new meanings to emerge. As alluded to, in illustrating the limits of each representation the viewer is challenged to imagine space as something more than what is represented (Diary, 22.02.19). This is, insofar as the artwork works both to exemplify the failures of representation as well as articulate space as something beyond what is fixed by the map or other contingent modes. Indeed, this performative space of representation offers us a glimpse of space as something more, existing in its dissimulation, or trace. This is only ever an instantaneous act of witness, as Dewsbury (2003: 1910) notes, wherein the event of limited representation lies a “space where we apprehend that inaccessible quality but for a fleeting moment ... through a personal register”. Presenting a positive nominalisation of such is, therefore, only ever to reduce and contradict.

there are forms

without plans, *dynamic ORDERS*

and *Disor*

d

ers

I have just broken the formatting rules for this dissertation as a direct analogy for Matta-Clark's breaking of representational structures. Indeed, the sentence should read: "there are forms without plans, dynamic orders and disorders" (Matta-Clark, 1974). In writing as such, Matta-Clark is seemingly intimating space as more than what is contained in these fixed and contingent modes. The experimentation shows a sentence without a plan, as disorderly assortment of words with variable fonts, spacing and capitalisation. As I have tried to show, presenting a positive nominalisation of the spatial is only ever to fix it and reduce it. Thus, I have attempted to disrupt normative writing practice to show the element of disorder that is essential to an understanding of the spatial.

Indeed, the nature of the spatial can only be inferred through its relation to the closure of the representational structure. From this we can, nevertheless, deduce space as unfinished, an ongoing process that is open to difference and iteration, through the failure of fixed and contingent modes to fix it. It is this condition of becoming, bound to time, that ultimately resists taming by the map which the viewer is confronted with. Indeed, the locating of these plots as previously outside architectural space, as well as the impossibility of their representation, resonates with Massey's (2005: 103) diagnosis of space as a "dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals". This is, insofar as the plots work to dislocate the existing, temporally insensitive spatial configuration. It is precisely this openness and potential to be that forecloses any possibility of its capturing through a closed and formal representation. With regard to knowing the plots as they paradoxically exist, we could say, again following Derrida, that the spaces hold an anarchic relation to alterity,

anarchy here being used in its etymological sense as being before, or without the rule. This is, insofar as the relation of the non-relation will have already taken place as that to which knowing responds.

In sum, *Fake Estates* produces a critical understanding of the spatial only through the dissimulation of its parts and relation to closed structures. As such, we can infer the spatial to be always open to difference and in a constant state of becoming. On the whole, space is fixed and reduced through each representation. But for a fleeting encounter through the performative space of representation as it were, space remains inaccessible through the limits of representation. This is, moreover, inherently problematic to represent as such, the representational confines work to limit our grasp of it.

5.2 Office Baroque



Figure 4: "Office Baroque". (1977). Collection: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

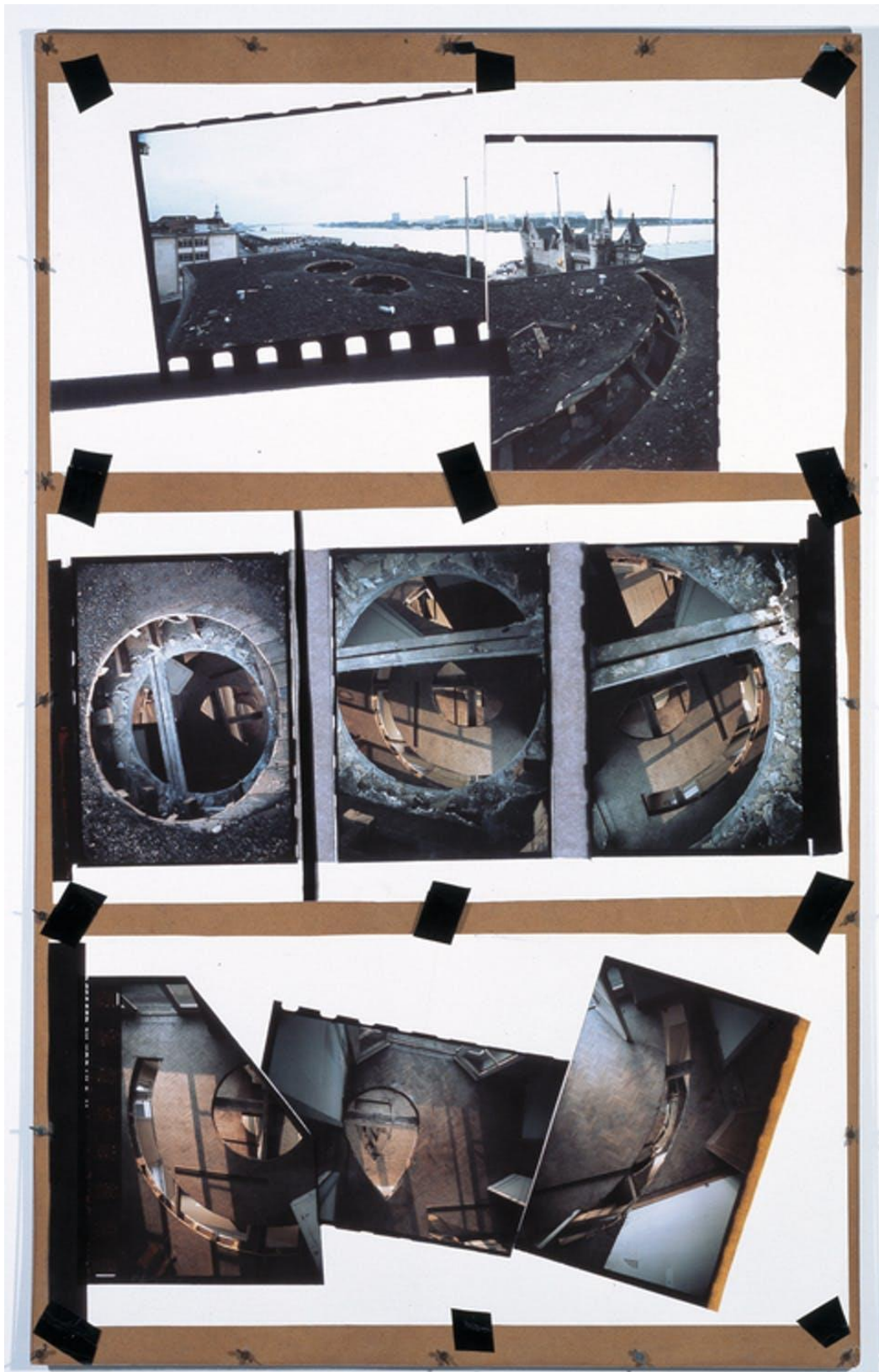


Figure 5: Office Baroque #669. (1977). Collection: Collection M HKA, Antwerp

“There are certain kinds of pieces that can be summarised – or at least characterised – very quickly from a single view. And there are other ones which interest me more, finally, which have a kind of internal spatial complexity which doesn’t allow for a single and overall view.”

(Matta-Clark int. Kirshner: 390)

Prior to its demolition, *Office Baroque* (1977) was comprised of interlinking circular sculptural incisions, arcing from the basement to the ceiling in a five-storey building in Antwerp. These structural absences, voids and negative spaces produced, as Matta-Clark put it, “an ever-changing promenade of internal views” that refused consolidation from one position (int. Kirshner: 389). Reflecting on my own inability to form a complete view of the piece through the remaining collections of photography and film, I suggest that the site of the artwork is expanded through the experimental use of these mediums such that a similar effect is evoked. This is, insofar the viewer is enrolled to construct the space, which is only ever partially depicted, through multi-sensory means. In this regard, Matta-Clark makes explicit the embodied experience of the work, revealing the spatial as intimate and sensuous. This results in potential for new meanings, indeed; each medium takes on a degree of autonomy such that it is read anew each time, such that meaning is never complete, but constantly deferred. I proceed by briefly describing the piece, before discussing each medium in turn. I then reflect on the implications for space and knowledge claims more generally.

V1: “The beam of light streaming into the rooms brilliantly illuminates the cuts and makes me feel at ease. It is as if this dark, sombre building slated for imminent demolition is being injected with energy one final time. It feels alive ... the tear drop shaped cut evokes a certain melancholy, as well surprise, indeed, the building has seemingly infinite depths.” (Diary, 14.03.19).

Office Baroque was Matta-Clark’s final major building sculpture before his death. He intended it to be an “ongoing act for the passer-by” and likened it to a theatre performance that would disrupt preconceptions of the architectural form as static, showing it to be part of wider processes of urban renewal (int. Kirshner: 388). He removed sections of walls and floors, creating voids that challenged aesthetic form and disrupted sensory perception (Figure 4). Indeed, to experience the work was to be “seized by vertigo” such that one lost their bearing between horizontal and vertical (Bois, 1997: 191). This captures the visceral shock that cutting through the structure of the building triggered. In addition, the use of light,

as highlighted in the vignette, worked to reveal the architectural materiality within and change the feel of an otherwise derelict building. These phenomenological and sensory aspects of the artistic encounter are crucial; indeed, Matta-Clark explicitly wrote that he wanted its spatial complexity to defy reduction to a perceivable whole and extend beyond merely the visual (int. Kirshner: 390). In this regard, his voids, or “working with absence” as he termed it, was to “open up a view to the invisible”, or fuller experience of the space (cited in Sussman, 2007: 21). While the leftover fragments of the initial sculptural form have been consigned as mere documentation, incomparable to the physical form (Lee, 2000: 191), this is to overlook Matta-Clark’s creative experimentations with each medium, which renders them more-than-just representations. Walker (2004: 133) concurs in relation to his documentation of his cuts more generally, arguing they too work to extend the experience.

“WHEN A MEASUREMENT DOESN'T WORK ... A MORE INTIMATE NOTION OF SPACE BEGINNINGS” (Articles & Documents 1942-77)

Matta-Clark’s use of photomontage challenges the viewer to make sense of the spatial complexity of the sculpture, creating a new space of encounter which expands the site of the artwork. As shown in Figure 5, cut-up fragments of photograph depicting multiple views are positioned at odd angles, distorting perspective and disorienting the viewer. Here, the cutting process is extended from the building to the “sacred photo framing process” considered by Matta-Clark as “equally violatable” (int. Kirshner: 377; Walker, 2004). The effect, an unconscious tilting head movement to grasp the space within the image (Diary, 10.03.19). This was seemingly Matta-Clark’s intention, insofar as the photomontages were “an approximation of this kind of ambulatory ‘getting to know’” the space (int. Kirshner: 332). The use of blank areas surrounding each cut-out fragment are also significant, insofar as the viewer relies on imagination to form the rest of the space beyond what is depicted (Diary, *ibid*). Absence, in other words, works to interpolate the viewer within the scene to fill the partial space based on their memory of other views (*ibid*). Indeed, the role of memory was something Matta-Clark explicitly aimed to incorporate in the initial sculpture, insofar as it “encourage[d] the inclusion of some sort of expanded being” (int. Wall: 30). Thus, part of the work done by the photomontage is to inspire a sensation of being within the sculpture itself, “a more intimate notion of space” perhaps, by extending the effect of the physical cuts into the present. In this sense, the photograph (Figure 5) does not merely work to represent the space but becomes a subject through which space is understood.

At the same time, the epistemological limits of the photograph as a representation of the space are exposed. This is, insofar as the viewer's role in partially self-generating an image of the space means that it is read anew each time. Its disruption of perception means the viewer is enrolled in a "discursive exchange" with each element of the photomontage, such that they are implicated deeply within the production of a view of space (Burton, 2009: 73; Diary, 19.04.19). Indeed, Fer (2007: 142) comes to similar conclusions about the extension of the site of the work, writing: "the space we, as viewers, move in, can also be thought of as a kind of open seam or join that is unhinged in the encounter with the image". The opening up of this space, insofar as aesthetic experience is co-constituted, works to undermine the stability of the initially indexed sculptural form (Zacharias, 2011: 58). This is to say that the role of the viewer in helping imagine and construct the rest of the space results in the potential for a multiplicity of views and meanings, in so doing exposing the photograph as an always limited representation of the space. As such, the photomontage refuses a clear conception of the whole spatial complexity of the piece, and with it, the possibility of fixed and final meaning.

The film (Matta-Clark, d. Florent Bex [1977] 2003) also refuses the viewer a complete viewing of the sculpture and challenges what exactly constitutes the art 'object'. It focuses on the cutting process and circumvents a linear narrative by interspersing shots of the 'final' sculptural form throughout, providing a different version of what the artwork was about. Its patchwork quality, as if the linear progression of shots themselves had been cut up and rearranged to evoke the material effect of the cuts, makes the viewer question what constitutes the work of art (Diary, 22.2.19). Indeed, the viewer is left to consider whether the work of art is the process of cutting, or the 'finished' object. Moreover, the complication of temporality makes the viewer reflect on the extent to which the film itself represents an extension of the artistic process, insofar as it continues to disarticulate meaning (ibid). Despite its potential for moving pictures unlike the photomontage, the film only ever provides partial views of the sculpture, such that a realisation of its whole is similarly inconceivable. As such, the film questions what constitutes the art as well as the possibility of an overall view, such that it too refuses a single meaning.

What I have attempted to show here is that each medium conveys neither a complete experience of the spatial dimensions nor a singular meaning of the initial sculpture. Rather, each medium opens up their own space of encounter through their creative alterations, which works to refuse a univocal impression. It is this difference which enables the potential

for multiple meanings. Read together, each provides a different version of what constitutes the artwork, whether it be its spatial dimensions that are only ever metonymic of a wider and always inconceivable whole, or by blurring the boundaries of what constitutes the artwork itself. Derrida's notion of 'différance' outlined previously, has further critical value here. Indeed, following his logic of iterability, each medium continues to both repeat and differ. It repeats insofar as the artistic process does not end with initial sculptural form, as each medium continues to partially reproduce the effect of the material cuts. On the other hand, meaning differs through the aesthetic encounter which is further opened up through creative alterations. This is, insofar as each element takes on an autonomy of its own through its relationship with the viewer, creating an interpretive distance from the initial sculptural form. For Derrida, the authority of the work thus transfers to the "unauthorised interventions of the interpreter, who can take advantage with his own choices of passageways the author never entered" (Cumming, 1981: 519). Indeed, it might be said that each presents their own "ever-changing promenade of internal views" such that it holds the potential to be read anew each time, mimetic of the spatial complexity of the initial form (Matta-Clark, int. Kirshner: 389). This is apparently partly intentional. Matta-Clark writes: "the whole looking at the piece being made and having been finished becomes a narrative which is subject to all kind of variations" (int. Kirshner: 391). Hence, meaning can never be fully exhausted, insofar as it does not fully reside within the original sculptural form, nor does it exist in any foreseeable destiny to come. As such, it is constantly deferred and never reaches a final, fixed form.

I have again purposely disrupted this quotation, written about *Office Baroque* by Matta-Clark, to capture iterative nature of meaning. The sentence reads: “WORKING IN SEVERAL DIMENSIONS ... KEEPING IT AN ONGOING OPEN PROCESS NOT FINISHING JUST KEEPING GOING” (Articles and Documents). Indeed, this suggests real cogency with the arguments outlined, insofar as Matta-Clark seemingly realised his work was an ongoing process that operated across multiple registers and mediums. Beyond these resonances, note the repetition of the sentence, but also difference, insofar as it moves from left to right down the page and finishes in a different location. This speaks to the autonomy of each medium and the iterability of meaning itself.

V2: “*The motif of constant movement in the film, whether it be the process of cutting, or the hustle of the street below as captured through the pierced exterior, makes me feel the building has worth, has life. And yet, the way the light lingers over the cuts in the montage, never quite fully illuminating the room ... It’s almost as if the sun is setting on the building itself. Indeed, its usefulness is no more, and it is soon to be demolished.*” (Diary, 22.03.19)

This proliferation of differences is exemplified through the affective dimension of the aesthetic encounter with each medium, which speaks to the openness of the spatial. As Hawkins and Straughan (2014: 103) note, affect is characterised by “extra-discursive, extra-textual moments of intensity, reactions in/on the body at the level of matter” (also see Grosz, 2008; O’Sullivan, 2009). As Dewsbury (2003: 1910) notes, the performative space of the artwork evokes a “moment of connection of that draws you in to a sense of belonging ... more so than you were a moment before”. Indeed, the registering of a moods and sensations associated with the artwork as indicated in both vignettes, is brought to the fore in each

medium, making it a crucial part of any experience of the space generated. In this sense, we might infer the spatial as always part of the realm of the sensible, open to chance and imaginative possibility, or, as Thrift (2006: 139) himself terms it, a “processual sensualism”. As such, the value schema, experiences and memories of the viewer are folded into the experience of space. Indeed, following Massey (2005: 105), it is possible to see the spatial as an “arena of possible becoming”. It is precisely this openness and potential to be that forecloses any possibility of its capture through a closed and formal representation.

Indeed, this sensuous, affective dimension of the spatial also illustrates the limits of a Derridean understanding. As Crang and Thrift (2000: 20) argue, Derrida’s writings “seem to lack sticky viscosity of life, of the friction of movement”. Moreover, this becoming, as co-constituted through the artwork, is to issue an ontological claim, insofar as it affirms the existence, or truth to the sensory realm. As we have seen, Derrida’s project is set up to destabilise the surety of such statements, the possibility of a phenomenological subject as it were. In contrast, Matta-Clark’s “intimate” spaces push the viewer to consider the space of the body, and particularly the mind, as always part of the piece, as well as the functioning of the mind through imagination and memory as a central part of embodied experience. As such, the usefulness of Derrida to understand *Office Baroque* is perhaps limited here. Indeed, following Deleuze (1986: 14), we must “reject simultaneously the form of a consciousness or a subject, and the groundlessness of an undifferentiated abyss”. Thus, Matta-Clark plays with different registers of meaning, in this case predominantly the sensible, to illustrate the generative nature of space and subsequently undermine structures that attempt to fix it.

6.0 Conclusion

This dissertation has explored how the artwork of Gordon Matta-Clark offers geography the potential to think anew about space. In doing so, it has attempted to address significant oversight in the existing reception, which has focussed on his work as a form of radical urbanism and a critique of cultural norms and artistic-architectural practices, instead of the deep insight into the dynamic and open nature of space. To facilitate a move away from the analytical tendencies of art history, this dissertation widened its interpretive scope to consider Matta-Clark's artworks as co-constituted through the thinking, feeling body. It has examined how *Fake Estates* and *Office Baroque* produce an understanding of space, arguing that each piece demonstrates the impossibility of its representing, such that it is revealed as dynamic and in a constant state of becoming.

In *Fake Estates*, Matta-Clark challenged the doctrine of defining space through mapping and other purportedly universal modes of description used to translate the plots into the real estate economy. Through the visual composition of the piece, each description is revealed as contingent upon an exclusion of spatial elements, undermining their totalising and coherent claims to the space. The newly legible plots challenge fixed spatial imaginaries as implied by the map, underlining the importance of an understanding of space as intertwined with time. In this sense, the spatial can be understood as always unfinished, an ongoing formation of configurations open to difference and iteration. Indeed, it is this disruptive potential and openness that precludes any possibility of its complete representation. As such, the artwork produces a critical understanding of the spatial through its relation to the closure of the representational structure. Further, the possibility of knowing these spaces as other than, or as "absolutely differentiated" from the capitalist instantiation of real estate (Foucault, 1986), is effaced through their very representing through such descriptions. Thus, we are only ever witness to their dissimulation through the performative event of the artwork, as space remains inaccessible through such representations.

In contrast, *Office Baroque* works to produce more intimate notion of space through the complexity of its form. This has a profound effect on the sensual, thereby highlighting the open, embodied and sensual nature of space. Specifically, Matta-Clark's use of experimental mediums extends the effect of material cuts. Though not the initial sculpture, the photomontage and film are more-than-just-representations and work to similarly evoke the intimate space and multiplicity of views that the original sculpture engendered. The

montage in particular becomes a subject through which the space is understood insofar as it calls on the capacity of memory and imagination through the strategic use of absence and distortion of perspective. In this sense, Matta-Clark centres the space of the body at the forefront of the experience of the work. Space as such is understood as contingent upon sensory registers, mediated through the subject's own positionality and thus open to chance and imaginative possibility. As such, space is read anew each time, and mushrooms into a multiplicity of potential views and meanings.

I have also argued that part of the work of either artwork is to question the nature of the claim and problematise traditional knowledge structures underpinning representation. In both cases, space is used to illustrate the contingency of representation, and functions as an interpretive device through which meaning is destabilised. In the case of *Fake Estates*, space is revealed as open through the breaking apart of representation as a closed structure by identifying and disrupting its centre. In *Office Baroque*, the epistemological limits of each medium are revealed through its always partial view of the space. Their creative alterations, moreover, work to incorporate the sensual such that meaning is constantly deferred through interaction with the viewer. The destabilising of meaning in both work challenges ontological modes of surety through undermining the concept of representation, such that thinking carefully about Matta-Clark necessitates a shift in the nature of the claim, what it means to represent. Indeed, this offered a springboard for experimenting with conventional writing practices. The form of this dissertation has tried to internalise and evoke a similar conceptual end through the disruption of conventional writing formats in an attempt to demonstrate how each artwork speaks to processes that do not end with it. Indeed, plurality, the limits of representation, the trace, are never done with, so it would be problematic to make out as such.

The implications of this dissertation for wider human geography are fourfold. First, in demonstrating representation as a fixed and contingent structure, it opens parallels with a host of other modes of inscription, and thereby can be productively taken up by other studies. Second, it affirms the potential of artwork more generally as offering rich empirical resources for geographers to disrupt and transform our critical understanding of key issues, whether it be space, representation or beyond. Third, the creative 'doing' and engagement with artwork holds the promise of developing innovative methodological strategies to help think through the implications of the aesthetic encounter, as well as offering the potential for

new forms of knowledge production. Finally, it reiterates the importance of the thinking, feeling body in the conceptualisation of space.

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