
A Thesis in

Art History

by

Jennifer H. Noonan

© 2007 Jennifer H. Noonan

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2007
The thesis of Jennifer H. Noonan was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Sarah K. Rich  
Associate Professor of Art History  
Thesis Advisor  
Chair of Committee  

Brian A. Curran  
Associate Professor of Art History  

Joyce Henri Robinson  
Affiliate Associate Professor of Art History  

Simone Osthoff  
Associate Professor of Critical Studies  

Craig Zabel  
Department Head  
Associate Professor of Art History  

*Signatures are on file in Graduate School
Abstract

This thesis examines the way in which printmaking proved to be a powerfully appropriate venue for artists to work through issues of identity in 1960s and 1970s. By shifting the discourse away from traditional materials and objects that manifest intuition, many artists working during this period turned to conceptual art, body art, and performance art as a way to synthesize data and ideas. Art historians have argued that artists exploited photography, video, and other time-based media to negotiate these concepts, but they often overlook the importance of printmaking during this period. In this thesis, I argue that printmaking operated in the same way as other reproductive media, and artists found the process to be receptive to similar explorations. This dissertation, specifically, analyzes the manner in which pressed indices and the subsequent reproduced signs describe, or trouble, conventions of gendered, nationalist, ethnic, and artistic identity, which came under increasing scrutiny during the 1960s and 1970s. This thesis explains, even more specifically, the way that the print document participated in that dialogue.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures..............................................................................................................v  

Acknowledgments......................................................................................................xi  

Chapter 1. Introduction: Printmaking and Body in the late 1960s and early 1970............1  

Chapter 2. Bruce Conner: What’s In A Name?..............................................................63  

Chapter 3. David Hammons, A Man Who Questions......................................................124  

Chapter 4. Joyce Wieland “Jammed the Machine”.........................................................188  

Chapter 5. Vito Acconci as Medium, His Body as Matrix............................................247  

Chapter 6. Conclusion..................................................................................................316  

Images........................................................................................................................323  

Bibliography..............................................................................................................505
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Robert Rauschenberg</td>
<td><em>Abby’s Bird</em></td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Larry Rivers and Frank O’Hara</td>
<td><em>US from Stones</em></td>
<td>1957-59</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jasper Johns</td>
<td><em>O to 9</em>, 1963</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jasper Johns</td>
<td><em>Skin with O’Hara Poem</em>, 1965</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Robert Rauschenberg</td>
<td><em>Accident</em>, 1963</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Robert Rauschenberg</td>
<td><em>Booster</em>, 1967</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Claes Oldenburg</td>
<td><em>Profile Airflow</em>, 1968-69</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Roy Lichtenstein</td>
<td><em>Reverie from 11 Pop Artists</em>, 1965</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Josef Albers</td>
<td><em>White Line Squares: White Line Square XII</em>, 1966</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Andy Warhol</td>
<td><em>Jackie from 11 Pop Artists</em>, 1965</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ed Ruscha</td>
<td><em>Chocolate Room</em>, 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Paul Jenkins</td>
<td><em>Tide Finder</em>, 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Richard Anuskiwicz</td>
<td><em>Yellow Reserved</em>, 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Alexander Calder</td>
<td><em>Spirals</em>, 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Peter Dechar</td>
<td><em>Pears</em>, 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ray Parker</td>
<td><em>Untitled</em>, 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Robert Rauschenberg</td>
<td><em>Wart</em>, 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Richard Hamilton</td>
<td><em>Kent State</em>, 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sol LeWitt</td>
<td><em>Squares with a Different Line in Each Half Square</em>, 1971</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bruce Nauman</td>
<td><em>Studies for Holograms</em>, 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Vito Acconci</td>
<td><em>Kiss Off</em>, 1971</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Vito Acconci</td>
<td><em>Trademarks</em>, 1971</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Vito Acconci</td>
<td><em>Touchstone (For JL)</em>, 1972</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Jasper Johns</td>
<td><em>Bent Blue</em>, 1971</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Joseph Kosuth</td>
<td><em>One and Three Hammers</em>, 1965</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Marcel Duchamp</td>
<td><em>Fountain</em>, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Robert Morris</td>
<td><em>Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal</em>, 1963</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Carl Andre</td>
<td><em>Xerox Book</em>, 1969</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Ed Ruscha</td>
<td><em>Standard Station</em>, 1966</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Jan Dibbets</td>
<td><em>Perspective Corrections</em>, 1969</td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Vito Acconci</td>
<td><em>Conversion (II: Insistence, Adaptation, Groundwork, Display)</em>, 1971</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Yves Klein</td>
<td><em>Anthropométres (Ant 100)</em>, 1960</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Dan Graham</td>
<td><em>Two Correlated Rotations</em>, 1969</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Dennis Oppenheim</td>
<td><em>Identity Stretch</em>, 1970-75</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Gina Pane</td>
<td><em>Discours mout et mat</em>, 1975</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Carolee Schneemann</td>
<td><em>Interior Scroll</em>, 1975</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Eleanor Antin</td>
<td><em>Carving: A Traditional Sculpture</em>, 1973</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Praxiteles</td>
<td><em>Aphrodite of Knidos</em>, c. 340-330 BCE</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Dennis Oppenheim</td>
<td><em>Reading Position for a Second Degree Burn</em>, 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Richard Long</td>
<td><em>Nile Papers of River Muds</em>, 1990</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Bruce Conner</td>
<td><em>Mandala</em>, 1965</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 43. Bruce Conner, *Untitled*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 44. Bruce Conner, *Untitled*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 45. Bruce Conner, *Untitled*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 46. Bruce Conner, *Rain*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 47. Bruce Conner, *Landscape*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 48. Bruce Conner, *Green Line*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 49. Bruce Conner, *Untitled*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 50. Bruce Conner, *Sunset Strip*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 51. Bruce Conner, *Landscape*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 52. Bruce Conner, *This Space Reserved for June Wayne*, 1965……………….p. 64
Figure 53. Bruce Conner, *Cancellation*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 54. Bruce Conner, *Jelly Fish*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 55. Bruce Conner, *Thumbprint*, 1965…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 56. Bruce Conner, *Prints*, 1974…………………………………………...p. 64
Figure 57. Bruce Conner, *Untitled*, 1957…………………………………………...p. 66
Figure 58. Bruce Conner, *Child*, 1959…………………………………………...p. 66
Figure 59. Bruce Conner, *Letter to Alan*, c. 1957……………………………………..p. 66
Figure 60. Marcel Duchamp, *Rrose Selvay*, 1921……………………………………..p. 60
Figure 61. Bruce Conner, *I Am Bruce Conner*, 1964……………………………………..p. 69
Figure 62. Bruce Conner, *I Am Not Bruce Conner*, 1964……………………………………..p. 69
Figure 63. Marcel Duchamp, *The Bottle Rack*, 1914……………………………………..p. 70
Figure 64. Marcel Duchamp, *Feuille de vigne femelle* (*Female Fig Leaf*), 1950……..p. 70
Figure 65. Marcel Duchamp, *Object Dard*, (*Dart Object*), 1951…………………………..p. 70
Figure 66. Marcel Duchamp, *Coin de Chasteté* (*Wedge of Chastity*), 1954…………..p. 70
Figure 67. Marcel Duchamp, *Tablier de Blanchisseuse*, (*Couple of Laundress’ Aprons*), 1959………………………………………………………………..p. 70
Figure 68. Marcel Duchamp, *The Marcel Duchamp Traveling Box*, 1963……………..p. 73
Figure 69. Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even* (*Large Glass*), 1915-23……………………………………………………………..p. 74
Figure 70. Bruce Conner, *Octopus protecting a chest of valuable coins*, c. 1945…….p. 81
Figure 71. Bruce Conner, *Geryon*, 1957…………………………………………...p. 81
Figure 72. Bruce Conner, *Untitled* (*Hand Print*), 1965………………………………...p. 72
Figure 73. *Spotted horses and negative handprints at Pech-Merle*, 22,000 BCE…….p. 82
Figure 74. Jean Fautrier, *La joile fille* (*The Pretty Girl*), 1944…………………………..p. 83
Figure 75. Bruce Conner, *Dark Brown*…………………………………………...p. 85
Figure 76. Bruce Conner, *TOUCH/DO NOT TOUCH*, 1964…………………………..p. 85
Figure 77. Godefroy Engelmann, *Manuel du dessinateur*, 1824…………………………..p. 97
Figure 78. Charles Hullmandel, *The Art of Drawing on Stone*, 1824………………………p. 97
Figure 79. Kenneth Noland, *Eyre*, 1962…………………………………………...p. 100
Figure 80. Sam Francis, *Cross*, 1960…………………………………………...p. 100
Figure 81. Frank Stella, *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor*, 1959………………………p. 101
Figure 82. *Art Gallery Magazine*, November 1966…………………………………………p. 102
Figure 83. Jasper Johns, *Hands*, 1963…………………………………………...p. 103
Figure 84. Pablo Picasso, *Paloma et Claude*, 1950…………………………………………p. 103
Figure 85. Bruce Conner, *The Dennis Hopper One Man Show*, 1971-73……………..p. 108
Figure 130. David Hammons, *Untitled (Man with Pierced Ear and Toothpick)*, 1974………………………………………………...p.129
Figure 131. David Hammons, *American Costume*, 1970………………………………..p. 129
Figure 132. David Hammons, *Untitled*, 1977………………………………………………p.129
Figure 133. David Hammons, *I Dig the Way This Dude Looks*, 1971……………………p.129
Figure 134. David Hammons, *Pray*, 1970……………………………………………………p. 129
Figure 135. David Hammons, *The Wine Leading the Wine*, 1971…………………………p.129
Figure 136. David Hammons, *Untitled*, 1977……………………………………………….p.129
Figure 137. David Hammons, *Untitled*, 1975………………………………………………p.129
Figure 138. David Hammons, *Sunday Morning Mass*, 1969………………………….p.129
Figure 139. David Hammons, *Untitled*, 1973………………………………………………p.129
Figure 140. David Hammons, *Defend Your Walk*, 1974……………………………………p.129
Figure 141. David Hammons, *Untitled (Woman with Mop Hair and Lace Shawl)*, c. 1975………………………………………………………….p. 129
Figure 142. David Hammons, *Don’t Bite the Hand That Feeds*, 1974……………………p.129
Figure 143. David Hammons, *Untitled (The King’s Show Has Ended…)*, c. 1970…p. 129
Figure 144. David Hammons, *Blue Angels (Penises)*, n.d. .......................................p.129
Figure 145. David Hammons, *Untitled (Penis Print)*, n.d. ........................................p.129
Figure 146. David Hammons, *Body Print*, c. 1970…………………………………………p.129
Figure 147. David Hammons, *Body Print*, c. 1970…………………………………………p.129
Figure 148. David Hammons, *Boy with Flag*, 1968…………………………………………p.171
Figure 149. David Hammons, *Untitled, (Man With Flag)*, n.d. .................................p. 171
Figure 150. David Hammons, *America the Beautiful*, 1968………………………………p.171
Figure 151. David Hammons, *Untitled (Man with Flag)*, n.d. ....................................p.171
Figure 152. David Hammons, *Black First America Second*, 1970………………………p.171
Figure 153. David Hammons, *Untitled (Body Print)*, 1975………………………………p.171
Figure 154. David Hammons, *A Cry From Inside*, 1969……………………………………p.171
Figure 155. David Hammons, *Close Your Eyes and See Black*, c 1970………………...p.171
Figure 156. David Hammons, *Close Your Eyes and See Black*, c. 1970………………p.171
Figure 157. David Hammons, *Ragged Spirit*, 1974…………………………………………p.171
Figure 158. David Hammons, *Untitled (Body Print)*, 1973………………………………p.171
Figure 159. David Hammons, *Mop Series I*, 1976…………………………………………p.171
Figure 160. David Hammons, *Waiting*, 1974………………………………………………p.171
Figure 161. David Hammons, *Caution*, c. 1970…………………………………………...p.171
Figure 162. David Hammons, *Couple*, 1970……………………………………………….p.171
Figure 163. David Hammons, *Pray that we are not of the Western World*, 1974……p.180
Figure 164. David Hammons, *Untitled (Body Print)*, n.d. ........................................p.180
Figure 165. David Hammons, *Untitled (Body Print)*, 1975………………………………p.180
Figure 166. David Hammons, *Untitled (Blue Female)*, n.d. ................................……p.180
Figure 167. David Hammons, *Untitled (Man With White Headdress)*, n.d.………….p.180
Figure 168. David Hammons, *Untitled*, 1975………………………………………………p.180
Figure 169. David Hammons, *Untitled*, 1975………………………………………………p.180
Figure 170. David Hammons, *Black Mohair Spirit*, 1971……………………………………p.180
Figure 171. Joyce Wieland, *O Canada*, 1970………………………………………………p.188
Figure 172. Joyce Wieland, *Squid Jiggin’ Ground*, 1973……………………………………p.188
Figure 173. Joyce Wieland, *The Arctic Belongs to Itself*, 1973........................................p. 188
Figure 174. Joyce Wieland, *Facing North—Self Impression*, 1973........................................p. 188
Figure 175. Joyce Wieland, *O Canada*, 1970.................................................................p. 190
Figure 176. Joyce Wieland, *Reason Over Passion*, 1967-1969........................................p. 191
Figure 177. Photograph of Joyce Wieland and *O Canada* Quilt, 1970.................................p. 191
Figure 178. Ad for *O Canada*, Artscanada 1971..............................................................p. 203
Figure 179. Joyce Wieland Film Frame Creating *O Canada*...............................................p. 203
Figure 180. Willem de Kooning, *Woman-Lipstick*, 1952..................................................p. 208
Figure 181. Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Monroe’s Lips*, 1962..................................................p. 217
Figure 182. Joyce Wieland, *Birds At Sunrise*, 1972........................................................p. 223
Figure 183. Joyce Wieland, *Arctic Day*, 1970.................................................................p. 223
Figure 184. A.Y. Jackson, *This Beothic at Bache Ellesmere Island*, 1924............................p. 226
Figure 185. Yvonne McKague Housser, *Evening-Nipigon River*, 1943.................................p. 227
Figure 186. Using silkscreen prints at Y.M.C.A. Sunday Morning Art Class........................p. 227
Figure 187. Jack Bush, *Mood with Yellow*, 1959..............................................................p. 228
Figure 188. Kazuo Nakamura, *Early Spring*, 1958............................................................p. 228
Figure 189. Nordair ad, 1971................................................................................................p. 229
Figure 190. Joyce Wieland, *Pierre Vallières’ Mouth*, 1972.................................................p. 231
Figure 191. George Caleb Bingham, *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*, 1845..............p. 233
Figure 192. Jasper Johns, *Study for Skin*, 1962.................................................................p. 238
Figure 193. Photograph of Johns creating *Study for Skin*, 1962........................................p. 238
Figure 194. “Formline” design from Bill Holm, *Northwest Coast Indian Art*, 1965.............p. 242
Figure 195. Ceremonial blanket, Tlingit, Northwest Territories, 19th Century......................p. 242
Figure 196. Totem pole, Northwest coast, late-19th Century..............................................p. 242
Figure 197. Mask, Ojibwa in Toronto..................................................................................p. 242
Figure 198. Pootagook, *Joyfully I See Ten Caribou*, 1959................................................p. 243
Figure 199. Joyce Wieland, *Artforum*, April 1972.............................................................p. 203
Figure 200. Vito Acconci, *Trademarks*, 1970....................................................................p. 248
Figure 201. Vito Acconci, *Rubbing Piece*, 1970...............................................................p. 257
Figure 202. Robert Rauschenberg, *Third Time Painting*, 1961.........................................p. 261
Figure 203. Jasper Johns, *Target With Plaster Casts*, 1955..............................................p. 279
Figure 204. Yayoi Kusama, *Aggregation: One Thousand Boats Show*, 1963..................p. 280
Figure 205. Vito Acconci, *Applications*, 1970..................................................................p. 283
Figure 206. Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (Black Painting)*, 1953..................................p. 287
Figure 207. Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (Red Painting)*, c. 1954..............................p. 287
Figure 208. Vito Acconci, *Run-Off*, 1970.......................................................................p. 293
Figure 209. Robert Morris, *Untitled*, 1974......................................................................p. 300
Figure 210. Lynda Benglis, *Untitled (Artforum)*, 1974......................................................p. 300
Figure 211. Film Still from *Flaming Creatures*, 1962-1963..............................................p. 301
Figure 212. Andy Warhol, *Ambulance Disasters*, 1963.....................................................p. 303
Figure 213. Andy Warhol, *White Burning Car II*, 1963....................................................p. 303
Figure 214. Vito Acconci, “Touchstone for JL,” *Avalanche*, 1974....................................p. 309
Figure 215. *Shroud of Turin*...............................................................................................p.314
Figure 216. Dennis Oppenheim, *Reading Position for Second Degree Burn*, 1972........p. 322
Figure 217. Iain Baxter/N.E. Thing & Co, *P+L+P+L+P*
   =*VSI Visformula No. 10*, 1970………………………………………….……p. 322
Figure 219. Pat Kelly, *Shot in the Dark*, 1970……………………………………….p. 322
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply indebted to so many people who have helped me complete this project. I would like to thank the artists who generously shared their time and memories with me. Vito Acconci, Bruce Conner, David Hammons, Gary Kennedy, Bob Rodgers, and Mike Snow provided information that was invaluable to my research. I am also grateful to those who shared their knowledge and experiences about those artists and the artistic community discussed in my dissertation. In particular, I would like to thank Avrom Isaacs who opened his studio and his archives to me. His information regarding Joyce Wieland and Toronto in the 1960s was a major source of information.

I am grateful, too, to the staff at the many archives, libraries, galleries, and museums that I visited during the course of my research. Peter Dykhuis and the staff at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design kindly answered my numerous queries and showed me many prints in their collection. I also appreciate the assistance provided by Suzanne Dubeau and Sean Smith at the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections at York University in Toronto. I would also like to thank the staff at the Tamarind Archives at the University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, the staff at the Archives of American Art in New York, and the staff at the Bancroft Library at the University of California in Berkeley. I am also indebted to the staff in the print departments at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the New York Public Library. Their knowledge, on more than one occasion, steered me in the right direction.

I would also like to thank The Department of Art History at The Pennsylvania State University for supporting my project. I am most appreciative for the funds that I received from various grants and fellowships, which enabled me to complete my research. They include the Dissertation Fellowship Award, a Graduate Studies Grant, a Babcock Galleries Endowed Research Grant, a Donor Grant Award, a Francis Hyslop Memorial Fellowship. The staff at The Palmer Museum of Art has also been a great source of support, and for that I thank them. I would also like to thank my committee members who provided assistance and guidance during my tenure; the input I received from Dr. Brian Curran, Dr. Joyce Henri Robinson, and Professor Simone Osthoff improved the quality of my work. I owe a special debt to Dr. Sarah Rich, whose guidance and support led me through this project. Without her intelligence, generosity, and enthusiasm, this dissertation would not have been possible. I am deeply grateful to her for helping me become a better scholar, and I certainly could not have had a better advisor.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends. Their support of my project and my goals proved invaluable. They patiently listened to my ideas and concerns. Many offered insightful comments that improved my work. Lastly, I would like to thank my mother and father whose belief and unwavering support in me made this project possible.
DEDICATION

To My Mother and Father
Chapter 1: 
Introduction: Printmaking and Body in the late 1960s and early 1970s

By the end of the end of the 1960s, many artists who had turned away from painting and sculpture began to exploit printmaking to work through their ideas. Their interest in printmaking, and especially in lithography, was catalyzed by the growing popularity of the medium during that decade. Numerous print workshops were opening across the country, and the burgeoning market produced a demand that could be satisfied, in part, by the quantities and affordability printmaking could provide. As a result of this American print renaissance, artists not formally trained as printmakers, many of them working in conceptual, performance, and body art, tried their hand at working a stone or plate. The print studio became a space of experimentation: it provided artists with the room to flesh out conceptions of the body and notions about identity.

Indeed, the lithographic stone proved to be fertile ground for artists working in performance, body and conceptual art because the print matrix—the stone itself—offered artists the means to work through issues of identity and think about the body as a site of difference. In the prints produced by artists working in these non-traditional media, the print matrix stood in for the body matrix and it became the place where artists worked through these issues. As, for example, Bruce Conner laid his fingerprint upon a stone (his finger as the first matrix) and he then pulled a lithograph of a fingerprint from that stone (the stone as the second matrix), Conner and artists like him explored subjectivity as something that is always already mediated, always at a distance from itself. The skin—the part of the body that is the very container of the self—became the site of separation...
and transition between the self and its Other. In such a process of printing from the body, the artist’s corpus became a medium of mechanical reproduction. The conceptual and body artist Vito Acconci acknowledged as much when he concurred with the critic Sylvère Lotringer’s statement that “The brain is a muscle, but the body is a machine,” and Acconci added, “The machine is a surrogate for the mental working out of something.”

If the body was a machine, it made sense that another machine like the lithographic process be recruited for thinking though issues of difference and identity. Lithography became, in Acconci’s words, a surrogate to work out these concepts. The matrix became the meeting ground where artists joined bodily traces to conventional signifiers of subjectivity in two senses. Their investigations of identity were often grounded in gender, race, notions of national identity, and the social value of an artist. The stone surface became the place where the artist’s body met the language of the Other. In other words, these prints from the body often addressed the fundamental problem of self and Otherness, particularly as defined in theories of psychoanalysis. For conceptual, performance, and body artists, reproduction and the print document became the place to negotiate the relationship between the Lacanian “real” of the body and the symbolic Other or signifiers of language and the law. At the same time, more generalized and structural notions of subjectivity came into play as well. The print, in its differential structure, thus offered an opportunity for artists to think through the problem of the self in respect to psychological Otherness as well as societal otherness. And, in their most ambitious moments, these artists were able to connect these two models of otherness—

the social and the psychological—quite deftly. In both instances, the document
dramatizes the subject as that which is always mediated. It also functions like the subject
because both are split, dispersed and fractured.

Even though printmaking proved to be a viable means to work through aspects of
conceptual, performance, and body art, art historians and print historians have mostly
neglected the way in which it served those artists needs. While art historians have pointed
out that photography, film, and other reproductive media advanced issues addressed
through these non-traditional art forms, they have neglected to describe the way that
artists working in these styles exploited the reproductive qualities of printmaking to
expand their ideas. Most print historians have also overlooked the document’s relevance
and its role in generating signification. Those print historians who have described print
production in the late 1960s have by and large emphasized workshop production, the
growing market for prints, and the number of artists who began making prints. This
oversight is particularly surprising given the activity in printmaking at the end of the
decade.

This dissertation seeks to redress this omission by considering the ways in which
Vito Acconci, Bruce Conner, David Hammons, and Joyce Wieland turned to printmaking
to work through issues of identity informed by the symbolic signifying structure and
signifiers taken from the body. By using their lips, fingers, and other body parts like a
print matrix, pressing those bodily matrices onto a stone matrix, and then reproducing
that impression on paper, these four artists drew attention to the subject as that which is
conditioned by the meeting of the real body and the symbolic Other. Specifically, this
analysis will show that each artist used reproduction to explore aspects of gendered, ethnic, nationalist and artistic identity as it is conditioned by their relationship to the Other. In order to support this claim, this study entails an examination of indices and conventional signs—such as lipstick traces, hair, clothing, flags and speech—as they operated in the socio-historical climate of the 1960s and 1970s. The following four chapters will show that the print as a document behaves like the social self and unveils the subject as mediated.

In order to understand why artists working the late 1960s and early 1970s turned to printmaking, it is important to know what precipitated their interest. To that end, this introduction will detail activities in printmaking during 1960s, the decade of the American print renaissance. Also provided in this introduction will be the state of scholarship on the document’s role in prints produced during this period. The state of scholarship on conceptual, performance, and body art and its assessment of the document will also be provided. The present analysis will summarize and evaluate recent scholarship about the complex operations of the (usually photographic) “document” in conceptual and body art. Further, the following will also show that most art historians and print historians writing about conceptual, body, and performance art have neglected printmaking in part because they treat prints as if they were neutral documents, and, at times, as works of art in an artistically inferior medium. Since the following four case studies will seek to demonstrate that artists turned to printmaking to negotiate identity in order to dramatize the notion that the subject is never a discrete being, the remainder of the introduction will also present post-structuralist theories that describe the self as that
which is always mediated. These issues that define printmaking around 1970 reflect changes in the way that artists thought about the medium and its expressive potential. It is a markedly different opinion from that held by artists working just ten years prior.

The American Print Renaissance:

Robert Rauschenberg stated in 1960 that “the second half of the twentieth century was no time to start writing on rocks.” The statement was the artist’s somewhat cheeky response to Tatyana Grosman’s invitation to make lithographs. Grosman, who had recently opened a print workshop on Long Island, began soliciting the artist as part of her larger goal to generate interest in lithography as a fine art among established artists. After two years of Grosman’s calls, and the persistent nudging of his close friend and contemporary Jasper Johns, Rauschenberg relented. Like his ancient forebears, he picked up a tool and left his mark on a stone (fig. 1).

Rauschenberg’s bold statement of disdain for lithography reflected the state of printmaking in 1960. In the beginning of the decade, not many artists experimented or expressed an interest in the medium. By the time that Rauschenberg’s retrospective

---


3 Tatyana Grosman opened a print workshop, called Universal Limited Art Edition (commonly known as ULAE), at her home in West Islip, New York in 1957. In the early years at ULAE, Larry Rivers and Jasper Johns produced lithographs on stones that Grosman delivered to their studios. In fact, Rauschenberg often helped carry the heavy Bavarian stones up to Johns’ studio after they arrived from Grosman’s workshop.

4 Rauschenberg stated that he decided to give in to Grosman’s requests because he realized it was “the only way” he could get her to stop calling and pestering. See Calvin Tompkins, “Profiles: Esther Sparks, Universal Limited Art Editions: A History and Catalogue, The First Twenty-Five Years (Chicago, IL: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1989). See also “The Moods of a Stone,” The New Yorker 52 (June 7, 1976): 66.
opened ten years later and this statement appeared in print, however, the artist’s comment seemed preposterous, given that the print market had exploded in the 1960s and more artists than ever were working in lithography. Interest in the medium at the close of the decade, of course, was due in large part to the tireless promotion by figures like Grosman—a promotion that artists like Rauschenberg found increasingly hard to resist.

Grosman opened Universal Limited Art Edition in 1957 in the garage beyond her home in West Islip, New York. Although she had intended to run a silkscreen business where artists could make reproductions of their paintings, she changed her mind after finding a lithograph stone in a path of her garden. Grosman, guided by the advice of curators William Lieberman and Carl Zigrosser, invited established artists to produce lithographs that would be included in a livre d’artiste. Grosman’s first major portfolio, Stones, from 1957 (fig. 2), included Larry Rivers’ drawings and Frank O’Hara’s poetic text. Working on the stones simultaneously, the two artists scribbled words into cryptic combinations that engaged in a dialogue that was often libidinal in character. The twelve lithographs in the subsequent suite cemented Grosman’s interest in the livre d’artiste, and she invited Abstract Expressionist painters Robert Motherwell and Barnett Newman to create prints as well.

It was Grosman’s work with younger artists that granted the workshop a high profile. In 1960 Jasper Johns began working at ULAE. Although the artist knew little about the medium, lithography’s sequential nature and its capacity to reconfigure a single

---

image offered him a new medium to rework issues addressed in other media. In his earliest series, 0-9, 1960-63 (fig 3), he printed ten lithographs with the numbers zero to nine printed atop a single number. In the first print he drew a zero; in the next print he burnished the zero and drew in the number one. He continued this process until he reached nine. The stone thus became a palimpsest indicating his working process. Johns pushed the boundaries of reproduction three years later when he impressed his body on the stone. In Skin With O’Hara Poem, 1963 (fig. 4), the body operates like the reproductive machine and yet it seems calligraphic when compared to the printed text of O’Hara’s poem. Johns’ success in printmaking led Rauschenberg to accept Grosman’s requests.

When Rauschenberg began working at ULAE in 1962, the collage and assemblage elements for which he was already well known became the subject of his prints. In his first print Abby’s Bird, 1962 (fig. 1) which was published for the Hilton Hotel chain in New York, the artist combined images of a door, a tire tread (a reference to the tire print he made in 1951 with John Cage), and a drawn bird perched (also a reference to his earlier “combines”). In a print produced one year later, Rauschenberg drew attention to the role that the stone played in reproduction. To create the print Accident, 1963 (fig. 5), the artist employed two stones that had broken while printing.

---

7 Ibid.
another print. In the first step, the artist inked and then printed two halves of a broken stone. In the resulting image, dark ink coats the paper’s surface, but it is split open by a white gash (that is the paper’s surface); it refers to the accident that split the stone in two. At the bottom of this break, the artist gathered rubble from another broken stone, inked it, and printed it in a second step. The print won an international prize and brought attention to the workshop.9

While artists worked with Grosman on Long Island, others experimented with lithography in Brooklyn. The Pratt Graphics Center opened in 1956 with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.10 The workshop provided presses and assistants for artists to create lithographs, and artists such as Jim Dine, David Hockney and Barnett Newman used the facilities. The workshop also trained students in the art of lithography. In addition to Pratt and ULAE, the workshop Impressions in Boston opened in 1959.11 After the founder George Lockwood obtained a lithographic press from a publishing firm, artists were invited to work with the medium. Although the workshop was devoted to

---
9 In a conversation with Ruth Fine, Print Curator at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., Frank Stella described Johns’ and Rauschenberg’s influence upon artists of his generation, stating “Bob [Rauschenberg] and Jasper [Johns] set the tone, in a certain way. They created an excitement around printmaking as a special, exclusive, self-contained activity that rubbed off…. I think that it was the intensity of the graphic touch that turned other people on. Certainly I wasn’t all that into printing, but they were involved with the technique and into the possibilities derived from mechanical virtuosity. They pushed it a bit and got other people interested in printing, at least indirectly. That’s the way it seemed to me.” See Ruth Fine, “Setting the Course: Early Prints and Sculpture,” in Gemini G.E.L.: Art and Collaboration (Washington, D.C. and New York: Abbeville Press in association with National Gallery of Art, 1984), 41.
11 Ibid. 252-253.
lithography, they also produced etchings, engravings, and woodcuts. With the opening of these workshops on the East Coast, more artists had access to lithography than ever before.

On the West Coast, June Wayne founded the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles in 1960. With funds provided by a grant from the Ford Foundation’s Program in Humanities and the Arts, Wayne sought to create a fine art print shop based on the model of European print workshops, to establish lithography as a fine art, to stimulate research, and to train master printers who could then open workshops and run them according to the high standards set at Tamarind. The workshop, which was much larger and less intimate than Grosman’s, attracted a diverse group of artists including Josef Albers, Bruce Conner, Sam Francis, Philip Guston, and Misch Kohn, and Louise Nevelson. Although the possibility of being paid to experiment with lithography generated interest in the medium, the increasing number of master printers who left Tamarind and opened their own workshops also brought attention to it.

Kenneth Tyler, for example, opened a workshop in Los Angeles. Established in 1966, Gemini G.E.L. earned a reputation for experimenting and using non-traditional materials. At the workshop, Rauschenberg produced *Booster*, 1967 (fig. 6), a life size print that required two stones, and Claes Oldenburg created *Profile Airflow*, 1968-69 (fig. 7), out of molded polyurethane and lithography. The latter print challenged the

---

13 Ibid., 1-2.
workshop’s technical department, but it was this willingness to push printmaking’s boundaries that attracted the attention of many artists.15

Irwin Hollander, also a printer who trained at Tamarind, opened Hollander’s Workshop in New York in 1964.16 Jack Lemon, another Tamarind graduate, opened and ran the print workshop at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and then he relocated to Chicago where he founded Landfall Press in 1970. Also during this time, Kathan Brown opened Crown Point Press in San Francisco in 1962 so that she and fellow artists could experiment with etching. She invited artists such as Richard Diebenkorn and Wayne Thiebaud to experiment with etching in her workshop in Berkeley.17

Such activity in the beginning of the decade led Art News to publish two articles asking, “Is There An American Print Revival?” While James Schuyler assessed the work produced in ULAE, Jules Langsner detailed the production at Tamarind. Although the two scholars listed numerous prints, including those produced by Richard Diebenkorn, Grace Hartigan, Jasper Johns, and Robert Motherwell among others, they surmised that a revival was not underway.18 Although these two scholars neglected to see the beginning

15 Ibid., 62-63.
of what would become the boom, the growing interest in reproduction meant that a revival would soon be hard to ignore.

Around this time Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Andy Warhol, among other Pop artists, began to make paintings that looked like prints. By copying the tell tale signs of reproduction such as of Ben-day dots, mis-registration of margins and colors, uneven inking, sharp black outlines, and flat shapes of color, artists translated comics, magazines, and advertisements for consumer goods into silkscreen that they spread across a canvas. For example, Lichtenstein exploited the look of reproduction and mass-produced imagery in *Reverie*, 1965 (fig. 8). Artists working in Pop art expressed their desire to emulate the mechanically reproduced images. Lichtenstein, for example, stated that he wanted to produce art that looks “as if it had been programmed” because he “wanted to hide the record” of his hand. Warhol famously stated that he wanted to be a machine. Given the interest in commercial reproduction, it is not surprising that a growing number of Pop artists made prints.

Pop art became fashionable during the 1960s due in part to mass-media magazines, such as *Time* and *Glamour*, that published articles celebrating the new style

---

and showcased glamorous lifestyles that included these works. The familiar subject matter and its status as the most avant-garde style appealed to the growing audience of consumers who had discretionary income. The marketing of Pop prints and the subsequent attention that publishers, curators, critics, and scholars lavished upon them fueled the American print boom.

In addition to Pop Artists, Hard-edge Abstractionists, Op artists, and Minimalist artists also created prints at the newly opened workshops. Tyler’s streamlined workshop accommodated Josef Albers’s experiments in color theory. The subtle shift in colors and the precise edges that divide them, as in White Line Squares: White Line Square XII, 1966 (fig. 9), could be made on Tyler’s state-of-the-art machines. In addition to Tyler’s workshop, Crown Point Press attracted many artists working in Hard-Edged and Minimalist styles. The workshop’s reputation for etching and engraving appealed to artists such as Brice Marden and Robert Ryman because intaglio produced a print surface with texture and structure, which are characteristics that define their paintings.


Due to the burgeoning market and growing number of artists who produced prints, the publishing industry swelled. In 1965 Marian Goodman opened Multiples. She published and marketed prints by John Baldessari, Sol LeWitt, Roy Lichtenstein, and Claes Oldenburg among others. Also in the mid 1960s, Rosa Esman established Tanglewood Press, and she published prints by Christo, Johns and Donald Judd. Esman is perhaps best known for publishing the portfolio *11 Pop Artists*, which included Andy Warhol’s *Jackie*, 1965 (fig. 10). In the later 1960s, Brooke Alexander, Pace Editions, and Diane Villani Editions opened to fill the demand for prints. These publishers commissioned prints from artists and printers for sale to the growing print market.

This combination of market shifts, art making practices, and changes in patronage fostered what is known today as the print renaissance. By the end of the decade, there was so much activity in printmaking that the print historian Judith Goldman remarked the “market [in the 1960s] boomed like a frontier town.” And one painter quipped in 1972 to art historian Thomas Hess that, in “the 50s, when you saw a friend on the Long Island Railroad on an early Wednesday morning, you knew he was going to town to see his shrink. Nowadays, you know he’s on his way to work with his lithographer.”

---


26 Hess does not provide the name of the painter who made this remark, although he does quote him. See Thomas Hess, “Prints: Where History, Style and Money Meet,” *Art News* 70 (January 1972): 29.
By the late 1960s and into the early 1970s, artists working in conceptual art, body art, and performance art had also begun to exploit the printmaking process. Since these artists questioned the preciousness of the object, institutional authority, and conventional meaning in art, printmaking served their needs because prints are by nature multiple objects, they can move easily outside the gallery, and they can be produced inexpensively and in large numbers. These features of printmaking appealed to those artists already interested in challenging the conventional status of the art object. Lithography, as noted previously, allowed artists to work through issues about the social self and its material aspects structured their ideas. Yet print historians and art historians have largely overlooked the manner in which reproduction operated.

Many narratives on printmaking neglect the aesthetic and conceptual weight of the print document. There is an omission of this sort of analysis in the histories of conceptual printmaking, though such an omission seems almost understandable given a long history of print scholarship focusing on workshop production and content rather than form and the role it plays in content. It is a particularly obvious oversight in broader art historical narratives, since these scholars often analyze the importance of other reproductive media and since printmaking received a lot of attention (and not just specialized) at the turn of the decade.

In 1970, for example, the American contribution to the Venice Biennale included only prints. In the U.S. Pavilion, William Weege and Jack Damer, printmakers from the

---

University of Wisconsin, showed about ninety prints along with demonstrations of lithography and the silkscreen process. Both artists also helped run an educational workshop on printmaking that was housed in a former United States Consulate building on the Grand Canal next to the Peggy Guggenheim Palazzo-Museum in Venice. The workshop offered classes, informal discussions, critiques, access to printing presses, and funding for artists who were invited to spend the summer working at the Consulate. The idea according to Lois Bingham (the Director of International Arts Program, a division of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Collection of Fine Arts, which oversaw the United States’ participation in the Biennale) was to “bring artists from many countries together for work and the exchange of ideas.”28 This statement accorded with the aims of the annual exhibition as it emphasized experimentation, process, and technology. 29

The organizers of the American pavilion decided to forego the traditional practice of showing the work of eight to ten artists and instead presented a large selection of

29 The organizers of the Venice Biennale altered slightly the exhibition’s structure in response to criticism from artists, film directors, scholars, students and other Italian Leftists who wanted the annual exhibition placed in “the hands of those who participate in the exposition.” These protestors were displeased that the 1938 guidelines had not been reformed, that the biennale was run by one individual, “an appointed ‘commissioner extraordinary,’” and that is was shaped by commercialism and dealer influence. Yielding to the demands, organizers agreed to review the exhibition process, they discontinued the annual prize, kept the pavilions open into the night, included working ateliers, extended the exhibition’s duration, and focused on experiment and technology rather than a finished product. In the central pavilion, the exhibition, “Proposal for an Experimental Exhibition,” featured artists from many nations who worked with technology, concepts, and process. For example, Dan Flavin submitted, and then withdrew, a light sculpture. “Organizers of Venice Biennale Plan Wide Innovations for ‘70,” *The New York Times* (February 27, 1970): 32. See also Paul Hofmann, “35th Art Biennale Beset By Problems at Venice Opening,” *The New York Times* (June 24, 1970): 38; See also Milton Gendel, “Venice,” *Art News* 69 (September 1970): 63, +79.
works by twenty-five artists. By eliminating the “star system,” including numerous works by various artists, offering print demonstrations, and opening a workshop, Bingham and Henry T. Hopkins (the exhibition chief for the United States Pavilion and then Director of the Fort Worth Art Center Museum) hoped to “place more emphasis on creativity rather than the commercial end of the product.” Bingham and Hopkins, with the assistance of the print historian Una Johnson, chose to highlight printmaking because it would permit visitors to see process and creativity at work, allow artists to work together, and engage in a dialogue. Bingham stated that prints were chosen also because of the perceived “strength of new expressions in printmaking.” She observed, “A lot of good artists who are not straight printmakers have become increasingly involved with the graphic arts.” With this goal in mind, Bingham, Hopkins and Johnson invited forty-seven artists to submit prints, including Josef Albers, Leonard Baskin, Jim Dine, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Morris, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, Ed Ruscha, Frank Stella, and Andy Warhol.

Dine, Morris, Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, and Warhol among twenty other artists, however, refused to exhibit their prints. They withdrew “as an act of dissociation from the United State Government sponsorship” and to deny “the use of their art as a cultural veneer to cover policies of ruthless aggression abroad and intolerable repression at

---

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 U.S. organizers were also encouraged by the possibilities of printmaking and workshops because of the positive feedback they received from other graphic workshops that the International Art Program set up in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.
home.”34 The stance was a response to social repressions, and in particular to the killings at Kent State and Jackson State, as well America’s role in the Vietnam War and the military intervention into Cambodia. While some artists refused inclusion as an act of protest, other artists agreed to show their work. Johns, Albers, Ruscha and nineteen additional artists submitted prints that offered a glimpse at recent developments in printmaking. Ruscha’s *Chocolate Room*, 1970 (fig. 11) for example, offered visitors a luxurious sensory experience; 360 sheets of paper silk-screened with chocolate adorned the walls of one room of the pavilion. Although the artist had not intended this effect, the prints became a site of protest because visitors realized they could lick their fingers and write subversive messages in the chocolate. Ruscha’s prints, therefore, became the venue where other’s voiced their thoughts about American policies at home and abroad. On the patio of the pavilion, Damer demonstrated the lithographic process while Weege directed the silkscreen demonstrations where he turned out a batch of “Impeach Nixon” posters.35

Although these silkscreens stirred a bit of controversy, the larger installation and experimental workshops received a lukewarm response. Frederic Tuten, writing for *The New York Times*, stated that the absence of many artists gave the exhibition a “sketchy quality that even the participation of such fine artists as Jasper Johns, Josef Albers, Alexander Liberman, Sam Francis, and Edward Ruscha couldn’t ameliorate.”36 He surmised that it was a commendable effort but that an exhibition of American Arte

Povera, earth or conceptual art would have been more relevant as it would have demonstrated the most “vital sectors of contemporary art.” An editorial in *Art News* suggested that the installation offered “comic relief” because rather then send paintings and sculpture by “the best” artists “at work in the world today,” organizers chose instead to show prints and demonstrate printmaking to those “who invented all the [printmaking] mediums and who have practiced them with consummate skill ever since.” Gregory Battcock commented that the American contribution was a “disappointment” because of the mediocre art exhibited and the political motivation (the desire to avoid the controversy that besieged the 1968 Biennale and political nepotism) that informed the decisions.

In addition to the prints offered to viewers at the Biennale, *Art in America* included an offset lithograph in each issue released in 1970. Donald Karshan, print editor for the magazine, initiated a print publishing program in 1968, and by 1970 each of the six issues contained a print. The first issue, January-February, included a colorful offset lithograph.

---

37 Ibid.  
38 Staff, “Burning Issues,” *Art News* 69 (Summer 1970): 27. Silk-screen, as the historian Anthony Griffiths points out, developed in Japan and was brought to America in the nineteenth century. At the end of that century, Charles Nelson Jones of Michigan patented a process that is similar to modern forms of silk-screen. In the later half of the 1930s and until the end of the Second World War, artists produced silkscreens in the graphic workshops of the Federal Art Project. After the war and the shops closed, the medium was not widely used again as a fine art medium until the 1960s. See Anthony Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking: An Introduction to the History and Techniques* (Los Angeles and Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 109-112.  
39 Gregory Battcock, “Critique: Art and Politics at the Venice Biennale,” *Arts Magazine* 45 (September 1970): 22-26; In commenting on the show before it opened, Battcock noted, the “American pavilion in Venice is bound to be extremely boring, and not because it’s avant-garde. There is nothing significant about it, other than the fact that it promises to be death itself.” See Gregory Battcock, “U.S.A.: Death in Venice,” *Art and Artists* 5 (June 1970): 54.
lithograph by Paul Jenkins, 1970 (fig. 12). Richard Anuskiewicz’s *Yellow Reserved*, (fig. 13) appeared in the next issue. Alexander Calder’s print *Spiral* followed (fig. 14). The magazine then published Peter Dechar’s *Pears*, (fig. 15), then Ray Parker’s *Untitled*, (fig. 16), and the year ended with an offset lithograph by Robert Rauschenberg, (fig 17).

Karhsan began this program at a time when issues of authenticity, originality, and value concerned many in the print world. With print runs of up to 65,000, Karshan challenged the parameters that print historians and publishers established.\(^{40}\) For example, print publishers, scholars, and curators demanded handcrafted prints, a limited or small number of prints per edition, and a signature indicating the artist’s presence. The goal was to create standards so that prints would be considered works of fine art. These issues became the subject of heated debate in the 1960s when these individuals were trying to raise the status of printmaking.

Amid discussions about rarity and originality, Karshan offered his reasons why artist and publishers need not limit the number of prints in each edition.\(^{41}\) He pointed out that artists who worked with concepts often utilized reproduction—photographic, Xerox, and offset printing—to dramatize their ideas and they frequently declared the form that their ideas took to be unique. Although this notion might seem paradoxical, Karshan argued that the object could be thought of as unique because each artist had the right to decide whether or not it should be reproduced. He therefore surmised that, “uniqueness, no longer indigenous with media itself…should ideally be determined by the implication


of content alone, rather than being a economic ploy….”42 According to Karshan, then, uniqueness and rarity in the early 1970s required rethinking. These changes marked the end, in the scholar’s estimation, of “the cult of the unique.”43

The year that Art in America printed the offset lithographs coincided with the publication of the first edition of the Print Collector’s Newsletter. The growing interest in reproduction, the attention accorded printmaking by artists, and the burgeoning market led print historians to begin publication of a periodical devoted solely to prints. The publisher Paul Cummings stated that the publication hoped to satisfy the demand for information about prints, to keep individuals notified of current trends or activities in printmaking, and “to stimulate research and scholarship.”44 In addition to this publication Life magazine also published an article on the prints that the Museum of Modern Art had recently acquired, which the public could purchase.

Also in 1970, the Whitney Museum of American Art fed public interest in printmaking by running a print workshop in its sculpture garden below street level.45 The open-air workshop in operation during the month of October demonstrated the silkscreen process to students from the Whitney Art Resources Center and individuals passing by the museum. Students, visitors, and pedestrians were invited to try their hand at making a print. As Elke Solomon reported for the Print Collector’s Newsletter, “A microphone walkie-talkie system was installed from the sidewalk to the sculpture court and provided

42 Ibid., 288.
43 Ibid.
communication between the printmakers and the audience. Once the prints were completed a pulley clothesline hauled the prints from the court to street level where they were displayed and available for purchase; on the first day rock music accompanied the event. According to Solomon, the workshop generated a great deal of excitement and the hope for similar projects in the future. The popular appeal of the print, therefore, extended beyond the many individuals who might have obtained prints individually. The “popular” here converged upon the “mass” or even “the crowd” as printmaking entered into the realm of the public spectacle.

Given the widespread interest in printmaking and the use of it by artists working in conceptual, body, and performance art, it seems surprising that many art historians have overlooked the role it played in art production during the late 1960s and 1970s. In addition to larger art historical narratives, histories of printmaking have also largely neglected the way that the printmaking process contributed meaning to the work of art.

**Conceptual Printmaking and The Document: The State of Scholarship:**

As this dissertation will show, many of the artists working at the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s exploited reproduction for its ability to develop more richly concepts that were less easily addressed in other media. Yet most print scholars have neglected this aspect of printmaking. When describing print production at the end of the decade, scholars have often focused on the revival in the 1960s, and they tend to discuss

---

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
it in terms of workshop history and production. \(^{48}\) Thus, the history of printmaking in the 1960s and 1970s unfolds in such a way that the reader is left with little more than a checklist of artists, prints, and workshops.\(^{49}\)

James Watrous’ often-cited book, *American Printmaking: A Century of American Printmaking, 1880-1980*, for example, details the artists who produced prints, the establishment of individual workshops, the creation of a print market, and the exhibitions that helped further the market between 1960 and 1980. \(^{50}\) Although conceptual art, body art, and performance art occurred during this period, Watrous’ discussion of print production in the late 1960s and early 1970s is restricted to a list of prints produced in workshops, including Tamarind, Universal Limited Art Edition, Kenneth Tyler’s shop Gemini G.E.L in Los Angeles, and Kathan Brown’s Crown Point Press in San Francisco. Watrous also documents the print exhibitions, growth of dealers and publishers who sought to compete for their share of the market. In the sixties and seventies, as Watrous points out, the galleries Castelli, Marlborough, and Martha Jackson began dealing graphics.\(^{51}\)

---


\(^{51}\) Ibid., 283.
In a more recent publication on printmaking in America, Barry Walker also details the history of printmaking in the late 1960s into the 1980s in terms of workshop contribution to print production. Walker points out, for example, that Kathan Brown established Crown Point Press in 1962 to provide a place for artists to experiment with etching, and that it was one of the first workshops that attracted Minimalist and conceptual artists, including Brice Marden and Robert Mangold. This, as Walker indicates, is why it “has the distinction of printing and publishing the most important corpus of early minimalist and conceptual graphics,” including works by Sol LeWitt.

The print historian Mark Pascale also recounts print production at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s in terms of workshop production. In detailing the history of Jack Lemon’s Landfall Press in Chicago, Pascale notes that the workshop was the first to focus solely on conceptual art in printmaking, and therefore it should be considered one of the most important workshops that produced conceptual prints. Pascale offers, “it also seems true that with the exception of Cirrus Editions and Crown Point Press, both in California, no other American printer or publisher has committed itself to publishing multiples for conceptual or neo-conceptual arts as has Jack Lemon.”

---

53 Barry Walker notes that Brown had “a particular affinity for the work of minimalist and conceptual artists,” which is why her workshop attracted mostly these artists. See 54 Ibid., 86.
56 Ibid., 20.
Pascale provides a detailed account of those artists who have worked with Lemon, including Vito Acconci and Sol Lewitt.

Riva Castleman, print curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, was one of the first print historians to detail the way that artists working in the late 1960s and into the 1970s exploited reproduction. In one of the earliest accounts devoted entirely to printmaking during this period, Castleman has argued that artists utilized printmaking to offset art’s commodity status. She has noted that for those artists who had grown increasingly distrustful of the art world, reproductive works of art created for and published in magazines, newspapers, and other non-fine art locations meant they could circumvent the authority of museums and galleries.

Castleman also places prints within a political context, arguing that artists exploited printmaking’s characteristics to say something about events taking place at the end of the decade. She also notes that many artists working at this time employed printmaking in innovative ways that contributed meaning. She argues, “While conceptual artists preferred to conjure up the visible by means of the idea, they often presented such ideas in formats that were as fascinating as their ideas.” Castleman, thus, briefly touches on the conceptual and aesthetic weight of the print document.

In Kent State, 1970 (fig. 18) for example, Castleman points out that Richard Hamilton manipulated a photograph of a student shot by a National Guardsman during an

---

58 Although Castleman points out that artists were never able to detach themselves from the art market because they were “unable to refrain from making their ideas material in someway.” Ibid., 23.
59 Ibid.
anti-war protest at Kent State in 1970 in order to show that the situation fatally deteriorated. After transferring the image from a television broadcast to film and then to silkscreen, the scene degraded almost to the point of illegibility. According to Castleman, Hamilton’s handling of the image during the reproductive process emphasized the “degradation (a reference to the diminishing photographic clarity) of the scene.”

By taking advantage of reproduction, the artist allowed the disintegrated photographic image to stand in for the scene at Kent State. Thus, *Kent State* was anything but a straightforward documentation of the event. Since Castleman’s analysis is couched in a larger discussion of printmaking between 1960 and 1980, Hamilton’s print is the only instance in which she details the relevance of reproduction and its role in generating meaning.

The print historian Susan Tallman has continued this line of inquiry noting that “…rarely was it [printmaking] a straightforward recording of fact, and often documentation provided the occasion to explore the complex quandaries of representation.” In her account of print production after 1945, Tallman suggests that printmaking’s materiality could accommodate an artist’s interests in process, systems,

---

60 Ibid., 24.
61 Tallman described how artists who worked with language, earth, and cognitive systems exploited the reproductive process to investigate the language of art. For example, Richard Long in *Nile: Papers of River Muds* (fig. 41) incorporated mud from various riverbeds in Africa and Europe and mixed the natural material into the printmaking process. After the two elements were combined, Long then screenprinted the name of the location from which he gathered the mud onto the print itself; Tallman interpreted this print as metonym as the print stands in for the larger location of the African and European rivers. See Tallman, 106.
and the language of art that they had explored in other media.  

For example, Sol LeWitt’s print series *Squares with a Different Line Direction in Each Half Square*, 1971 (fig. 19), demonstrates the artist’s interest in permutations of geometric shape and contours that define his wall drawings and sculpture. According to Tallman, printmaking allowed LeWitt to create successive transformations of lines by etching and re-etching a plate several times and printing the plate in multiple directions. The “mechanical mutations” of the printmaking process enabled LeWitt to realize all possible solutions to the idea stated in his title as all ten prints in the series depict a “different line direction in each half square” on every print. Therefore, through reproduction LeWitt investigated the language of line and shape, and in this way it recalls the combinations in his wall drawings and sculpture as seriality run amuck. Tallman has surmised that printmaking provided LeWitt with a logical venue for continuing his interrogation of art’s language.

In an apparent reversal of this thesis, however, Tallman argues that printmaking for artists interested in the body and performance served to document events or people and record the gap between the private and public. For example, the five prints that comprise Bruce Nauman’s *Studies for Holograms*, 1970 (fig. 20), “record an early

---

62 In her history of printmaking, Susan Tallman notes a paucity of critical writing on printmaking after 1945. She attempts in *The Contemporary Print: From Pre-Pop to Postmodern* to rectify that situation by placing print production in a socio-historical context. See Tallman, *The Contemporary Print: From Pre-Pop to Postmodern*.

63 Ibid., 102-105.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Tallman suggests that Eleanor Antin and Gilbert & George similarly used materials to document fictive personalities.” Gilbert & Georges’ use of reproduction placed the print somewhere between “conceptual art document and theatrical prop.” Tallman, 108.
performance piece” that is about the manipulated body. Instead of describing the way that print reproduction informed Nauman’s conceptual activities, Tallman proposes that the final prints allowed the artist to transgress “the accustomed boundaries between intimacy and exposure, between artists and audience.” Thus, Tallman does not address how meaning was destabilized and renegotiated during the transition between performance and printmaking.

Eric Cameron, a Canadian-based artist and scholar, does provide some indication as to the way that artists exploited the printmaking process and the performing body to work through their concepts. In his 1974 essay on print production at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Cameron suggested that the printmaking process recalls a dramatic performance because both require successive stages of production. For Cameron, the connection between performances and printmaking was one reason artists turned to printmaking. For example, he noted that Vito Acconci used the stone matrix in *Kiss Off*, 1971 (fig. 21), and *Trademarks*, 1971 (fig. 22), to record performances that originated elsewhere. Although he did not indicate why the marrying of the two processes is meaningful in these two prints, Cameron offered a bit more analysis of the melding of printmaking and the performing body in Acconci’s *Touchstone (For J.L.*)*, 1972 (fig. 23). Cameron further proposed that “a good deal depends on the verbal pun of ‘touchstone’ and the nomenclature of the materials contributes further: the ink with which

---

67 Ibid., 113.
68 Ibid., 113.
70 Ibid., 245.
71 Although Cameron does not explicitly state the idea that the stone matrix offered an alternative performance site, he alludes to it. Ibid., 246.
he marks up the stone is rubbing ink.” Although Cameron theorized that printmaking was a performative medium and as such it proved to be a meaningful way to document artistic performances, he did not fully explain that joining the two media enhances both or that printmaking extended the activities performed.

The print scholar Richard Field best described this shift in printmaking, arguing that the process of reproduction ceased serving as “the handmaidens of subject and form” and “had become the focus of meaning.” During a panel discussion on developments in printmaking in the 1970s and on the disastrous “21st National Print Exhibition” at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1979, Field argued that the “operational processes” of printmaking informed a work of art’s meaning in many prints produced in the late 1960s and the 1970s. Although some of the panelists who participated in this session, “New

72 Ibid.
73 Richard Field alludes to this shift in his assessment of printmaking practices during the 1960s. He suggests that for Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol, and others working in the 1960s “printing techniques were no longer the handmaidens of subject and form, but had become the focusing of meaning.” His assessment of printmaking after 1960 begins with a description of Pop art and printmaking and continues to describe print production in the 1970s and 1980s. This trajectory is set up to provide a context for female artistic print production in the 1970s and 1980s. In his explanation of conceptual art, Field notes that the entire movement “was an outgrowth of the interest in the printed image, this time in the uses of verbal rather than visual languages.” See “Printmaking Since 1960: Conflicts Between Process and Expression,” in A Graphic Muse: Prints By Contemporary American Women, ed. Ruth E. Fine and Richard Field. (New York: Hudson Hill Press, in association with The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, 1987), 9-30.
74 Among the panelists Jacqueline Brody, editor of the Print Collector’s Newsletter, Brooke Alexander, dealer of contemporary prints, Riva Castleman, curator of prints and drawings at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Alex Katz, painter and printmaker, Kathryn Markel, independent print curator, Janice Oresman, a scholar of the history of printmaking, and Richard Field, all agreed that the annual print exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum failed because the curator, Gene Baro, only included prints by artists who had never been included in this prestige print annual and sought to discover and then
Prints of Worth: A Question of Taste,” disagreed, Field proposed that the print process and its flatbed matrix played a part in aesthetic decisions when artists translated ideas from painting and sculpture into a print, and vice versa. Field stated that “An artist like Johns is bound to be interested in how prints take apart the process of representation. He gathers certain ideas from prints that differ from those of other media.”

Although Field did not offer a specific example of how the operational process of printmaking, its flatbed picture plane, and its reproductive capabilities informed the language of Johns’ art, he did fully explore how the language of printmaking functioned in Johns’ work in a text he wrote at the end of the decade.

In the catalog that accompanied an exhibition of Johns’ prints at Wesleyan University in 1978, Field explained that Johns exploited reproduction and signs to generate meaning. The print historian asserted that Johns’ decision to reveal through reproduction what is normally hidden in language supplemented his goal of demanding


Field suggested that printmaking was not a means to simply reproduce a work in another media. He stated, “It’s horrible when you hear a printmaker saying that an artist like Alex [Katz] is only reproducing his paintings. Totally insensitive.” However, Katz and Riva Castleman acknowledged that sometimes printmaking is about making reproductions. Castleman noted that this aspect “doesn’t bother me at all. It’s making Dick [Richard Field] cringe, but it doesn’t bother me, because it gets those images around, right? That’s what prints are all about.” Ibid. 111.

Field also described how the printmaking process affected Philip Pearlstein’s aesthetic decisions. He stated that Pearlstein’s attempt to “smooth out his planes of aquatint” translated into his drawings and paintings. After working in aquatint, these two media display “more polish,” “a greater finish,” and became “less and less brushy.” See 112.

that viewers “understand the notion of seeing oneself seeing, being aware of our language while we use.” This project is apparent in Johns’ *Bent Blue*, 1971 (fig. 24), but Field noted that it could be discerned only if one understands the function of language and the language of printmaking,

_In Bent Blue_ the spectator is moved to total acceptance of what, in any other context, would be regarded as meaningless: the bending of the color as it (the word) moves through pictorial space; the imprinting or projection of itself in various aspects of completion on the machined surface of blended ink at the right. …. Our language allows us to say that we can bend colors, but not mean it, colors do not bend but the painting and print employ other types of language in which bent blue is a grammatical and meaningful phrase.  

“Bent Blue” becomes a meaningful phrase because Johns, according to Field, manipulated the print’s quality of being flat to show how blue may be bent. Johns forced this consideration, according to Field, by exploiting the flatness, mirroring, and reversals in printmaking. The process of printmaking entails reversals, so that what is placed on the matrix will appear in reverse on paper. Johns included that process in this print as two “blues” mirror each other. Indeed it looks as if one “blue” was the matrix for the other printed “blue” and during the transfer process the surfaces of “blues” held on too tightly and became marred, or bent in the process. The white line (the paper’s surface) that divides the two blues points to the process and its delays. By employing these devices, Johns demonstrated that blue may bend in the flat, symbolic realm of printing even if the action cannot be seen in real time. In considering the gap between visual and symbolic

---

78 Ibid., 8.
79 Ibid., 15, 19.
language, Johns forces the viewer to “see themselves seeing” two different realities. In Field’s estimation this is just one print among many in which Johns exploited printmaking to foreground the relation between what the viewer sees in the print and what he knows.

Field’s theory that the language of printmaking informed Johns’ aesthetic decisions and artistic production will guide my reading of the prints created by Vito Acconci, Bruce Conner, David Hammons, and Joyce Wieland. In the following chapters, I will show that this model of reading signs and signifiers works in tandem with the print process to critique the conventions of language, the meaning of representations, and the perception of identity as it underwent increasing scrutiny at the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s. My goal in this dissertation is to demonstrate that printmaking offered an alternative and suitable venue for artists who turned away from painting and sculpture and began exploiting other forms of media to communicate ideas that were in accordance with the tenets of conceptualism, body art and performance and that reflect the socio-historic climate at the turn of the decade.

**Conceptual Art and The Document: The State of Scholarship:**

Current scholarship on conceptual art has begun to consider the importance of the document and its ability to generate meaning. Yet scholars have generally focused on photography, video, and other time-based media in their assessment of art production around 1970. Although most scholars have overlooked the way in which the reproductive aspects of printmaking contribute meaning to the work, they have not neglected other
reproductive media. This, however, was not always the case. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, scholars asserted that conceptual art is based upon the notion that a concept is essence of art and that it may be considered as important, more important, or may even exist in the absence of an object that structures it. These scholars, therefore, perceived the document to be superfluous.\textsuperscript{80}

In one of the earliest accounts of conceptual art, “The Dematerialization of Art,” Lucy Lippard and John Chandler described the trend toward negating the autonomous, tangible work of art. According to these two art historians, the unique work of art that had substance and referenced the artist’s psyche, as in Jackson Pollock’s work, was being replaced by an “ultra-conceptual” and “dematerialized” art form that emphasized cognition.\textsuperscript{81} Since they argued that the idea was paramount, they neglected the material basis of conceptual art. In their opinion, “The medium need not be the message…”\textsuperscript{82} This influential account foreclosed meaning on the document, and as a result in chronicles that followed, art historians neglected its importance.

Ursula Meyers likewise suggested in her 1972 book, \textit{Conceptual Art}, that “Conceptual art emphasizes the elimination of the art-object…”\textsuperscript{83} She observed that this change affected the style of the new art form, noting “The abolition of the art-object,


\textsuperscript{81} Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, “The dematerialization of art,” \textit{Art International} 12 (February 1968): 31-36.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{83} Meyer, “Introduction,” in \textit{Conceptual Art}, XIII, XV.
typical for conceptual art, eliminates the concern with ‘style,’ ‘quality,’ and ‘permanence,’ the indispensable modalities of traditional and contemporary art.”

Lippard, Chandler, and Meyers initially interpreted the alteration as a move toward the obsolescence of the material object. More recent scholarship has noted the problematic nature of these accounts—particularly the ways in which early scholars read documents as transparent, inconsequential things that provide evidence for a previous performance or idea but did not impart meaning.

Anne Rorimer has noted, for example, that the form ideas take contributes to the work of art’s meaning. She observes that Joseph Kosuth in *One and Three Hammers*, 1965 (fig. 25), depicted a tripartite representation system—a mimeographed definition of a hammer, a photographic image of it, and the hammer itself—to show how slightly different representations of one object can alter meaning and perception. In this work, for example, the presentation of the same thing in three different forms questions the “true” definition of a hammer.

Kosuth’s interest in concepts and found materials recalls the work of Marcel Duchamp. The older artist’s practice of co-opting commonplace objects (or

---

84 Ibid.
85 In addition to Chandler, Lippard, and Meyers, Gregory Battcock articulated painting’s demise. In reviewing Seth Siegelaub’s exhibition “0 Objects, 0 Paintings, 0 Sculptures,” Battcock declared painting to be obsolete. See Gregory Battcock, “Painting is Obsolete,” *New York Free Press* (January 23, 1969): 7. More recently, Thomas McEvilley has observed that painting “was for a decade or more declared dead. When this “death” turned out to have been only a temporary exile, painting returned gradually to the foreground in representational rather than abstract modes.” See Thomas McEvilley, *The Exile’s Return: Toward a Redefinition of Painting for the Post-Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 98.
“readymades”), such as a men’s urinal or a bottle rack and making them works of art through a statement of intent or a signature influenced artists working in late 1960s and early 1970s. The transformation of a non-art object into an art object by re-orienting it, altering its context, and including a signature disrupted traditional artistic aesthetics based on quality of execution and beauty. With these modifications, as in *Fountain*, 1917 (fig. 26), Duchamp suggested everyday objects, an artistic gesture, and conceptual ideas could dictate an acceptable art form. A monograph on Duchamp published in the late 1950s and exhibitions of the artist’s work in California and New York in the early 1960s generated enthusiasm for the artist’s ideas, and as a result, many young artists turned to Duchamp for conceptual guidance. The practice of undermining traditional aesthetics and questioning artistic practices or institutions by appropriating found objects, using linguistic puns, irony, performance, chance, and humor spoke to a new generation who sought an alternative to conventional aesthetics.

Benjamin Buchloh has pointed out, conceptual artists exploited Duchampian language to question the visual in art and to critique institutions. Buchloh specifically argues that other artists employed linguistic structures, everyday objects, as well as administrative materials—such as Xeroxes, contracts, and legal language—to undermine the value and structures of art and its institutions. This practice produced, in Buchloh’s

---

87 In addition, Buchloh argues that these works of art supplanted handcrafted art forms that exhibit artistic desire for transcendence. See Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105-143.

88 This differs, according to Buchloh, from Kosuth’s practice of exploiting language to sustain a tautology.
estimation, an “aesthetic of administration.” In addition to Duchamp’s influence, Robert Morris’ work from the early 1960s provided the impetus for this change. Buchloh argues that Morris’ art laid the groundwork for what would be conceptual art’s assault on the visual by incorporating linguistic signs, form, and legal contracts. Buchloh further suggests that the material aspect of the work of art contributed to this project.

In Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal, 1963 (fig. 27) for example, Morris exploited business vernacular and a legal contract. Using these forms, the artist took back and drained the perceptual aspects from the work of art.” By using statistics, legal contracts, administrative language, and institutional critique, Morris simultaneously attacked the visual in art and revealed often hidden power structures. According to Buchloh, this shift within Morris’ work, as well as in works created by other artists of this period, demonstrates the negation of transcendental art forms and the adoption of forms that demonstrate an “aesthetic of administration.” In other words, conceptual artists exploited Xerox and cheap printing to create multiple objects that subverted the hierarchies of fine art.

Alexander Alberro describes in a recent publication similar tendencies. He argues that artists who were interested in the deskilling of the artist, de-commodifying the work of art, re-negotiating the relationship with the viewer, and critiquing institutions created works of art that were designed for reproducibility. This is readily apparent in the

---

89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 115-119.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
Xerox Book organized by Seth Seigelaub. In this work, Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, and Robert Morris contributed works of art that address the aesthetic and conceptual value of reproduction. Carl Andre, for example, dropped twenty-five, one-inch square pieces of cardboard onto the Xerox machine’s glass plate (fig. 28). Rather than placing them on the surface all at once, he dropped the pieces one at a time; each time he dropped one, he photocopied it. As Alberro points out, Andre incorporated chance and gravity to negate “conventions of skill and rational composition,” and in so doing, he dramatized the conceptual relevance of reproduction by allowing the work to address “the procedure of its own making.”

Two years later in 1970, the Xerox machine and its processes became the focus of an exhibition at The Jewish Museum in New York. In the catalog for the exhibition Software, the curator Jack Burnham indicated that artists exploited information processing systems—including video cameras, photographic cameras, computers, telefax machines, and Xerox machines—to structure communication in their works of art. Machines (as well as the interest in linguistic theories and Cybernetics), according to Burnham, shaped the changes taking place in art. He noted in his catalog essay that “…the movement away from art objects has been precipitated by concerns with natural

94 Ibid., 136. Of course he does not explicitly state it, but Alberro’s description of Andre’s work and procedure recalls Duchamp’s use of chance in Three Standard Stoppages and Morris Box with the Sound of Its own making.
and man-made systems, processes, ecological relationships, and the philosophical-linguistic involvement of conceptual art. All of these interests deal with art which is transactional; they deal with underlying structures of communication….”

As Burnham pointed out, the burgeoning interest in process, linguistic structures, and other non-traditional media found a logical outlet in the new information processing systems. Machines that reproduced information not only made possible new art forms and new audiences, but their intrinsic qualities added meaning to conceptual works of art.

In addition to the Xerox machine, the camera was yet another mechanical device that structured artists’ ideas. Although many artists and scholars have generally agreed with Ursula Meyers’ early assessment that the camera was “a dumb recording device,” some art historians have recently argued that conceptual artists exploited the reproductive aspects of the photographic medium to invest a work of art with greater meaning. Jeff Wall and Lucy Soutter, for example, have recently documented the conceptual uses of

---


97 These individuals did not believe that photographic process or the photographic print contributed or structure meaning. Douglas Huebler, for example, told Patricia Norvell, an art historian who frequently writes about conceptual art, that photography functioned as a straightforward document of fact and without “ornament” or “pictorial interest.” See Patricia Norvell, “Douglas Huebler,” in Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegelaub, Smithson, and Weiner, ed. Alexander Alberro and Particia Norvell (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 139-140. In addition, Ursula Meyers in her text on Conceptual Art stated the “camera as well as the Xerox Machine can be used as dumb recording devices.” See Meyers, Conceptual Art, XII. In addition, Kat Rhodes points out that the Australian photographer Robert Rooney also stated that the camera functioned like a “dumb recording device.” See Kate Rhodes, “The Camera is a Dumb Recording Device: Robert Rooney and the Serial Photographs in Retrospect,” Art Bulletin of Victoria 42 (2002): 46-55. Since Lippard and Chandler negated the meaning of material, it seems that they too held this perception of photographic reproduction.
photography and its role in generating meaning. Wall and Soutter have suggested that some artists considered the properties of photography to be an essential, conceptual component of art, and therefore they used its materiality to question perception and meaning.

In an essay for the 1995 show on conceptual art held at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, Wall asserts that conceptual artists renegotiated the relationship between artist, medium, and meaning by subverting photography’s “burden of being a depiction and using its properties as a means of making visible the condition of being a depiction.”98 This revision was accomplished principally by the “de-skilling” of the artist or “amateurization.”99 In Ed Ruscha’s Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations, 1963 (fig. 29) for example, the banal subject, the poor cropping, and insensitivity to the effects of lighting imitate the work of an amateur photographer and call attention to photography’s reproductive qualities. As a result, Ruscha dismantled the hierarchy of art in which the work of a professional artist is considered superior to the souvenir made by an amateur.100 Wall states that Ruscha’s techniques turned photography on its head by destabilizing the relationship between artists, work of art, and meaning. This project of usurpation and questioning, according to Wall, is characteristic of conceptual art’s philosophy.

In addition, Lucy Soutter theorizes that Jan Dibbets manipulated the process and conventions of perspective in actual and represented space in order to order to draw

99 Ibid., 248, 258.
100 Ibid.,
attention to photography’s illusionary nature and the fallibility of human perception. In Dibbet’s *Perspective Corrections*, 1969 (fig. 30) for example, the converging orthogonal lines suggest that the landscape and architecture occupy three-dimensional space, but the artist’s alteration to the actual space in the photograph subverts the illusionary nature of the represented space. Dibbets accomplished this modification, Soutter notes, by cutting out a trapezoidal section of grass that, when photographed, transforms into a perfect square. Since the square area of the grass does not obey the same laws of perspective as the architecture and landscape, Soutter observes that it appears to be a separate photograph adhered to the surface. In addition, the tonal disparities in the grasses, between the mowed area of grass and the rest of the lawn, contribute to this visual discrepancy and suggest the existence of two separate photographs. The manipulation of real space for the purpose of making visible the mechanics of optical processes in photography destabilized both photographic transparency and conventions. As two-dimensional surface and three-dimensional space conflate, Soutter summarizes, the viewer is left questioning the truth of what is represented. Thus, Dibbets exploited reproduction to question modes of perception and representation in art. The material component of photography and its ability to offer exactly repeatable pictorial statements allowed artists to destabilize meaning and perception. As Soutter and Wall point out, therefore, the photograph functioned as more than a transparent record of an idea. Its formal attributes, its history and operation as a medium are all active elements in the meaning of the conceptual work.

Body Art, Performance Art and the Document: The State of Scholarship:

Many of the ideas that define in conceptual art have also shaped body and performance art.\textsuperscript{102} Even though it seems that the three separate easily—conceptual art concerns the concept, performance art entails an individual following a narrative, script or directions, and body art requires that the artist use the body as medium where s/he is both object and subject—the boundaries often turn out to be much more fluid. Max Kozloff argued in a 1975 article that “the criteria for separating” body art “from other forms is not clear.”\textsuperscript{103} The reason for this lack of clear distinction, according to Kozloff, was that “…recent Process and conceptual art, the minimal sculpture of ten years, the Happenings of fifteen, and the Dada and Futurism of sixty years ago” obscured the origins of “Body art, or bodyworks.”\textsuperscript{104}

Following a philosophy similar to that practiced by conceptual artists, artists who worked with the body as material undermined art’s traditional aesthetics and economic structures by failing to produce an object for sale. Since the work of art consisted of a

\textsuperscript{102} Most recently, Thomas McEvilley has linked performance art to conceptual art. He noted, “Born together, the two new genres evolved as a kind of family act. While precocious sibling conceptual art uttered its brittle insights, it brought with it, tagging along as it were, a gangly adolescent younger sibling, performance art, which could not rise above, or indeed see beyond, the awkward embarrassments of living in a body.” He also observed that the “cognitive imperative” led conceptual artists to question and analyze everything while the “ethical or affective imperative” guided performance art. See Thomas McEvilley, “Anti-Art as Ethics,” in The Triumph of Anti-Art: Conceptual and Performance Art in the Formation of Post-Modernism (New York: McPherson & Company, 2005), 217. In addition, Robert Pincus-Witten conflated performance and conceptual art in his description of Acconci’s Seedbed. See Robert Pincus-Witten, “Vito Acconci and The Conceptual Performance,” Artime 10 (April 1972): 47-49.


\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 37-38.
performed activity, when it ended so too did the work of art; the lack of a commodity left dealers without an object to sell. Artists of body art and performance art further undermined art’s economic structure by moving the work of art outside the gallery space and bringing it directly to the audience through public actions and performances. In this way, artists conflated the distance between producer and consumer and subverted the traditional practices of consumerism in which an individual goes to a gallery, views a work of art, and then purchases it. When an artist put his/her body in service of destabilizing and critiquing art practices in this way, according to one of the leading historians of performance art, RoseLee Goldberg, s/he linked their project to conceptual art.  

Goldberg points out, however, that the term “body art” was “a loose one” that produced a wide variety of interpretations. In her text on the history of performance art, she demonstrates this point by indicating the commonalities among performance, conceptual and body art. Goldberg notes, for example, that performance art became an extension of conceptual art because in both the concept served as material. Those artists who dealt with issues that were also explored in conceptual art and used their body should, as Goldberg has suggested, be more accurately grouped together under the rubric body art rather than performance.

106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., 152-180.
108 Ibid., 152.
109 Goldberg, 153. Since the artist’s body became the subject and object of Performance art in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many art historians have suggested that the term
According to Goldberg, in both conceptual and body art the experience served as the work of art and its materialization in reproduction was only tangential to the real work in performance.\(^{110}\) She suggests that after the idea materialized in the performance, the work ceased to exist. The ephemeral performance and not the documentation of it, in Goldberg’s assessment, should be considered the real work of art. Goldberg also points out that the real work of art often entailed the body as medium. In Vito Acconci’s *Conversion*, 1970 (fig. 31) for example, the artist attempted to change his gender by burning away his body hair, pulling at each breast in an attempt to make female breasts, and hiding his penis between his legs.\(^{111}\) Since the artist acted upon his body and his body received the action, his body served as the material testing the artist’s physical and psychic boundaries. Thus, the work of art occurred on or through his body. It was also, as Goldberg argues, momentary, and when it ended, the activity ceased. She, therefore, considers photographs of the event as merely a supplement to the real work.\(^{112}\) Goldberg is not the first scholar to argue this point.

As early as 1970, the artist, critic, curator, and magazine publisher Willoughby Sharp asserted the importance of the body over its manifestation in reproduction.\(^{113}\) Sharp

\(^{110}\) Ibid.
\(^{111}\) Ibid., 156.
\(^{112}\) Ibid., 152-153.
suggested that the body became the “sculptural material” that was simultaneously subject and object.\footnote{Ibid., 14. In addition to Sharp and Goldberg, a number of art historians recognized that the body became the material in works produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For example, the Italian scholar Lea Vergine stated in her 1974 text that “The body is being used as an art language by an ever greater number of contemporary painters and sculptors…” See Lea Vergine, “Bodylanguage,” \textit{Art & Artists} 9 (September 1974): 22-27. In addition, Lucy Lippard stated “The 1970s have seen the proliferation of a new type of art in which the primary image and/or medium is the artist’s own body.” Lucy Lippard, “The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: Women’s Body Art,” \textit{Art in America} 69 (May-June 1976): 73-81. In addition, Ira Licht noted in his 1975 text that “Artists using their own bodies as their primary medium of expression is the most significant artistic development of the 1970s.” See Ira Licht, \textit{Bodyworks} (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1975), unpaginated. See also François Pluchart, “Body Art,” \textit{Artitudes} 2 (1971): 5-8; See also Jonathan Benthall, “The Body as a Medium of Expression: A Manifesto,” in \textit{The Body as a Medium of Expression}, ed. Jonathan Benthall and Ted Polhemus (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975), 5-12.} In an article for \textit{Avalanche}, Sharp stated that artists used the body as a medium to question and explore “assumptions about…modes of being.”\footnote{Sharp, “Body Works: A pre-critical, non-definitive survey of very recent works using the human body or parts thereof,” 14. In the same year that he curated “Bodyworks” at the Museum of Conceptual Art in San Francisco.} The body, according to Sharp, functioned as tool to mark the body’s presence. As a “marking instrument,” the body made physical contact between the self and environment.\footnote{Ibid., 15.} For example, Richard Long used his feet to mark a line on the ground while walking through an English meadow (fig. 32).\footnote{Ibid.} Sharp noted that this practice of using the body as a tool to mark the environment could be compared to Yves Klein’s work in which bodies marked the surface of a canvas as in \textit{Anthropometries (Ant 100)}, 1960 (fig.33).\footnote{Ibid., 15.} The difference, according to Sharp, was that Klein used models and was more interested in theatrics. In addition to “body as tool,” Sharp also suggested that the body functioned as a...
“place” that received marks, as a “prop,” as an “object,” and as “‘body in normal circumstances’ used to find out something about itself.”119 According to Sharp’s assessment, the photograph served to document these activities because it recorded the body in “continuous process.”120 When Sharp argued this point, he alluded to the idea that they functioned transparently and that they should be considered distinct from the body in performance.121

In another early account of body art, Cindy Nemser also argued that the body was the primary medium for many artists working in the late 1960s and early 1970s.122 In a narrative that traces the influences on body art back to Duchamp’s performances as Rrose Selavy, Jackson Pollock’s action paintings, Yves Klein’s *Anthropométries*, and the Happenings of the 1960s, Nemser theorized that artists working around 1970 used their body as primary source material to negotiate relationships between themselves and their environment.123 Nemser, for example, argued that Edward Hall’s theories, which suggest that man understands his subjectivity through awareness of himself and his relation to the

---

119 Ibid., 15-17.
120 Ibid., 17.
121 Ibid., 14.
environment, influenced those artists working with the body. In addition, Nemser postulated that James Gibson’s theories, in which man understands his environment through his perceptual systems, also informed body art. These theories are apparent, according to Nemser, in Dan Graham’s *Two Correlated Rotations*, 1969 (fig. 34). In this work of art, Graham and another participant pointed cameras at each other as they walked in a circle. Each participant’s movements were subject to and contingent upon the other’s behavior. This activity, in Nemser’s estimation, allowed Graham to “know one’s self as both subject and object in relation to one’s surroundings.”

While Nemser pointed out that studies on human interaction informed this work and suggested that the body allowed artists to negotiate subject-object relations in real time, she did not touch on the role of the document. Although Nemser provided a context for the work, she and many other historians have neglected the importance of the document.

---


125 Nemser, 42.

126 Other art historians have contended that body art resulted from the radical, socio-political period in which it was produced. For example, Sharp stated “…it is not surprising that under the present repressive socio-economic situation young artists have turned to their most readily available source, themselves, for sculptural material with almost unlimited potential…” Sharp, “Body Works: A pre-critical, non-definitive survey of very recent works using the human body or parts thereof,” 14. François Pluchart stated “…one had to wait until the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s to see artists
More recently Peggy Phelan, a leading scholar on performance art, has argued that the document is not as important as the live performance. She theorizes, “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.” Phelan argues that the performance is unlike the document because they do not operate in a similar manner. She observes, “To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance’s being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here becomes itself through disappearance.” Phelan, therefore, surmises that the document merely serves to jog the memory and to encourage that memory to come alive.

Although Phelan and others have argued that the document acts as a supplement to the performance, some art historians have suggested otherwise, noting that the object shares in the concept embedded in performance. In her seminal article “Notes on the Index: Part I” of 1976, Rosalind Krauss theorized that the photograph means something endanger their bodies and inflict on themselves a violent physical suffering.” François Pluchart, “Risk as the Practice of Thought,” 39-40.

Ira Licht, for example, suggested in 1975 that the photograph or record is a mere document. He stated that the “power of the physicality and the psychological directness of the gesture transcend its pictorial representation.” See Licht, Bodyworks, In addition, See Dennis Oppenheim, for example, stated that photography was “merely a residue” of the original event that served as a vehicle for communication. See Alison de Lima Green, “Dennis Oppenheim: No Photography,” Spot 12 (Spring 1993): 5.


Ibid.
in relation to the performance.\textsuperscript{130} Seeking to describe what united the disparate elements of production in the 1970s, Krauss suggested that many artists employed photography because it operated like the indices they used in other media, such as performance and body art.\textsuperscript{131} Krauss explained that indices and “shifters” were empty signifiers waiting to be filled by a particular presence.\textsuperscript{132} The photograph indexed a presence and like the index it pointed to an absent referent or location. Thus photography took on the performative role of signification at work in the index. This relationship, which Krauss traced back to the work of Duchamp, is at work in much art produced in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{133} This exploitation of indexicality is apparent in Dennis Oppenheim’s \textit{Identity Stretch}, 1970-75 (fig. 35). To create this work, Oppenheim left an index of his thumbprint on a field in the environs of Buffalo, and that imprint registered his presence. Oppenheim then photographed the installation in of the indexed field; the photographic index captured and therefore extended that performance because it too pointed to a presence in another location. Although Krauss described the reciprocity between the activity and the object, art historians did not connect the two for another twenty years.

Kathy O’Dell and Amelia Jones have recently contended that the document partakes in meaning, but they place greater focus upon the volatile social milieu of the late 1960s and early 1970s that shaped body art. O’Dell, for example asserts that Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, Gina Pane, and Ulay/Marina Ambramovic contended with

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 68-69, +80-81.
\textsuperscript{132} Krauss argued for the recognition of Duchamp’s importance, noting that he was the first artist who demonstrated the potential of signs. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 70-78.
women’s rights, gay rights, civil rights, and the Vietnam War in their work.\textsuperscript{134} O’Dell specifies that the activities and performances—and particularly the masochistic ones—addressed broken social, psychological, and legal contracts.\textsuperscript{135} A contract, according to O’Dell, is a metaphor that alludes to an agreed upon power structure within social, political, domestic, and legal situations, and these contracts provide order to human relations.\textsuperscript{136} These contracts, in O’Dell’s assessment, broke down when trouble emerged in political, legal, and social institutions because of the Vietnam War and the various rights movements. In the works of art that address these issues, artists used their bodies to unveil the dysfunctions that resulted from the broken contracts and the “mechanics of alienation” that went along with this condition.\textsuperscript{137}

In this study and in an article published a year later, O’Dell argues that photographs and their reception can be understood as an extension of performances of identity.\textsuperscript{138} O’Dell’s earlier argument is based on the understanding that these photographs were never intended to be hung in galleries but were made for reproduction and were intended to be touched. Like coarse family photographs, the grainy photographs of performances are experienced through touch and sight as they are held, viewed, and understood in private and often domestic spaces. This condition of viewing recalls the process of identity formation—as perception occurs through touch and sight in domestic spaces—but it also parallels the investigations into identity undertaken in the body art

\textsuperscript{134} O’Dell, \textit{Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970s}, xii.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., xii-xiii.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
documented in these photographs. O’Dell surmises that the document links the viewer to the producer in a parallel enactment of subjectivity by exploiting haptic and visual experiences. The photographic document and its reception, therefore, continues the artist’s bodily performance of investigating “psychical identity.”

In her later text, O’Dell also suggests that the photograph means something in relation to the body. She suggests that the photograph operates like a contract in which the subject negotiates his relationship to the world. In *Discours mou et mat*, 1975 (fig. 36) for example, Gina Pane accentuates proximity and touch by focusing on her face and providing double-portrait. In this photography, the artist’s face, which is obscured by large sunglasses, is mirrored in the shattered glass. Two portraits, therefore, dominate the photography. Also mirrored in the glass is the artist’s hand; it leans against the glass above her hand and touches its reflection. O’Dell suggests that the image stimulates the viewer’s desire for connection to the image by accentuating touch. Yet the shattered glass, the glasses worn by the artist, and the absence of the artist’s presence in reproduction maintains a distance. Since this photograph was viewed in an institutional setting and hung at a height that aligns Pane’s head with that of the viewer’s, the photograph dramatizes the way in which identity is formed through “contracted negotiations with others” that are governed by and at operation in “institutional

---

139 O’Dell, 81.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., 28.
settings.” These photographs also reflect the process of negotiation between the self and other that the artist and viewer both experience.

Amelia Jones also acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between the performance and the document. In a text published in a special issue of the *Art Journal*, Jones argues that attending performances (“in the flesh”) was not more important than viewing photographs of a performance and thus it should not be accorded the place of privilege. The reason, according to Jones, is that both indicate the body as lacking and dispersed in a late capitalist society. This situation for Jones is apparent in Carolee Schneemann’s *Interior Scroll*, 1975 (fig. 37). To create this work of art, the artist painted her body and withdrew a text from her vaginal cavity. The text addressed feminist issues. The work allowed Schneemann to work through gender inequalities and her unique experiences as a woman.

Although Schneemann performed the work (“in the flesh”), she could never, in Jones’ estimation, fully deliver herself to the audience because she could never share all aspects of identity with those present. Jones argues that some aspect of the artist’s identity always escapes that which is present in her performance and the text. It demonstrates, therefore, that an individual’s body and subjectivity can never be wholly present. This lack and deferral in performance translates, according to Jones, into the photograph as it represents the impossibility of really knowing all facets of the body that

143 Ibid.
145 Ibid., 12.
146 Ibid., 12-14.
performs. In any given frame, for example, a photograph can only represent a portion of the body. Jones surmises that the document thus “exposes” the body “as supplement, as both the visible proof of the self and its endless deferral.”147 In other words, the body is insufficiently present in performance and equally insufficiently present in the document. In this way, they both represent the work of art.

In addition to Jones and O’Dell, Joanna Frueh has also described the relevance of photography to performance and body art.148 Her reading of the photographs in Eleanor Antin’s Carving: A Traditional Sculpture, 1973 (fig. 38), bears this out. To create this piece, the artist dieted for thirty-six days, and on each day she photographed herself from four angles—front, back and both sides—as she stood before a door in her apartment. The artist indicated that her intention for this piece was “to make an academic sculpture.”149 Frueh points out that Antin’s work evokes the ancient sculptural practice of using a set of proportions to carve an ideal image of feminine beauty in marble.150 Like Praxiteles who carved away at marble to produce a nude female figure in the Aphrodite of Knidos, 350-340 BCE (fig. 39), Antin carved away at her body through dieting to

147 Ibid., 13-14.
150 Amelia Jones and Tracey Warr have suggested that the photographs parody the “method of traditional Greek sculpture in which the sculptor worked his way around a figure, repeatedly carving a thin layer from all sides in order to “keep the whole in view.” See Amelia Jones and Tracey Warr, The Artist’s Body: Themes and Movements (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2000), 87. In addition, Joanna Frueh noted that “just as the Classical Greek nude occludes women’s bodies in this kind of aesthetically rigid form, so the socially correct beautiful body disciplines and punishes women, through frustration, guilt anxiety, and competitiveness with other women.” See Frueh, “The Body Through Women’s Eyes,” 195.
produce a thin, ideal body. Frueh suggests that Antin’s project calls attention to the common belief that being beautiful in our society means being thin. 151 In this way it is possible to see Antin’s Carving: A Traditional Sculpture as an investigation into the female form and ideals of beauty. 152

Even though Antin was interested in making an academic sculpture, the document was also important to her. She stated the “…document is not a neutral list of facts. It is a conceptual creation of events after they are over.” 153 By manipulating the document’s formal qualities, Antin exposed the difference between the nude and the naked female figure. The distance between the lens and the subject, the clinical poses, and the repeated forms arranged in a pseudo-scientific spreadsheet evacuate sensuality from the figure. 154

---

151 Ibid.
152 Antin pitted—as she stated—the ideal nude against the naked form. She intimated to Lisa Bloom that she presented her real self to the world, rather than the coiffed ideal form. She noted that she photographed herself in four different angles “without my life, history, or achievements to give me courage, barely awakened from sleep, hair uncombed, not yet with a face to present myself to the world.” See Lisa Bloom and Eleanor Antin, “Rewriting the Script: Eleanor Antin’s Feminist Art” (includes an unpublished correspondence between Bloom and Antin), in Eleanor Antin, ed. Howard Fox (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Fellows of Contemporary Art, 1999), 168-169.
154 In 1973, the art critic Cindy Nemser wrote that Antin’s Carving is about “how women are always concerned with need to improve their body.” See Cindy Nemser, “Eleanor Antin,” in Art Talk (New York: Scribner’s, 1975), 281. More recently Anne Rorimer stated that Antin’s use of seriality produced multiple images of the female nude and that plurality rejects “definition as volumetric material.” As such, the female nude is not reduced to a singular object but exists in multiple parts, and it is this multiplicity that permits subjectivity. See Anne Rorimer, “Photography: Restructuring the Pictorial,” 116. In addition, Amelia Jones has argued that Antin controlled the image through creation and reproduction, and that position allowed her to be both subject and object as she parodied classical sculptural traditions. This duality that allowed for self-inquiry and
Using these devices, the artist produced a document of the naked form rather than a representation of an ideal beauty. Frueh notes that the artist nullified the traditional notions of beauty and replaced it with banality through systematic permutations of the body and arranging the document in a grid.\textsuperscript{155} Antin’s manipulation of photography and her body, therefore, produced a scientific analysis of the female form, rather than a multiplicity of titillating images. In this way, she investigated and reconfigured the female form. Frueh argues that these types of self-examination and self-determination allowed artists such as Antin to investigate female power and their myths as a means of empowerment.\textsuperscript{156} Antin’s work reflects larger social practices.

During the late 1960s and into the 1970s, other female artists and women in general sought to explore and gain control of their bodies as a means to assert their authority and autonomy. With the increasing momentum of the Women’s Movement, the Sexual Revolution, and the availability of the birth control pill women gained control of their bodies and desires.\textsuperscript{157} These changes materialize in \textit{Carving} as the female figure produced and was the subject of meaning. According to Frueh, Antin took control of the form by morphing “the poetry of the nude into mug shot prose”.\textsuperscript{158} In other words, the

\textsuperscript{155} Frueh, 195-196. Frueh also links Antin’s use of the grid to conceptual, minimalists, and pattern and design movements.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} The new-found freedom found its way into popular culture in the movie \textit{Prudence and the Pill} and Erica’s Jong’s discussion of the “zipless fuck” in \textit{Fear of Flying}. For a thorough description of how social and political changes in the women’s movement is apparent in popular culture and infiltrated the fine arts see Frueh, “The Body Through Women’s Eyes,” 190-207.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 195.
artist produced a clinical or legalistic representation of her body, and this record effectively drained all sensuality from the female nude. In this way, the document in body art added another layer of meaning to the artist’s performance.

Yet it is a reading by Lucy Soutter—a much less well-known art historian—of Dennis Oppenheim’s photographic processes that best demonstrates that the body and the photograph were intimately linked in performance.¹⁵⁹ Soutter theorizes that Oppenheim’s performance in *Reading Position for a Second Degree Burn*, 1970 (fig. 40), mimicked the photographic process of recording indices and then allowed reproduction to reenact his performance. To create this piece the artist traveled to Jones Beach on Long Island and slumbered in the sun for five hours with the book *Tactics: Cavalry and Artillery* resting open upon his chest. Two photographs document the performance: one photograph captured Oppenheim before the five-hour period as he laid with the book spread open across his chest; the other depicts the moments after Oppenheim removed the book, exposing a sunburn he received while sleeping.

In the after image, a white square materializes on his chest where the book was located and provides a striking contrast with the surrounding reddened skin. Soutter suggests that the white square resembles a monochrome painting and in this way it supports Oppenheim’s contention that the sun painted his skin the way paint colors a canvas’ surface.¹⁶⁰ Regarding the effects of sun on his body and its similarity to paint

---

¹⁵⁹ Soutter, 8-9.
¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 8.
application, the artist stated, “I allowed myself to be painted—my skin becomes pigment. I could regulate its intensity through control of the exposure time.”

Although Oppenheim linked his activity with painting, Soutter discerns the link between the exposure of sunlight on his body and that of light on photographic film and paper. Soutter points out that the artist’s discussion of exposure time combined with the physical alteration of his epidermis after light exposure evokes the photographic process in which the amount of light exposure determines tonal and color saturation on film and paper. Thus, Soutter surmises that Oppenheim used his body like a piece of light-sensitized photographic paper and created a square photogram on his torso.

The photographic process and its materiality provided a physical link between the original event and its documentation. According to Soutter, this connection was made possible by activating indices in both the performance and the photograph. In other words, when the sunlight hit the artist’s body it left a trace of its presence on the artist’s torso; the resulting square is an index of the sunlight’s presence. In turn, the light reflecting off his body left an index of its presence on the film that was then transferred to photographic paper. Therefore, the photograph bears a direct indexical relationship to the original event because the sunlight refracting off Oppenheim’s body left an index on the

---

161 Ibid., 8. Oppenheim’s comments were taken from a 1971 interview with Willoughby Sharp. See “Dennis Oppenheim Interviewed by Willoughby Sharp,” Studio International 182 (November 1971): 188.


163 Soutter, 10.
film emulsion that was then mapped onto light sensitive paper. By playful manipulating indices in *Reading Position for a Second Degree Burn*, Soutter points out that Oppenheim unveiled the indexical relationship between the performance and the photograph.\textsuperscript{164} The process worked through the manner in which indexicality operates according to degrees by juxtaposing the “immediate index” on his skin to the “mediated” one left on the photographic paper.\textsuperscript{165} Oppenheim exploited the photographic medium, Soutter concludes, to reassess the language of photography in order to understand “what it is and what it does.”\textsuperscript{166} In other words the artist used his body like the photographic machine and then allowed the photograph as an index to stand in for his absent body.

Soutter as well as Rosalind Krauss have argued that artists used their bodies as a medium that parallels the photographic process and then used the photograph to recall that process. Artists also exploited printmaking’s reproductive qualities, and yet art

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid. Anne Rorimer has also suggested that Oppenheim’s work embodies the photographic process, but she argues that he employed the process to address larger pictorial issues. Drawing upon the artist’s statements, Rorimer notes that Oppenheim considers the work “a reversal of energy expenditure with the sun being the driving force for bringing about color change.” According Rorimer the work was not a means to highlight the photographic process, but rather to bring a “performed activity to light as a pictorial or sculptural entity.” For Rorimer, Oppenheim’s interest in “bringing about color change” allowed Oppenheim to reassess pictorial issues. Anne Rorimer, “Photography: Restructuring the Pictorial,” in *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality*, 116. In addition to Wall, Soutter, and Rorimer, the photographic historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau has also suggested that conceptual artists approached the photographic medium “without the baggage of a photographer with all the technical hang-ups about precision. This freedom allowed conceptual artists to explore the various aspects of photography and utilize the characteristics of the medium to their own ends.” See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Photography After Art Photography,” in *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 103-123.
historians have largely overlooked this medium in their narratives. Krauss’ and Soutter’s practice of linking the object to the activity will provide a model for my reading of the way in which Acconci, Conner, Hammons, and Wieland allowed printmaking to participate in the work of art. The following chapters will be given over to discussing these artists who used prints not as transparent, neutral documents, but as formally complex objects produced in a medium that was to participate actively in conceptions of the body and the self.

**Theoretical Foundations:**

In order understand the manner in which Acconci, Conner, Hammons, and Wieland employed the operational process of printmaking to destabilize and critique signs of the self, it will be helpful to know the theoretical underpinnings of selfhood in general. For my study, I will employ Jacques Lacan’s theories on subject development and its semiotic precursors. My readings of these artists will rely upon a basic understanding of linguistic and indexical signs, as they were defined by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce respectively and used by Lacan in his post-structuralist notions of the self. In the end, I hope to expose the way in which printmaking allowed for new conceptual and aesthetic approaches to the body and selfhood.

In 1897 the American philosopher Charles Peirce developed a theory of language and communication based on the nature of the linguistic sign. According to Peirce’s theory described in “Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs,” a sign has three divisions
that mean something in relation to an object. All three divisions describe the character of the sign, but it is the second division, or “trichotomy,” that tells us about the character of the sign and its relation to the object to which it refers. In this division the sign’s quality can be broken down into an index, icon, and a symbol. An index is that quality of a sign that is made by an object and therefore is connected physically with the object (like an impression of a finger); an icon is a sign that exhibits similar characteristics as the object to which it refers (like a picture of a finger), and a symbol depends upon conventions and repetition for meaning about the object to which it refers (like the word finger).

A few years later and in contrast to Peirce’s theory, Ferdinand de Saussure hypothesized that the material aspect of the sign and the mental concept are not easily divided. He shared his theories of linguistic signs during lectures at the University of Geneva beginning in 1906, but he did not publish them during his lifetime. After he died, students and colleagues compiled his course notes in Course in General Linguistics. In part one, “General Principles: Nature of Linguistic Sign” and “Invariability and Variability of the Sign,” Saussure defined the dual nature of linguistic sign and

---

168 Ibid., 98-119.
suggested that the two aspects are inextricably linked to each another. He clarified, “a
sign is the combination of a concept and a sound pattern.”

The sound pattern, according to Saussure, can include both speech and the words of a language. He considered this aspect of the sign to be the material element, but stressed that it is linked to the conceptual element. For example, the sound pattern “tree” is connected to the concept of a tall wooden stump, with branches and leaves. The link between the two is part of what provides meaning. In this relationship, the sound pattern is the signifier and the concept is the signified.

Central to Saussure’s description of the sign is the understanding that the link between the signifier and signified is arbitrary, based on conventional relationships, and acquires meaning by virtue of being different from other signs. By way of example, Saussure suggested that the English sound pattern “sister” is not intrinsically linked to the ‘idea sister’ because the French sound pattern “s-o-r” has the same meaning. Neither sound pattern (or signifier) has an organic relationship to the concept (or signified), and therefore the link between the signifier and signified is arbitrary. According to Saussure, the reason the link proves somewhat stable is because conventional relationships and differences are at play. Since rules govern language, the signifier (sound pattern) gains meaning by virtue of being different from other signifiers. For example, the sound pattern ‘sister’ is different from ‘brother’ and therefore gains meaning by virtue of its difference. The continual use of given words employed within a specific linguistic

171 Ibid., 67.
172 Ibid., 67.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid., 72-74.
community, according to Saussure, explains why signs maintain some stability and allow for communication.\textsuperscript{175} Saussure’s description of signifiers influenced Jacques Lacan’s theories on subject formation.

These theories of signification, which hinge upon the problem of distance/mediation between the referent and the sign, shaped Lacan’s notion of selfhood. In \textit{The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis} and an earlier essay “The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience” Lacan drew upon took these semiotic sources and predicated upon them a scheme by which to describe human subjectivity as a mediated thing.\textsuperscript{176} These sources will be invaluable for my argument because in them Lacan argued that subjectivity and identity develop within individuals as they encounter the social world and language. From these texts, I will draw on Lacan’s theories of “Desire and The Drives,” “The Subject and the Other,” “The Gaze and \textit{Objet Petit a},” “the Name-of-the-Father,” and “Alienation and Separation” to show how the signs describe or trouble identity in the work of these four artists. The subject, in post-structuralist analysis as in Lacan’s work, is conditioned by its relationship between the self and the Other. Both inform the subject and yet are never fully present in it. Since the subject always negotiates its place between these two entities, it is always mediated and split. It is fated to exist in the space between the two,

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
but without the ability to rest there because it continually seeks identification with one or the other. As a result of this vacillation, there is no such thing as discrete or authentic human being.

In my reading of the work of these four artists, I will show that they used their body in tandem with printmaking to dramatize the subject as mediated. The print, as this dissertation will argue, operates like that space between the self and Other, the space where the subject works through issues of subjectivity. Since printmaking is a mediated process that entails the dispersal of the subject into many parts, I argue that Acconci, Conner, Hammons and Wieland exploited its material aspects to dramatize the subject as that which is always mediated. In other words, I will draw upon Lacan’s theories regarding the mediated subject and show how the mediated aspect of printmaking unveiled conditions of subjectivity in the work of these four artists.

Lacan’s theories on subjectivity do not address, for the most part, gender and ethnicity in any politically sensitive way, so I will employ the work of some of Lacan’s most politicized readers: Franz Fanon’s discussion of ethnicity in *Black Skin White Masks* and Luce Irigaray’s discussion of gender in *The Sex Which is Not One* and “When Our Lips Speak together.”177 These theorists used Lacan’s model of subjectivity, but mapped it onto a more social mode of difference. Fanon will be important because in his estimation, the subject is conditioned by the Other that is a racial or social Other. While

---

Lacan suggests that all individuals are conditioned by their introduction into the symbolic, patriarchal signifying structure, Fanon argues that subjectivity for the black Antillean man is conditioned by his introduction into that same structure but because it is inherently biased and racist, his identity is conditioned differently. Irigaray’s thesis follows a similar trajectory as she notes that Lacan neglected and ultimately negated the presence of women in his description of subjectivity and her texts seek to redress this omission. Thus, Irigaray will be helpful because she reads the Other in terms of gender.

Since these scholars’ works are more or less contemporary with the works of art addressed in this dissertation and since the works in this dissertation will be analyzed in terms of how artists of this period were interested in examining notions of identity, it will be helpful to draw on Lacan’s, Fanon’s and Irigaray’s theories to understand the way that these four artists critiqued and examined signs of identity and subjectivity. By considering how each artist manipulated signs and printmaking, this dissertation will argue that content and form are intimately linked in meaning that speaks to issues that reflect the broader socio-historical context of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The goal of this dissertation is to demonstrate that conceptual, body, and performance artists employed printmaking as a participatory component in a work of art that contributed to its meaning.
Chapter 2: Bruce Conner: What’s in a Name?

After Bruce Conner and his wife returned from living in Mexico and settled in Massachusetts, he made a conscious choice to stop “gluing down the world.”¹ When he conveyed that information to Paul Karlstrom in a 1974 interview, he was referring to his decision to cease making assemblages for which he earned his reputation. His choice coincided with a period that had begun a few years earlier, in 1961, when Conner began to question his identity as a “nylon stocking artist” and when he stopped signing his assemblages.² By 1965, Conner was no longer signing his name, he refused to have his photograph taken, and he restricted his output to two-dimensional media. In addition to making films and drawings, he turned to printmaking when June Wayne of the Tamarind

---

¹ Bruce Conner, interview by Paul Karlstrom, August 12, 1974, Oral History Project, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. In other interviews, Conner frequently refers to his self-conscious decision to “stop gluing stuff down.” See Robert Dean, “Interview with Bruce Conner,” in *Bruce Conner Assemblages, Paintings, Drawings, Engraving Collages, 1960-1990* (Santa Monica, CA; Michael Kohn Gallery, 1990), 2. See also Philip Brookman, "California Assemblage: The Mixed Message," in *Forty Years of California Assemblage*, ed. Peter Boswell (Los Angeles, CA: Wright Art Gallery University of California, 1989), 78. Conner had become well known for his assemblage works that were made of the detritus he gathered from homes that were being demolished during San Francisco’s urban renewal project, and objects he scavenged second-hand stores. see William Seitz, *The Art of Assemblage* (New York: Museum of Modern Art distributed by Doubleday and Company Inc., 1961); see also Rebecca Solnit, *Secret Exhibition: Six California Artists of the Cold War Era* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1990).

Print Workshop in Los Angeles offered him a two-month fellowship. In April of 1965, Conner was back in California, living in Los Angeles, and working at Tamarind.³

While there, Conner produced fourteen lithographs—*Mandala*, (fig. 42), *Untitled*, (fig. 43), *Untitled*, (fig. 44), *Untitled*, (fig. 45), *Rain*, (fig. 46), *Landscape*, (fig. 47), *Green Line*, (fig. 48), *Untitled*, (fig. 49), *Sunset Strip*, (fig. 50), *Landscape*, (fig. 51), *This Space Reserved for June Wayne*, (fig. 52), *Cancellation*, (fig. 53), *Jelly Fish*, (fig. 54), and *Thumbprint*, (fig. 55). Since he arrived knowing that he was not going to sign any artworks, he offered to mark all the prints with his thumbprint. He suggested to Cal Goodman, who was the acting director of Tamarind while Wayne was in Europe, that the thumbprint would stand in for his conventional signature.⁴ At the end of his first two weeks, and after he had produced thirteen other prints, he employed the largest stone in the workshop to reproduce his thumbprint, which he then signed with another impression of his thumb in the lower right.

Conner’s decision to reproduce his thumb was provocative and telling. As we shall see, it revealed his frustrations with Tamarind and the studio system of printmaking in general. It also denoted the artist’s larger interest in signatures and the way that they ascribe meaning to works of art. He exploited the thumbprint sign, its quality, and the printmaking process to dramatize that identity is formed and recognized through signature marks. Lastly, and specifically in a series he completed almost a decade later called *Prints*, 1974 (fig. 56), Conner’s exploitation of signs and printmaking’s

---
³ While Conner was living in Los Angeles on the Tamarind fellowship, his wife and son remained in Massachusetts, which is where they took up residence after returning from Mexico.
⁴ Mary Fuller, “You’re Looking for Bruce Conner, the Artist, or What is This Crap You’re Trying to Put Over Here?,” *Currant* (May-July 1976): 8-12.
reproductive processes activates his struggle and failure to gain complete control of his artistic identity. The use of signatures and signature marks, *Thumbprint* and the *Prints* series, manifests the battle that the artist waged with other individuals and institutions for that control.

Conner’s fascination with signatures began in the late 1950s when he was making paintings and assemblages, such as *Untitled*, 1957 (fig. 57), and *Child*, 1959 (fig. 58), and his interest is evident in the letters he exchanged with his New York dealer, Charles Alan, at that time. In unpublished letters that have not been analyzed and date from 1957, Conner informed Alan that he would no longer be signing his works of art. Speaking of himself in the third person both to emphasize his proper name and to distance himself from it, Conner wrote, “I’m sorry—I understand your problem in handling merchandise without a trademark prominently displayed, but Mr. Conner is not trying to be difficult…personal esthetic reasons…force me to leave the painting unsigned.” A frustrated Alan responded, “Oh Bruce, life would be so much simpler if you would sign your paintings. I don’t care but everyone who looks at a painting always asks about the signature. When you are great and famous…you can indulge yourself in not signing

---


paintings and everyone will recognize who did them. In reply, Conner conceded to Alan’s point and offered to sign his paintings in small subscript (fig. 59).

Conner had, in fact, become well known for his assemblages by the early 1960s, and at that point he definitively stopped signing his works of art. When Alan insisted on a signature at this time, however, the artist told him to forge it. When the dealer refused, Conner sent him a rubber stamp, which would have allowed him to reproduce the signature. Yet Alan returned the stamp—unused—to the artist. When Conner received it, he enshrined the false signature machine by placing it in a metal and glass box that he presented in 1963 to Marcel Duchamp. The gift was especially fitting since the older artist was already famous for “forging” the signature “R. Mutt” to the fountain, (fig. 26)

Duchamp’s work, gestures, and attitudes had a profound effect on Conner. During a 1994 interview for The Duchamp Effect: Essays, Interviews, Round Table, Conner told print historian Elizabeth Armstrong that he came across Duchamp’s work when he was a teenager and “had seen something about him either in Arts Digest or possibly Life

---

8 Undated letter written in the late 1950s when Bruce Conner was living in Boulder Colorado. Bruce Conner to Charles Alan, n.d., Reel 1379, Charles Alan Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York.
11 Ibid.
magazine.”

He also offered that he was “aware of books that incorporated the history of Dada and Surrealism.”

He told Armstrong that he realized the similarities between his interest in signatures and names and Duchamp’s manipulation of objects and signatures in his ready-mades. While Duchamp signed mass-produced objects and submitted them for exhibition or sale, Conner refused to sign works of art that he created by hand.

Duchamp’s manipulation of signs and signifiers of identity, as Amelia Jones argues, disrupted the continuity between a sign and its referent, which usually structures Western aesthetics.

Choosing Duchamp as his accomplice, Conner tapped into the older artist’s notorious history of authorial erasure and re-inscription. Issues of authenticity, reproducibility, and disruptions in authorial effects materialize in Conner’s work from the early 1960s. In 1962, the artist began thinking about signifiers of identity after a friend drove him past Bruce Conner’s Physical Services, a Los Angeles gym.

A year later while dismantling an exhibition of his work at the University of Chicago, Conner’s

---

13 Armstrong, 57. Conner was probably referring to Life magazine’s ten-page photo spread on Duchamp that was published in 1952 under the title “Dada’s Daddy.” See Winthrop Sargeant, “Dada’s Daddy,” Life 32 (April 28, 1952): 100-106.


15 Armstrong, 59.


17 Fuller, 8. Conner informed Fuller that Dennis Hopper took this photograph for a poster, which was about two feet by three feet and was used to announce his exhibition at Brandeis University. The exhibition, “Bruce Conner: Sculpture,” took place from September 20 to October 24 at the Rose Museum. For a detailed list of Conner’s exhibitions see “Selected Exhibition History,” in 2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story, Part II, 253-262.
interest in the power of names peaked again after a couple looking for “Bruce Conner” approached the artist. They wanted to see the man who had the same name as their friend. This exchange and the artist’s recounting of it indicates that he realized that the signifier of his identity really operated in a paradoxical manner: it bestowed value on his works of art and yet meant little in other contexts because it also belonged to other individuals. This episode furthered Conner’s investigation of authenticity and markers of identity connected with his name, ascribed to his signature, and denoted in his works of art. He intimated to the art historian and co-curator of the Bruce Conner retrospective, Peter Boswell, that a name is “the emblem you have the least control over.”

After he finished in Chicago and returned home to Massachusetts, he combed through national phone books at the Boston Public Library for other Bruce Conners. After he found fourteen, he decided to hold a convention. He stated,

…I thought we’d have a convention, hire a ballroom with a marquee out in front and invite all the Bruce Conners of the world for the Bruce Conner Convention. On the marquee it would say WELCOME BRUCE CONNER. You would walk in and you would get a button that said ‘Hello! My name is Bruce Conner’ and you’d have a program with a person named Bruce Conner who would introduce the main speaker, whose name was Bruce Conner. Special awards to members of the group would be awarded by Bruce Conner, from Bruce Conner to Bruce Conner.

---

18 Bruce Conner, interview by Peter Boswell, September 1, 1985. Reprinted in Rothfuss, 162.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Fuller, 8. Using a slightly different description taken from Peter Boswell’s interview with Conner regarding his ideas for a convention, Rothfuss suggested that the repetition of a name temporarily loses its attachment to a specific object or idea and becomes nothing more than a string of sounds. She theorized that if Conner repeated his name enough times, it would “become weightless and float away thus, perhaps, liberating his identity.” Rothfuss, 160.
This bizarre notion, though never realized, to hold a convention and meet other Bruce Conners would have allowed the artist to physically gather the names together and assess their validity, perhaps even locating the real Bruce Conner. Also during this period, the artist continued this naming game by sending Christmas cards to other Bruce Conners. In each card, he included two buttons; a red button states, “I am Bruce Conner” and a green one bears the inscription “I am not Bruce Conner,” 1964 (fig. 61 and fig. 62).

The art historian and co-curator of the Bruce Conner retrospective, Joan Rothfuss, has argued that by seeking out other Bruce Conners, Bruce Conner the artist was “attempting to demonstrate for himself both the vacuity of his name…and the rich possibilities offered by its non-specificity (a man with this label can be many things at once. Freedom!).” This follows Rothfuss’ thesis that the artist “explored the decentralizing power of free will” that was on the mind of anti-establishment figures in the Cold War era of the 1950s. Rothfuss also suggests that freedom for the artist meant that many of Conner’s selves could “reside within the same consciousness.” She surmises that by exploring multiple personas, Conner sought to reconcile the need to “find himself” with the suspicion that, given the multiplicity of his personas, this would be impossible.

Rather than using the names to “discover the role of his work in the world” with goal of “finding himself,” as Rothfuss points out, it seems that the artist manipulated

---

22 Fuller, 8.
23 Ibid. Rothfuss notes that these buttons would have been used at the convention. Rothfuss, 161.
24 Ibid., 163.
25 Ibid., 160
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
marks of identity to wage a battle with authority figures and signifying structures. Conner’s struggle with identity, his battle to gain control of signifiers of his identity, and his failure to do so unveils his desire to be self-defining outside other controlling entities. Conner touches on these ideas in the buttons and the conference. Although they overtly play out in the prints that the artist produced at Tamarind, they first emerged in his desire to reconcile the fantasy of himself as a discrete artistic being beyond the structuring influence of the father of modern art, specifically Marcel Duchamp. The desire for separation from the authority figure appears in a joint exhibition that Conner proposed to his dealer, Charles Alan, and in a work of art that Conner presented to Duchamp.

At this time, Conner approached Alan, who also exhibited Duchamp’s work, and suggested a joint exhibition. Conner’s interest in a joint exhibition may have been stimulated by an exhibition of the older artist’s work at the Alan gallery in 1963. Working with the Galleria Schwarz in Milan, Alan exhibited the works by Duchamp along side works by Francis Picabia and Kurt Schwitters. Duchamp’s ready-made Bottle Rack, 1914 (fig. 63) was included in this show. Also included were the artist’s erotic sculptures, which were not widely known or discussed, including the Feuille de vigne femelle (Female Fig Leaf), 1950 (fig. 64), the Object Dard (Dart Object), 1951 (fig. 65), Coin de Chasteté (Wedge of Chastity), 1954 (fig. 66) and the Tablier de Blanchisseuse, (Couple of Laundress’ Aprons), 1959 (fig. 67). Since Conner was living on the East

28 Rothfuss, 160.
29 Armstrong, 59.
31 Alan Gallery, Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, Kurt Schwitters: Paintings and Assemblages, unpaginated.
Coast at the time and since Alan was also his dealer, he was probably aware of the exhibition and we can surmise that it contributed to his desire for a joint show. He discerned the similarities between his and Duchamp’s work and the possibility of revealing them in an exhibition, noting

At that time I was doing work that I didn’t sign, whereas Duchamp had work that he didn’t make that he signed. So I suggested that a show be put on in the gallery of those particular works by Duchamp. And my collaboration and participation in the two-person show would be to paint the walls of the gallery the same color and as indiscernibly different as possible from the way it was previously. And to paint the sculpture stands. And I would not sign it. Charles said he didn’t want to propose it, and I was so apprehensive of speaking to Duchamp that I never brought it up.32

Conner’s interest in the way Duchamp assigned value to a work of art correlated to his own investigations. While Conner refused to sign his works believing that they had aesthetic value without his name, Duchamp questioned the way in which signatures granted value to utilitarian objects. Conner’s desire for a joint exhibition reflected his attempt to explore the connections between what he perceived to be similar modes of production: both artists worked through issues of the signature in works of art, albeit in different ways.

Conner’s contribution and his use of Duchampian gestures and language could be read as an attempt to bridge a connection between the two artists. Specifically, if Conner had painted the stands the color they were before the show, he would have created an “indiscernible” but absolute difference. Since his actions would be indexical without leaving a perceptible trace, Conner’s contribution would have dramatized Duchamp’s

32 Armstrong, 59.
description of the “infrathin.” The concept of the “infrathin” refers to liminal distance or difference between two objects. When two objects, person, or things contact each other, the residue of that contact or the difference resulting from that contact is an instance of the infrathin. It is, therefore, the distance, space, and difference between two contacting surfaces.

Conner’s contribution would have represented his attempt to join with Duchamp. However, he would ultimately fail because a boundary between the two would always exist. Indeed, a desire for a connection to Duchamp and the ultimate failure to bridge their divide is evident in Conner’s attempt to link his gestures with those of his predecessor. This desire for connection is also evident in the box that Conner presented to Duchamp in the same year his exhibition failed to materialize.

Conner met Duchamp when the elder artist gave a lecture at Brandeis University. After the lecture Conner presented Duchamp with the glass box that contained the rubber stamp of Conner’s signature. The artist sealed the glass box with a piece of wax in the shape of a flaccid penis and then he wrapped the entire object in

33 In other words, Conner’s stands would act as an adjective that could not exist in its own right but could serve only to support Duchamp’s sculpture that would function as the noun in the equation. The notion that the infrathin functions like an adjective is noted by Duchamp in note number five. Marcel Duchamp actually labeled this relationship the ‘inframince” but scholars refer to this theory as the “infrathin.” See Marcel Duchamp, “Inframince, Note 5,” in Marcel Duchamp, Notes, trans. Paul Matisse (Boston, NY: G.K. Hall & Company, 1983), unpaginated.
34 Ibid.
35 For example, Duchamp noted that the infrathin describes, “The difference/(dimensional) between/2mass produced objects/[from the same mold]/is an infrathin…” Ibid., note 14, unpaginated. Duchamp described it more explicitly as “The warmth of a seat (which has just/been left) is infra thin. Ibid., Note 4, unpaginated.
36 Duchamp entitled the lecture “Apropos of Myself.” The lecture was jointly sponsored by Brandeis University and the Baltimore Museum of Art. For information about the lecture see d’Harnocourt and McShine, eds., Marcel Duchamp.
string (fig. 68). Although Conner thought about gifting the box to Duchamp, he decided that it would be an imposition.\(^{37}\) Instead Conner asked Duchamp to bring it back to New York and give it to Alan. Conner asked Duchamp, “‘Would you take this box and give it to Mr. Charles Alan?’ Marcel said seriously, ‘Do you mean Dr. Charles Alan of Madison Avenue? [the Alan Gallery], (to which Conner responded) ‘Yes,’ and Duchamp responded, ‘I Will!’”\(^{38}\)

Conner’s use of material and forms in the box, as Rothfuss has noted, evokes Duchamp’s use of glass and string.\(^{39}\) She also suggested that as the flaccid candle hangs from the top of the box it both seals the box shut and muscles its way inside, and therefore recalls the “metaphorical depiction of unrealized sexual union in, The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even (Large Glass),” 1915-23 (fig. 69).\(^{40}\) She surmises, “The gesture is made perfect by its actualization of their differences. Conner, still very much a working artist, had abandoned his artistic identity (represented by a replica of his signature) on the doorstep of Duchamp, who called himself an artist but claimed to have ceased making art.”\(^{41}\) It is not, I believe, that Conner “abandoned his artistic identity on the doorstep of Duchamp,” but rather that he sought to reconcile the fantasy of himself in relationship to the elder artist.


\(^{38}\) Ibid., 174.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 174-177.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 177.

\(^{41}\) Ibid. Rothufss also noted in her essay that Conner “himself has lately related the box to Duchamp’s last work, Étants Donnés: 1e La Chute d’Eau, 2e Le Gaz, d’Éclairage, noting that both included ‘a cheap illumination effect’ and that the melted candle on his box resembles Duchamp’s flowing waterfall.” See Rothfuss, “Footnote 57: Bruce Conner, conversation with the author, May 15, 1998,” in 2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story, Part II, 177.
Since Conner incorporated glass, string, and a candle burned into the shape of a phallus in his box, he may have been thinking of the phallic shape in *Object Dard*, which was on display at the Alan Gallery. Rather than appropriating Duchamp’s style, Conner altered the elder artist’s material and language when he created the box and asked the elder artist to return the box to Alan. Conner’s creation and his actions suggest that he sought to align or to perceive his artistic production in relation to Duchamp’s; it is as if the elder artist functioned like a father figure for Conner.

Conner was not the only artist struggling with Duchamp’s influence. At that time, other artists and art historians had begun to re-examine his contributions. For example, William Seitz, in *The Art of Assemblage*, cited Duchamp’s works and gestures as the precursor to works by Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Bruce Conner. In addition, the Pasadena Museum of Art offered American audiences the first retrospective of Duchamp’s work in 1963. Reviewing the show for *Art in America*, the critic Helen Wurdermann noted Duchamp’s influence. She wrote, “For many it is not Picasso but Marcel Duchamp who is the great revolutionary of the 20th-century painting and sculpture.” Wurdermann noted specifically that “Like a radar…he [Duchamp] pointed the way to the mechanized psychic and philosophical expressions of today, the dynamic flow and movement of time and speed, the Freudian overtones in our culture.”

---

42 John Cage, for example, exploited Duchamp’s interest in chance in his music and he conveyed his interest in Duchamp to his students at Black Mountain College, including Robert Rauschenberg.
43 Seitz, 74, +87-90.
45 Ibid. Although the Duchamp retrospective at the Pasadena Museum of Art was the first showing of the artist’s oeuvre in America, it was not widely reviewed. The artist Richard Hamilton, who was instrumental in organizing the show, reviewed the show in *Art*
Yet it was not until two years later in 1965 at his second retrospective, held at the Cordier-Eckstrom Gallery in New York, that Duchamp’s work received a lot of press.  While some reviews were critical of Duchamp’s work, most praised his contributions to modern art. For example, Cleve Gray, a critic for Art in America, argued that Duchamp “appears more and more to be the father of contemporary esthetic attitude, when it appears possible that he, above all others, may be the most influential artist of the century, it is timely that we examine the unknown work of his early life.” Although the gallery exhibited his late, erotic sculpture, scholars focused on Duchamp’s readymades and the way they question the nature of art. Yet, it was most likely these erotic later objects that Conner had in mind when he created his box with its flaccid penis.

International. In the review, he praised Duchamp’s early work for their “fine sensitivity” and his ability to “take key thoughts” and translate “them into subtle plastic expression.” R G Wholden also reviewed the show for Arts Magazine. These critics focused on Duchamp’s early work. See Richard Hamilton, “Duchamp,” Art International 7 (December 1963-January 1964): 22 ; See also R G Wholden, “Duchamp’s 1st Retrospective at the Pasadena Museum,” Arts Magazine 38 (January 1964): 64-65.

46 The show, which was entitled “NOT SEEN and/OR LESS SEEN by/of MARCEL DUCHAMP/RROSE SÉLAVY 1904-1964,” ran from January through February of 1965. After it closed it was slated to travel to the Houston Contemporary Arts Museum, the Baltimore Museum of Art, Yale University Art Galleries, and the Tate Museum in London. The show was also reviewed by Dore Ashton for Studio International, Sidney Tillman for Arts Magazine, Robert Coates for The New Yorker, Cleve Gray for Art in America, and Thomas Hess for Art News. Clifford Still also described Duchamp’s influence over his work in Artforum.


Conner’s appropriation of Duchampian language, replication, and the human touch in his box dramatizes his desire to define himself and his artistic production in connection to “the most influential artist of the century” and the “father of contemporary esthetic attitude.”

By reworking Duchamp’s materials, gestures, and philosophies, Conner attempted to reconcile his creations with that of the father. More specifically, by adopting the symbols found in Duchamp’s work and engaging Duchamp in play, Conner sought to position himself as a discrete artist, as heir to this “father” of modern art.

Conner’s object and gestures in relation to Duchamp manifest Lacan’s theories about the relationship between the subject and Other, and specifically the “Name of the Father.” According to Lacan, individuals always exist in relation to the father/law/language/Other. It is the authority of the father that shapes and bestows identity because the subject seeks validation from this Other. When the subject articulates his/her desire for validation it is brought into being. Yet the father as Other and the symbolic structure can never wholly meet the subject’s request and, therefore, a gap

49 Gray, “Retrospective for Marcel Duchamp,” 103. See also Wurdermann, “In Pasadena—A Duchamp Retrospective,” 142.
remains. It is in that gap of unfulfilled desire that desire for or of the father simmers and eventually erupts again; in this space, the subject’s desire is once again demanded.\textsuperscript{53}

In Conner’s work Duchamp is that father figure, the figure of authority. The elder artist’s role emerges in both Conner’s work and his actions. Conner’s articulated demand that the “father” of modern art play along and return the box to their mutual dealer brought his desire to being. Conner announced and created a connection to the father of modern art through his utterance. When Conner asked Duchamp to follow his authority and Duchamp accepted, Conner also sought to assert his authority in relation to this father. When the elder artist submitted to Conner’s desire to act for him, he sought to govern the father’s behavior while negotiating an autonomous position separate from the father’s rule. In this way, Conner sought to define himself as a discrete human being and create his own identity outside the controlling forces of the father of modern art. In addition, Conner’s request and Duchamp’s compliance may even be interpreted as Conner’s desire to assume the symbolic position of the father. When Duchamp submitted to the request, Conner assumed a position of control. Duchamp, therefore, functioned as both the father governing inspiration and the compliant object of desire.

Amelia Jones has argued that Duchamp played both roles; he was a “seminal influence” and a “passive object of artist’s and public’s desire.”\textsuperscript{54} For Jones, Duchamp’s contradictory nature appears in 1952 article written by Winthrop Jones for \textit{Life} magazine. In the article “Dada’s Daddy,” Duchamp is assigned the role of an authority figure, “the arch-Dadaist and precursor of the whole movement,” and yet he also is configured as an


individual of “disarming courtesy and polished charm.” In this way, Amelia Jones interpreted Duchamp as both a passive feminized figure, “a party hostess,” and dominant, masculine figure of authority. The photographs published of Duchamp for the article foster Jones’ reading of the artist whose gendered authority is unfixed. The artist’s “multiple and contradictory self positioning,” according to Jones, “expose the ultimate failure of the desire to locate in Duchamp unified authorial intention.”

By engaging Duchamp and controlling his actions, Conner placed Duchamp into a passive role, as that of a “party hostess” who “acquiesces to her guest’s whims.” Yet Duchamp’s language and gestures provided source material for Conner’s artistic production; as we have seen, Conner refashioned Duchamp’s phallic imagery, glass and string, and gestures. Thus, Duchamp functioned in Conner’s artistic production as both “object of desire” and “subject of artistic production.” This duality supports Jones’ assertion that Duchamp’s malleable and slippery role as author informed subsequent artistic production. For Conner, the manipulation of both the subject and object aspects of Duchamp’s character meant that he could both employ the language handed down by father of modern art history and subjugate the father to his own needs. After Duchamp yielded, Conner could, in theory, realize himself as a discrete entity outside the authority of the father.

Yet according to Lacan’s notion of the self, Conner could never be self-defining or completely distinct from the father, because individuals always come into being

---

55 Ibid., 64. Winthrop Jones’ article appeared in Life magazine on April 28, 1952. Jones reproduced the text in her chapter on Duchamp’s “author-function.”
56 Ibid., 66.
57 Ibid., 64.
58 Ibid., 66.
through a connection to and demands from the father/law/Other. In turn, the father can never totally fulfill a subject’s desires, which are articulated through language. The nexus between demanded and unfulfilled desire marks a lack in the subject, and Lacan labeled the trace of that contact the objet petit a. In other words, objet petit a defines the subject, marks the subject as lack, and instigates desire.

Conner’s box manifests the objet petit a because it evinces traces of the father’s authority while demonstrating the desire for and failure to achieve separation from the father. As we have seen, Conner appropriated Duchamp’s materials, gestures, and engaged the symbolic figure in play to create a work of art that is distinctly his own. Although Conner’s verbally and materially articulated his desire to supercede the father, he and his work could never exist completely apart from the father of modern art because the elder artist’s materials and gestures shape the work of art. As Lacan noted, the gap between articulation of the need for something and failure to receive it leaves a void where desire festers. This the lack of fulfillment of the stated desire forces the subject to rearticulate his need. Since need can never be met, fulfillment is continually deferred. Conner’s action of questioning the authority of the father, his desire to separate from this Other, and his inability to do so all define his work at this time.

The box is a manifestation of this struggle. It indicates the use of the father’s language and the role language plays in shaping objects. In addition, the play in which Conner engaged Duchamp indicates his desire to supercede the father. The box’s title

also points to the failure Conner’s inability to separate from this figure of authority. Housed at Guggenheim Museum in New York, it is exhibited under the title *The Marcel Duchamp Traveling Box*. Thirty years later, the father maintains a presence in Conner’s work and his identity as an artist. Since Duchamp’s name and materials maintain a presence in the Conner’s work, autonomy is continually deferred. Conner’s desire for separation and control of his identity continued to unfold in the prints he produced. The desire for separation and the constant deferral of it also define his prints.

A year after Conner’s exchange with Duchamp, he received an offer from June Wayne of Tamarind Print Workshop to create prints in her newly founded workshop. Wayne nominated Bruce for a two-month, paid fellowship. In a letter to Conner, Wayne enticed the artist by mentioning that “you need not know lithography in order to work with us as our staff will implement your technical needs very quickly….Esthetic freedom and technical beauty are possible here as nowhere else.” Conner accepted Wayne’s offer and agreed that the fellowship would begin the following April and last through May.

Although Conner made prints prior to his tenure at Tamarind, he had not previously worked with lithography. Conner’s first foray into printmaking began at a young age; he stated,

My parents enrolled my sister and me in craft class during intermediate school, with a woman who lived three blocks...

---

61 June Wayne to Bruce Conner, September 25, 1964, MSS 574 BC, Box 4, Folder 39, Tamarind Archives, University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

62 Ibid.

63 The fellowship could not begin before then because Conner was still receiving grant money from the Ford Foundation and working on that films that the grant funded. Bruce Conner to June Wayne, October 2, 1964 and Lillian Lesser, Administrator to Bruce Conner, October 29, 1964, MSS 574 BC, Box 4, Folder 39, Tamarind Archives, University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
away. The students were ages ten to thirteen years and they were learning painting on canvas, drypoint, and linoleum cut. I made a print of my dog Blondie. I also made a linoleum cut of an octopus protecting a chest of valuable coins (fig. 70). Those are my earliest prints and I made them with a roller, spoon and knife.\textsuperscript{64}

Conner continued to make prints in high school and college. As an undergraduate at the University of Nebraska, Conner enrolled in printmaking classes with Rudy Pozzatti.\textsuperscript{65} While working with Pozzatti, Conner made some etchings, woodcuts, and drypoints but at the time he was not “excited about doing prints.”\textsuperscript{66} Rather he was interested in the plate as a work of art, so he “drilled into the surface so it would become a three dimensional surface.”\textsuperscript{67} At that time, he was more interested in the plate than what could be pulled from the plate.\textsuperscript{68} Since he was not focused on the printed images, he only produced a small edition of monochromatic prints.\textsuperscript{69}

A year after Conner graduated from college, he created a print series called \textit{Geryon}, 1957 (fig. 71).\textsuperscript{70} The black and white, etching and aquatint prints include characters from Dante’s \textit{Inferno}, and stylistically they evoke the ethereal images in Symbolist art.\textsuperscript{71} Peter Boswell has noted that the sharp contrast between light and dark represents the “twin poles of radiant promise (though false, in this case) and tortured

\begin{footnotes}
\item[64] Bruce Conner, interview by Jennifer Noonan, September 2004.
\item[65] Rudy Pozzatti is a distinguished American printmaker who is credited with starting the printmaking department at Indiana University in 1956 when he joined the faculty.
\item[66] Bruce Conner, interview by Jennifer Noonan, September 2004.
\item[67] Ibid.
\item[68] Ibid.
\item[69] Ibid.
\item[70] Conner earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Nebraska in 1956.
\item[71] Charles Giuliano offers that the images are suggestive of Odilon Redon’s imagery. See Charles Giuliano, “Bruce Conner,” \textit{Artist’s Proof} 7 (1967): 56-7.
\end{footnotes}
despair that run through Conner’s work of the 1950s.”72 After Conner completed *Geryon* he turned away from printmaking until his time at Tamarind, save one print he produced a month and a half before his arrival at the workshop.

In February of 1965, Conner made a print of his blood-soaked right hand. In *Untitled (Hand Print)*, (fig. 72), the hand occupies a central position on the white sheet of paper, and the fingers are slightly spread open. The paper surface and the image is partially torn because the blood dried while Conner had his hand on the paper and as he pulled it from the surface it picked up pieces of the paper’s pulp. In this work, the hand imprint operates as both an oath attesting to the artist’s presence and a testament to criminal activity.

Both an upraised hand and a handprint oath promise that what is forthcoming, or what has recently transpired, will be true. It acknowledges, of course, the legislation of the self and will by law. In other words, an individual raises his hand and promises what is about to be said is a true and authentic statement. The form and position of the hand in Conner’s work evokes this practice. In artistic traditions, the handprint refers to the true presence of an individual. As far back as 22,000 BCE, handprints like those at *Pech-Merle* in France (fig. 73) have functioned as signatures that mark the presence of community members (or perhaps an individual artist). More recently, artists working in the twentieth century have exploited the handprint. For example, Jackson Pollock included his handprint *Number 1*, 1948 (fig. 88) as an index of his presence. The handprint in Conner’s work of art follows this trajectory. The handprint attests to the artist’s presence.

---

Since Conner used blood to mark his presence, his print takes on slightly different connotations. Contracts written in blood denote an individual’s presence and solemn vow to honor stated codes and commitments. When those agreements are broke, violence often ensues. The handprint in Conner’s print alludes to a blood oath and the violence associated with such a pact. Here, specifically, it attests to the transgression of artistic traditions. The bloody handprint and the torn paper suggest a violation of aesthetic standards. The messiness and violence of the work denotes Conner’s criminal activity of desecrating artistic laws.

Yet Conner’s handprint also alludes to the artist as a victim of a crime. It speaks to notion that artists are often forced to provide signature marks that denote their presence at the site of creation. By creating a handprint using his blood, Conner called attention to the practice of demanding marks of authenticity. The handprint and the blood suggest that the work of art must reveal the artist’s inspired labor and presence at any cost. While the blood unveils the system that requires such signs, it also strikes against the system that victimizes. By drawing with his blood, Conner raged against this structure. The graphic nature of the image, the blood and the torn paper, meddles with this system as it highlights the potential for harm. Conner was not the only artist concerned with the value of the authentic mark and the violence that it entailed.

The fingerprints in Jean Fautrier’s La joile fille (The Pretty Girl), 1944 (fig. 74), also violate artistic standards and simultaneously mock the need for signifiers of artistic

73 Pacts with the Devil are made in blood. In addition, when Tom Sawyer asked Huckleberry Finn, Jo Harper, Tommy Barnes, and Ben Rogers to swear allegiance to his gang and keep all gang activities secret, he had each of boys the “stick a pin in their fingers to draw blood” which they used to sign their “mark on the paper.” Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, unabridged (New York: New York Post Family Classics Library), 10-11.
presence. Rachel Perry has argued that Fautrier “disdained the sacred touch” and that his contempt is obvious in *La joile fille.*⁷⁴ In this work, the artist created an abstract representation of a young woman through his signature application of thick paint. The fingerprint indices that surround and engulf the figure also signify his identity. Although they bear out the artist’s presence at the site of production, they also, as Perry argues, connote criminal behavior because they make a dirty mess of the picture and thus, they violate artistic aesthetics. In other words, the fingerprints are stains left behind because the artist’s handled the paint poorly and this violation vandalized the image of a pretty young girl.

Perry also posits that the marks violate the girl’s bodily boundary so they allude to “sexual possession and erotic violence, if not rape of this young girl.”⁷⁵ They, thereof, place Fautrier at the scene of the crime. By denoting presence, violence and criminal behavior, Perry concludes that the need for indexical traces mocks the “consumer who fetishizes the artist’s autographic mark or stroke” at any cost and derides “a public that clamors for visible signs of the artist’s inspired labor.”⁷⁶

The violence in *Untitled (Handprint)* dramatizes similar concerns as it ridicules the desire for marks of “inspired labor.” The artist drew enough blood to coat his entire hand and to sufficiently transfer his handprint to another surface. The impression operates, as it does in Fautrier’s work, as a visible sign of the artist’s presence. *Handprint*, therefore, speaks to the convention that requires an artist to lay his hand on an

---

⁷⁵ Perry, 74.
⁷⁶ Ibid.
object or leave his mark in order to bestow value on a work of art. The artist’s focus on touch seems connected to a work he completed the prior year.

After seeing a “Do Not Touch” sign that the staff of the San Francisco Museum of Modern art placed next to his assemblage *Dark Brown*, (fig. 75), Conner responded with *TOUCH/DO NOT TOUCH*, 1964 (fig. 76). He asked his friend and fellow artist John Pearson to apply black transfer letters reading “DO NOT TOUCH” to twelve store-bought, pre-stretched, primed canvases. On the thirteenth canvas Conner applied the letters “TOUCH.” When the canvases were installed in the Batman Gallery in San Francisco, six of the *DO NOT TOUCH* canvases were hung facing the other six *DO NOT TOUCH* canvases. *TOUCH* was hung on a separate wall and covered with glass. The *DO NOT TOUCH* canvases were available for touching while the *TOUCH* canvas was set apart in a special location, encased in glass, and rendered inaccessible.

Joan Rothfuss compares Conner’s *TOUCH/DO NOT TOUCH* with relics as well as with images of Christ and the twelve disciples. She notes that the work, the installation, and the artist’s thoughts about the piece indicate a link between the way Christian objects are venerated and the way the art establishment prizes and treats works.

---

77 Rothfuss, 180.
78 Ibid.
79 The Batman Gallery was one of the numerous galleries that opened in San Francisco in the 1960s when the market demanded it. Conner helped find and design the space. It opened in 1964 and the first exhibition was of Bruce Conner’s work. Ibid. Rothfuss, 180.
80 Ibid.
81 Rothfuss noted that Conner has compared the relationship of parts within *TOUCH/DO NOT TOUCH* with that of a holy object and its congregation, or Christ and the twelve disciples. Quote excerpted from Rothfuss, “Bruce Conner interview with Peter Boswell, September 1, 1985,” 183. In addition, Conner, as Rothfuss pointed out, intended the exhibition to have Christological import. She noted that the show was to run for three days, and during that time Conner entertained guests, show films, sleep in the back room, and “after three days the stone was rolled away and I walked out.” Rothfuss, 180.
of art. Conner indicated as much when he stated, “Art reaches people, involves people and touches them. It is then placed into caskets like the relics of saints, and barriers are put between the people and the artworks. The artworks that the establishment determines are the most successful are the ones that people are forbidden to come near…” While Conner invited people to reach out to the DO NOT TOUCH canvases, the TOUCH canvas was removed from human interaction. It stands, as Rothfuss surmises, as the paradox made flesh.83

By only touching one canvas (which was accorded the place of honor through position and display) and then precluding individuals from accepting its invitational title by enshrining it in glass, Conner commented on the preciousness of the artist’s touch and mocked those who worship it. The artist’s use of irony unveils the sacredness of the artist’s touch and the need for those marks of authenticity. It also speaks to the way in which the art establishment treats those sacred objects and depends upon its perceived supposed sanctity for value. If visitors touch works of art they could mar its surface and thus endanger the sanctity and value of the object that ensures the stability of art institutions. In this way, Conner exposed and attacked the economic mechanisms that govern the art establishment.

The policies that prevent individuals from touching a work of art in a gallery or museum may have prompted Conner to create Handprint. Like a relic that contains the blood of Christ, Handprint denotes the presence and preciousness of Conner’s touch. Given Conner’s critique of the art establishment, the artist probably intended the gesture in Handprint to be a comment on the way in which an artist’s touch secures value.

82 Ibid. Quote excerpted from Peter Boswell interview with the artist. September 1, 1985. 83 Ibid.
The ideas in *Handprint* reappear in the works that Conner created at Tamarind. Since the artist stated that when he arrived at Tamarind he had a “well-developed sense” of his goals as an “artist creating new directions and discoveries,” works such as *Handprint, TOUCH/DO NOT TOUCH, and The Marcel Duchamp Traveling Box* may have been on his mind as he went to work.\(^{84}\) Although the artist did not have specific ideas for the prints, his interest in the way that signature marks and signs of identity operated within art’s signifying structure surely informed his printmaking activity.\(^{85}\) His experiences in the first two weeks at the workshop, after he pulled eleven prints, prompted the artist to refine his ideas regarding an appropriate subject matter for printmaking.\(^{86}\)

\(^{84}\) Bruce Conner to Pat Gilmour, March 9, 1991, Bruce Conner Papers, BANC MSS 98/3, Box 1:25, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California. Reproduced in Rothfuss, 177.

\(^{85}\) Bruce Conner, interview by Jennifer Noonan, September 2004. When asked about his thoughts on printmaking and images before his tenure at Tamarind, Conner alluded to his interest in exploring “varieties of paper, translucent materials, layers, and overprinting.\(^{86}\) *Mandala* (fig. 42) is the first print Conner created at Tamarind. More than any of the other first eleven prints, this print relates to his pen and ink drawings, which he was working on just before his time at Tamarind. These drawings evoke, as Faye Hirsch has pointed out, the swirling lines of a fingerprint. Faye Hirsch, “Up Above My Head: Consciousness and Habitation in the Graphic Work of Bruce Conner,” *Parkett* 48 (1996): 123. In the subsequent prints, as in *Untitled* (fig. 43) Conner maintained his interest in swirling lines and intricate patterns. Instead of suggesting a fingerprint and relying on his earlier drawings, he played with line, color, image, and reproduction. In this print the dense network of lines and the brown ink in this print evoke wood grain. The artist heightened the allusion to the woodcut medium by creating a break in the pattern on the right side of the image. The break alludes to a crack in wood grain that occurs when old pieces of wood are printed one to many times. The damaged image also reads as a piece of paper torn during the printing process because of a broken matrix. Paradoxically, such an accident in reproduction would result in a unique work and yet the print would be discarded because of it. Conner’s manipulation of the image and process is as ironic as his * TOUCH/DO NOT TOUCH* paintings, but here the artist’s commented on viability in reproduction and uniqueness. This early print indicates that he exploited the expressive possibilities of the reproductive media. The following nine prints that Conner made—*Untitled* (fig. 44), *Untitled* (fig. 45), *Rain* (fig. 46), *Landscape* (fig. 47), *Green Line* (fig.
Working in collaboration with the Technical Director and Master Printer, Kenneth Tyler, Conner produced his last three prints, and, in the process, tested workshop procedures and the staff’s patience. Specifically, the artist’s twelfth print, *Cancellation* (fig. 53), first raised eyebrows because it broke with workshop traditions. Conner worked and reworked a drawing on the matrix for several days, but he was not happy with the results so he intended to discard it and start over. In accordance with workshop procedures, he placed a huge “X” through the image.

This action in printmaking indicates that the artist and printer have decided that the image should no longer be printed. The reasons a printer and an artist cease printing a stone vary: they might have finished pulling an edition, the artist might have decided that he didn’t like the image and/or the prints it produced, the stone may have been damaged in the printing process. It is also a mark that indicates the stone may be sanded down and readied for another image. In printmaking terminology, the mark indicates the moment of “cancellation.”

After Conner decided to cancel the print, Tyler saw the stone, intimated that he liked what Conner had done, and suggested that they print it. Conner agreed and decided to call it what it was, *Cancellation*. Although Conner agreed to Tyler’s idea, its underlying concept accords with the artist’s practice of pushing boundaries and

---

88) *Untitled* (fig. 49), *Sunset Strip* (fig. 50), *Landscape* (fig. 51), and *Jelly Fish* (fig. 54)—are similar to his assemblages because they evoke Conner’s environment. For example, *Rain* denotes the weather conditions that Conner endured when he first arrived in Los Angeles in April of 1965.

87) Fuller, 10.

88) Ibid. In a letter to Pat Gilmour, Conner stated that Ken Tyler “encouraged” him “to carry on my work while I was allowed to do so. We discussed various techniques of lithography and Ken opened all the doors of information and cooperation that he was allowed to.” Bruce Conner to Pat Gilmour, Bruce Conner Papers, BANC MAA 98/3 Box 1:25, 2. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.
questioning authority. When he subverted conventions by printing a cancelled plate, he worked through his desire to defy workshop procedures and define practices according to his laws. Print historian Pat Gilmour has suggested that Conner’s actions confronted workshop “taboos” against printing a cancelled plate. Indeed, the artist’s actions did not please some of the workshop staff, and his willful disregard for procedure aroused the ire of Cal Goodman, the acting director at Tamarind.

It was the last two prints that really infuriated Goodman. In the first of the two prints, *This Space Reserved for June Wayne*, Conner reproduced June Wayne’s parking spot plaque located in the lot outside the workshop. The print references Wayne’s absence from Tamarind, and, as Gilmour points out, it also manifests the artist’s frustration and his “inability to do as he wanted.” After the text-based image was printed, he signed it in the same way he signed the other thirteen, with his thumbprint. Goodman and the staff, as Conner stated to Elizabeth Armstrong and Sheila McGuire, “were morally offended that I was signing these things with my thumbprints—they considered it an assault, that I was doing this purposely to intimidate them.”

Although Goodman took Conner’s actions as an affront to workshop procedures, the artist’s decision to withhold his written signature dated back three years to when he told Alan he would no longer sign works of art. In addition, the work Conner produced just before he arrived at Tamarind suggests that he was thinking about the various ways

---

90 Ibid., 45-46.
in which an artist may leave his mark on a work of art. Conner, therefore, seems to have
decided before he arrived at Tamarind that the prints he made would not bear his
autograph. Instead, he offered to mark all his prints with an impression of his thumb as an
alternative.\textsuperscript{92} He suggested to Goodman that it would stand in for his conventional
signature as Conner could be somewhat duplicitous about the function of the
thumbprint.\textsuperscript{93} In a 1976 interview with Mary Fuller, the artist stated that the thumbprint
was the most authentic form of identity documentation because “It’s possible to forge an
artist’s signature but virtually impossible to forge a thumbprint.”\textsuperscript{94} His work at Tamarind,
of course, was meant to explore the veracity of that idea.

Tamarind, like many print workshops, had strict guidelines that required each
print edition to be numbered and marked with Tamarind’s insignia or “chop,” as well as
the artist’s autograph.\textsuperscript{95} To comply with these rules, Goodman pressed Conner for a
written signature, but the artist refused.\textsuperscript{96} This exchange led the artist to consider the
weight given to the artist’s insignia and its relationship to a signature style.\textsuperscript{97} Conner
informed Fuller,

\textsuperscript{92} Fuller, 10.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Samuel Grafton described workshop procedures in a 1970 essay for the \textit{Lithopinion},
which was the graphics arts and public affairs journal of Local One, Amalgamated
Lithographers of America. In that essay he noted, “Each print pulled is an individual
work of art, having the approval of both personalities who worked on it, the artist and
artisan-printer. Each is numbered and carefully registered, receiving the Tamarind mark
or “chop,” the printer’s identifying mark, and the artist’s signature.” Grafton also noted
that “Even defect prints are recorded and destroyed—they used to be thrown away
casually and would then turn up in the art market. Every sheet of paper that comes into
Tamarind is accounted for.” Samuel Grafton, “Tamarind: Where Artist and Craftsman
\textsuperscript{96} Fuller, 9-10.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 9-11.
Possibly the thumbprint was more important in that context than whatever information or illumination could come through the fingers of the artist. What is drawn on the paper should be exactly what it is without explanation. What is drawn on the paper or the lithograph stone should *be* the signature of the artist, so requesting the artist to sign his name is superfluous but if it is a question of identity, a thumbprint is a more special and direct way of identifying.\textsuperscript{98}

Having resolved the relationship between his signature and subject, he brought the two together in *Thumbprint* (fig. 55). The thumbprint was, of course, simultaneously a feature of artistic authority and the artist’s most criminal activity. He was purposefully, vandalously wasteful of materials once he decided upon his thumbprint. Conner noted, “When I really resolved my relationship to the point where the fingerprint to me was equal to the image, I got the largest lithographic plate that they had.”\textsuperscript{99} Conner impressed his thumb onto the top third of the surface leaving a conspicuously broad expanse of blank surface. The decision to place his thumb, as he stated, in “the middle of the plate, a very large plate,” stages his desire to confront workshop practices in a grand way. He chose the largest plate and he may have opted to use the thumb because it is the thickest digit on the human hand. Since its fleshy pad is the largest, it has the most figural insistence. It also conjures up other notions. For example, it may be used to signal for a lift, it conveys the acceptance or rejection of an idea, it also denotes the wearing on something by repeated handling. Given his interest in the mechanics of the signature, the thumbprint’s slipperiness as a signifier may have appealed to Conner; it allowed Conner to work through these notions.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
Conner’s unwillingness to autograph his prints and his subsequent decision to sign prints using his thumb infuriated Goodman, but the artist’s final decision to make a print of his thumb on the largest plate available was the last straw. According to Conner, Goodman called the artist into his office and demanded to know, “What is this crap you’re trying to put over here?” Unhappy with Conner’s response, Goodman ceased production on this and all other prints.

When Wayne returned to Tamarind, however, she reversed Goodman’s decision and authorized master printer Ken Tyler to proceed with the work. After Tyler finished printing the edition, Conner signed each print with a direct impression of his thumb. In *Thumbprint*, one impression, as Conner stated to Fuller in 1976, “is the mirror image of the other.” They mirror each other because both thumb pads contain similar whorls and loops. The way in which Conner created them also allows for mimicry. The signed (or indexed) thumbprint demonstrates how the body may operate as a repetitive agent. In this print, Conner used his body like a machine by inking a portion of its surface and then pressing it first on the stone surface and on each print. The printed thumbprint duplicates this action and refers to the body as machine because it takes the repetitive action of the body and duplicates it. The matrix then stood in for the absent body and mimicked the repetitive process.

The artist’s decision to reproduce his thumbprint and use his body like a machine has numerous implications. In the most basic way, as print historians have noted, it

---

100 Ibid., 9.
101 Fuller, 9-10. See also Bruce Conner to Pat Gilmour, March 9, 1991, Bruce Conner Papers, BANC MSS 98/3, Box 1:25, The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, California.  
102 Fuller, 10.
reveals his frustrations with Tamarind’s practices. It also denotes Conner’s interest in signatures, the way in which they assign meaning or value to works of art. Even more specifically, it speaks to collector’s and connoisseur’s demands for signatures as marks of authenticity and inspiration. Yet Conner’s gesture takes on new meaning when it is considered in the larger context in which it was made.

Beginning in 1960 and largely as a consequence of the developing print renaissance, print councils, print curators, and other print scholars articulated standards and offered guidelines for what constitutes an original or fine art print. At the time that Conner made *Thumbprint*, the Print Council of America, the Comité National de la Gravure, and print scholars participating in the Third International Congress of Plastic Arts in Vienna had recently issued guidelines in an attempt to standardize the numbering and signing of prints. Those who attended the Third International Congress of Plastic Arts in 1960, for example, set forth their guidelines. Among the five directives, the Congress declared “Each print, in order to be considered an original, must bear not only the signature of the artist, but also an indication of the total in the edition and the serial number of the print.”

A year later the Print Council of America published its thoughts on the artist’s signature in “What is an Original Print?” In slightly broader guidelines, the Council

---


determined that a print is original when “the artist alone has made the image in or upon the plate, stone, wood block, or material, for the purpose of creating a work of graphic art” and “the finished print is approved by the artist.”\textsuperscript{105} The Council, however, remained ambivalent about the value of the signature; they felt its validity was questionable after a few artists and dealers engaged in dubious practices. They stated, “It is not clear at present what the artist’s signature on a print stands for, and in some cases editions are deceptively numbered and described.”\textsuperscript{106} They also determined that it would be “highly desirable for artists to adopt a uniform practice with respect to numbering a signing prints.”\textsuperscript{107} Four years later in a publication that the Print Council of America sponsored, however, Carl Zigrosser a council member noted the importance of the signature in guaranteeing authenticity and originality.\textsuperscript{108}

In February 1965, the Comité National de la Gravure published guidelines for printmaking in Nouvelles de L’Estampe. They succinctly stated,

The following are to be regarded as original engravings, prints, and lithographs: impressions printed in black and white or in colour, from one or more matrices, conceived and executed entirely by the artist himself, whatever the technique employed, and excluding the use of all mechanical or photo-mechanical process. Only those prints

\textsuperscript{105} Joshua Binion Cahn, ed. \textit{What is an Original Print?: Principles recommended by the Print Council of America} (New York: Print Council of America, 1961), 9. The guidelines, however, also allow for the use of transfer lithography. “The artist,” according to the guidelines set forth by the Print Council of America, “should have the maximum participation possible in the making of the plate, block, stone or the like and in printing from it.” He continues that the artist need not directly mark the matrix, “…in transfer lithography, where the artist made a drawing on transfer paper with lithographic ink or crayon, for the purpose of having the image thereafter transferred to a stone without photographic processes, the artist may be considered as having made the image which is on stone.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.

which correspond to this definition have the right to be considered *original prints.*

Their primary aim was to provide collectors, curators, and art historians with information so they could separate artistic impressions from the false impressions that were flooding the market after the Second World War. As Zigrosser and the print historian Ferdinando Salamon noted, publishers working in Paris during the late 1940s and 1950s entered into agreements with artists, including most infamously Georges Braque and Salvador Dali, to reproduce their paintings. These publishers would have artists sign reams of blank paper before the printer pulled an impression from the matrix. After an image was photographically reproduced on the signed sheets, the prints were sold as original works of art. Still other instances involved the sale of original prints that were offset lithographs made from other prints that artists did not sign.

June Wayne, in her 1957 grant application to the Ford Foundation’s Program in the Humanities and Arts, lobbied for the funds to establish a printmaking workshop where the art of lithography could be revived, master printers could be trained, and artists could create original prints in order to end—in her words—“this dismal practice.” It was at this moment that signatures became vitally important as a mark of originality and the artist’s involvement. According to the guidelines articulated by these various print councils and demanded in print workshops, the signature and active participation by the

---

111 Ibid.
112 June Wayne Papers, File 1-43, Tamarind Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
artist would ensure an original print. There was a new need to legislate the practice and stipulate its disciplinary rituals because artists who were not professional lithographers began creating prints. Indeed, the need was even more pressing because artists interested in challenging rules and rituals began to work in the medium.

By 1965, many artists who were not trained as printmakers began experimenting with lithography at Wayne’s workshop. Other artists explored lithography at Tatyana Grosman’s Universal Limited Art Editions on Long Island, which opened three years prior in 1957. These two print shops, which were run in the tradition of French ateliers, initially created a market for prints by hiring skilled printers and inviting established artists to experiment with lithography. A thriving network of curators, dealers, and publishers bolstered a market for such prints, and a new audience of consumers interested in purchasing works of fine art fed it. As Danielle Fox has noted, Life, Glamour, Vogue, and Esquire—the mass-media magazines of choice for this new demographic—often published articles to guide collectors. With the help of this infrastructure, many could now afford to purchase fine art.

In order to produce a so-called “fine art” print, experts also stressed the need for impressions that were free from unnecessary marks, including the printer’s fingerprints. If fingerprints appeared on an impression, their messiness would deny the artist and the

---

114 For example, Samuel Grafton noted “The slightest defect, ink-stain, finger-mark, wrinkle or bend means rejection and destruction of the print. One of the marvels of the operation is the absolute pristine freshness of the work that comes out of this inky and greasy milieu.” See Grafton, “Tamarind: Where Artist and Craftsman Meet,” 21. For additional references concerning the history of lithography and printing issues see Pat Gilmour, “The Lithographic Collaboration: The hand, the head, the heart,” in Lasting Impressions: Lithography As Art, ed. Pat Gilmour (London: Alexandria Press, 1988), 308-359.
workshop a pristine print, and the work might be mistaken for a proof. In addition, any indication of another person’s hand prohibited the print from existing as a unique manifestation of artistic inspiration. An inability to create immaculate images could lower a workshop’s reputation, and, in the 1960s, this would have impeded the development of lithography as a fine art.

Such concerns were not new in the 1960s, however. As soon as thirty years after the invention of lithography in 1798, publications cautioned artists who were not trained in the art of printmaking about the problems inherent in the unstable process of lithography. Printer and publisher Godefroy Engelmann, in his 1824 *Manuel du dessinateur*, (fig. 77) for example, noted that fingerprints could damage the surface of a litho stone. Engelmann warned artists that a sneeze, free-floating dandruff, and fingerprints could mar the lithographic surface and destroy the image. In addition, English printer and publisher Charles Hullmandel in his *The Art of Drawing on Stone* (fig. 78) also warned that “persons with scurfy hair,” “spittle,” and perspiring fingers” could damage the surface of a stone. These hazards were still a major concern in the sixties when individuals worried that shoddy work on the stone and sloppy printing could diminish the fine art of lithography.

The appearance of Conner’s thumbprint, of course, was in no way a result of bad printing. It was a way of making his work purposefully dirty. Although dirtiness had long been a feature of Conner’s works, it took on new importance in the particular context of lithography because of all that such contamination might say about the loosening of the

---

specialization of printmaking. In *Thumbprint* this dirtiness intentionally messed with workshop procedures.

Voicing his irritation with Tamarind’s rules, Conner noted that there was “a whole series of regulations about how to make prints. You could only use a certain kind of paper. It had to be printed in a certain way, and they had to be signed and numbered in a certain way.” Although Conner realized that Wayne was in the process of reviving the fine art of lithography and ensuring its survival, he felt frustrated and stifled by their operations. He told the print historian Pat Gilmour, “[I was informed that] unsigned prints are worth only the cost of labor and materials. They were teaching us how to print money and manipulate the market.”

Print scholars Joan Rothfuss, Marjorie Cohn, Pat Gilmour, and Susan Tallman have noted that the artist’s frustrations and rebellious spirit informed *Thumbprint.* For example, Conner intimated to Gilmour that each time he wanted to explore a new subject or employ a new technique he was, in his words, “forced to retreat to accommodate (sic) the rules…” In addition, David Platzker noted in his essay “Reconsidering the Fine Art Print in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” that Conner felt “‘oppressed’ by what he perceived to be a ‘claustrophobic’ approach to making art and by the limitations placed

---

117 Fuller, 9-10.
118 Bruce Conner to Pat Gilmour, March 9, 1991, Bruce Conner Papers, BANC MSS 98/3, Box 1:25, The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, California.
119 See Susan Tallman, *The Contemporary Print: From Pre-pop to Postmodern* (New York: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1996); see also Pat Gilmour, “The Curious Pavane: Tamarind and the Art of Collaboration,” 44-47; see also Rothfuss, 159-183; see also Cohn, “The Artist’s Touch,” 11-35.
120 Gilmour, “The Curious Pavane: Tamarind and the Art of Collaboration.”
on him by the workshop’s management.”\textsuperscript{121} In response to the oppressive environment, Conner wished to assert his authority so he “placed his most personal of signifiers down, plainly, for all to see.”\textsuperscript{122}

It is Platzker’s assessment that even if the “sophomoric action” was Conner’s response to the limitations at Tamarind, his actions had profound effects. According to Platzker, the resulting print “begs the viewer to look beyond the formal presentation of the fine art print and contemplate the conceptual frontiers offered by printmaking.”\textsuperscript{123}

Indeed many scholars agree that \textit{Thumbprint} is the first instance when conceptual art appeared in printmaking.\textsuperscript{124}

Rather than looking beyond the formal presentation of this fine art print, if we consider the way that the formal qualities shape the concept, a different meaning emerges. What becomes apparent is the means by which signatures, signature marks, and process advanced and troubled Conner’s search for identity. Rather than using the marks to “discover the role of his work in the world” with goal of “finding himself,” as Rothfuss points out, it seems that the artist manipulated signature marks to wage a battle with the signifying structure that desired such signifiers.\textsuperscript{125} When Conner created \textit{Thumbprint}, signatures were the cause of concern within the print world, and this print may be

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121} Platzker, “Reconsidering the Fine Art Print in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” 27.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 28.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Rothfuss, 160.
\end{itemize}
Conner’s response to the print world’s obsession with signatures. Yet, Conner’s refusal to provide a written signature may also reflect larger artistic trends.

Cleve Gray, an art historian and frequent contributor to Art in America, noted in a 1962 article on artist’s signatures a burgeoning trend among artists of withholding their signatures. He wrote, “Abhorrent to nature though it may be, the lower right-hand corner, conventional location of the artist’s signature, is now frequently empty—a vacuum.” Gray postulated that perhaps the artists perceived themselves and their work to be so unique from other works of art that their signature was superfluous. Conversely, he argued that perhaps artists considered their identity to be of such minor importance in relation to the larger concept that their signature was unnecessary.

Gray first detected the absence of an autograph in the color-field paintings of Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland, as in Eyre, 1962 (fig. 79). He theorized that these purists did not want to mar their paint surfaces. He also noticed the lack of signatures among some Abstract Expressionist works of art. Gray argued that the brushstrokes in Mark Rothko’s paintings and the swirls in Sam Francis’ paintings such as those in Cross 1960 (fig. 80), among others, could have easily hidden the artist’s signature. Gray offered that perhaps these artists were “super-egoists” who believed that their style bespeaks their identity and “inner self.” He also detected the lack of signatures on new hard-edged works of art and postulated that perhaps artists such as Frank Stella, as in The

127 Ibid., 93.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid., 94.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
Marriage of Reason and Squalor, 1959 (fig. 81) for example, wanted to focus on the object. He surmised, “It is often very difficult to distinguish extreme modesty from extreme pride.”

For Gray, both the new aesthetic and the impetus to withhold signatures was the reaction against the “cult of personality” against which artists of the 1960s were revolting. In what is really an ode to the signature, Gray laments the lost signifier of identity and beckons its return.

In Conner’s work the lack of a written signature speaks to the artist’s resistance to the commercial aspects of art. The artist’s refusal to provide his autograph in Thumbprint indicates his response to the growing demands, placed both upon him and practicing artists in general, for a signature. It seems that in Conner’s estimation print workshops, art historians, art dealers, and collectors prized the written signature more than the work of art. Thumbprint, which juxtaposed his actual thumbprint—in lieu of a written signature—with the lithographic reproduction of his thumb, laid bare the ontological paradox of this emphasis on signature and authentic signs of an artist’s presence.

To highlight these issues, Conner critiqued the regulatory procedures of printmaking by getting the print dirty. At the same time, however, he mimicked the most essential aspects of printmaking with his very body. Conner used his body like a machine to manipulate signs of his presence. Conner’s actions and his words suggest that he understood his body could function like a printmaking machine to manipulate signs of

134 Ibid.
135 Ibid., 95.
136 Conner’s decision to sign his prints with his thumb, as the print historian Marjorie Cohn has pointed out, “appalled the administration,” because it “prided itself on immaculate standards. See Marjorie B. Cohn, “The Artist’s Touch,” 27. The thesis of Cohn’s essay is that lithography’s autographic quality allowed artists, such as Conner, to import their mark-making process from painting or drawing into printmaking without altering their technique.
his identity. By repetitively pressing his thumb on a sheet of paper his hand functioned like the printmaking process as it created duplicate images from the his bodily matrix. In other words, Conner’s hand functioned like a matrix.

Conner’s words indicate an awareness of the parallel practice between his body and the mechanical process. He stated that when he realized that the thumbprint “was equal to the image,” he got the largest plate he could and reproduced his thumb. Thumbprints and print imagery both acquire identity through repetition. By putting his thumbprint to use like a printmaking machine, his actions copied the printmaking process of duplicating his thumbprint. In addition, Conner’s statement that “one… is a mirror image of the other” evokes the idea that reproduction produces copies of original indices. In this way, Conner put his body to use like a printmaking machine.

The editors of *The Art Gallery Magazine* also realized the link between the body’s ability to make prints and the reproductive process. A year after Conner completed *Thumbprint*, a similar thumbprint graced the cover of the November issue of *The Art Gallery Magazine*, (fig. 82). In an issue dedicated to the flourish of activity in printmaking, the thumbprint was used to suggest that the first print was made when man impressed his hand on a surface and left a trace of his presence. The editors noted on the cover of the periodical, “the first original print was made by the first man. It looked like this:”\(^{137}\) If the editors were correct in their assessment that the human body is the original printmaking machine, it is easy to place Conner’s actions in that trajectory.

\(^{137}\) According to the editors, “the print has undergone a few changes since that first involuntary effort and this issue is devoted to somewhat more recent developments in the history of arts most ancient medium.” Editors, *The Art Gallery Magazine* 10 (November 1966): 9.
Conner was not the only artist who realized that the body could mimic mechanical, reproductive practices. In addition to Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, and Robert Rauschenberg among others, Jasper Johns employed his body like a machine when created *Hands* in 1963 (fig. 83) This print contains two reproductions of Johns’ right hand and accompanying text that informs us that one was imprinted with oil and the other with soap. Richard Field linked these procedures to a Greenbergian paradigm when he noted that the prints from this period indicate that Johns exploited bodily impressions to emphasize the picture plane’s flatness as well as to insert his presence into the reproductions.  

A little more than ten years earlier in 1950, Pablo Picasso also used his fingerprints to represent both his presence and that of his children. In *Paloma et Claude*, (fig. 84), as the print historian Marjorie Cohn has noted, Picasso used his creative hand to recreate his children’s visages and his technique recalls the procreative act that originally brought them into existence. The lithographic process further heightens Picasso’s creative and procreative prowess by suggesting that his contributions in reproduction both created and recreated his children.

Conner, like Johns and Picasso, employed his body to imprint personal markers. Yet by making an impression of his thumb, the artist was not only trying to turn his body into a machine or to flout Tamarind’s policies. His manipulation of the thumbprint index and its replication also reflect issues that Conner had explored before arriving at Tamarind. In particular, his exploitation of names, signatures, and material unveils his

---

139 Cohn, “The Artist’s Touch,” *Touchstone: 200 Years of Artists’ Lithographs*, 27.
inquiry into the mechanics of the sign and its capacity (or incapacity) to act as truthful signifier of identity.

The thumbprint was a perfect vehicle to investigate the nature of signs because they have been considered authentic markers of identity since antiquity. In ancient China, for example, thumbprints were found on clay seals that were used as legal documents.\textsuperscript{140} In the contemporary era, the Federal Bureau of Investigation began using fingerprints in 1924 as a means of identification.\textsuperscript{141} By comparing differences and measuring the distances between the lines, experts can distinguish a person’s identity. The patterns in Bruce Conner’s thumbprint differ from anyone else’s, and therefore, his thumbprint denotes his identity. Yet here it also criminal because it violates printmaking practices.

The contrary operations of Conner’s fingerprint might, in part, derive from the contrary operations of indexical signs. The thumb impression in the lower right-hand corner of \textit{Thumbprint}, according to Charles Peirce’s theories on the nature of linguistic sign, is an index because it is the direct effect of Conner’s unique presence, his having been there where the print was made.\textsuperscript{142} Yet as Georges Didi-Huberman has theorized in

\textsuperscript{140} Eugene Block, \textit{Fingerprinting: Magic Weapon Against Crime} (New York: David McKay Company, 1969), 1-14. James Elkins notes in a descriptive book about looking and examining minutiae that there are basically three different types of fingerprints: the plain arch, the loop, and the whorl. Upon close examination, Conner’s thumbprint falls into the second category because his lines emerge from one side of his thumb, loop up into an arch, and descend back down, where they exit on the other side of his thumb. In addition, these lines meet and diverge at the “delta” where difference in “typelines” can be discerned. Elkins also observes that differences between fingerprints can also be discerned in the pitch of the arch and the differences in the core line located in the center of the arch. See James Elkins, “How to Look at a Fingerprint,” in \textit{How to Use Your Eyes} (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 154-163

\textsuperscript{141} Block, 263-5.

his article “The Index of the Absent Wound,” indices are always unruly, there is no law governing their meaning.\textsuperscript{143} Indices operate this way, according, to Didi-Huberman because they are unique, authentic marks of a person’s presence that affirm the place of contact between the person making the mark and the trace of the contact. In addition, Didi-Huberman argues that the non-mimetic quality of an index is a further guarantee of its authenticity because “contact having occurred, figuration would appear false.” According to Didi-Huberman’s theories, the index of Conner’s thumbprint guarantees the artist having been there at the point of contact between thumb, matrix, and sheet. The index here is utterly particular, and yet it also abrades against the rhetoric of authenticity it mobilizes. In other words, the index, which is the signal of authentic singularity, is also here the means of establishing reproducibility. The predicament in the case of Conner’s work, of course, is that the very direct effect that the thumb has upon the print establishes the same relationship that we see between any matrix and print. By juxtaposing an index of his thumbprint next to its reproduction, Conner drew attention to the sign’s different qualities. The index denotes an authentic presence, while the icon obviates the artist’s absence.

Jacques Derrida, in “Signature, Event, Context,” addressed this duality in all signatures.\textsuperscript{144} He stated the signature marks and retains an individual’s presence because each “parah” (or the flourish at the end of a written signature) contains an “enigmatic

\textsuperscript{143} Georges Didi-Huberman, “Index of the Absent Wound (Monograph on a Stain),” October 29 (Summer 1984): 63-81.
“originality” that is unique to each signer.145 Yet he explained that in order for those marks to mean something, they must be reproduced and systematized – made sufficiently identical to each other — so that each time an individual writes their signature it is recognized as such.146 Derrida thus concluded that in order to join the signer to the signature “what must be retained is the absolute singularity of a signature-event and a signature-form” as well its “pure reproducibility.”147 When Conner placed an index of his presence next to an icon that marks his absence, he demonstrated that presence, absence, and repetition are elements of a signature.

Conner declared his presence when he placed his thumb on the lithographic surface. Through reproduction of the index, the artist’s presence shifted. It was placed at a distance because reproduction unhinged his presence from the sign. When he autographed the print with his thumb, he restored a trace of his presence to the work of art. Since the signs denote both his absence and presence, it operates like a fetishistic object. By exposing this duality, repeating it twenty times for each print, and making those signs the only subject matter, Conner critiqued the need for signs of authenticity and laid bare the desire for discernible signs of artistic presence and inspiration.

By refusing to provide Tamarind with a written signature, Conner bucked conventional fashions. When he provided a non-traditional signature he did so because the written alternative did not meet his needs. In this way, he asserted his independence and his desire to define his own signature and identity outside traditional laws. Yet by offering an alternative signature, Conner took up a position toward printmaking

145 Ibid., 194
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
regulations and rules. When the artist provided his signature and placed it in the conventional spot, workshop regulations retained a presence in the artist’s work. Conner’s behavior demonstrates Lacan’s theory that the subject can never be self-defining because some portion of the Other and its laws always define the subject.

Since it was a non-traditional mark in printmaking, it did not abide by established conventions. Conner’s non-conformist gesture allowed him to reject some aspects of printmaking traditions. By reproducing an impression of his index and signing the print with his thumb, Conner codified his desire to flout conventions, and in so doing he created his own style. Paradoxically, then, the artist’s manipulation of his signature allowed him to produce a signature style.

When Conner ignored and deliberately rejected conventional printmaking process and workshop practices, his actions allowed for a “new style of behavior.” His actions point to the desire for alternative procedures because his needs were not being met. Ernest Gombrich suggested that new styles arise when the needs of an individual, or community, are not being met. He argued that two forces enable change: technological improvements and social rivalry. He also noted that changes in styles may occur when an individual refuses to follow changes and seeks an alternative to the popular fashion.

By rejecting popular trends and improvements, according to Gombrich, an individual asserts his independence. He cautioned that this is only “illusory independence” because “a refusal to join in the latest social game is a way of taking up a

---


149 Ibid., 354
position toward it.”

If the individual who refuses to follow social trends possess enough prestige, Gombrich theorized, “they might even find themselves to be creators of non-conformist fashion which will ultimately lead to a new style of behavior.”

This new style of behavior is apparent in *Thumbprint*. It points to Conner’s desire to supercede the laws governing printmaking and its authority, while assaulting its need for marks of authenticity. By allowing printmaking traditions (and specifically the signature’s location) to trickle into his work, Conner took up a position toward traditions. Rather than completely dismantling prior conventions, he produced an alternative that resulted in a new style.

When Conner left Tamarind he did not cease these inquiries. He continued to question the way signs denoted identity in a print series that included actor and director Dennis Hopper. In *The Dennis Hopper One Man Show* (fig. 85), Conner attempted to relinquish his identity to the actor. Conner settled on the idea after Hopper photographed Conner in front of *Bruce Conner’s Physical Services* in 1964 (fig. 86). At that time, Conner saw Hopper’s assemblages and he realized they looked similar to his own assemblages. He noted, “Dennis was already involved in my personality, the identity of whoever Bruce Conner was.” After Conner seriously investigated the meaning

---

150 Ibid. For example he noted, “In our technological society, even the retention of the ‘vintage car’ is symptomatic of a ‘style of life.’” If an individual rejects the newest technology that allows for better and bigger cars and decides to acquire and old car he is taking up position toward the modern need for “bigger and better” possessions. Ibid.

151 Ibid.

152 This poster served as announcement for Conner’s exhibition in Boston, Massachusetts.

153 Fuller, 12.
assigned to his signature and name at Tamarind, he decided to test its worth by allowing someone else to use it. To that end, Conner cast the actor in the role of Bruce Conner.¹⁵⁴

Prior to his engagement with Hopper, Conner had been thinking about assuming the role of another artist’s identity, specifically that of Max Ernst. When Conner saw the similarities between Hopper’s work and his, he realized that Hopper had mimicked Conner’s collages just as Conner had mimicked Ernst’s collaged images. He told Alfred Frankenstein of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “If Dennis can perform me in my work, as maybe I tried to perform Ernst in [mine], I would take advantage of his being an actor, and cast him in the role of the artist who made these collages.”

The project materialized in 1971 after Conner worked with Crown Point Press in San Francisco. Using bits and pieces of engravings lifted from nineteenth-century wood engravings that appeared in travelogues and adventure books, Conner created a pastiche of assemblages in twenty-six prints. After Conner arranged the fragments, they were photographically reproduced on sensitized etching plates and then printed. In 1971 the first eight were printed, followed in 1972 by the next ten, and the last eight were printed in 1973. Although the title refers to Hopper, the prints include fantastical images arranged in surreal juxtapositions that recall Ernst’s work. As many art historians have noted, Conner’s statements and non-linear narratives make the connection to Ernst hard to miss.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Many scholars have noted the similarities and differences between Conner’s and Ernst’s collages. For example, Alexi Worth notes “whereas Ernst's ‘surrealistic novels’ spoof bourgeois melodrama, Conner's images are neither narrative nor genteel.” See Alexi Worth, “Exhibition Review: Bruce Conner at Curtis Marcus Susan Inglett,” *Art News* 95 (March 1996): 114. Garrett Holg has also recognized the connection, but has
When Conner completed the sets in 1973, they were exhibited at the James Willis Gallery in San Francisco. Conner invited Hopper to the opening, enticing him with a promised copy of the third edition. When Hopper arrived Conner asked him to sit in a chair that had his name on the front and Conner’s name on the back, while Conner’s chair had Hopper’s name on the back and his on the front, (fig. 87). This gesture (Duchampian in spirit), suggests that Conner continued to think about the power of naming and identity. He initially felt, however, that the meaning was misunderstood. In the 1976 interview with Fuller, Conner noted, “So far nobody has been able to understand what the show is about…. Like Alfred Frankenstein….I don’t know whether he just didn’t want to listen to what was going on or whether the game of substituting artists’ roles and concepts of identity was something that he didn’t want to deal with.”

Rothfuss has observed Conner’s musing on the name game, suggesting that the artist’s “scheme grew out of…[his] rumination on the power of names, and on his frustration that authorship played such a large part in establishing the value of an art object.” Rather than seeking to discover the role that his work plays in the art world as Rothfuss’ asserts, it seems Conner attempted to control the position it assumed.


156 Fuller, 10. In reviewing the show for the San Francisco Chronicle, Frankenstein noted “Dennis Hopper’s only apparent relationship to this exhibition is that he has nothing whatever to do with it.” Alfred Frankenstein, “Etchings Based on Fantastic Collages,” San Francisco Chronicle, (August 12 1971), 31

157 Rothfuss, 163.
The photograph that captures Conner’s gesture of handing over his identity to Hopper suggest his desire to realize the fantasy of himself as a discrete being, as an individual who retains total control over his identity and can give it away. The transparency of the switch (the actors are in each other’s seat) points to Conner’s failure to do so. Paradoxically, both artists’ identity is confirmed through the error. In other words, the person sitting in Bruce Conner’s chair is not Conner but Hopper, while Hopper’s chair is occupied by Conner.

The playful manipulation of the setting and the camaraderie expressed in the photograph suggests that Conner and Hopper are two central characters in a buddy movie. Seated in director’s chairs, the characters are alter egos linked together in collaborative game of naming. Since Conner evoked a movie set and a movie genre, it seems that he attempted to slip into Hopper’s skin while he tried to shed his own. Of course, Conner could never really switch identities with Hopper.

Conner’s struggle to gain control of signs that shape his identity—in *The Marcel Duchamp Traveling Box*, in *Thumbprint*, and in *The Dennis Hopper One Man Show*—plays out in the last series of prints that he made. The artist’s attempt at self-definition and autonomy is most apparent in his lithographic series *Prints*, 1974 (fig. 56). Using his body as a machine, he created these prints in response to the hiring practices at the California State University. Each one of the works in the edition of twenty contains a fingerprint card, a Xerox of artist’s hands, photographs that document the process, and correspondence that details the political and social maneuvering that Conner endured.
Specifically, the documents indicate the artist’s various encounters with the California education system.¹⁵⁸

In the spring of 1974, San Jose State University in California hired Conner to teach painting, and as a new employee he had to be fingerprinted. Trustees of the California State Colleges instituted a policy in the early 1960s that mandated all university employees, like all other state civil service employees, be fingerprinted as means to assess a “prospective employee’s fitness for a position.”¹⁵⁹ To that end, each campus in the state system worked with the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation to fingerprint every new employee and to process each state-issued fingerprint card.¹⁶⁰ After the department assessed each individual’s prints to see if he or she was charged with criminal behavior, the records were kept on file in the state capital in Sacramento. When the administration at San Jose offered Conner a job in 1973, he was forced to comply with this policy.

Conner objected to giving over his fingerprint to a state agency because he felt that they had artistic value.¹⁶¹ He stated in a letter to Kathy Cohen, the Chairman of Art Department at San Jose State, “my fingerprints have a value in themselves as works of art. Unless they are sold or leased under agreement with me then they cannot be reproduced without my permission. Their value has to be secured against loss or damage.

¹⁵⁸ These documents are in each edition, including the one that the dealer Susan Inglett has in her stock. Copies of the documents are also contained in Peter Selz’s Papers housed at the Archives of American Art in New York. The excerpts taken from the documents in this dissertation were obtained from Selz’s Papers.

¹⁵⁹ Memo from the Trustees of the California State Colleges to State College Presidents, October 11, 1962, Reel 1196, Peter Selz Papers, Archives of American Art, New York.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Bruce Conner to Kathy Cohen, Chairman of Art Department at San Jose State University, December 10, 1973, Reel 2344, Peter Selz Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York.
My own copyright for the fingerprints will be filed with the Library of Congress.” As proof of their value, Conner informed Cohen that he had made a lithograph edition of his thumbprints eight years prior and because of that print his fingerprints had a retail and true value.  

Instead of giving over his prints, Conner requested that they be returned to him after processing. Peter Selz suggests, in a catalog essay devoted to the series, that Conner insisted “that they be returned to him after use during his short period of employment.” Conner stated, “If they [his fingerprints] cannot be returned to me within two weeks after they are taken then I would like to request a meeting to determine the true standing of the situation.” Although Cohen sympathized with Conner, the Dean of Faculty, Robert F. Sasseen, did not believe the university should “press” the state for their return. He even suggested that Conner’s idea of art may have pushed its limits to far, noting, “If my fingerprints and the fingerprints of everyone who has been fingerprinted are each of them works of art, then must we not conclude that art is commonplace, and if commonplace, hardly an activity of inestimable value?”

Sasseen’s inquiry follows the course, albeit slightly differently, that Conner charted at Tamarind. In Thumbprint the artist derided the need for a written signature. His

162 Ibid.
163 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
166 Cohen informed Conner that she had hoped the university could purchase the fingerprints to “form the nucleus of a permanent art collection.” However, the money was lacking. Her hope was for the safe return of Conner’s fingerprints. Memo from Robert F Sasseen to Professor Bruce Conner, Art Department, December 27, 1973, Reel 2344, Peter Selz Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York.
167 Ibid.
actions also mocked the process by which art consumers fetishize signatures and signs of artistic presence. Therefore, it would seem that Sasseen’s rhetorical question challenging value of fingerprints would please the artist who used his thumbprint to challenge conventional practices.

Yet Conner’s reaction to Sasseen’s position and to state university’s policies suggests that his thumbprint was not so much a rejection of conventions as a means of “taking up a position toward it.” As Gombrich cautioned, rejection of standards “is only illusory independence because a refusal to join in the latest social game is a way of taking up a position toward it.”168 When Conner rejected policies set at Tamarind and broader artistic conventions, he became a creator of a new style of behavior. Even if the artist was throwing off the yoke of art world practices, his demand for the return of his fingerprints at Palo Alto suggests that he had only reinvented standards according to his needs.

As a solution to the impasse, Conner offered to make an edition of his fingerprints using the fingerprint form required by the university.169 The last print in the edition of twenty would be given to the university, and the entire process would be photographed and recorded. On January 18, 1974, Conner, Sasseen, and Conner’s dealer Paula Kirby, Director of Smith-Anderson Gallery, met to discuss Conner’s suggestions. All agreed that Conner could proceed with his project.170

With the assistance of his dealer, Conner produced an edition of his fingerprints at the Palo Alto police department. The artist’s fingerprints on the state-issued card,

---

169 Bruce Conner to Kathy Cohen, January 8, 1974, Reel 2344, Peter Selz Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York.
Xeroxed copies of his hands, photographs of the process, all correspondence, and a transcript of January 18, 1974 meeting were gathered and placed in a gun-metal, or institutional gray, lock box. On the lower right hand corner of each box (again a traditional location for a signature), Conner placed a gold number that corresponds to its number in the edition. The artist presented the last box in the edition, number twenty, to the university for processing.

In this print series, Conner again relied on indices to mark his presence but two slightly different things are at work. On the one hand, the artist manipulated an index so that it functions like an icon in describing his identity. On the other hand, Conner’s use of repetition and reproduction of signs dramatizes his struggle (and subsequent failure) to wrest control of his identity away from the Other; here that Other refers to the law.

Conner brought these two issues into play by manipulating the signifying value of an index. The artist’s fingerprints operate as an index because they have a dynamic relationship to its referent and mark his presence. Yet, the fingerprint indices in Prints also function like an icon because of their use in Conner’s past work. In this way, the index becomes an iconic sign because of its conventional and traditional use in Conner’s Handprint and Thumbprint. Prints, therefore, stages the malleability of signs.

Richard Shiff describes this condition in “Performing an Appearance: On the Surface of Abstract Expressionism.” He argues that when an artist consistently uses similar marks (or indices) within a painting, and from one painting to the next, he creates

---

171 Conner told Mary Fuller that he chose the “institutional gray” boxes. Fuller, 12.
a similarity among the indices or an “instance of iconicity.” Thus an index may become an icon. For example, Shiff theorizes that in Pollock’s paintings the indices operate like icons because the marks in his paintings closely resemble each other as well as his marks in other paintings. With the application of “consistent (bodily) action,” Pollock produced indices look sufficiently alike and this duplication enables the indices to function like icons. This transformation, according to Shiff, resulted in an “iconic ‘style.’”

Furthermore, Shiff notes indices can become icons over time. He suggests that by adopting Pollock’s drips and pours, Claes Oldenburg mimicked Pollock’s technique, “creating an art that openly represented indexicality as an iconic sign.”

It is possible to see the same shift in Conner’s work. The slip from index to icon allowed the artist to claim that his fingerprints were not commonplace indices but rather were valuable because they had become his “iconic style.” In letter to Cohen, Conner described the important change,

I produced a series of lithographs at Tamarind Lithography Workshop in 1965. In lieu of a signature I signed all the works of art which I approved with my thumbprint. The act of placing my thumbprint also became a form of Conceptual Art. I control the use of my fingerprints, an absolute means of identification, as a means of absolute definition of my Art. Information can be derived from my fingerprints. One lithograph I produced at Tamarind was an impression of my thumbprint, also signed with my thumbprint. “Thumbprint” was in an edition of 20 copies and has a retail sales value of $200.00 per copy. It’s true value is inestimable. You can understand the necessity of protecting my status as an artist and the inherent concepts of my Art. By simple gross multiplication the value of ten fingerprints would be $2,000 but the unique character of

173 Ibid., 100.
174 Ibid., 113.
175 Ibid., 116.
their appearance would establish their value beyond this amount.\textsuperscript{176}

Since Conner had consistently used his mark from one print to the next, as had Pollock in his paintings, the index exhibited value as an iconic style. Therefore, contrary to Dean Sasseen’s remark that everyone’s fingerprints constitute a work of art, Conner’s fingerprints could be interpreted as a manifestation of his “iconic style,” or artistic identity. In this way, the index became an icon through conventional and repetitive use.

Peter Selz has noted that Conner’s use of his fingerprint follows prior traditions found in Jackson Pollock in \textit{One (Number 31)} \textit{1948}, 1948 (fig. 88) and Hans Hofmann’s \textit{The Third Hand}, 1947 (Fig. 89).\textsuperscript{177} He suggests, specifically, that the “hand of the artist” in all of these works of art embodies the artist’s aura.\textsuperscript{178} The marks provide, according to Selz, “an essential stamp of the personal and individual aspects” of the artist’s work.\textsuperscript{179} The fingerprints reflect Conner’s belief, in Selz’s assessment, that \textit{his} fingerprints were an integral part of his \textit{persona} and his qualifications as an artist.”\textsuperscript{180} Since the indices are “essential stamps,” according to Selz, they promise a fundamental identity. Yet the indices are not merely direct references to the artist’s presence and aura, they also operate like icons. This instability troubles the indices’ promise of authenticity.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{176} Bruce Conner to Kathy Cohen, December 10, 1973, Reel 2344, Peter Selz Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York.
\textsuperscript{177} Selz, “The Artist As Dactylographer,” n.p.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{181} In addition to Selz, Jerry Cullum in his review of Conner’s retrospective at the Walker Arts Center in 2000, has argued that the \textit{Prints} edition works as a “critique of ‘the mark of the artist’s hand.’” Jerry Cullum. “Minneapolis: Bruce Conner” \textit{Art Papers} 24 (March/April 2000): 45.
Although it is possible to see that Conner’s indices work as icons to suggest and trouble artistic identity or style, *Prints* also manifests the artist’s desire to wrest control of his “iconic style” away from the Other. In an interview with Fuller, Conner stated that he had told the university officials at Palo Alto, “These [fingerprints] belong to me. You don’t owe me anything but I want what belongs to me, it’s my hand. For that matter, my name belongs to me. If I should choose not to have a name, I should have that choice rather than having an exterior agency say that my name is Bruce Conner.”

Rebecca Solnit has suggested that Conner’s struggle with university officials recalls the battle he waged with the workshop staff at Tamarind, noting “arising out of Conner’s interest in maintaining control over his work, the project proposes a parallel between police paperwork and the meticulous documentation fine print studios generate.” It seemed, therefore, that the situation at Palo Alto was a repeat performance of events at Tamarind.

Just as Conner had struggled with workshop officials, he found himself confronting similar, albeit legal, limitations with representatives of the law. Indeed, the artist attempted to gain control of his artistic identity by exploiting documentation as legal proof that his fingerprints and impressions of them belong to him and constitute part of his subjecthood. The photographs and witnesses support his claim. The documentation, then, reflects his desire to be self-defining.

Documentation, control, and desire present in Conner’s work evoke the work of his contemporary Andy Warhol. Similar issues emerge in Warhol’s *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*, 1964 (fig. 90). The artist produced the work for the New York State Pavilion at the 1964 New York World’s Fair. The large silkscreen, which hung on the

---

182 Fuller, 12.
183 Solnit, 122-123.
pavilion’s exterior, includes mug shots from the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s list of the most wanted men. The gritty, black-and-white, mechanically reproduced mug shots are similar to the gritty, black-and-white, mechanically reproduced images of Conner’s hands. Like Warhol’s images, the hands can be read as Conner’s mug shots. They capture that which best reveals his identity, his fingerprints. Just as faces identify criminals, Conner’s hands define his criminal behavior or transgressions of print rules. Perhaps most obviously, both works mimicked conventional forms of documenting criminality; Warhol exploited the mug shot, while Conner employed the fingerprinting process.

In addition to documentation, issues of control and desire also define Warhol’s and Conner’s prints. Scholars have discerned the homoerotic desire in Warhol’s *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*. For example, Richard Meyer has suggested that Warhol’s use of the F.B.I.’s list of most wanted men or criminals is a double entendre. The *Most Wanted Men* refers to their status as the government’s most wanted criminals, but it also refers to the ‘wanting of men by other men,” a desire that was seen as a form of criminal or deviant behavior. While Warhol’s work may address a homoerotic desire, Conner’s desire and his “criminal activities” are aimed at perceiving himself as a discrete human being in relation to the Other.

---


185 Warhol’s work has also been read as an indication of the crackdown on the homosexual community that occurred prior to opening of the 1964 World’s Fair. See Douglas Crimp, “Getting the Warhol we Deserve,” *Social Text* 59 (1999): 49-66.
According to Lacan, the Other belongs to the symbolic realm because it governs linguistic structures and the law. The Other, as Lacan has also pointed out, may also represent another subject, most often an authority figure. *Prints* represents Conner’s struggles against the Other of the law and university authorities. As we have seen, the Other wanted to take impressions of Conner’s fingers. The artist believed that his fingerprints had artistic value, and if he gave them over to the authorities he could lose control over them as they circulated within the legal system. Conner perceived it as a threat to his autonomy, and by battling the government and university officials, he attempted to retain control of the signifiers of his artistic identity.

The materials and processes used in *Prints* also define this struggle. In this series, Conner engaged legal procedures, which are used to ascertain identity, by allowing a Palo Alto police officer to ink his fingertips and impress them on the government-issued fingerprint card. By documenting his identity according to the defined structure of the law, Conner projected the real of his body onto the signifying structure of the Other. Conner’s indices on the card denote his real presence, but his collusion in the process indicates the meeting of the two entities. By employing the language of the Other on his terms or as he governed the process, Conner articulated his desire to gain command of his identity by controlling the distribution of personal signifiers. Through manipulation of legal proceedings, Conner attempted to assert his authority and ultimately gain control of his subjecthood.

Yet according to Lacan’s theories, self-definition is impossible. Lacan argued that the Other can never be fully present in the subject and the subject can never be totally

---

present in the Other; however, the projection of the Other onto the subject leaves a trace of its presence. The result of the meeting between the subject and the Other produces what Lacan described as a remainder, and it is this trace that shapes the subject. As we have seen, Lacan labeled the remainder the *objet petit a*.

Conner’s perception that the university authorities wanted to take control of what he perceived to be his identity threatened his subjecthood. As he told Cohen, “I control the use of my fingerprints, an absolute means of identification, as a means of absolute definition of my art.” In an attempt to gain control his identity by taking it away from the authorities, or the Other, Conner sought to project himself into the symbolic order of the law and upon the university authorities. To that end, Conner physically projected himself, denoted in his fingerprints, onto the Other, represented as a fingerprint card. The card exhibits the introduction of the symbolic order, or legal processes, into the real of the subject, present in the fingerprint impressions. The *Prints* series is the remainder that marks the connection between subject (or Conner) and the Other (or the university and state officials), and, therefore, it can be interpreted as a manifestation of the *objet petit a*.

Lacan described the *objet petit a* as the mediator between the subject and Other. It denotes that subject can never be fully present in the Other and that the Other can never fully represent the subject; as such, the subject is always deferred, incomplete, or lacking. Thus, *Prints* can be read as a manifestation of the *objet petit a* because it demonstrates lack, deferral, and dispersal when subject encounters the Other. For example, the fingerprint fragments are literally compartmentalized on the official card. Since the legal process determined where Conner could mark his presence and forced his indices into predetermined compartments on the card, the Other formed a dispersed subject. In other
words, this distribution of indices into smaller parts manifests the subject as split and dispersed. In addition, the signs of Conner’s subjectivity shatters into twenty different fragments for each identity card, in every mug-shot Xeroxes of his hands, and the photographs taken at the police department. Since only a portion of his identity materializes on each card or in each photo, his fingerprints may be read as fragments of a complete body. In this way, they dramatize identity as that which lacks coherence. The final diffusion occurred after the artist separated each index and icon into twenty different boxes, locked them away, and stacked them one on top of the other (fig. 91). The separation and inability to attain unity became permanent at this moment, but it was ensured after each print in the edition was sold and moved to a different location.

The Prints series, therefore, can be interpreted as a trace or manifestation of the objet petit a because it documents the introduction of the Other into the Conner’s subjecthood. The edition also represents the objet petit a because it manifest Conner’s desire to perceive his subjecthood as a discrete human being in relation to the Other and the lack that arises from his inability to do so. The result, or rather failure, emerges in the split and dispersed subject on the card and into the twenty locked boxes, which, of course, reignites the desire for wholeness.

Conner’s decision to manipulate his finger and thumbprints indicates his assault on the symbolic order within the print workshop, the art world, and larger signifying structures. By employing the reproductive aspects of the printmaking and using his body like a printmaking machine, the artist exploited signs of his presence to work through issues of artistic identity. Ultimately, Conner’s forays into printmaking dramatize the way that signs ascribe meaning to works of art and describe identity. The prints and the
reproductive process point to his desire to gain complete control over those signs from the Other/father/law and his failure to do so. In this way, they operate as the *object petit a* because they mark the point where the Other meets the subjects and leaves the subject lacking.
Between the late 1960s and the mid 1970s, David Hammons created about 500 body prints.¹ The artist produced these prints by pressing his lubricated body onto a piece of paper and then dusting that impression with colored chalk to draw out the image. This process, according to Hammons, is analogous to dusting for “fingerprints at a murder scene.”² Like those imprints taken from a crime scene, each body print offers an index of the artist’s bodily presence. Just as fingerprints can confirm the identity of a thief, the indices in Hammons’ prints seem to guarantee an authentic presence. Yet the bodily impressions cannot live up to that promise, because they also operate like icons describing the conventional aspects of appearance. The body prints, therefore, negotiate the slippage within the trace; they unveil the shifting space between the authenticity of the index and the conventionality of the icon. In other words, the authenticity guaranteed by the index promises an essential self, but the iconicity of the signs falsifies that guarantee by showing the self as a construct. By exploiting this duality, Hammons pointed to the condition of identity. These prints include signs drawn from the discourse of Blackness—of the late 1960s and early 1970s—that seem to describe an essential self, but the signs indicate that identity is always mediated by language, discourse, and the authority of the Other. Here, the body prints specifically dramatize that a racial Other alienates the subject.

Although these issues exist in many of Hammons’ body prints, the four that will be discussed in this chapter represent four variations on this technique. The earliest body

² David Hammons, interview by Jennifer Noonan, March 2006.
prints are direct transfers; the artist applied grease to his body and then pressed it onto a sheet of paper, as in *Back to Black*, 1969 (fig. 92). Soon thereafter the prints became more complex as Hammons set a silkscreen, and mostly commonly the American flag, on top of the body print as in *America the Beautiful*, 1968/69 (fig. 93). The third group of prints include a silkscreen of the artist’s body placed on a found object as in *Black Boy’s Window*, 1969 (fig. 94). Just before Hammons stopped making prints, he had begun to use collage elements as in *Ebony Kiss*, 1974 (fig. 95). Not only do these four prints represent the four different techniques that the artist used, they also epitomize his project. Each one interrogates notions of identity.

These four prints also represent Hammons’ shifting philosophical position about identity as it morphed during the nine years that he created these prints. In earliest body prints, the artist manipulated process, materials, and symbols to negotiate the condition of alienation that many African-American men and women experience under the gaze of the Other. While Hammons addressed the experiences that African-American artists endure under the gaze of the Other in *Back to Black*, he worked through issues pertaining to the condition of alienation that individuals experience regarding the social and legal Other in *Black Boy’s Window* and *America the Beautiful*. In the last print discussed in this chapter, *Ebony Kiss*, Hammons incorporated slightly different symbols and process, and they activate a different condition of identity; it is one that entails separation from the structure that alienates individuals based on their appearance. In these body prints, Hammons worked through notions of identity.

In order to create these images, Hammons used his body like a printmaking machine and transferred an index from his body onto paper. In the process, he
manipulated form, color, and texture to craft symbols of identity. In order to understand the way in which he negotiated the slippage between the index and icon to generate meaning, it is important to know how he created these images. To fabricate the early body prints, as in Back to Black, Hammons first lubricated his body, hair, and clothing with a greasy substance including butter, margarine and eventually Johnson’s Baby Oil, which he began using after the birth of his children. Sometimes before he applied the oil he would cover his body in fabric, such as corduroy, in order to produce a patterned impression. Hammons even liked to use his wife’s lace tablecloths, “since the ‘body

---


4 Young, Three Graphic Artists: Charles White, David Hammons, Timothy Washington, 8.
print’ technique seems to recreate every thread.”

After coating the desired area, Hammons pressed his lubricated body onto a piece of paper or illustration board.

Depending upon the desired intensity for the image, the support was placed on either the wall or the floor. If Hammons wanted a dark imprint, he would place the paper on the floor because his full body weight could produce a denser impression than merely pushing his body against a piece of paper tacked to the wall. By taking the paper off the wall and placing it on the floor, Hammons shifted the axis from a vertical orientation to a horizontal one and in so doing allowed gravity to play a role in production. The body’s weight and gravitational pull pressed the body toward the ground creating a saturated impression. After gravity and Hammons created a sufficiently greasy impression, the artist lifted his body off the paper’s surface. The detachment, however, was not always easy. Hammons noted,

When I lie down on the paper, which is first placed on the floor, I have to carefully decide how to get up after I have made the impressions that I want. Sometimes I just lie there for perhaps three minutes or even longer, just figuring out how I can get off the paper without smudging the image that I’m trying to print.

---------------------

5 Ibid.
6 The paper, according to Hammons, had to be thick enough to absorb the oil and powder. David Hammons, interview by Jennifer Noonan, March 2006. Young noted that Hammons used illustration board because he found it “especially responsive.” Young, *Three Graphic Artists: Charles White, David Hammons, Timothy Washington*, 8
7 Young, “Reviews: Two Generations of Black Artists and David Hammons at Brockman Gallery,” 74.
After Hammons figured out how to detach himself from the paper without smudging the image, he applied pigment. The color chosen, according to the artist, depended upon the subject. For example, he used blue pigment for blue jeans. To achieve this effect, Hammons sifted the colored, powdered pigment through a colander, over the greased areas in order to draw out the image from the oily substance. Describing this effect of sifting, Young noted, “As fine pigment slowly descends like a cloud of dust, the color is captured more intensely in those areas of the paper which have absorbed the ‘printed’ margarine film.” After the grease was satisfactorily coated, Hammons shook off the pigment that was not absorbed, and those traces that did not slide off were erased.


11 Ibid.

12 Young, Three Graphic Artists: Charles White, David Hammons, Timothy Washington, 8.

13 Ibid. The print Injustice Case, which is currently hanging in storage at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, still has a halo of erasure marks around the impression’s perimeter.
The results of the process employed in these early prints often amazed the artist. He noted, “The surprising thing is that when I first make the print you can’t see anything, and once the powder flows over it—it just blooms.”14 He also informed Young,

That’s why I love printing, because there’s a surprise. You really can’t tell what you’ve got until you lift the paper…. Especially when I use cloth that I have wrapped around myself. I had no idea originally that all those wrinkles and all those folds would actually turn out like that. I just couldn’t believe it. I still can’t believe what I see sometimes.15

After the image “bloomed,” Hammons bound the grease and pigment together with fixative.16 A color-infused index of the artist’s body resulted from this process. In early body prints such as Back to Black, the artist signified his presence by impressing his grease-coated back, cloathed buttocks, hair and the right side of his face onto paper.17 In this way, and like other artists in this study, he used his body like a print matrix to transfer marks from his body onto paper. The technique that the artist used to make the signs evokes traditional printmaking techniques because the artist produced an image by pressing paper onto a matrix, and here it is the body.

14 Young, Three Graphic Artists: Charles White, David Hammons, Timothy Washington, 8.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Other prints include: Untitled (Man with Pierced Ear and Toothpick), 1974, Body Print, (fig. 130); American Costume, 1970, Body Print, (fig. 31); Untitled, 1977, Body Print, (fig. 132); I Dig the Way This Dude Looks, 1971, Body Print, (fig. 133); Pray, 1970, Body Print, (fig. 134); The Wine Leading the Wine, 1971, Body Print, (fig. 135); Untitled, 1976, Body Print, (fig. 136); Untitled, 1975, Body Print, (fig. 137); Sunday Morning Mass, 1969, Body Print, (fig. 138); Untitled, 1973, Body Print, (fig. 139); Defend Your Walk, 1974, Body Print, (fig. 140); Untitled (Woman with Mop Hair and Lace Shawl), c. 1975, Body Print, (fig. 141); Don’t Bite the Hand That Feeds, 1974, Body Print, (fig. 142); Untitled (The King’s Show Has Ended…) (c. 1970), Body Print, (fig. 143); Blue Angels (Penises), n.d., Body Print, (fig. 144); Untitled (Penis Print), n.d., Body Print, (fig. 145); MoMa, Body Print, (fig. 146); MoMa, Body Print, (fig. 147).
Hammons created the imprints in *Back to Black* using his body, and therefore, those imprints are indices that indicate his presence. The impression, which denotes the point of contact between the artist and the paper, takes on the shape of the artist’s body seen from behind. Although the artist angled the body to show his back, he did provide a glimpse of the face because he turned his head to the right. With one side of the face and half of the artist’s hair presented here, the artist denoted a portion of his body. These impressions promise an authentic presence because the artist made them, and yet they falsify this claim because they do not provide a complete picture of the artist’s body. When the artist omitted his arms and most of his legs, he shaped the index into a body that is but a fragment of its larger self. Even though the mechanics of authenticity are at work in the sign and the process, they slip into conventional and traditional signs because the artist manipulated them to craft a certain bodily appearance.

The indices in *Back to Black* become conventional signs of Blackness because of the way that Hammons shaped his body and the process he used to leave his mark. By using the transfer process to shape indices into an identifiable form, Hammons morphed an index into an icon. He contorted his body in such a way that the indices, which mark an authentic presence and are believed to be natural, transform into conventional signifiers of a Black body. By exploiting this shift, Hammons opened up that space between the authenticity of the index and the conventionality of the icon to argue that Blackness is conveyed through signs rather than being the essence of an individual. In this print, the slippage between the signs is apparent in the body, the clothing, and the hair.
The index of the hair is shaped into an Afro, also called the “natural.” This hairstyle became popular in the late 1960s and the 1970s because it was perceived to be an essential signifier of ethnicity. It represented an unprocessed appearance that entailed allowing hair to grow and take shape without the use of products that would straighten it. It was, therefore, considered to be a natural style. During the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, the Afro reflected the acceptance and pride in ethnicity while also rejecting white mainstream culture. Hammons’ drew attention to this style by positioning the head in such a way that shows off the hair in the shape of the “natural.” This sign, therefore, operates as signifiers of Blackness used to foster Black pride. Hammons was just one of many artists who used the sign to convey this ideological position.

Hammons’ contemporary and fellow-Californian artist Phillip Lindsay Mason, for example, used similar signs in Woman as Body Spirit of Cosmic Woman, 1970 (fig. 97). Mason incorporated the “natural” sign to represent Black pride. In this image, the Afro hairstyle, a long loose dress, large hoop hearings, and the erect stance are signs of Black pride. Even more specifically, the cosmic blue dress, the radiating sun disk that floats above her head and mimics the shape of her hair, and the flower that runs up her back like a spine provide strength and erect posture. These elements signify that this figure is the embodiment of the “natural,” Black woman. The Afro plays a role in that signification process.

Signs of Blackness that have been traditionally read as natural, such as the Afro, have recently been opened up to discussion of conventionality. Cultural critic and writer Kobena Mercer has pointed out that the Afro hairstyle was called a “natural,” but it was
anything but that. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many Black men and women rejected straightening styles and opted to groom their hair so it would grow up, out, and into a three-dimensional shape that took up space. It was a means to assert and announce pride in African ethnicity. As Mercer notes, this hairstyle required an erect stance, because “to wear an Afro you have to hold your head up in pride, you cannot bow down in shame and still show off your ‘natural’ at the same time” Thus the hairstyle required an assertiveness and authority. It became a coded sign representing those who were proud of being Black. Although it was believed that letting the hair grow long and rejecting products to smooth the hair would produce a natural hairstyle, Mercer concludes there is no such thing since this style required cultivation and shaping. In this way, the Afro rather than being natural signifies the natural; it points to Blackness rather than being an essential aspect of it.

In Back to Black, the index of the artist’s hair functions as this type of symbol. The hairstyle, the “Afro,” indicates this specific identity because, as Mercer has suggested, it was worn as a signifier of Blackness; it suggested Black pride and alliance with the movements that sought equality, and it represented the rejection of White, mainstream culture. The index of the figure, therefore, becomes a conventional sign of a very specific Black body. In addition, the use of the dark pigment for the skin tone underscores this identity. The index of the Black body becomes a sign for Blackness

---

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 106.
21 Ibid., 104-05.
because Hammons exploited the formal elements during the transfer process. He also used clothing to stage this specific identity.

While clothing is an expression of individuality, it also indicates a shared set of values and attitudes. Those individuals seeking vivid expressions of fresh, new, and modern energy often adopt new fashions and wear the latest fad. In the late 1960s and 1970s, jeans became the new uniform of the youth culture. Charles Reich, a spokesman for the counter-culture movements in the 1960s and 1970s, noted in *The Greening of America* that jeans functioned as the badge of the new cultural style. In Reich’s estimation, jeans connoted a conscious rejection of the “artificial look of the affluent society,” because their “earthy and sensual” character made “one conscious of the body.” Jeans also symbolized a rejection of the constructed, constricting styles worn by older Americans, because they permitted “the person wearing them the freedom to do or move however he or she wants.” In a sense, the freedom the jeans allowed became a metaphor for freedom and movement away from the status quo that the youth culture sought. Since jeans became the uniform of youth, they became associated with the counter-culture and with those who struggled for significant social changes.

The figure in *Back to Black* wears this uniform. Vertical lines surround the pockets and seams of the pants that the figure wears, and they suggest the stitching in jeans. Given the time that Hammons created this print and considered in light of the hairstyle, the jeans mark the figure as a member of the counter-culture, Black Power movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The indices in *Back to Black*, therefore,

---

23 Ibid., 234.
24 Ibid., 235.
operate like icons to convey a specific identity. It was not the only time that the artist manipulated the authenticity of index and conventional aspects of the icon to construct an identity.

Hammons self-consciously employed the index and reworked it into highly coded signs of Jewish identity in *Rabbi*, 1968 (fig. 98). By exploiting the nature of the sign in this print, the artist demonstrated that signs taken from his body could be manipulated during transfer and shaped into descriptions of identity. The full beard, stooped posture, gesture of preaching, and head covering that looks like a yarmulke describe the body of an elderly Jewish Rabbi. Clearly, Hammons was not an elderly Jewish man when he made the print, yet he appears to be one.\(^{25}\) To achieve this look Hammons altered his appearance to highlight features that suggest a Jewish identity. Although these adjustments, like those in *Back to Black*, participate in the logic that suggest signs pulled from the body and transferred to another surface point to a natural identity rather than actually being natural, they also play dangerously close to stereotypes. The stooped posture and the large nose in *Rabbi*, for example, recall the over simplified and imagined differences repeated in stereotypes of Jewish identity.

David Joselit has observed that Hammons manipulated stereotypes in his series *Spade*, 1970-76 (fig. 99-103) to point out their destructive nature. Joselit argues that the

---

\(^{25}\) Hammons may have been inspired to think about the differences when he and other African-American artists were given exhibitions at the Westside Jewish Community Center on Olympic Boulevard in Larchmont, California. In a 1994 interview David Hammons stated, "I started off showing on pegboards in Jewish recreation centers because they were the only ones in Los Angeles that gave shows to black artists." See David Hammons and Robert Storr, “You Have to Be Prepared: A Conversation Between David Hammons and Robert Storr,” in *Yardbird Suite: Hammons 93* (Williamstown, MA: Williamstown College Art Museum, 1994), 56. This connection clearly requires more investigation, and I plan to work on this link in the near future.
flattened subject represents the violence done to Black subjectivity when they are “flattened into types” with the use of racist invectives.\(^{26}\) He explains, “In repeating his racist interpellation as ‘spade,’ Hammons makes explicit the price we pay—in unequal measure according to our race, gender, and sexuality—in having to exist as images for others, and in having to adjust to the images others have of us.”\(^{27}\) For Joselit, Hammons’ use of flatness suggests the damage done to individuals when their identity is imposed from without and they are reduced to stereotypes.

Sharon Patton has also suggested that African-American artists working in this period confronted stereotypes in their work by including aspects of them in their paintings, collages, and assemblages.\(^{28}\) What saved these works from perpetuating such images and notions, according to Patton, was the way that artists configured the image or altered its context.\(^{29}\) In Betye Saar’s *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*, 1972 (fig. 104) for example, the female figure represents liberation rather than connoting traditions of servitude, because she carries a grenade and a gun, as well as a broom.\(^{30}\) Patton cautions, however, that such images, if read improperly, could further the very notions they are meant to subvert.\(^{31}\)

More recently, Irish artist Cheryl Donegan made explicit that impressions taken from the body can convey conventional (even stereotypical) signs of ethnicity. In *Kiss My Royal Irish Ass (K.M.R.I.A.)*, a 1993 performance at the Andrea Rosen Gallery in New York...

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 27.
\(^{29}\) Ibid., 202.
\(^{30}\) Ibid.
\(^{31}\) Ibid.
York City (fig. 105), Donegan appeared in a green thong and bra, and she sat in a puddle of green paint. After coating her buttocks with this paint, she pressed them onto a sheet of paper in the shape of a shamrock. When she finished transferring the marks from her body to a sheet of paper, she drank a pint of Guinness. The humorous performance drew attention to the way that signs work. The color green, a four-leaf lucky clover that is suggestive of Ireland, and a beverage associated with that country signify an Irish heritage.

Although there is nothing inherently Irish about these signs, they are often perceived to be naturally linked. Of course there is a difference between these signs and signs of Jewish and/or Black identity. Primarily, signs of national identity do not reference the body and appearance but rather the perceived characteristics and traditions within a country. In addition, stereotypes of nationality are not as commonly used to judge a person, and when they are used, they do not inflict violence or threaten an individual’s safety. However, the way in which Donegan manipulated these signs is similar to Hammons’ project because both suggest the construction of identity.

The indices that form the shamrock seem natural because they were made by the artist’s body, but they in fact become conventional because they form into a stereotype of Ireland. Although the indices in *Kiss My Royal Irish Ass (K.M.R.I.A.*) momentarily bear out the artist’s real identity (because her body made those indices), the conventional sign (a sign that could be used by any Irishwoman) brought into being through reproduction eclipses that certainty. The contradiction between the impressions made by an Irish woman and the conventional sign that represents her heritage suggests the fallibility, and malleability, of those signs.
Just as Donegan manipulated indices of her real body in such a way that they morphed into conventional signs for an Irish identity, so too did Hammons employ indices as icons to point to signs of Blackness. By joining an index of his body to an icon that signifies Blackness, Hammons’ print *Back to Black* details the process of subjectivity in which identity is formed through the transfer and repetitive use of highly coded signs. Even though the signs in this print confirm the notion that there is no essential self because the subject is formed through conventions, these signs participate in the dialogue that exploited and cultivated perceived, “natural” attributes as a means to assert pride in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Larry Neal and Amiri Baraka, the influential poets, playwrights, and champions of the Black Arts Movement, spoke about the need to use markers of ethnicity in order to describe a positive Black identity. They argued during the 1960s and 1970s that the adoption of signifiers of “Blackness” would establish a “Black Esthetic” that would result in a positive self-image for Black Americans. In a 1969 article for *Ebony* magazine, for example, Neal laid out his ideas that “the new references of clothing and hair are essentially visions of ourselves perfected; they are sign posts on the road to eventual self-determination.” Such positive images and references, according to Neal, would reach beyond images of oppression and portray Black Americans in a positive way. In

---


34 Ibid., 62

35 Ibid.
addition, the scholar, activist, and founder of the US Organization, Ron Karenga, noted that backing a Black aesthetic would speak to and inspire Black Americans.\[36\]

In addition, Carolyn Rodgers, nationalist poet and critic, adamantly advanced the need for all artists to question their use of language and poetry. Writing in *Black World* during 1970, Rodgers called for artists to use African-American, urban language and ignore European linguistic structures.\[37\] Using this vernacular, according to Rodgers, would foster pride and nationalism within the Black community. By rejecting mainstream language, Rodgers argued that poets and writers could bolster Black social and political solidarity and affect change.

Patricia Coleman, writing for *The Black Arts* in 1968, articulated a similar theory.\[38\] She stated that Black individuals could demonstrate their pride through “general conversation, by African dress, and by the advent of the a hair style worn only by Black Americans.”\[39\] She theorized that the hairstyle, left as “natural,” would manifest Black pride. The hairstyle, according to Coleman, conjured up African traditions and this provided an alternative to White mainstream styles.\[40\] By wearing this hairstyle and clothing that recalls an African ancestry, Black Americans could show pride in their heritage and foster dignity in their identity. With the constant use of these signs, according to Coleman, “a change” was “sure to come about.”\[41\]

---

38 Patricia Coleman, “Black Pride Abstract,” *The Black Arts* 1 (Summer 1968): 36. This periodical was published quarterly in Detroit, MI.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
In the visual arts, Elsa Honig Fine recognized the tendency among some artists to employ the Black Aesthetic to create change. In an article for *Art Journal* in 1971, the art historian noted three different artistic styles: the “mainstream,” “blackstream,” and “Black Art Movement.” While “mainstream” artists conformed to international art styles relating to abstraction, “blackstream” artists created works of art that respond to the political turmoil and as such most of this work is figurative. The artists of the “Black Art Movement” produce works that participates in the dialogue of the Black separatists and Black nationalism. By rejecting traditional art forms and deliberately creating paintings that describe Black experiences, these works sought to inspire “Black unity, Black dignity, and respect.”

In addition to this larger discourse, artists working in southern California also discussed the way in which a Black aesthetic could be used as a means to represent and valorize African-American experiences. According to the artist and one-time director of the Watts Art Center, John Outterbridge, he and his fellow artists, including Hammons, often gathered at each other’s houses (such as senior artist Noah Purifoy’s home) or in galleries (such as Suzanne Jackson’s Gallery 32 or Alonzo and Dale Davis’ Brockman Gallery) to discuss the state of the arts. During those meetings, Outterbridge observed, “Noah…always challenged everything—you, the environment—He’d want to break

---

43 Ibid., 374.
44 Ibid.
down concepts and replace them with ideology that was fresh and stout.”\(^{46}\) Indeed, Outterbridge and Hammons noted Purifoy’s influence.\(^{47}\) Alonzo Davis, co-founder of the Brockman Gallery, also observed, “There was a tremendous surge of self-identity, self-pride, and sort of a cultural renaissance that was taking place in the Black community. Not that artists didn’t exist prior to that, but there became a greater need and a greater demand to be heard. So several entities began to take place…”\(^{48}\)

Davis, Outterbridge, and Hammons, among others, believed that the Black Artists Association and the Black Arts Council could help foster change.\(^{49}\) While artists in the Black Arts Council focused on organizing exhibitions, those connected to the Black Artists Association often gathered to talk “about things and aesthetic statements that were related specifically to their immediate concerns and works”\(^{50}\) For example, Outterbridge stated that collective discussion focused on change,

---

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 237-238.


\(^{49}\) The Black Artists Association, as Outterbridge noted, grew up from the Brockman Gallery. See John Outterbridge, interview by Richard Cândida Smith, “African-American Artists of Los Angeles: John Outterbridge, Volume I,” 248. Alonzo and Dale Davis ran the Brockman Gallery and showed the work of other Black and Hispanic artists. David noted that the focus of the Black Arts Association was “an attempt to get together and communicate about things and issues and aesthetic statements that were related specifically to their immediate concerns and work. Alonzo Davis, interview by Karen Anne Mason, “African-American Artists of Los Angeles: Alonzo Davis,” 172.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
We were much more verbal at the time than we are now, because that period pooled artists together. We even had discussions about redefining what the arts were, especially from an African-American point of view, because we considered the fact that, maybe from the cultures we grew out of—The equivalent of what we know as art in the Western world did not exist in those cultures. So we, at least, had some freedom to give art another kind of rendition, to redefine it. As a matter of fact, it might be anything that we chose for it to be…

Hammons acknowledged a similar ideological position in his words, actions, and works of art. He noted his alliance with these individuals and ideas when he stated, “…I feel it my moral obligation as a black artist, to try to graphically document what I feel socially.” By drawing attention to the physique, clothing, and rhetoric in Back to Black, Hammons evoked the newly empowered “Black identity.” The dark pigment in the saturated body print, the Afro, the clothing, and the title are coded signs that refer to this ideology. As the cultural critic bell hooks has noted, body-centric imagery and verbal colloquialisms exuded a symbolic and psychic weight in a decade in which African Americans wished to assert a strong, powerful vision of their identity. In this light, then, Back to Black demonstrates that signs pulled from the body could be transformed into codes that champion a Black aesthetic in an attempt to get Back to Black. The artist

---

acknowledged as much when he stated, “my early things are related to the black cause.”\textsuperscript{54} Hammons print, made the same year that Neal’s article appeared, may function as a “signpost on the road” “Back to Black.”

Toward that end, \textit{Back to Black} also offered a possible alternative, an “equivalent” to “art in the Western world.” In this print Hammons pulled signs from his body and translated them into symbols of Blackness, but he also shaped them into a fragment of his larger body. That bodily portion is a lean and fit form that appears to have suddenly stopped mid-stride. As the head turns and the weight shift lifts one shoulder the form recalls fragments of antique sculpture. The form that the body assumes in this print recalls the laws of proportion devised in antiquity to produce an ideal form.

In the 5th Century BC, the Greek sculptor Polykleitos developed a system of proportions that would allow an artist to create an ideal male figure. This system, known as the Canon, called for the artist to divide the marble according to ratios based on distances between body parts. By depicting the marble figure shifting weight onto one leg, in a contrapposto pose as in the \textit{Doryphoros} (Spear-Bearer), 450 BCE/5\textsuperscript{th} Century Classical Period (fig. 106), the artist could suggest a figure in motion. That hint of movement contributed to a naturalistic appearance. These devices allowed for greater naturalism and an ideal figure that stood as the Canon for future artists. Although the \textit{Doryphoros} exhibits the ideal body in total, today many statues exist only in fragmented form due the elements of time as seen in \textit{Torso of a Youth}, 118 BC (fig. 107). In these remains, however, there is enough material extant to suggest that the artists followed the Canon.

\textsuperscript{54} Young, “Reviews: Two Generations of Black Artists and David Hammons at Brockman Gallery,” 74.
The form of the armless torso in *Back to Black* adheres to this system. Specifically, the torso in Hammons' print shares many features with *Torso of a Youth*. Both forms are missing arms and both are but fragments of a larger form.\(^{55}\) The body in Hammons’ print and the torso in the marble statue describe the body of an ideal youth. In both forms, the trapezius and deltoid muscles of the shoulders are well developed and suggest strength. In Hammons’ print the attenuation of these muscles and the subtle upward shift in the left shoulder indicates contrapposto, which further evokes ancient statuary. The muscles that carry the lean frame hint at the vigor of youth. Thus, the muscles and the sleek physique create an ideal form that evokes the Canon of proportions. In addition, the twist of the torso makes apparent the tilted and inclined head, and the action suggests introspection. The form in Hammons’ image harkens back to the 5\(^{th}\) Century Classical style. Thus, the truncated body, the strong torso, the stance, and the inclined head in *Back to Black* recall an ideal Greek sculpture as seen in the *Torso of a Youth*.

Yet it seems that Hammons offered a new vision of the Canon in *Back to Black*, because he joined non-Western features dressed in contemporary clothing to a classical form. Inserting the language of the Black aesthetic into the Canon could allow for the existence of other cultures. This alteration of the Canonical form would define the art world in broader terms and allow for difference. Hammons’ print, then, may be

\(^{55}\) During a conversation, Hammons stated that this is an imprint of his back; he suggested that it could not be the front of his torso because the chest would be apparent. David Hammons, interview by Jennifer Noonan, March 2006.
interpreted as a redefinition of what the arts could be as it inserted different imagery into the Canon and thus replaced forms with "ideology that was fresh."\textsuperscript{56}

This change accorded with the dogma put forth by the champions of the Black Arts Movement. As Larry Neal proposed, Black artists needed to undertake "a radical reordering of the western cultural aesthetic" by introducing "separate symbolism, mythology, critique, and iconology."\textsuperscript{57} By employing the classical tropes and blending them with an ethnic identity pulled from the body, Hammons’ print provides a glimpse at a radical reordering of the art historical Canon. In a way, then, \textit{Back to Black} introduces a new iconology to the Canon, one that allowed for an "African-American perspective" and an empowered "Black identity."\textsuperscript{58} Richard Powell alludes to this essential condition, noting "His head twisted around & backside visibly pressed into the psychological space of the viewers, Hammons hectored those who would question the new \textit{black} state of affairs and provoked the critics who would disparage an image as firm, sooty and authentic as his."\textsuperscript{59}

Although \textit{Back to Black} speaks to this specific and essentialist ideology, the way that Hammons brought together signifiers of Blackness and artistic conventions that define the ideal figure indicate that the artist also realized that these signifiers construct


\textsuperscript{58} Outterbridge stated that artists were trying to redefine the arts from an African-American point of view. John Outterbridge, interview by Richard Cándida Smith, "African-American Artists of Los Angeles: John Outterbridge, Volume I," 236-238.

identity. He pulled indices from the body—seemingly natural signs—and transferred them into signifiers that adhere to conventions. The marks denote the real presence of his body yet conventional signs shape that subject—the clothing, hair, and language speak to an individual aligned with the Civil Rights Movement and Black Pride. Their constructed nature materializes when they are joined to conventional signs of the ideal form. When Hammons married signs of Blackness to Canonical signs he unveiled the constructed nature of both. The Canon, itself, is but a system of codes. The formation of the muscles, the inclined head, the short wavy hair, the stance of the body, and the lack clothing are signs of a strong Greek youth. Although they are worn on the body, the signs are not natural; they do not define an essential being. Rather, they too were cultivated to convey an ideal identity in society and art. As such they are codes, or the laws, that allow for the perfect subject.  

By joining Canonical signs to signifiers of Blackness in Back to Black, Hammons drew attention to the condition of the subject as that which is always informed by something that is outside and beyond the self. These signs stage the notion that there can never be an essential identity because individuals are always shaped by laws and conventions that pre-exist them. When Hammons merged indices pulled from his body with signs of a socially constructed self, he constructed a subject. By allowing the index

60 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, touched on the constructed nature of the subject. He articulated that classical sculpture was constructed in an “idealized” form and it was a reasonably accurate representation of Greek society. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture, trans. Elfriede Heyer and Roger Norton (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Classics, 1987). For more recent descriptions of the body as a social construction see James Porter, Constructions of the Classical Body (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1999); see also Lin Foxhall and JB Salomon, Thinking Men: Masculinity and Its Self-Representation in the Classical Tradition (New York: Routledge, 1998).
to work as an icon, Hammons unveiled the nature of the subject as that which is always conditioned by the shift between the real body and the language of the Other. In other words, the figure in Back to Black marks the subject as that which is always is always split, caught between self and Other.

The theory that the subject is always mediated because it is suspended in the space between the real of the body and the language of the Other is described by Lacan. In an analysis of subject formation, as discussed in the previous chapter, Lacan suggested that a subject comes into being through interaction with the Other. Lacan also stated that the Other is an entity that exists outside the self. As an individual grows, the mother is the first exterior Other, but she is soon replaced by the father, language, and the law. This external Other governs a subject’s behavior, for it is the place from which the subject draws his/her identity and it is the focus of his/her desires. While the Other informs the subject’s being, it can never be fully present in the subject and the subject can never be fully present in the Other. Something always remains outside the subject’s grasp. For example, language or another person can never totally fulfill a subject’s desire. However, 


there always remains a trace of that Other in the subject that shapes it. Lacan labeled this leftover the *objet petit a*.\(^{65}\) Since the subject can always only find a portion of the Other in themselves or their desires, a lack remains and defines their subjectivity. Consequently, the individual is always split, divided, and devoid of wholeness. The subject, then, is always fragmented.\(^{66}\) Although Lacan suggested that this division occurs similarly in all subjects, recent scholarship has suggested the symbolic order evinces differences in subjectivity that Lacan left out.

Using Lacan’s model against itself, scholars have recently suggested all subjects are not formed in the same manner.\(^{67}\) Many argue that social and cultural conditions and traditions matter when the subject develops. These factors, as scholars argue contrary to Lacan’s theories, often inform an individual’s identity based on perceived differences. Since Lacan discussed the formation of the subject based on the Other, his theories have been increasingly used to describe the condition of race relations. Psychoanalyst and author of *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race*, Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, has suggested that subjectivity and difference are governed by a master signifier,

---


\(^{67}\) For example, Ann Pellegrini considers the use of psychoanalysis in studies of racism and gender studies. See Ann Pellegrini, *Performance Anxieties: Staging Psychoanalysis, Staging Race* (New York: Routledge, 1997); see also Christopher Lane, ed. *The Psychoanalysis of Race* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); see also Hortense Spillers, “‘All the Things You Could Be By Now if Sigmund Freud’s Wife Was Your Mother: Psychoanalysis and Race,” *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Summer 1996): 710-734.
“Whiteness.” In this text, which investigates why race continues to define people even though it is recognized as a social construct rather than an essential aspect of being, Seshadri-Crooks links its persistence to the regime of looking that is governed by the “inaugural signifier.” According to the author, this master signifier determines the structure of human relations and difference through inclusion and exclusion. The author argues that the symbolic order governs the manner in which differences are perceived in the visual field because one must “believe in the factuality of difference in order to see it….” Thus, when an individual goes looking for racial difference, the superficial and predetermined differences in appearance and behavior may lead an individual to believe that they have seen race. They only see the difference, according to Seshadri-Crooks, by referring back to the master signifier—Whiteness. In societies divided by difference, as Seshadri-Crooks postulates, these superficial racial codes promise mastery, certainty, and the assurance of wholeness that “undifferentiated” subjectivity might otherwise threaten. Therefore, as the author concludes, the concept of difference in superficial racial codes persists because they promise wholeness and alleviate anxieties of similarity.

By suggesting that subjectivity is governed by the master signifier, “Whiteness,” and perceived differences from it, Seshadri-Crooks indicates that an individual’s identity is shaped by appearance located in the scopic field. Seshadri-Crooks’ insights rely

---

69 Ibid., 5-8.
70 Ibid., 5.
71 Seshadri-Crooks notes “…the so-called pre-discursive marks on the body (hair, skin, bone)... serve as the desiderata of race.” Ibid., 8.
72 Ibid., 7.
73 Ibid., 20.
heavily on the example set by Frantz Fanon, who first ascertained the value of psychoanalysis for discussions of race. In *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon applied Lacan’s theories to issues of perceived racial differences and historicized the condition of racism by pointing out that the Black, colonized Antillean man was alienated from the White, French culture. Fanon’s theories of subject formation suggest that a Black man’s interaction with the Other conditions his subjectivity based upon his appearance, or his “bodily schema.”

Born in the French Antilles, Fanon moved to France to join the army where he served during World War II. After his tour ended, he remained in Lyon to study medicine and psychiatry. While there, in 1952, he wrote *Black Skin White Masks*. In this book, which was translated into English in 1967 and excerpts of which were printed in *Negro Digest (Black World)* in the late 1960s, Fanon assessed the condition of the alienated Black man in White, French culture. He theorized that Black-White relations structure the Black man’s relationship to the world based on visual appearances and economics. According to Fanon, this regime of looking informs the Black man’s understanding of himself. This formation occurs when the White man constructs the Black man’s identity based on his bodily schema and the Black man, in turn, internalizes the White man’s ideas about his identity. This internalization or what Fanon called “epidermalization” produces feeling of inferiority, lack, and alienation.

---

75 Ibid., 110.
77 Fanon, “Introduction,” in *Black Skin White Masks*, 11.
It is in the fifth chapter, “The Fact of Blackness,” that Fanon offered his most vivid description of this dynamic. While riding a train, Fanon encountered a young French child who was frightened by his appearance. The child’s exclamation, which he shared with his mother and others on the train, left Fanon feeling as though he was judged and made to feel inferior because of perceived differences. For Fanon this encounter illustrated that the White Other deduced ideas about Black subjectivity based on his “racial epidermal schema.” During this encounter Fanon observed that he was being “dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes.” This incident forced the realization that the Other had “objectively cut away slices” of his “reality.” When the Other finished dissecting Fanon’s existence, he felt crushed and fixed into an idea of what he was and represented. He remarked, “my body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning.… This exchange led Fanon to believe that he had been reduced to an object, denied his subjectivity, and equated with all those who came before him and who shared these perceived similar physical traits. Fanon observed, “I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics…”

---

79 Ibid., 112.
80 Ibid., 116
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 113.
83 Ibid.
As a result of this experience, Fanon’s subjectivity became dislocated, and this split forced him to retreat to a place “far off from...[his] own presence” where he felt reduced to “an object.”

Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others. Their attention was a liberation, running over my body suddenly abraded into nonbeing, endowing me once more with an agility that I had thought lost, and by taking me out of the world, restoring me to it. But just as I reached the other side, I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put back together again by another self.

This vivid description summarizes “epidermalization,” the process by which Fanon was made to feel inferior based on the color of his skin. His description suggests that he sought meaning in the Other beyond his being, but the moment he found freedom there and hoped to identify with the Other, he was returned to himself in fragments. He realized this return was conditioned by the gaze of the Other, because it “fixed” him as a signifier based on his corporeal schema. This knowledge, Fanon suggested, made him aware of himself in three parts; he was made aware of his being, his existence in relation to the Other, and the concept of himself conditioned by the Other. For Fanon, the world was White and it “barred” him “from all participation” in society because of perceived differences from the gaze of the Other. This regime of looking fragmented and split Fanon’s identity. As he put those fragments back together, his subjectivity fluctuated between the two realms, between self (being) and Other (meaning). Without being able to

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 109.
86 Ibid., 111-114.
rest in either one, the subject vacillated between the two and thus existed in the gap between being and meaning; it is the space that Lacan referred to as the “vel of alienation.”

Lacan noted that the subject becomes alienated when s/he seeks to exist as either being or meaning but fails to fully assimilate to either one. Lacan explained, when we exist as being, “the subject disappears, it eludes us, it falls into non-meaning.” If we seek existence in meaning, “The meaning survives only deprived of that part of non-meaning that is strictly speaking that which constitutes the realization of the subject, the unconscious.” Since an individual can never be fully present in either one, s/he is fated to exist between the two. When the subject vacillates between them, s/he is always displaced and thus alienated.

Lacan, as Seshadri-Crooks has pointed out, neglected that this condition of alienation differs for Black men and women. Fanon alluded to this reality when he stated that the subject vacillated between self and Other because the gaze of the White Other determined his subjectivity based on appearance. Thus, the gaze of the Other conditions the “vel” of alienation for Black men and women. While Lacan suggested that all individuals endure this suspension and alienation because they are caught between the self and Other, Fanon’s theories, as well as those of more recent scholars, indicate that this condition is not uniform.

---

88 Ibid., 211.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 210-212.
Fanon’s description of alienation plays out in *Back to Black*. As we have seen, Hammons demonstrated that signs suggest the constructed nature of Blackness. At the same time, they also speak to the condition of alienation that occurred in an encounter between Black artists and the institution of art because of perceived “natural” differences. Traditionally, Black artists have been excluded from art historical traditions and institutions, and this exclusion was tied to appearance and other signs of identity. By transferring signs of his body into those that signify Blackness and the Canon, Hammons pointed to the notion that these signs of perceived difference led to alienation. Suspension, fading, and fragmentation specifically demonstrate this condition.

By joining Canonical, iconic forms to signifiers of Blackness in *Back to Black* rather than allowing one to fully form the subject, Hammons demonstrated that a subject is conditioned by both and suspended between them. The symbolic language of the Canon of proportions, or the Other, informs the subject in this print and gives shape to it. The indices mark the presence of a real body, but they morph into codes for Blackness; thus it is a specific being to which Hammons’ impression alludes. Since the subject retains signs of Blackness, he does not become fully assimilated into the Canon. Yet he cannot remain only as a being because some aspect of the art historical language informs his subjectivity. Since the indices of the artist’s body are as apparent as the symbols of art’s traditional forms, they struggle for dominance. In the end, neither one completely wins. *Back to Black* portrays the subject as suspended between being, which as evident in the bodily indices, and meaning, located in the Other of Canonical law. In other words, the vacillation between being and meaning does not allow the subject to rest in either one. As such the subject remains suspended between the two.
By including traces of being and meaning, this print suggests that a subject exists as a person split or fragmented because s/he can always only find a portion of the symbolic in the real of their being, and vice versa. More specifically, this print suggests that for the Black artist, fragmentation takes place on the body as the Other’s gaze fixes the subject like a “chemical solution is fixed by a dye.” Here the dissected, flattened subject appears to be but a trace of his full self; therefore, the color and form suggest the destruction that occurs during biased exchanges. The body’s fragmented form underscores this idea. *Back to Black* points to a reality faced by African-American artists in art history’s traditions. Artists were often alienated from the signifying structure based on their corporeal schema and perceived differences.

The print also enacts the condition of “fading” that occurs when the subject seeks to exist as either being or meaning. Lacan pointed out that when an individual seeks to exist as meaning, some part of the subject disappears, and if meaning is chosen, then the real of the subject exists elsewhere as “fading,” as disappearance.\(^9^1\) This condition is apparent in *Back to Black* as the image in the body print looks like a shadow. It speaks to the condition that occurs during biased exchanges when figures are reduced to a mere shadow of their full identity. Here the ghostly figure fades under the gaze of the Canon. In a sense then, the print stages the way that an individual may fade away when he seeks existence with the Other. By employing an index of the body, Hammons also referred to the notion of fading as it marks the real disappearance of a bodily presence.

Fading, fragmentation, and suspension all describe the condition of alienation. While alienation affects every subject, *Back to Black* indicates that alienation for the

---

Black artist is compounded by the way the Other of the art historical Canon has excluded an artist because of his bodily schema. By joining meaning to being and giving both a degree of autonomy, Hammons’ body print demonstrates that the subject becomes alienated when the self seeks meaning in the Other. It unveils the way that Black artists have been sealed into a “crushing objecthood” based on the way that voices of authority have judged signifiers of their identity. As Fanon noted, these judgments have often forced feelings of inferiority.

This process of “epidermalization” led to alienation from the Canon, and consequently, the traditional signifying structure has been devoid of difference. When Hammons juxtaposed signifiers of Polykleitos’ ideal form next to signifiers of an ideal empowered Black figure, he threw difference into relief. While this union drew attention to difference and constructed ideal forms, it also pointed to a lack of Black presence in the Canon. By bringing together signifiers of Blackness with signifiers of the ideal, Hammons’ print screams of an ethnicity that has traditionally been omitted from the art historical conventions.

This exclusion seems even more evident when compared to Robert Rauschenberg’s and Susan Weil’s bodyprints. The artists created life-size bodily indices by pressing against blueprint paper. In Sue, 1950 (fig. 108), for example, Weil pushed her body onto the paper, and those areas covered by her body, clothing, and props remained white when exposed to light, while the uncovered areas turned blue. The result is an image in which the index transforms into an icon of a female portrait. It seamlessly fits into that traditional because the sign assumes the naturalness of whiteness rather than
dramatizing it; this condition is exactly what the sign in Hammons’ print insists upon in order to gain a presence in those traditions.

Although *Back to Black* stages the alienation that Black artists experienced in the face of art history’s signifying structure, it also speaks to the reality within its institutions. By the late 1960s various Black artists and organizations were calling for representation and inclusion in museum exhibitions and collections.\(^{92}\) For example, the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (B.E.C.C.), in 1969, asked The Metropolitan Museum of Art to add an African-American co-curator and modern artists to the exhibition *Harlem on My Mind*.\(^ {93}\) In California-based organization Art West Associated, run in San Francisco by the artist E.J. Montgomery and run in Los Angeles by Ruth Waddy, sought recognition of African-American art and artists through exhibitions and other art related programs.\(^ {94}\) Although, as Mary Schmidt Campbell has noted, exhibitions of work by African-American artists were on the rise in the late 1960s, the installations were often

---

poorly installed and inadequately curated. These organizations offered the means to combat that deficiency.

In southern California, the Black Arts Council (BAC) sought to generate exhibition “opportunities for artists” while “stimulating and creating an audience base within the black community as well as the community at large.” Although artists of BAC first met in churches, Suzanne Jackson’s Gallery 32 became the regular meeting place. The BAC, headed by Claude Booker, organized protests against museums and galleries that neglected or refused to show work by African-American artists. They curated exhibitions in banks including the Security Pacific Bank, at the Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino, and at shopping centers.

The BAC, as Outterbridge noted, became a “very, very important organization in Los Angeles, extremely important” because artists found themselves “confronting major

98 In a 1996 interview, Ferguson noted that Security Pacific Bank agreed to show work of African-American artists, including the work of David Hammons. They built walls and hung thirty to thirty-five pieces. When the bank administration viewed the installation they had a problem with Hammons’ Pray for America. They asked that it be replaced, but the BAC refused and threatened to picket the bank. Ferguson stated they would say “this little organization, the Black Arts Council, is trying to do something with race relations, and you, being a big old bank, you’re persecuting them.” The bank relented and agreed to let the exhibition remain as it was. The BAC showed at other banks, and only had one other major problem in Newport Beach. In both instances, Ferguson intimated that the issues concerned the use of the American flag in various works of art. Cecil Ferguson, interview by Karen Ann Mason, “African-American Artists of Los Angeles: Cecil Ferguson, Volume I,” 215-216.
institutions.”

99 Hammons, as Cecil Ferguson and Suzanne Jackson have noted, was very involved in this organization. According to Ferguson, Hammons “approached universities [for exhibitions] because that’s where the young and supposedly liberal people were.”

100 The organization hoped to represent and draw attention to works that African-American artists produced. The exhibitions and press coverage of the shows, the organization believed, would rectify the neglect of those artists who had been overlooked for inclusion in mainstream art institutions.

101 In light of the disregard that Black artists and their work suffered, Hammons may have chosen to reference art historical iconography and signs of Blackness in Back to Black to dramatize the reality of alienation.

The poignancy of Hammons’ print lies in its ability to simultaneously support the Black aesthetic and to work through the condition of the Black subject as always split and alienated by art historical traditions and institutions. While the reworked signs in this print indicated that there is no such thing as an essential self because the individual is always alienated, this print also points to the notion that the gaze of the Other shapes subjectivity for Black artists based on bodily schema and perceived differences.


101 Ibid., 164.

102 Jackson stated “David Hammons was very innovative about putting up shows.” She also indicated that the BAC helped install shows in “shopping marts” and “banks, places that weren’t ready to have gallery exhibitions.” Suzanne Jackson, interview by Karen Anne Mason, “African-American Artists of Los Angeles: Suzanne Jackson,” Oral History Program University of California (Los Angeles, CA: The Regents of the University of California, 1998), 255.
Fanon’s terms this awareness “creates a real dialectic between…body and the world.” In other words, *Back to Black* works through the process of epidermalization and its capacity to fragment and alienate a subject from himself and his surroundings. In a sense, the body print stages the notion that the Other has traditionally turned its “Back to Black” artists and alienated them from art historical traditions based on perceived differences.

Fanon’s and Lacan’s descriptions of alienation informs other body prints, including *Black Boy’s Window*, (fig. 94). To create this print Hammons transferred a body print to silkscreen. He then reproduced this bodily impression onto panes of glass that he had removed from a window frame from a local residence. After the artist fixed the silkscreen on the glass, he reassembled the window, putting the panes back into the wooden frame, refastening the security bar, and remounting the window shade. In this work the body spreads out into a flat expanse of black ink. The truncated form includes the torso, legs, head and handprints placed to the right and left of his forehead. This abstracted, planed form contrasts with the worn, rutted quality of the found materials in the frame. Hammons exploited reproduction, a found window frame, and distortion to dramatize the concept of alienation perceived in a “Black Boy’s Window.”

Since the figure appears flattened and squashed up against the glass, it is difficult to ascertain the subject’s position in relation to the window. With his hands placed on either side of his forehead, the figure could be leaning against the glass and peering through it to the interior beyond; this would place him outside the window and the viewer

---

103 It is, as Hammons pointed out, the same body print used for *The Door (Admission’s Office)* (fig. 109). David Hammons, interview by Jennifer Noonan, March 2006.
104 David Hammons, interview by Jennifer Noonan, March 2006.
105 During a telephone conversation, Hammons stated that he cut panes of glass from a window frame but when he finished transferring the silkscreen he had to reassemble the window. David Hammons, interview by Jennifer Noonan, March 2006.
inside the window looking out at him. In an essay that describes the dialogue that Hammons’ print shared with Betye Saar’s *Black Girl’s Window* 1969 (fig. 110), Kellie Jones argues that the body’s hands are raised either banging for entry or held high in a posture of surrender (‘no, I don’t have a gun.’).\(^{106}\) The shade, in Jones’ estimation, could be pulled down to “shut out what was going on with African America” at the end of the 1960s.\(^{107}\) This reading places the body outside the window. The position of the body also refers, according to Jones, to a space that is “separate but equal, or even…jail,” because the metal bar stretching across the window and over the figure “accentuates both exclusion and containment.”\(^{108}\) If the figure is located outside, he might have been caught before entering and pressed up against the surface for frisking.

Conversely, the boy might be looking out from the window to the world beyond. He could be pressing his body against the glass trying to see the reality outside his window. Perhaps the bar that spans across the body is meant to restrain the body, to keep him from going beyond the window. It may be a security device that prevents the boy from falling out of the window or it might be a means to prevent an escape. Linda Goode-Bryant, in one of the earliest and most extensive descriptions of the artist’s body prints, has argued that the vertical figure set against the horizontal drag of the bars and the shade

---

\(^{106}\) Kellie Jones, “Brothers & Sisters,” in *Back to Black: Art, Cinema, and Racial Imaginary*, ed. Richard Powell (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2005), 144. During a telephone conversation, David Hammons confirmed that Saar was his inspiration. Therefore, Saar’s print *Black Girl’s Window* must have been completed either before or produced while Hammons was creating *Black Boy’s Window*. David Hammons, interview by Jennifer Noonan, March 2006.


\(^{108}\) Ibid.
create a tension that accentuates “the imprisonment of the figure.” The art historian argued that Hammons’ print represents a figure that is constrained.

In that same text, Goode-Bryant observed that the artist employed “material remains” such as ink, chalk and grease to create this image. These remains refer to the substance left over from an earlier act, so that the body in action left remains of its presence on the glass. Since the figure is fragmented and a sliver of the whole body, it seems to be a sample, or more specifically, a specimen sliced from a larger entity and placed on a glass slide to be scrutinized. Such scientific study should unveil the truth about the “Black Boy’s Window.”

In all three scenarios, the transparency of the window promises unfettered access to the truth. Each reading posits that there is singular, unfettered truth to be glimpsed beyond the glass. Indeed the transparency of glass and its ability to provide a true picture of a three-dimensional world has been used by artists for hundreds of years. As far back as the fifteenth century, painters have conceived of the picture plane as a window onto the world, and using orthogonal lines receding to a vanishing point, they have produced a three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. It would seem that the glass in Black Boy’s Window operates in a similar manner. The title, the window, and the presence of a boy promise a full and unified image of the “Black Boy’s” world and his existence, and yet such a reality fails to materialize.

The window in Hammons’ print does not provide a glimpse into a three-dimensional world where the figure exists as a total, whole being. The absence of

110 Ibid., 39-40.
traditional perspective, depth, and shading produces a two-dimensional trace that alludes to the once present three-dimensional being. The flattened figure on the window suggests that certain individuals were denied their full subjectivity. Paradoxically, Hammons’ use of the window and the remains lets viewers see that which escapes from vision and that which cannot be glimpsed through this art historical window.

The apparition in black pigment that covers almost all of the windowpane refers to the psychic space of the “Black Boy’s” three-dimensional world. The forms and reproduction used in Black Boy’s Window structure and investigate the condition of being for the “Black Boy.” It is an existence informed by the remainder left over from the interaction between the subject and another entity. The silkscreened remains here may be viewed according to Lacan’s notion of the remainder.

As we have seen, Lacan noted that a remainder is the residue that marks the point of contact between the subject and the Other. When the subject projects his/her desires onto the Other, the Other reflects back onto the subject and inflicts its authority or laws on the subject. The introduction of the Other—its laws, authority, or presence—into the subject leaves its trace. This trace is the remainder in the subject that is leftover from the absent Other, and it indicates that the subject’s projected desires can never be totally fulfilled. What remains describes a subject as lack or as a subject of unfilled desire.

In this print, the Other captures the Black subject in its gaze and flattens its identity. Since the figure in Black Boy’s Window is compressed, distorted, and reduced to a color that recalls the corporeal schema of the Black boy, it compacts into a mere shadow of a discrete subject. Hammons’ manipulation of color, form, and process activates the mechanism of the gaze of the Other to indicate the way that it denies the
subject wholeness and leaves him split and alienated. As Fanon pointed out, the gaze for the Black man belongs to the realm of the White world, and through this realm the Black man comes into being.\textsuperscript{112} Pulled apart and examined “under white eyes, the only real eyes,” as Fanon observed, the racial Other “cuts away slices of” the Black man’s “reality.”\textsuperscript{113} As a result, the body was given back “sprawled out, distorted, clad in mourning.”\textsuperscript{114} The prejudice he felt during this encounter forced a realization that his acceptance in society depended upon the perceptions of the Other. This conditional existence, according to Fanon, “barred” him “from all participation.”\textsuperscript{115} The form in \textit{Black Boy’s Window} marks the introduction of the gaze of the Other into the “Black Boy’s” body. As a result, the alienating presence of the Other renders the subject incomplete and fragmented.

The silkscreen process further unveils this condition of alienation because it shows the subject as lacking and split. When the artist transferred an image of his body onto the screen for reproduction, he removed an aspect of his presence. His being was further removed again through reproduction. Even though the ink that made it through the screen refers to this presence, traces of his real body were blocked because they were not present during the process. Reproduction, therefore, marks the subject as lacking a real, complete presence. Since the silkscreen process split the subject, once for this print and another time for \textit{Admission’s Door}, it also marks the self as alienated from himself and the Other. The flattened and sliced form manifests Fanon’s notion that the Black subject

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{112} Fanon, 116.  \\
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 113.  \\
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 112-114.
\end{flushright}
fragments under the gaze of the White Other. The bar in this print underscores this condition.

This process of being “barred...from all participation” and of having one’s being “crushed,” “sprawled out,” and “distorted” materializes in Black Boy’s Window. The optical distortion hints at a whole body rather than represents one. If Hammons had utilized linear perspective, he may have created a trompe l’oeil effect that produced a total subject. Instead he exploited the barred, distorted image to foreground the gaze of the White Other and its ability, through the regime of looking, to “bar” Black individuals from all participation in society. The bar that blocks the flattened subject stages this condition of subjectivity. Hammons’ print may be interpreted as illustrating the condition under which the Black subject in the late 1960s was “barred” from “full participation” in society based on his corporeal schema. More specifically, the material and process here refers to the condition of alienation that “Black Boys” experienced when seeking a presence in homes and communities that have these windows.

The bar and window in Black Boy’s Window resemble those bars in middle-class communities and lower-middle class communities that use them as security devices to prevent unwanted intruders from entering the home (fig. 111). Since Hammons obtained it from a local residence it probably came from a neighborhood south of Los Angeles where he lived and worked. Hammons’ studio along Slauson Avenue was located in a South Central neighborhood in Los Angeles. During the 1960s, it was a neighborhood of great change as the middle class fled to Compton, located south of Watts, and Leimart Park/Crenshaw, located to the west. Many individuals left South Central after the Watts Riots and when manufacturing companies moved to other counties for tax breaks and
to expand their business.\textsuperscript{116} In the later 1960s, still more people fled Compton for Leimart Park/Crenshaw, West Adams, and Baldwin Hills because the community offered better transportation, shopping, school systems, and a higher standard of living.\textsuperscript{117} For example, almost sixty percent of African Americans who were living in Baldwin Hills in 1970 had lived in the area centrally located south of Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{118}

With the flight of wealthier individuals and manufacturing jobs, the neighborhoods in South Central and Watts deteriorated. Crime rose and the tax base declined because a majority of the population was either underage or unemployed.\textsuperscript{119} This change adversely affected the city’s infrastructure, because potential business and retail stores would not open and others closed.\textsuperscript{120} Those individuals who remained battled crime, poverty, and the deteriorating condition in the school systems. In neighborhoods where such conditions existed, as well as in those wealthier, neighboring communities, the need to ensure safety required security devices such as the bar in Hammons’ work. Since he acquired it from a local residence, it probably was taken from these neighborhoods that experienced shifting demographics. The bar also describes these communities because they are functional and yet they are often arranged into a pleasing design to lessen the unsightliness of the grills. The arrangement of the bars in a decorative pattern in \textit{Black Boy’s Window} speaks to the desire for beauty in a necessary security device.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 189-193.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 190.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 182.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 183.
\end{flushleft}
Since these sorts of bars appear on homes within specific socio-economic strata, they refer to the homes and neighborhoods to which many individuals desired full access and presence but were denied because of their ethnicity. In *Black Boy’s Window* the “Black Boy” contacts this domestic space as he presses his body against the window; this window represents the realm of the Other onto which “Black Boys” projected their desire for representation. Rather than being granted full subjectivity or becoming a whole being, the subject became flattened during that encounter. This print dramatizes the way that the Other denied “Black Boys” unfettered access into homes within a lower- and middle-class communities. The materials refer to the way that the Other “barred” them from living in certain places based on their corporeal schema. The print even more specifically refers to the social changes taking place in the housing market.

When Hammons created this print, participants in the Civil Rights movement sought changes in all sectors of life, including the desegregation of neighborhoods. In southern California during the 1960s, housing was a particularly volatile and divisive issue. The year before Hammons moved to California, the state legislature passed the Rumford Fair-Housing Act, which declared discrimination in housing to be illegal. A year later in 1964, however, the California Housing Association—formed from the

---

combined forces of the California Real Estate Association and the California Apartment Owners’ Association—mounted a campaign to repeal the law. With the help of assemblymen, senators, and many California residents, they pushed forward an initiative, known popularly as Proposition 14, that sought to allow home and apartment owners the freedom to choose who could buy and/or rent their property. After an acrimonious fight—fed on both sides by billboards, television commercials, newspaper ads, radio announcements, and bumper stickers that read “No on 14” or “Yes on 14”—the voters supported the Proposition. With a majority vote, the Rumford act was repealed and Californians were allowed, once again, to maintain segregated neighborhoods.

After state residents voted in 1965 to rescind the Rumford Fair-Housing Act, feelings of injustice and despair pervaded many of the poor neighborhoods south of Los Angeles where overcrowding and substandard living conditions were a constant reality. Some scholars have suggested that the repeal fueled resentment and may have contributed to the riots that took place less than a year later in Watts, a suburb of Los Angeles. Historian Thomas Casstevens, for example, noted that a report from the Governor’s Commission on the Los Angeles Riots of 1965 suggested that many “African Americans ‘felt that they had been affronted by the passage of Proposition 14’ and although it many not have been ‘one of the fundamental causes…[it] was one of the

122 Casstevens, Politics, Housing, and Race Relations: California’s Rumford Act and Proposition 14, 48.
123 Ibid., 49-67.
124 Ibid., 65. Cars with “No on 14” or “Yes on 14” that were parked in certain areas were subject to having their tires slashed. Ibid., 53.
125 Ibid., 81.
126 Ibid., 83. The historian Rudolph Lapp also suggested that housing issues fueled the Watts Rebellion and he noted that the Rumsford Act was one of California’s most controversial political campaign issues in 1967. See Rudolph Lapp, Afro-American in California (San Francisco, CA: Boyd & Fraser Publishing Company)
aggravating events that led to the Watts Rebellion.”

In an interview with the Richard Cándida Smith, Outterbridge described the effects that Proposition 14 had on the Black community noting, “the turbulence had some impact on the event that I participated in later right here in the community in an open field after the revolt [in Watts], when we started working with people like Jim Woods, who had housing at the top of his agenda.”

Jim Woods and Guy Miller co-founded the Studio Watts Workshop in 1964. The Workshop was located on 103rd Street and Grandee in southeast Los Angeles, and although mostly known for its work within the arts community, it also attended to broader social and economic problems. In the late 1960s, the Watts Community Housing Corporation emerged from the Studio Watts Program. With a grant from the City of Los Angeles and federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Watts Community Housing Corporation funded the building of more than a hundred

---

127 Casstevens, Politics, Housing, and Race Relations: California’s Rumford Act and Proposition 14, 83-84.
130 Curtis. See also Sides, 185-189.
homes and granted money to arts programs.\textsuperscript{131} Due to bureaucratic changes in 1967, HUD restructured the grant and Watts lost some of its funding.\textsuperscript{132}

The same year the Watts Housing Corporation lost federal funds, the California Supreme Court overturned Proposition 14, reinstated the Rumford Fair-Housing Act, and ended legal discrimination.\textsuperscript{133} Almost immediately after the ruling, protest mounted. With the newly elected Republican Governor, Ronald Reagan, behind the effort to overturn the state Supreme Court’s decision—the governor stated that he would accept a bill modifying the Rumford act and would “certainly not object to an outright repeal”—the California senate proposed legislation to repeal the Rumford Act.\textsuperscript{134} Nevertheless, a month later in May of 1967, the United States Supreme Court upheld the California Supreme Court’s decision that repealed Proposition 14.\textsuperscript{135}

Housing and discrimination issues like those taking place in California were addressed on the national level a year later, in 1968, when the Fair-Housing Act was amended to the Civil Rights Bill. Although these acts attempted to redress the nationwide problem of discrimination, it seems that trouble persisted. For example, the legal scholar Deborah Kemp has noted that problems continued because HUD oversaw the application of the Fair Housing Act without the authority or the resources to enforce the act.\textsuperscript{136}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Although the Watts Community Housing Corporation lost financial support from the government, it looked to private sources for support in order to continue to serve those in need of housing.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Casstevens, \textit{Politics, Housing, and Race Relations: California’s Rumford Act and Proposition 14}, 83.
\item \textsuperscript{134} Casstevens, “California’s Rumford Act and Proposition 14,” in \textit{The Politics of Fair-Housing Legislation}, 283-284.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 284.
\end{itemize}
scholar also points out that property owners and real estate agents used techniques such as “blockbusting,” “steering,” and “tipping” to control neighborhood demographics. ¹³⁷ Since these practices were not technically illegal, HUD could not intervene. As a result of these practices by realtors, landlords, and mortgage lenders, according to Kemp, African Americans continued to face unfair treatment into the 1970s. ¹³⁸ In these subtle ways, segregation was still being practiced at the end of the 1960s when Hammons’ created Black Boy’s Window. The distorted and flattened bodily impression speaks to this situation.

The forms in Black Boy’s Window describe the condition of alienation that resulted when the “Black Boy” encountered the Other who controlled housing laws. The figure contacts this domestic space as he presses his body up against the window, which was controlled by the authority of the Other. This subject came into being when he articulated his desire to be present and recognized by the legal authority of the Other. The point of contact between the “Black Boy” and housing laws takes shape in the remainder that structures the form in Black Boy’s Window. The joining of the two produced a subject that is split, distorted and fragmented because the Other’s laws did not fully represent the subject. The contact denied the subject his full presence and precluded the condition of a whole subject in relation to the Other. Here the Black Boy’s subjectivity became squashed and “sealed into that crushing objecthood” during this encounter and under the gaze of the Other. The distorted subject participates in crafting this condition.

This print process further alludes to the housing conditions in which many African Americans projected their desire for acceptance and affiliation within these

¹³⁷ Ibid., 333-343.
¹³⁸ Ibid. See also Sides, 192-193.
communities and yet were denied. The absence of fulfilled desire and the inability to be fully present materializes in reproduction. Through the reproductive process the subject’s presence evaporated, and those traces that remained split into many parts. By dividing the subject into parts, the print process furthers the notion that the subject under the gaze of the Other lacks full subjectivity. Coupled with the content, the form manifests the “Black Boy’s” existence as that which is dispersed through an encounter with the Other that controls his environment. The remains that shape the “Black Boy’s” body in this print may interpreted, therefore, as the remainder that was left behind when the subject projected his desire for and was denied entrance into a home attached to such a window. Black Boy’s Window, then, maps the psychic space of the “Black Boy’s” world as it was disjointed in the late 1960s by the alienating presence of Other who set the housing rules.

In another group of prints that include a direct impression pulled from Hammons’ body and a silkscreened image of the American flag, the artist exploited the difference between the index and the icon to demonstrate the condition of alienation. Of the numerous prints that include a silkscreen of the American flag and a body print, America the Beautiful, 1968/69 (fig. 93) speaks to this condition. To create this print Hammons first pressed his body on the paper’s surface and then set a silk-screen of the American flag around the impression. He explained the process to Joseph Young, noting “I

---

139 Boy with Flag, 1968, (fig. 148); Untitled, (Man With Flag), n.d., (fig. 149); America the Beautiful, 1968, (fig. 150); Untitled (Man with Flag), n.d., (fig. 151); Black First America Second, 1970, (fig. 152); Untitled (Body Print), 1975, (fig. 153).
140 David Hammons, interview by Jennifer Noonan, March 2006. In other Body prints Hammons combined Body prints and silkscreen: A Cry From Inside, 1969, (fig. 154); Close Your Eyes and See Black, c. 1970, (fig. 155); Close Your Eyes and See Black, c. 1970, (fig. 156); Ragged Spirit, 1974, (fig. 157); Untitled (Body Print), 1973, (fig. 158); Mop Series I, 1976, (fig. 159); Waiting, 1974, (fig. 160); Caution, (fig. 161); Couple, 1970, (fig. 162).
always do the ‘body print’ first. Then I decide where the image of the flag will be. I must print in this sequence because the ‘body print’ technique is so uncertain as to how it will actually turn out.”

This statement indicates that the production of the index is less stable than the icon. By combing the two techniques, Hammons produced an index of his body shrouded by an American flag.

Since this icon covers the figure, it appears to be a mantle. While it physically shields the figure, it also functions symbolically alluding to the promise of protection and equality to those under its cover. The flag and everything it represents operated as a potent symbol in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Outterbridge alluded to this idea, noting “A sense of belonging to the history of America was what we all wore as garment. The struggle to make America live up to its creed was what we believed in. It was very painful and very exciting all at the same time.”

Outterbridge’s statement and Hammons’ print indicate that artists sought to work through the notion of protection and equality that the flag guaranteed.

When Hammons created this print, not all Americans enjoyed equal protection. The rights of many Americans—and particularly African-Americans and Latino-Americans—were often neglected. Individuals were often denied equal access to housing, education, jobs and health care. Although the American flag is a coded sign

---

indicating equal opportunities, many believed that egalitarianism did not exist in the late 1960s. By layering an icon upon an index, Hammons alluded to the lack of protection. The artist compounded the sting by illustrating the violent condition of fading brought on by the Other.

The subject fades, according to Lacan’s theories, when a single signifier is extracted from the realm of the Other and applied to the subject. If one word, notion, or image fixes the subject, his full subjectivity evaporates. This diminution “petrifies” the subject. If the subject becomes petrified, part of him/her fades away. Lacan labeled this lethal fading of the subject *aphanisis*. It refers to the annihilation of the subject. This condition of fading materializes in *America the Beautiful*, because the subject under the flag seems to be disappearing.

The index that defines the subject appears much less substantial than the icon. While the impression is dark in some areas, it appears gray in many areas and in still other areas it is colorless. When it is compared to the large, colorful, and evenly saturated flag, the subject appears to be fading. Within the American social and legal structure many individuals’ identities were fixed according to perceived signs of difference, namely their skin color. Using this sign to assess these individuals effectively petrified them into a signifier; it reduced them into an object, denied them a portion of their subjectivity. As a result, an aspect of their identity faded. In Hammons’ print, it is possible to see the subject fading under this system. The annihilation of individual results from the signifying structure of the Other denoted here in the flag. Rather than offering protection, the flag in this print speaks to the violence done to African Americans in the

---

late 1960s. This fading of subjectivity also materializes in *American Hang Up*, c. 1968/69 (fig. 112).

In this body print Hammons’ also joined an index of his body to an icon of the American flag. Although the American flag symbolizes freedom and liberties guaranteed under the judicial system, in this print the flag strangles the body of subject. Since the icon forms a noose from which the index hangs, Hammons’ image suggests a very real violence visited upon the Black subject often at the hands of the White Other. The flag and the subject allude to a different type of justice, and specifically it describes a system of injustice or the practice of lynching.

There is a long history of lynching in America. The decision of whom to lynch by its very nature had nothing to do with justice. The practice was based on signs of difference—one’s skin color—and perceived crimes. As the historian Philip Dray has noted, this renegade style of justice was usually visited upon Black people.145 In this system, mobs became vigilantes. These individuals operated outside the law and broke many of them to the detriment of others, and yet they were the ones protected by the American judicial system. The legality of this practice persisted until 1968 when President Johnson added an anti-lynching amendment to the Civil Rights Bill.146 By

---

146 Dray. The amendment was added just one year after federal prosecutors tried members of the Ku Klux Klan for the 1964 lynching of three Civil Rights workers in Mississippi. In the Summer of Freedom, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner traveled to the South to help register voters. While there they went to investigate the burning of a black church and were arrested on trumped up charges. After dark, the arresting sheriff released the three men and they were met by KKK, who beat and murdered them. Three years later, federal prosecutors tried several men; some were acquitted, others received probation, and nobody served more than six years for the crime. Known as the “Mississippi Burning Trial,” the national press coverage suggested
allowing this type of vigilante justice to occur, the United States government neglected individuals’ civil rights and in the process inflicted violence upon many.

Hammons’ manipulation of signs in *American Hang Up* suggests this violence. Here, as in *America the Beautiful*, the subject fades when it is reduced to a signifier by the Other. The flag made into a noose alludes to the White Others who lynched African Americans. As the icon twists around the neck of the indexed presence it suggests encounters between the White Other and the Black subject in which the Other became hung up on the signifier of skin color, could not see beyond it, and reduced the subject into single signifier. By reducing the man to a signifier based on skin color, the Other denied and strangled the man’s subjecthood, doing real violence to his existence.

Hammons’ *American Hang Up* spotlights this problem, this American hang-up. The figure, here, is subjected to violence.

The powerful punch that the flag packs in Hammons’ early prints has not gone unnoticed by scholars. For example, Kellie Jones has suggested that the American flag stands as a “symbol of America’s unkept promises to, and violence against, African Americans.” Writing about the widely discussed and exhibited *Injustice Case* (fig. 113), Dawoud Bey states that the American flag and bound figure recall the “bounding and gagging of Black Panther leader Bobby Seale in the court of Julius Hoffman during the Chicago Eight trial. Bordered by the stars and bars of the American flag, the piece

---

becomes an indictment of the legal system, that would allow a man to be bound and gagged in a court of law.” 148

In addition, Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins and Cecil Ferguson have suggested that “use of the flag as a symbol of discontent in America found wide use among Afro-Americans of this period. Artists like Hammons…used it to voice their feeling for a society that was alienating a segment of its population through neglect and a general view of that population is invisible.” 149 In a post-modern analysis, Powell argues that Hammons’ print indicated and foreshadowed his preoccupation with “himself as a validating and authenticating artistic vehicle.” 150 Powell points out that Hammons’ use of himself and the flag in Injustice Case addressed “this idea of self-definition, in terms of national identity (for example, being a black American), and in terms of an identity based on a view of one's self as a victim of government-sanctioned disenfranchisement and political oppression.” 151 Powell surmises that Hammons’ work was distinctive from other race conscious and politically charged because his work included the “pervasive, uncanny blend of self-referencing and culture-referencing.” 152

149 Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins and Cecil Ferguson, 19 Sixties A Cultural Awakening Re-Evaluated 1965-1975 (Los Angeles, CA: California Afro American Museum Foundation, 1989), 16. In addition, LeFalle-Collins and Ferguson have also observed that the flag in Pray for America represents “a system closing in on this man, further binding him…. We see an American dream gone sour.” LeFalle-Collins and Ferguson, 16. Also, Dan Cameron has noted, “Hammons’ first works…turned the symbolism of the American flag against itself in a critical manner.” See Dan Cameron, “David Hammons: Coming in From the Cold,” Flash Art 26 (January-February 1991): 69.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid., 132.
While Hammons exploited the flag to say something about identity, the way that he shaped indices into icons suggests that he was not referencing his identity specifically but African-American subjectivity in general. By allowing the icon to describe the condition of Black subject under the gaze of the White Other, the artist worked through issues of subjectivity that developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The way that Hammons exploited signs and reproduction bears this out.

Hammons was not the only artist who used the flag to express discontent. Faith Ringgold used it in Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger Die, 1969 (fig. 114), the Boston-based artist Dana Chandler incorporated it as ironic statement Land of the Free, c. 1968 (fig. 115), and David Bradford employed it in Yes, Leori, c. 1969 (fig. 116). The flag was such a potent symbol and appeared in so many works of art that the Judson Church on 4th Street in Manhattan’s West Village created an exhibition about its presence in art in the “People’s Flag Show” in 1970 (fig. 117).

Organized by Faith Ringgold, Jean Toche, and John Hendricks, the show was mounted in response to and in a show of sympathy for Stephen Radich, a New York art dealer. He was convicted in 1967 of violating the state law that prohibits the desecration of the flag because he exhibited works that included manipulated American flags. A

---

155 “Judson Dance Theater—Flag Show 9/11/1970,” and “Judson Gallery—Flag Show Photographs,” Judson Memorial Church Archive, Box 4, Folder 50 and Box 16, Folder 81, Fales Library and Special Collections in the Elmer Holmes Bobst Library,
flyer for the People’s Flag Show declared that the intention was to “challenge the repressive laws governing so-called flag desecration.”\footnote{Glueck, 53. See also “People’s Flag Poster,” Judson Memorial Church Archive, Series A: Sub-series 4: Judson Gallery, Box 2 Folder 4, Fales Library and Special Collections in the Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University, New York.} Although the Federal Bureau of Investigation closed down the exhibition and arrested the three organizers charging them with damaging the flag, the installation generated a lot of attention and discussion.\footnote{Grace Glueck noted in an article about the show’s reception that Paul von Ringelheim, the individual who led the opening activities, stated that the works in the show demonstrated how artists were “not trying to test the laws, but to discuss them.” Glueck, “A Strange Assortment of Flags is Displayed at ‘People’s Show,’” \textit{New York Times} (November 10, 1970): 53. For information about the arrests see “3 Arrested in Raid on Flag Art Show,” \textit{New York Times} (November 14, 1970): 25; see also Grace Glueck “Flag-Show Case Aired by Panel,” \textit{New York Times} (December 1, 1970): 60; see also “Flag Show Artists Fined $100 Apiece,” \textit{New York Times} (May 25, 1971): 47. See also “Judson Dance Theater—Flag Show—Federal Suit: Legal Brief,” Judson Memorial Church Archive, Box 4, Folder 51, Fales Library and Special Collections in the Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University, New York.} At the exhibition opening, Abbie Hoffman, Kate Millett, among the other two hundred guests, expressed their views about the symbol. Millett, an advocate for women’s rights, stated, “the time for seeing a kind of whimsicality or absurdity in patriotic symbols had passed, because of how terrifying the American scene has become.”\footnote{Ibid.} The reception the show received and the works exhibited certainly represented the tenor of the times.

Outterbridge expressed a similar sentiment when he noted that the American government’s actions made him “think about…how hypocritical certain symbols were. Like the American flag, I mean, what did it really represent?”\footnote{John Outterbridge, interview by Richard Cándida Smith, “African-American Artists of Los Angeles: John Outterbridge, Volume I,” 242-243.} He addressed those issues in \textit{O Glory Redefined}, 1970 and \textit{Traditional Hang Up} (fig. 118). In both, the flag is
made of steel, so it is durable and thus a metaphor for the resilience of and hope in America. Yet the metal does not wave and below the flag in *Traditional Hang Up* heads roll. In both works of art, the artist exploited material to remind viewers of the violence visited upon African Americans when they sought equal rights.160

While Hammons’ use of the flag in *America the Beautiful* also investigates the icon’s significance, the title “America the Beautiful” furthers this probing. This song, which rivals the national anthem in popularity, speaks of brotherhood, liberty, and law. Yet brotherhood meant something different to each community; Americans in the late 1960s were not united in brotherhood. Hammons’ exploitation of the signs in *America the Beautiful* unpacks the contentious relationship between African Americans and European Americans. The juxtaposition of the index with the icon and symbol in this print dramatizes the condition of fading and the annihilation of African American subjectivity when petrified into a single signifier.161

Hammons’ manipulation of the signs was so stinging that institutions had a hard time acquiring and exhibiting some of the body prints that included the American flag. For example, Hammons’ *Pray for America*, 1970 (fig. 119), disturbed the Los Angeles County Museum of Art so much, according to Cecil Ferguson, that they “couldn’t bring themselves to buy it.”162 Instead, they purchased *Injustice Case*. Ferguson stated that the

---

160 For information about the work of John Outterbridge see *John Outterbridge: A Retrospective* (Los Angeles, CA: Afro-American Museum Foundation, 1994).
museum acquired it instead of *Pray for America* because “they could deal with it.”\(^{163}\) In light of Ferguson’s statements, it seems that the museum may have acquired *Injustice Case* instead of *Pray for America* because it represents a specific event in which an African American was treated unjustly. *Pray for America*, on the other hand, suggests the widespread problem of racism and alienation that requires that people “pray” for a change in America. This print may have been viewed as a banner championing the Civil Rights movement, and that may have presented a problem for the museum and its audience.\(^{164}\) The volatile issue at work in this print and in *America the Beautiful* is the condition of alienation. Hammons’ manipulation of indices and icons unveils the nature of subjectivity as it fades away or becomes petrified when reduced to a single sign by the Other.

Although Hammons continued to address issues of the subjectivity and the self’s relationship to the Other in the body prints, a shift materializes in his later prints. Beginning in the early 1970s, Hammons incorporated collage elements, color, and form drawn from African-American artistic traditions. A reflection of this material culture and conventions is obvious in the body print *Ebony Kiss*, 1974 (fig. 95).\(^{165}\) In order to create this print, Hammons impressed his body on a paper support, but he manipulated the

\(^{163}\) Ibid.

\(^{164}\) In another instance, Cecil Ferguson stated that when the Black Arts Council (BAC) tried to exhibit *Pray for America* at the Security Pacific Bank in Newport Beach, California, it created such a problem that it almost instigated a lawsuit and may have resulted in the firing of a bank employee. After some persuasion from the BAC and an employee, the bank agreed to let the BAC build module walls and exhibit about thirty paintings. Cecil Ferguson, interview by Karen Anne Mason, Volume I,” 196-197.

\(^{165}\) Other prints include, *Pray That We Are Not of the Western World*, 1974, (fig. 163); *Untitled (Body Print)*, n.d., (fig. 164); *Untitled (Body Print)*, 1975, (fig. 165); *Untitled (Blue Female)*, n.d., (fig. 166); *Untitled (Man With White Headdress)*, n.d., (fig. 167); *Untitled*, 1975, (fig. 168); *Untitled*, 1975, (fig. 169); *Black Mohair Spirit*, 1971, (fig. 170).
impression so that it appears as if two bodies are present: one figure, seen in profile, leans in to kiss the cheek of the another figure who faces out toward the viewer. The two melt into one embrace. As he had in his early prints, Hammons’ dusted the images pigment to bring out the latent image. In this print, he also included flat expanses of paint as well as pieces of cardboard and torn wallpaper remnants patched together. Hammons’ manipulation of materials, process, and forms suggests that he drew upon African-American artistic traditions to shape his subject.

The pieces of wallpaper and cardboard are cobbled together in this work in such a way that suggests the patchwork of a quilt. The mismatched fabric creates a lively pattern that evokes African-American quilting traditions in which left over materials were fashioned into a coverlet (fig. 120).166 Perhaps more specifically, Hammons’ print recalls the technique of appliqué in which pieces of fabric are stitched together onto a larger matrix.167 The juxtaposition of various colors in these covers creates a vibrant symphony. The mismatched color paper in the background and the various colors that make up the forms in Ebony Kiss exhibit a lively composition and recall the tradition of sewing together bits of material.

The hodgepodge of paper and color that structures the wall beyond the figures also evokes the tradition of decorating small, often decrepit dwellings with newspapers, pictures, and other discarded material. Eldzier Cortier refers to this tradition in Room No.

166 Gladys-Marie Fry observes “not all quilts were made out of old clothes and leftover plantation cloth.” At times extra income from extra services rendered to the master and to “neighboring plantation owners and town merchants.” Fry notes that foodstuff and handmade goods could generate extra income. Gladys-Marie Fry, “Quilting in the Quarters,” in Stitched From the Soul: Slave Quilts from the Antebellum South (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 47.
167 Ibid., 43.
5, 1948 (fig. 121). In this painting the dresser and the figure reflected in the dresser’s mirror sit in a room where the walls are covered with pictures, advertisements, and torn wallpaper. This tradition of recycling discarded material and giving it new life or a new form was common in rural African-American culture and it materializes in Hammons’ print. The various pieces of wallpaper layered as covering in the background enliven the composition of *Ebony Kiss*. This work reflects a Hammons’ burgeoning practice of collecting detritus and refashioning it into new works of art. For example, he later reused old wooden planks to create *Spirit House* (fig. 122); this small house, built in New York’s Battery Park City in the mid-1980s, reflects his interest in the spirit of southern architecture where things are built with what’s available and “nothing fits, but everything works.”

This tradition first appears in Hammons’ late prints. In the background of *Ebony Kiss*, nothing really fits together but it all works together as a choir of color.

Not only is the wall constructed of recycled elements, the figures are also composed of dissimilar colors and patterns. The intertwined figures rendered in blue, orange, and purple weave together into a tapestry of form. The color divisions and patterns break at odd places, and the absence of subtle gradation precludes the representation of three-dimensional figures. This technique evokes Romare Bearden’s collages as in *Prevalence of Ritual: Mysteries*, 1964. (fig. 123). In this series, Bearden clipped photographs from *Look* and *Life* and wove them together into a tapestry of form, which he then photographed. The photomontages describe life in the urban North as well as rural, southern daily and seasonal rituals including planting, sowing cane, baptisms,

---

and mealtimes. The flat, abstract shapes and the disparate elements that shape the figures in *Ebony Kiss* call to mind Bearden’s collage technique.

The layering of colorful materials in *Ebony Kiss* also reflects Hammons’ interest in Simon Rodia’s *Watts Towers*, (fig. 124). Rodia built the towers by hand using wire and concrete, and while the concrete dried he added found objects like bottles and glass shards to create a colorful mosaic. Hammons stated in a 1986 interview with Kellie Jones that the work really influenced him, noting “I love his work, it’s one of the best.” Just as Rodia used colorful patterns and found material to create his work of art, so too did Hammons bring together bits of color and found objects to create a representation of an African-American kiss.

Although many artists have rendered the kiss—including August Rodin (fig. 125), Constantine Brancusi (fig, 126), Edvard Munch (fig. 127), and Gustav Klimt (fig. 128) among others—Hammons’ use of collage elements and abstract forms recall African-American visual and folk traditions. The patterning and flat forms bring to mind quilting and collage techniques, but the strong contour lines, the patterned hairstyles, and the arabesque lines that flatten out the figures and produce a graphic quality are also reminiscent of other works of art. In Sargent Johnson’s conté crayon drawing *Mother and Child*, (fig. 129) for example, strong outlines, flowing lines, and intertwined figures connect the figures as they do in Hammons’ print.

By including references to African-American visual culture, Hammons expanded his visual vocabulary. The incorporation of graphic, collage, and design elements gleaned from these conventions suggests a new direction in his work. It illustrates what the Mary

---

169 Ibid., 9.
Schmidt Campbell has described as the process among artists working around 1970 of getting rid of “the old symbols of the ancien régime” and replacing them with “new metaphors for a new African-American identity.…”  

Hammons was not the only artist who realized the value of this tradition. His colleague John Outterbridge stated, as noted above, that artists living in California in the late 1960s and early 1970s discussed the importance of mining the African-American cultural traditions instead of African traditions. He stated, “We…had discussions about redefining what the arts were, especially from an African-American point of view.” In addition to Outterbridge, Cecil Ferguson noted, “I realize that Africans are our ancestors, but at the same time I know that after three hundred years there is a culture called African American. They have their own dance, music dress, etc.”

In Ebony Kiss, Hammons may be been attempting to supplant Western iconography—as seen in Back to Black—with African-American tropes and techniques. His use of material from African-American culture demonstrates that the artist turned to sources other than those in Western pictorial traditions. The move away from the Western aesthetic and toward the African-American one bears out the Lacanian concept of separation.

In Seminar XI, Lacan built on his description of subject formation by suggesting that the dichotomous relationship between self and Other allows for the subject to

---

separate, to move beyond the Other, and free him/herself. Lacan noted that this could occur when the subject encountered something lacking in the Other’s speech. Lacan theorized that at the moment when the subject realizes that something does not succeed in the Other’s stated desires, the subject may think, “He is saying this to me, but what does he want?” As a result of this awareness, Lacan argued, the subject realizes a lack in the Other’s desire and thus may consider for a moment his own desire beyond that of the Other.

This knowledge, according to Lacan, can lead the subject to desire separation from the signifying chain, to wish to “get out” and away from the signifying effects of the Other. The Lacanian scholar Colette Soler has noted that this desire for separation supposes a “want to know what one is beyond what the Other can say, beyond what is inscribed in the Other.” In order for the subject to achieve freedom, according to Lacan, the subject must free him/herself from the “aphanisic effect of the binary signifier” and this may be accomplished when the subject realizes something is lacking in the Other.

175 Ibid., 213-215.
The signs in *Ebony Kiss* dramatize the desire to know what is beyond the Other. The incorporation of African-American signifiers, quilting, collage, and form indicates that Hammons may have found the Other, Western canon of signifiers and traditions lacking. The use of non-Western, non-Canonical signifiers in *Ebony Kiss* suggests a “wanting to get out, a want to know what is beyond what the Other can say, beyond what is inscribed in the Other.”\(^{178}\) By going beyond the Other’s artistic traditions and employing African-American forms, process, and materials, *Ebony Kiss* demonstrates the desire to get out from the signifying chain of the Other and find freedom beyond.

The realization that the Other lacks, and perhaps does not speak to the desires of Black women and men, is continually articulated by Frantz Fanon. During an encounter with the Other, Fanon realized that the contributions of African cultural traditions were ignored, or worse denied. In that moment, Fanon discovered lack in the Other’s speech. Fanon sought to know what was beyond this desire, stating,

> I rummaged frenetically through the antiquity of the black man…All of that, exhumed from the past, spread with its insides out, made it possible for me to find a valid historic place. The white man was wrong, I was not a primitive….I belonged to a race that had already been working in gold and silver two thousand years ago.\(^{179}\)

Fanon’s statement indicates the moment when he realized: “*He is saying this to me, but what does he want?*”\(^{180}\) What Fanon found beyond the Other and what the Other had denied was a rich civilization that stretches back two thousand years. Fanon experienced freedom by drawing on the knowledge that the Other lacked an understanding of African

\(^{178}\) Coler, 49.

\(^{179}\) Fanon, 130.

traditions. By questioning the Other, by “wanting to know what one is beyond what the Other can say,” and by probing one’s own history, separation may be attained. Fanon’s last very last request in this book speaks to this desire as he stated, “O my body, make of me always a man who questions.”

It seems that Hammons was such a man. In *Ebony Kiss*, he questioned what is beyond Western aesthetics. By drawing heavily from African-American traditions, the artist worked through the desire for separation from the White Other of the Western Canon. His work altered as it moved from representing an African-American presence based upon signifiers in the Canon, including idealized forms, to illustrating an African-American presence based on those traditions. *Ebony Kiss* provides a glimpse into what is beyond what the Other can say about African-American artistic identity. Thus this print implies a separation, a moving beyond the fading effect of the signifier to a space of freedom.

Yet, as psychoanalysis would have it, the subject can never be totally free from the effects of the signifying structure. The subject may question the Other, which is in itself freeing, but the Other will always condition the subject. It will always render him divided, split, or other. Thus, the subject can never be self-defying and can never be a discrete human being that exists outside the effects of language and the law. Since this print recalls other, Western traditions of “the kiss,” it points to that reality.

---

181 Fanon, 232.
Chapter 4:  
Joyce Wieland “Jammed the Machine”

“I’m interested in working on basic symbols that we know….It is what you do with them once you get them into the work. You work on your own myth from the very basic things you have around here.” (Joyce Wieland, 1972)

By the time Joyce Wieland made this statement, she had already included the image of lips in many works of art. As one of her basic images, it first appeared in the animated films that the artist produced in the mid-1950s. The artist revisited and reworked the imagery in her drawings, paintings, quilts, films, and lithographs for the next twenty years. In Wieland’s early work, produced during the 1950s and 1960s, lips appeared as one element among many, but that changed in 1970. In O Canada, 1970 (fig. 171), Squid Jiggin’ Grounds, 1973 (fig. 172), The Arctic Belongs to Itself, 1973 (fig. 173), and Facing North–Self Impression, 1973 (fig. 174), Wieland extracted the lips from all narrative and isolated them in their own environment. In these prints, the lips are singled out as a signifier, indexing the artist’s unique presence, and yet they also structure the work providing information about Wieland’s subjectivity. They speak about her desires and her identity as a feminine, patriotic, and environmentally conscious individual. By isolating the lips on a single sheet, manipulating the sign’s qualities and reproducing them, Wieland pried open the masculine-driven dialogue to allow the female voice to be heard. In other words, the lips in these prints speak as, to, and about woman and the desires she sought in the late 1960s and the early 1970s.

1 Joyce Wieland, Documents, 1994-004/001 [21], Joyce Wieland Papers, York University Archives and Special Collections, Toronto, Ontario.
The lips in Wieland’s print *O Canada* speak to issues of patriotism and feminism that Wieland questioned while living as an expatriate in Manhattan and while political changes occurred in Canada. After living in New York for seven years, Wieland and her husband, Michael Snow, accepted an invitation to return to Canada in 1970 and make prints at the newly opened Lithography Workshop at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in Halifax. The workshop opened in 1969 with Jack Lemon—a recent graduate of the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles—at its helm. He and Gary Neill Kennedy, the recently appointed President of NSCAD, invited established artists to experiment with lithography, while allowing their students to have direct contact with professional artists and their working process.

Although the artists were not pressured to make saleable objects, both the artist and NSCAD benefited from the sale of print editions. This open and loose environment produced, according to Kennedy, some amazing results. He noted, for example, that Wieland’s print *O Canada* is “among her best work as it demonstrated an astute, intuitive, and intimate understanding of lithography, a process which depends on the antipathy of grease (in this case, lipstick) and water.”

When Wieland arrived at the workshop, she asked master printer Robert Rogers, who also was trained at Tamarind and hired with Lemon, if she could use lipstick on the lithograph stone. Rogers informed her that she could, so Wieland purchased a new tube

---

3 Ibid., 24.
of lipstick and used it to create the lip impressions in *O Canada*.\(^5\) This lithograph documents Wieland’s performance of mouthing off the Canadian national anthem onto the stone surface. Pressing her lips to the matrix, Wieland recited the words,

```
O Canada!
Our home and native land
True patriot love in all thy sons command
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free
From far and wide,
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee
God keep our land glorious and free
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee
```

Each time she articulated a syllable, she freshened up her lipstick.\(^6\) The resulting sixty-eight lipstick impressions sequentially denote every syllable from the first stanza of the Canadian national anthem. The recital resulted in a diagram of seven rows and roughly ten columns of lips opened and closed at various intervals in the song. After she finished singing the anthem, the stone retained the indices of the artist’s performance and presence. The matrix was treated with a chemical process so all sixty-eight marks received an oil-based pink ink, while the unmarked surface repelled it. These impressions were then transferred to paper. The resulting image resembles a pseudo-scientific spreadsheet of lips-in-service or lip-service statistics.

The idea for *O Canada* most likely came from Wieland’s quilt of the same title, which she produced earlier in 1970 (fig. 175). The quilt has seventy-two, red lips arranged in six rows that stretch across the cloth. The lips are quite substantial because

---

\(^5\) Ibid.  
\(^6\) Ibid.
they are bright red and are strong across the cloth in a swaying, lyrical motion. From between the parted lips white teeth and the black void beyond them appear; their tactility enhances the realism, and this creates a disembodied sensation. Although slightly different, this quilt provided inspiration for the lithograph of the same title.

Wieland’s film *Reason over Passion*, 1967-1969 (fig. 176) also influenced the lithograph. This eighty-two minute film documents the Canadian landscape beginning on the eastern shore at Cape Breton, traveling across the country, and ending in Vancouver in the West. In the middle of the film, Wieland inserted images of the recently elected Prime Minister Pierre E. Trudeau. Subtitles “Reason Over Passion/La raison avant la passion” float on top of the Prime Minister’s visage and the landscape. The phrase, which refers to Trudeau’s election platform and expressed his hope that reason could unite Canada and quell the passion for separatism, is jumbled into numerous anagrams. For example, “Reason Over Passion,” appeared as “soenar voer pssiaon” in one frame but morphed into other arrangement in subsequent frames. Also spliced into the film is an image of Wieland, or more specifically her mouth, singing *O Canada*. This “travelogue” of the Canadian landscape, as one scholar has noted, offers its viewers images of Canada from “the most phenomenal to the most symbolic.” Many scholars consider this film to

---

7 The lip shapes were taken from Joyce’s mouth as she sang the hymn. (fig. 177).
be a manifestation of Wieland’s burgeoning political consciousness because of the
references to Trudeau, bilingualism, and symbols of Canadian identity.\textsuperscript{10}

The year Wieland began this film, 1967, marked the height of Canadian
nationalism fostered by social and economic reforms that Lester B. Person, the Prime
Minister who preceded Trudeau, instituted. By creating a national pension plan, universal
medical coverage, as well as economic and agricultural reforms, Pearson had stabilized
Canadian society.\textsuperscript{11} These policies improved the quality of life in Canada and bolstered
feelings of excitement and optimism about the country’s future.\textsuperscript{12} In that same year,
Canada commemorated its centennial anniversary, and its birthday celebrations were tied
into the World’s Fair, which was held in Montreal. With the theme of “Man and His
World,” Expo 67 attracted many visitors to Canada.\textsuperscript{13} Many traveled to Montreal to see,
among other things, the geodesic dome. With the Expo and positive social changes, the
country was suddenly hip.\textsuperscript{14} When the Canadian Parliament voted in 1967 to adopt \textit{O


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
Canada as the national anthem (two years after the Canadian national flag was decided) feelings of optimism and pride abounded.\textsuperscript{15}

Wieland, it seems, was swept up in the cult of Canada. In 1967 she read a lot of books and pamphlets on Canadian history.\textsuperscript{16} Although living away from her home may have stimulated an interest in things Canadian, the changes afoot in her homeland contributed to her desire to reconnect to her country. She noted in a 1971 interview, conducted by Hollis Frampton just months before Wieland returned to live in Canada, that living away from her home fostered an appreciation for it. She stated, “I have been doing so much work about Canada because I never could have seen Canada as I see it now. The people who are doing really good work about nationalism in film have spent a lot of time in other countries and have come back.”\textsuperscript{17} Wieland’s thoughts echo what cultural historian Irit Rogoff has observed about living abroad. She argues, “to unbelong and to not be at home is the very condition of critical activity…often this active form of unbelonging is both the expressive purpose of the journey and the unexpected consequences.”\textsuperscript{18} Wieland’s physical distance from Canada and her situation of not being at home in America allowed for an “unbelonging” and a critical eye that emerges in *Reason Over Passion/La Raison Avant La Passion*.

The material for this film came from Wieland’s desire to make a postcard of the Canadian landscape before it disappeared. Yet when Wieland attended the nominating


\textsuperscript{17} Wieland and Frampton, 174.

convention for the Canadian Liberal Party in Ottawa at the end of 1967, she decided to included Trudeau and his speech in which he articulated his policy. Accompanying Trudeau’s image and the words, a soundtrack emits grinding noises, repetitive beeps, and applause from a track. Many film historians have argued that Wieland’s use of noise, images, jump shots, the black outs, and the insistent presence of the film quality drew attention to the landscape and Trudeau’s dictum. Film historians, George Ellis and Lianne McLarty, for example, have noted that the formal techniques of blurring and distortion undermine the smoothness of Trudeau and his policy. The artist’s manipulation of the film’s materiality indicates her concerns about Trudeau’s apparently seamless rhetoric regarding Canada’s sovereignty and natural resources.

Wieland’s doubts about Trudeau’s capabilities and his role in shaping Canada’s future began to bother her after seeing, what she perceived to be, the future prime minister’s aloofness and his apathy toward the crowd at the liberal party nominating convention. She told Frampton that she began to wonder if he was “going to be any good or be just like another politician.” She also hinted during the interview with Frampton that her skepticism of Trudeau materializes in the film with the slowing down of film speed and the insertion of an applause track after Trudeau’s words appear on film. Although Wieland saw the irony in the juxtaposition of canned accolades and

19 Wieland and Frampton, 178.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
Trudeau’s sincerity, many did not, and they accused her of being a propagandist. She too wondered if she was the Canadian Leni Riefenstahl churning out political propaganda for the Prime Minister’s cabinet. Yet it was the materials and signs used ironically that prevented the film from devolving into propaganda. In fact, the material and signs critiqued rather than endorsed Trudeau.

This critique continued in the print, which Wieland created a few years later. Like the film, it analyzes patriotism and the requirements needed for it to succeed. By speaking onto the stone with her pink lips, allowing the stone to hold onto the hymn and then reproducing it, Wieland translated speech into written language and in so doing drew attention to the patriarchal social structure while also articulating her desire for a country that had yet to exist. Even more specifically, Wieland dramatized the mechanics of the signifying structures in patriotism and the position of women within that structure.

When Wieland kissed the stone while singing the national anthem, she engaged in a conventional, patriotic performance. The language of anthems, as the historian Benedict Anderson has noted, describes political love in terms of “kinship (motherland, Vaterland, patria) or that of home” within a community of users. Wieland’s performance could be viewed as an expression of love for her fatherland, for the act of kissing the ground has been an expression of love and humility since antiquity.

---

26 Ibid., 176.
27 Ibid. Leni Riefenstahl, of course, is best known for producing propaganda films that supported the ideology of the Third Reich. Her best-known film is Triumph of the Will, which was produced in 1934 at the Congress in Nuremberg.
If, as Eric Cameron has argued, the lithographic stone may be understood as a metonym for Canada in this piece, then Wieland’s act of kissing the stone may further represent patriotic sentiments and love for Canada. If Cameron’s assessment is correct, then it is also possible to read the stone as a standing in for the fatherland of Canada, because it is hard, rigid, and unbending and in this sense its recalls the male anatomy. The soft, pink lips meet, kiss, and yield to this hard surface. Thus, the pliant lips of the female body meet the stiff surface of the male body in an amorous encounter, and this connection recalls encounters in which women leave lipstick imprints on a man’s stiff collar. The meeting of the two surfaces evokes amorous encounters and the physiological differences between men and women.

---

30 Eric Cameron, “The Lithography Workshop,” in *NSCAD: The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design* (Halifax, NS: The Press, 1982), 20. Many art historians have suggested that *O Canada* is a patriotic statement with erotic overtones barely sublimated. Marie Fleming, for example, has stated “In the lithograph, animated, soundlessly singing lips are conjoined with a simple and direct symbol of love for Canada, the national anthem.” Marie Fleming, “Joyce Wieland: A Perspective,” 77. In addition, Dennis Young has suggested that *O Canada* reveals “erotic and patriotic love.” Dennis Young, *Recent Vanguard Acquisitions* (Toronto, ON: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1971), 19. Ross Mendes has also noted that it is a “whimsical refreshing view of our national anthem....” Mendes, “Introduction,” 2. Michael Greenwood also observed that the print expresses Wieland’s love and maternal protection of Canada. Michael Greenwood, “Some Nationalist Facets of Canadian Art,” *Arts Canada* 36 (December 1979-Januray 1980): 69. Marjorie Cohn has pointed out that while the work is a “feminist acid satire against dominant macho patriotism” it is also “at the same time an affectionate patriotic affirmation.” Marjorie B. Cohn, “The Artist’s Touch,” in *Touchstone: 200 Years of Artist’s Lithographs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Museums, 1998), 28.

31 Of course, as Ross Mendes points out, the connotations of fellatio are hard to miss. The belief that this performance mimics fellatio enhances the idea of satiating male desire. Ross Mendes, “Introduction,” in *Joyce Wieland: An Independent Canadian* (Guelph, ON: University of Guelph, 1972), 2-6.
The gender connection is also apparent, as John O’Brian has pointed out, because a female sang a hymn that refers to male patriotic love.\textsuperscript{32} The act of kissing while enunciating the words, “True patriot love in all thy sons command,” O’Brian argues, brought together female and male entities.\textsuperscript{33} He observed that this meeting “ironically conflates male patriotic love with female erotics while refusing to collapse the tension between the two.”\textsuperscript{34} The maintenance of this duality, he noted, allowed Wieland to express the idea that bilingualism could unite Canada and grant equality to all Canadians.\textsuperscript{35}

Rather than illustrating the notion of equality and fraternity, Wieland’s exploitation of color, gesture, and the way she marketed the print draws attention to and critiques the notion of patriotism, the actions required for it to succeed, and the patriarchal structures that demanded it. In order for patriotism to flourish and national anthems to mean something, individuals must use a common language. Compliant bodies and voices are needed to support this system. Wieland’s performance on stone participates in this practice. Using her soft lips, the artist repetitively kissed the stone. She lifted and lowered her head sixty-eight times, applying a fresh coat of lipstick in order to provide the best imprint each time. Right to left, up and down, over and over again until she finished. While the performance mimics the repetition needed for patriotism to thrive, the excessive gesture allowed Wieland to point to the need for constant subservience and service required of individual citizens to sustain larger patriarchal entity.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 144.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 145.
If power structures are to remain stable, individuals need to continually sing their praises and participate in the broader community that intones similar tributes. In order for a community of individuals to exist as a coherent nation, according to Anderson, “deep, horizontal comradeship” is needed.\(^{36}\) A common language in poetry and songs enables solidarity.\(^{37}\) National anthems allowed, as Anderson has observed “people wholly unknown to each other to utter the same verse to the same melody. The…unisonance…is the physical realization of an imagined community.”\(^{38}\) A patriotic hymn is one such song that fosters a national consciousness and a collective identity if a community adopts it. If this group continually employs a common hymn of poetry or prose that state allegiance, as Anderson has pointed out, patriotism may flourish.\(^{39}\) Wieland’s performance describes this mechanism at work in patriotism.

As she repetitively bent over the stone, Wielande sang of her allegiance. Her behavior mimics the repetition needed for anthems to acquire meaning within a community of users. In this way, *O Canada* argues that a citizen must consistently employ a nationally recognized song and through it sign a country’s praises in order to produce a national identity. She metaphorically submitted to a greater authority when she repeatedly bent over. Her performance implies that patriotism and national hymns gain currency when individuals submit, both mentally and physically, to larger governing forces.

---

\(^{36}\) Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 143-145.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 145.

\(^{39}\) Anderson elaborates on the effects of anthems in the eighth chapter, and he refutes the links to racism. See Anderson, “Patriotism and Racism,” in *Imagined Communities*, 141-154.
Wieland did not only use performance to dramatize the mechanisms at work in patriotism, she also exploited language to work through this structure. By speaking onto the stone with her pink lips, the artist translated speech into written language. The phonetic syllables on the stone and transferred onto paper represent the anthem. Although the title bestows meaning on the signs, the marks do not immediately yield signification. In order to obtain meaning, the viewer must parse out each syllable. By mimicking the movement of the lips, the reader may string together each syllable that comes from the lips. Once this action is complete, the signs gel into the well-known song. Since each written syllable is not an immediately identifiable linguistic unit, the audience must break down the speech pattern in order to understand each word.

In order to understand any unfamiliar syllable, a reader may parse out each pattern in the phonetic system. As the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure explained, this sounding out may happen in one of three ways.  

40 Using the lips, a reader can articulate the letters “p,” “b,” “m.”  

41 The teeth and tongue allow for the pronunciation of the dentals, including “t,” “d,” “n.”  

42 Lastly, the guttural sounds, such as “k” and “g,” originate at the back of the throat.  

43 When the reader uses his or her body and strings the phonetic syllables together into spoken sequences, he or she will produce a comprehensible linguistic unit that is a bearer of an idea.  

44 In addition, Saussure theorized, “every

---

40 Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye and trans. Roy Harris (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2001).
41 Saussure, “Principles of Physiological Phonetics: Chapter One, Sound Types,” 39-49.
42 Ibid., 45.
43 Ibid.
44 Saussure, “Principles of Physiological Phonetics: Chapter Two, Sounds in Spoken Sequences,” 50-63. Saussure also noted, “A syllable is defined solely in phonetic terms. But a sequence of sounds is a linguistic sequence only if it is the bearer of an idea: in
linguistic sign is a part or a member…where an idea is fixed in a sound and a sound becomes the sign of an idea.”

Thus, the differences in individual speech sounds presented in a logical, linear order—a syntagmatic order as Saussure labeled it—begets meaning. Linguistic units, therefore, operate in the realm where sound and thought converge. As Saussure noted “it is only by listening to others that we learn “our native language.”

This language, he surmised, “is in great part” that “which makes a nation.”

The lip sequences in *O Canada* represent the syllabic phonetic system. The ambiguous lip shapes—or the written words that substitute for spoken words—require parsing because at first glance they appear unfamiliar. If meaning is to be gleaned from Wieland’s print, this reenactment is necessary. The reader co-operates with the signs and restages the original performance. By mimicking the labial, dental and guttural position that the lips assume, the reader articulates each sound pattern. The slow, methodical reading of all sixty-eight impressions entails submitting one self to each symbol.

This process, then, not only mimics Wieland’s performance, but it also duplicates patriotic performances as the reader yields to the symbols. By exploiting a deliberately slow process required for reading the print and engaging numerous readers (at least sixty, or one reader for each print in the edition), Wieland drew attention to the performances required for patriotism and the need for participation among citizens within the imagined community to sustain it.

---

48 Ibid.
Wieland did not only use language to draw attention to patriotic, and patriarchal, structures. She also relied on gendered signs and color to communicate her ideas. The pink color, used in this print, is loaded with specific, social connotations. Colors that adorn the mouth, as the author Charles Panati has noted in *Sexy Origins and Intimate Things*, convey certain ideas about the wearer.\(^49\) He notes that the mouth is “clothed according to what an individual wishes to say, and therefore the color reflects what is needed.”\(^50\) Its appearance lets others know “to what extent it is being used as a weapon.”\(^51\) Red lipstick, for example, might convey power and passion. The color evokes the physiological changes that occur in a woman’s lips, both oral and labial, when she is aroused.\(^52\) The lips of the mouth flush with blood and swell during the arousal stage, and when this physiological change occurs it evokes similar alterations in the labia.\(^53\) As scholars have noted, red lipstick mimics those changes and it allows women to indicate passion and desire.\(^54\)

Pink lipstick, on the other hand, symbolizes affection. Scholars have noted that it is associated with such endearing qualities as sweetness, purity, health and innocence.\(^55\) In the 1960s, it became a signifier of counterculture ideology because it conveyed a natural appearance. As the historian Kathy Peiss has observed, “the natural body was

---


\(^{50}\) Ibid., 38.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.


considered authentic, real, erotic, and beautiful, a challenge to the artifice and repression of postwar society."\(^\text{56}\) Pink lipstick allowed women to wear lipstick, while giving the illusion that lips were bare. Since the color pink suggested the natural body—freed from restrictive grooming styles and dress codes associated with 1950s—it became, as Peiss points out, a very popular color during the 1960s.\(^\text{57}\)

According to Peiss, the cosmetic industry quickly commodified this counterculture aesthetic.\(^\text{58}\) For example, Cover Girl embraced the natural look with organic cosmetics and it invoked “the liberated woman as a beauty type.”\(^\text{59}\) In addition, Mary Quant, a counterculture figure in London during the 1960s, perhaps best known for her miniskirt designs, set trends in make-up when she designed a line of pale and shiny pink lipsticks.\(^\text{60}\)

Wieland’s choice of pink lipstick in \textit{O Canada} reflects these trends, and by dressing her lips in this color, the artist conveyed her political and social inclinations. The pink color tells of affection not passion. It reflects desire for a country that she would have liked to see exist, rather than sexual passion and lust for the country that did. Since the pink-lipstick indices represent the artist’s presence, they let others know about her desires. Thus rather than use red to demonstrate passion for Canada, Wieland employed pink, which in the 1960s suggested liberation. Thus, the color chosen conveys ideas about Wieland’s hopes for a new state, while it critiques the passion for the current one. Rather

\(^{57}\) Ibid.
\(^{58}\) Ibid., 260-261.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., 261-262.
than use red, which might connect her print with the color used in the Canadian flag (the other major national symbol), Wieland used pink in order to distance her statement from traditional symbols and the symbolic signifying structure.

It is, perhaps, the way Wieland marketed the print that best dramatizes the artist’s desire to draw attention to masculine signifying structures and patriotism. An advertisement in the August-September issue of *Artscanada* announced the sale of *O Canada* (fig. 178). The ad includes an image of the print, a French and English description of the piece, and a photographic reproduction of Wieland creating the piece. The photo was taken from the documentation of Wieland’s performance in the Lithography Workshop at NSCAD. The frames, as in (fig. 179) for example, capture Wieland at various angles as she kisses the stone. Some show a close-up contact between her mouth and the stone, while others show the top of her head. The image chosen to announce the sale of the print was one in which Wieland is visibly bent over, face obscured, hair fallen about her, and kissing the stone in an all-consuming performance. Staged for the publicity purposes, the image shows the performance of patriotism.

The pride and devotion a citizen has for his or her country is usually expressed by showing allegiance to its structures, submission to its philosophies, and devotion to the community. The prone position that the artist assumed while singing the anthem unveils the submission that is required for patriotism to operate smoothly. The advertisement in *Artscanada* demonstrates these mechanisms at work and thus draws attention to its various facets.

---

61 A similar ad appeared in *Artforum* (fig. 199)
The political situation, as O’Brian has pointed out, may have led to this print. On October 1, 1970, members of the Front de liberation du Quebec (FLQ) in Montreal kidnapped British Trade Commissioner James Cross. Five days later the FLQ kidnapped Quebec’s Minister of Labor and Immigration Pierre Laporte. In exchange for their prisoners, the FLQ demanded a Quebec free of Anglo-Saxon colonization. Trudeau sent helicopters and army men into Ottawa in order to convey their willingness to battle, and when journalists asked Trudeau how far he was willing to take his actions, he retorted, “just watch me!”

Soon thereafter, the Prime Minster of Quebec, Pierre Bourassa, requested help in arresting the FLQ and securing the release of Cross and Laporte. Trudeau agreed to help and immediately responded by invoking the War Measures Act. On October 15, 1970, Canada was under martial law, and the Prime Minister had dictatorial powers. He sent the army into Montreal and allowed early morning raids into people’s homes. The army and police captured members of the FLQ, who released Cross and Laporte’s body. During the siege, the army and police arrested almost four hundred and fifty people.

---

62 John O’Brien has linked it to the battle between English and French speaking Canadians. He suggests that the print’s reading may have been interpreted differently based on each Canadian’s affiliation. What may offend a “Quebcer” might not offend and English speaking Canadian. There was, he argues, the danger that it might have been interpreted as a form of propaganda. The print’s “bite” and humor” prevented it from being propagandistic. He also observes that it was Wieland’s use of slightly muted reds in the repeating lips set off against the off-white paper stock,” contradicting “the bombast of the flag, with its snow whites and Mountie reds” that saved it from being propagandistic. O’Brien, “Anthem Lip Sync,” 147-9.
63 Ferguson, 373; see also Bothwell, Drummond, and English, 367-374.
64 Ibid.
Although almost ninety percent of the Canadian population supported Trudeau’s decision, people began to question his actions after the crisis ended. In what has become known as The October Crisis, the situation and the government’s response led many to believe that the government went overboard and used excessive force. By the time Wieland began *O Canada*, many Canadians began to question their allegiance to a state that would unequivocally strip away its citizen’s rights. For example, Avrom Isaacs, Joyce Wieland’s dealer, expressed his concern in a letter to the artist. He wrote,

> I think the Trudeau honeymoon is over. Jim Eayrs, a professor of international economics, has been writing a series of pieces in the Toronto Star which I think are great. It is his belief that what Trudeau has done vis a vis the war measures act is unforgivable and the only thing the Canadian public can do to expunge (?) this act from our national conscience is to throw the Liberal part out in the next elections. And unless the government comes up with a better case I totally agree with him.

Isaacs’ letter reached Wieland in Halifax, Nova Scotia in November of 1970 while she was working at the Lithography Workshop at NSACD. Isaac’s feelings, the larger public sentiment, and Wieland’s own disenchantment with Trudeau, may have led the artist to address issues of patriotism in *O Canada*. Although O’Brian suggests that the print is a political statement that may have united or offended Canadians, it seems more likely that *O Canada* critiques all of these inclinations. Rather than speaking to or

---

66 Ibid.
68 In an interview with Hollis Frampton in 1971 Wieland stated that she felt that Trudeau was “not was much concerned and impassioned about Canada” as she thought.” Wieland and Frampton, 178.
offending separatists, this print represents Wieland’s desire to question all traditional power structures.

Devotion to Canada in 1970 particularly required subordination and absolute allegiance as Trudeau turned Canada into a police state. Unity meant uniformity. As a result of the Prime Minister’s actions, many citizens’ opinions and voices were not heard. In order to vocalize the inequity entailed in patriotism during this period, Wieland put her lips into action. It is as if Wieland exploited indices of her presence to articulate her personal protest while giving voice to others through reproduction. Other voices were included because after the lips’ indices were reproduced, Wieland’s presence vanished. The absence of a particular individual opened up space for other vocal protests. O Canada became the site where individuals could sound off.

Even more specifically than speaking to the way that patriotism operates, Wieland’s print stages the way that the female voice exists in this signifying system. The application of lipstick and the submissive role performed by Wieland unveils the position assumed in traditional signifying systems, but the lips, their placement on the stone, their reproduction onto paper, and the language represented in them also allude to power structures. Specifically, they suggest the dynamic in which a woman applies a masquerade to foster man’s desire and then satiates that desire. Psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray noted, in her controversial text The Sex Which is Not One, that the masquerade situates women “to participate in man’s desire, but at the price of renouncing their own.”69 For example, a woman will wear and express those aspects of femininity that appeal to male desire and in the process she may assume the male desire as her own. As a

result, Irigaray argued, an alienated or false version of femininity arises from this position.\textsuperscript{70}

Irigaray was one of the first theorists to describe the place women assumed in the signifying structure. Her education, experiences and reinterpretation of Lacanian psychoanalysis provided the foundation for her theory regarding the absence of women in patriarchal systems. She was a student of Jacques Lacan, attended his seminars at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, was a member of the Ecole freudienne de Paris, and was in charge of the Department of Psychoanalysis at Vincennes in France.\textsuperscript{71} After the publication of her book \textit{Speculum} in 1974, Lacan rejected Irigaray, the psychoanalytic establishment censured her for being politically committed, and school officials dismissed her from her teaching post.\textsuperscript{72} It was Irigaray’s revision of Lacan’s theories regarding the nature—the real—of the individual that offended Lacan as well as many others and led to her excommunication.\textsuperscript{73} In her collection of essays in \textit{Speculum} and in subsequent texts—specifically those published in \textit{This Sex Which Is Not One}—she rethought Lacan’s notion of the real, critiqued his denial of an essential nature of \textit{A/The Woman}—a universal woman—and she lobbied for the acknowledgment of sexual difference as a route to female empowerment.\textsuperscript{74} If recognition did not occur, Irigaray

\textsuperscript{70} Irigaray noted, “…the female Oedipus complex is woman’s entry into a system of values that is not hers, and in which she can ‘appear’ and circulate only when enveloped in the needs/desires/fantasies of others, namely, men.” Ibid., 134


\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 5.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 5-6.

\textsuperscript{74} Luce Irigaray, \textit{Speculum of the Other Woman}, trans. Gillian C. Gill, originally published in 1974 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); For “The Sex Which Is Not One,” “Cosi fan tutti” see Luce Irigaray, \textit{The Sex Which is Not One}. Irigaray’s most biting attacks on Lacan’s assessment of the female and Lacanian analysis can be found in
argued, women would continue to assume a submissive position in the patriarchal
signifying structure. A way to disrupt these practices and structure, according to the
theorist, was to draw attention to them through gesture, mimicry, language, touch,
silence, and sexuality. These techniques and the manipulation of female gender in
Wieland’s print call attention to the signifying structure.

In *O Canada*, Wieland’s lipstick functions as a masquerade, a conventional form
of feminine sexuality. Following Irigaray’s theory, the artist’s continual application of
lipstick each time she bent over and kissed the stone stages the supporting role that
women play in desire and the patriarchal structure. In other words, Wieland’s actions
illuminate the way that men construct women’s desire and the way that it is put in service
of desire that is not her own. Since the stone represents the fatherland and the lips sing
the patriotic hymn, the artist’s performance alludes to patriarchal power structures.

Wieland’s performance and submission to masculine desire recalls Elaine de
Kooning’s participation in the creation of Willem de Kooning’s *Woman—Lipstick*, 1952
(fig. 180). Wieland’s distinctive drawing method—where the body becomes the image-
making machine—is analogous to the technique that Elaine used. She applied red
lipstick and kissed the sheet of paper that contained Willem’s hand-drawn, female image.
She used her body like a machine, but rather than choosing where and what would
receive her kiss, her husband dictated her actions. At work in *Woman—Lipstick* are issues

---

“Così fan tutti” as well as “The Poverty of Psychoanalysis” see Luce Irigaray, “The
Poverty of Psychoanalysis” in *The Irigaray Reader*, 79-104.

75 For information about artists and reproduction, see Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art
of submission, fetishes, pleasure, and power.\textsuperscript{76} Elaine submitted her body to Willem’s directions and kissed the female figure many times, in different places. She, therefore, yielded to her husband’s authority. Since Elaine participated in de Kooning’s desire, she perpetuated the masculine logic as Irigaray detailed it; specifically, Elaine donned masquerade and behaved in a way that fulfilled Willem’s desire. Rather than drawing attention to this structure in order to dismantle it, Elaine furthered the system.

Conversely, Wieland used her own body and submitted to the patriarchal system in order to subvert its stability.

In “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine,” Irigaray also argued that if \textit{A/The Woman} intentionally assumed a subordinate position she could work to dismantle the traditional discursive mechanism.\textsuperscript{77} She noted that if a woman assumes “the feminine role deliberately” by employing masculine driven language and playing the muse to his desires, she would self-consciously submit herself to masculine logic.\textsuperscript{78} By intentionally taking up the subordinate position to maintain this structure, woman would draw attention to that structure.\textsuperscript{79} Wieland’s performance and the print participated in that undertaking. She submitted herself to the masculine signifying structure through kissing the stone while wearing masquerade. By employing these techniques, the artist unveiled the traditional system that requires submission from a woman. \textit{O Canada}, thus, represents a microstructure of power that sheds light on macrostructures. In this way,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 76-78.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 78.
\end{flushright}
Wieland’s gestures indicate the way that conforming to certain standards furthers the desires of the controlling structure.

Wieland’s performance and the reproduction of it call attention to this system. With her lips pretty in pink and her body bent in a submissive position, she enacted the grammar of a masculine discourse by singing the national anthem. Her excessive gesture—the action of continually and repetitively bending over—and its transference into print—which then continued to reproduce the gesture and thus exacerbated it—mimicked the process required for patriarchal language to mean something. The performance mocked that structure, and repetition parodied it. Reproduction and submission enabled Wieland to call attention to the position of the female voice in traditional signifying structure.

Wieland’s performance and her exploitation of reproduction also follows Irigaray’s theory that an examination of “the operation of ‘grammar’” is need for a reconsideration of language.  

This reevaluation, according to the theorist, would call attention to its inherent inequalities, open a dialogue, and enable change. Irigaray suggested that in the initial phase of the rethinking process, attention should be drawn to univocal meaning in language, hierarchies, and absolute truths in language by exploiting mimicry. When Wieland used her lips and body to mimic the behavior required for patriotism to operate, she called attention to the position women assume in this discourse and syntactical laws.

---

80 Irigaray, “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine,” 75-76.
81 Ibid., 76.
Irigaray also observed that mimicry may also reveal that women are such good mimics only because they are not “simply reabsorbed in this function.”\textsuperscript{82} She asserted that while women take up their subordinate position in the structure, they are also elsewhere, hovering around their sexual pleasure and waiting to assert its rightful place.\textsuperscript{83} If women intentionally play with these boundaries, crisscross them, and draw them out through excessive gesture they will open up language to scrutiny and dialogue; this action will disrupt the traditional hierarchy, which asserts that meaning is absolute and univocal. Thus mimicry may allow women to examine the operations of language, to destroy the binary opposition of the discursive structure, and in doing so may “jam the theoretical machine.”\textsuperscript{84} By employing excessive gesture, repetition, and mimicry, Wieland called attention to this system and thus, cleared space to challenge the merits of the traditional dialogue. In this way, she contributed to “jamming the theoretical machine.”

In addition, the silence in \textit{O Canada} also suggests the position of the female voice in this system. Although Wieland used her lips to sing about her country and the power structures that govern it, they are silent; they wait for a voice to fill the void. The pink lips part and seem to promise communication, but nothing materializes. The hymn waits for a community of interpretants to activate the song and impart meaning. Since the lips are mute, they allude to Irigaray’s theory that women’s voices are silenced in the dominant masculine signifying system. \textit{O Canada} calls attention to this relationship. In this way they, in Irigaray’s terms, allude to the role that “silences” and utterances” play in language. Following Irigaray’s theory, Wieland’s use of silence and the repetition of it in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 76.  \\
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 76, 78,
\end{flushright}
each lip formation help to uncover that which is veiled, namely woman’s subordination and silence in language. 

By making visible that which is invisible, this print also contributes to—in Irigaray’s words—“jamming the machine.” By manipulating language so that the lips appear silent, by using masquerade to locate the position of women within the patriarchal system, by mimicking those structures through excessive gesture and repetition, Wieland employed her feminine body and her lips in both an active and passive way in order to call attention to and thwart the traditional signifying system.

Not only do the lips jam this machine but they also speak together to in order to carve out a place for a particularly female voice. In this print, the “lips speak together” in order to assert a female presence in the masculine discourse. This is made possible because of the nature of the female body and the place of articulation. Irigaray first observed that a woman has multiple lips that overlap one another and are always touching each other, while men do not. Women have lips that are both horizontal and vertical, oriented in different directions while men do not. Since one set of lips continually embraces another set, a woman’s lips are always active. Due to this continual contact, woman is always touching herself and thus can stimulate her own desire and provide pleasure. This gratification occurs without the mediation of the phallus. In this way, then, woman is the active agent in her pleasure rather than merely a passive receptacle for man’s pleasure. If woman would see and appreciate her own nature, as Irigaray would

---

85 Ibid., 76. 
86 Ibid., 76-78 
87 Ibid. 
88 Ibid., 28-31 
89 Ibid.
have it, she could gain a sense of autonomy and value that which is not gleaned from the male body. Women, according to Irigaray, should use these lips to located and express their desires. If used in this way, lips would be a positive feature of female sexuality, and they could replace the idea of woman as lack or a void.

If the lips’ power were acknowledged in the real, according to Irigaray, their power could be carried over into the symbolic. Their valorization would allow woman to feel comfortable enough to articulate her desires, her pleasures. Since the lips permit woman, unlike man, to speak from many places, they may allow woman access to the imaginary of her desires. With the floodgates open, woman may access her own language, her love of self, and love of other woman. Thus woman would not remain in a passive or supportive position, because under these conditions the lips would have signifying power alongside the phallus. With this rethinking of the concept of female nature, the development of the subject in the imaginary would not exclude woman. In other words, woman as subject would have a voice and autonomy with the symbolic economy.

Wieland’s lips and her act of touching the stone created a space in the signifying structure for a female voice. This presence was called into being when Wieland kissed

---

90 Irigaray noted, “(Re-)discovering herself, for a woman, thus could only signify the possibility of sacrificing no one of her pleasures to another, of identifying herself with none of them in particular, of never being simply one…waiting to regrouped under the primacy of the phallus.” Ibid., 30-31
91 The author noted that the one form of the male sexual organ differs from multiplicity of the female organ because “the contact of at least two (lips)…keeps woman in touch with herself, but without any possibility of distinguishing what is touching from what is touched,” Irigaray, “The Sex Which is Not One,” 23-33.
92 Ibid.
93 Irigaray, “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine,” 80-81; Irigaray really unpacks the relationship between language and the woman in “The Mechanics of Fluid,” in This Sex Which is Not One, 106-118.
the stone. As we have the seen the stone metonymically stands in for the place from which it came. What if that land were viewed as female, the motherland rather than the “das Vaterland”? In a 1971 interview with Kay Armatage, Wieland asserted that she thought of Canada as female. She also wrote, “Canada is like a woman who does not know she is beautiful… and consequently gives herself to the first (sic) person who asks. If this woman wakes up to all that she possess she can get the big supermarket to the south to give her what she wants. Canada, in Wieland’s estimation, should be viewed as a feminine entity. If the stone represents the land from which it came, then Wieland’s performance of kissing demonstrates her affection for the feminine, and the ability to have that voice heard.

When Wieland pressed her lips against the stone that metonymically represents the motherland, she connected to another feminine entity and offered an affectionate caress. From Wieland’s lip indices, the matrix then echoed another song onto a sheet of white paper. In this way, the two feminine bodies overlapped and touched each other without one dominating the other. It is as if through touching the two spoke together to announce the presence of the feminine in the masculine signifying discourse of the national anthem. Wieland’s performance and its manifestation in print allowed the feminine lips a space in the signifying system. Thus, the lips in O Canada represent a particularly feminine perspective.

---

95 Ibid. Ingrid Jenker has suggested that while the lips represent the “artist’s signature interweaving of sexual love and patriotic feelings” they also replaced the phallus as a privileged signifier. It seems, however, that Wieland did not replace it. By allowing both a presence, by joining them together, it seems that Wieland followed Irigaray’s dictum.
Wieland could articulate this position because of her multiple lips; they allowed for the possibility of multiple voices. Women, unlike men, have more than one set of lips. Since they are multiple, as Irigaray pointed out, they allow women to speak from multiple perspectives and offer a fluid exchange of ideas. The presence of multiple lips arranged in non-hierarchical composition in *O Canada* demonstrates this possibility. As the pink lips ebb and flow across the stone and sheet, they articulate different syllabic sound patterns. At no point is one individual speech act made more prominent than others. Rather, they spread out equally across the allotted space for one set of lips is as important as its neighbor in the signifying structure. In addition, the lips relatively equal size, color, and spatial allotment contribute to the equality of language in the print. Each set of lips could be put in service articulating its own voice.

The potential for multiple voices expanded in reproduction. When the lip-stained matrix contacted sixty sheets of paper, the floodgates opened further and released any real distinction of a boundary. Since the lithographic process allows for an infinite edition, its open-ended quality also underscores the fluidity and circulation present in a woman’s lips. *O Canada*, therefore, demonstrates that the female body language and its fluidity could pry open the hierarchical masculine signifying discourse and insert the female gender. This process here allows woman to announce her presence in grammar and in so doing offer an alternative to the patriarchal structure.

---

that in order to allow for difference and to really change the signify structure both voices, both signifiers are needed. If the female signifier simply replaced the male, it would flip, but maintain, the same uneven, repressive structure. Thus it seems that rather replacing the male signifier as Jenker argues, the lips joined it. See Ingrid Jenker, *Joyce Wieland: A Vignette* (Halifax, N.S.: Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, 2000), unpaginated.
In addition, the numerous pink-lipped signs created through touch in *O Canada* and arranged in a spreadsheet devoid of hierarchy—they are at once horizontal and vertical—also convey equality and multiple viewpoints. As Irigaray pointed out, a woman’s lips are oriented both horizontally and vertically and this too allows for articulation from various perspectives. The two different orientations in Wieland’s print refer to the orientations of women’s lips. In this way, they speak from a uniquely female perspective.

The two orientations are also at work in the object itself. The matrix and sheet of paper are traditionally placed along the horizontal plane. Yet once they are done speaking together, the sheet may be reoriented to align with a vertical axis. These two vectors also evoke the dual orientation of female lips that allow woman to speak. By putting into play this dual orientation and employing fluidity, *O Canada* contributes to the dismantling of the structure based on a single truth or hierarchy and replaces it with a system based on multiplicity, fluidity, and openness.

Another, albeit less obvious, way that Wieland used her lips and allowed them to speak together in order to open up the signifying structure can be observed in her original performance and its translation into print. This dismantling of the traditional discourse is evident in the way she performed her speech acts on the lithographic matrix. Printmaking is a mirror process so everything written on a stone or plate will appear in reverse. In order to be able to read words in a lithograph, engraving, or etching, the artist must impress the words on the surface in reverse, or right to left, so that they will read in the correct order, from left to right, in the final print. Two different syntaxes, therefore, are required. Double syntax, Irigaray theorized, was one way to challenge masculine logic.
and insert a feminine presence.

Irigaray rhapsodized about a new language based on a double syntax. Its structure would entail difference, proximity, and closeness. She suggested that a model for this system could be found in a woman’s lips. Both the oral and vaginal lips touch and embrace while remaining open. Additionally, the lips occupy different spaces and yet they often meet across a divide. It is the fluidity inherent in femininity, Irigaray argued, that would offer a possible structure for a new language and would allow for difference. Since a double syntax would allow for proximity, exchange, and difference, it would give voice to woman’s desires and in so doing place it along side the masculine desire. By demonstrating the act of affection and self-love by kissing the stone, which represents a feminine entity, in reverse in order to make the text legible in the print version, Wieland’s print dramatizes a double syntax. In *O Canada* Wieland’s lips spoke together in order to carve out a space for the feminine voice in the traditional discursive system.

Wieland was not the only artist who realized the expressive potential of the female signifier. Andy Warhol recognized their value in *Marilyn Monroe’s Lips*, 1962 (fig. 181). In this work of art, Warhol extracted the image of Monroe’s lips from the publicity stills and re-arranged them in a non-hierarchical format. This subject and composition appear similar to the subject and form in Wieland’s print, and yet they differ. The lips in Warhol’s work are reproduced from a photographic image, while those in Wieland’s print are not. *Monroe’s Lips* exhibit all the signs of reproduction; they are uniform in shape, they are printed using Benday dots, and they exhibit the uneven inking, distinct black outlines, and flat shapes of color inherent to reproduction. These reproductive characteristics distinguish them from the hand-made, or more specifically
the lip-made, quality of *O Canada*.

In Warhol’s work the photomechanical process served to evacuate his presence while demonstrating that desire operates in consumer culture. Warhol famously stated that he wished to be a machine, and he wished that everyone would be a machine.  

By using a celebrity photo-still published by a Hollywood publicity department, reproducing it in silkscreen, and allowing the qualities of reproduction to show through, he denied Monroe an authentic presence because he allowed the packaging to emerge. In other words, aspects of reproduction undermine the seamless facade of the glittery star. As Cecil Whiting has pointed out, the manufactured quality manifest in Warhol’s work also demonstrates how consumer culture and desire function.

When some part of the star is lacking not wholly present to the consumer, the consumer’s desire to really know and fully possess the celebrity is stimulated. By foregrounding reproduction, as Whiting argues, Warhol revealed this lack and desire. The artist’s use of repetition also speaks to this desire because repetition provides opportunities to get closer. In other words, the numerous times an individual sees a star enhances his/her likelihood that s/he will obtain that desired proximity. Yet that never occurs because the consumer is continually denied this union. His or her desire is left lacking because of the impenetrable surface.

---

97 Cécile Whiting, “Warhol, the Public Star and the Private Self,” in *A Taste for Pop: Art, Gender, and Consumer Culture* (New York: NY, Cambridge University Press, 1997), 146-186. When Monroe was a star in the 1950s and 1960s the Hollywood studios shaped and packaged her persona as well as those of other celebrities. Marilyn Monroe’s sexuality, for example, was sold to the consumer through movies and publications.
98 Ibid.
The streaked ink that runs across Monroe’s lips, as Benjamin Buchloh has argued, also prohibits clarity and a connection to anything real.\textsuperscript{99} This opacity stimulates desire to get beyond the image to know more, yet reproduction always denies that possibility because the same package is continually used and nothing real (or different) ever materializes.\textsuperscript{100} Warhol’s reduction parodies the process by which stars were simplified into glittery, seductive packages intended to stimulate the consumer’s desire for more Monroe. No matter how many times the image was repeated, it still remained an image, a signifier of Monroe’s celebrity and of her sexuality.\textsuperscript{101}

Wieland, too, exploited the lip sign, reproduction, and repetition in \textit{O Canada}. Unlike the lips in Warhol’s print, the variable lip shapes in Wieland’s print denote an individual’s presence at the site of making. When Wieland put her body to work like a matrix by pressing her lips and transferring color onto a stone, which was then reproduced on paper, she played out Warhol’s wish that everyone be a machine. Even though she employed her body like a printmaking machine, the images produced were not uniform; rather, each one has a unique shape. This difference cleared space for individual voices to articulate their desire, the desire to be heard. In this way, they differ from the lips and desire present in Warhol’s work. The lips in his work describe desire in commodity or consumer culture, while the lips in Wieland’s work suggest the desire for a voice in the masculine-dominated culture and lack of that reality.

When Wieland mobilized her own body to mimic these structures she drew attention to them and became an active agent in them. As a result her image has an

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
authority and an autonomy that is not present in or Warhol’s (or de Kooning’s) work. Although drawing with the body or using the body as a machine has an artistic pedigree, Wieland altered it by inserting a specifically feminine logic. In the discourse present in *O Canada*, the lips speak together to redefine the masculine signifying structure. It may even be possible to suggest that by joining feminine logic with masculine (here that means the patriotic, masculine song and feminine grammar) in this print, Wieland revealed a new language; it is one that allows for both voices to be heard. This duality, according to Irigaray, would really allow for difference.

Three years after Wieland completed *O Canada*, she allowed her lips to speak together and articulate the desire for the recognition of differences in traditional discourse. This time she put her lips to work after she returned to Canada. After living in New York City for almost ten years, Wieland moved back to Toronto for personal and professional reasons. Specifically, the artist was excluded from the Film Archives, she was attacked outside her apartment building in Manhattan, and she realized during her trip across Canada—while she filmed *Reason Over Passion*—how much she missed her native country.  

She noted in an interview that she gave upon her return, “I realized

---

102 Wieland’s interest in subverting masculine discourse may have had something to do with the rejection of her work from the Anthology Film Archives in 1970. As Lucy Lippard has pointed out, Wieland really felt the effects of sexism when her films were not accepted in the Archives. The Archives opened in the beginning of the decade and its mission was to preserve Structural films. The works of Michael Snow, Ken Jacobs, and Hollis Frampton were included in the Archive while Wieland’s were not. Wieland worked with these individuals and, as she told film historian Lauren Rabinovitz, she considered her work to be part of this movement. She felt, therefore, that her work should have been included in the Archives. The selection committee—made up of Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas, P. Adams Sitney, Peter Kubelka, and Ken Kelman—thought otherwise. Wieland noted in that same interview that the experience was a “turning point.” She stated, “I came all that way with all those people, and I really loved it. Then I was left out of the Archives, and I thought ‘Goddman (sic) that shit.’” It seems that
how much I loved it. It’s to do with comparison…living without it.”

Perhaps the biggest impetus for the move was her disappointment in America and its dominance of her homeland. In a 1974 interview conducted in Toronto, Wieland stated that her burgeoning awareness and response to the inequitable relationship between the two countries drove her North. She stated,

We went through all this political stuff in the States and it took a while to connect with what was going on there to what was going on here. You couldn’t do a goddamn thing about what was happening there, and then I saw what the power structure of that country was doing here and wow! — you sort of run for the fort.

After Wieland returned home, she began to make works of art that acknowledged the disparate and neglected voices that define her native land. Her concern for her fellow Canadians, their history, and their role in the country’s future is evident in a suite of prints that she produced three years after her return to Toronto. *Squid Jiggin’ Grounds*, *The Arctic Belongs to Itself*, and *Facing North-Self Portrait*, the three prints included in this suite, mark a slight change in Wieland’s work; they stage the artist’s desire to get “at

---

Wieland felt slighted and silenced by the system. The suppression of her art and her experiences may have led her to address power structures and confront traditional signifying structures in *O Canada*. P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde, 1943-1978* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); see also George Maciunas, “Some Comments on Structural Film by P. Adams Sitney,” *Film Culture* 47 (1969); see also Lippard, “Watershed: Contradiction, Communication and Canada in Joyce Wieland’s Work,” 5-6; see also Wieland and Rabinovitz, “An Interview with Joyce Wieland,” 9.


the land” because it “was important.” By using her lips and allowing them to speak together, the artist demonstrated the pluralism and multiple voices that structure the Canadian cultural landscape. These prints, then, suggest the desire for a country that acknowledges all its constituents.

Wieland explored these ideas while working at the Open Studio in Toronto in 1973 and 1974. As in *O Canada*, the artist used her body like a print matrix, a machine, to create all three prints. Unlike the early print, Wieland combined both the syllabic and alphabetic phonetic system in the first two prints of the new suite. In the first print, *Squid Jiggin’ Grounds* the artist used her lips and the alphabet to articulate the first stanza of the Newfoundland folk song “Squid-Jiggin’ Ground,” which was written by Arthur Scammell in 1928. In a performance similar to that of *O Canada*, the artist impressed her lips on the stone every time she articulated a different syllable in the song that celebrates fishing traditions in Canada’s most eastern province,

Oh, this is the place where the fishermen gather  
With oil-skins and boots and Cape Ann’s battened down  
All sizes of figures with squid lines and jiggers  
They congregate here on the squid-jiggin’ ground

105 In an interview with Pierre Théberge, director of National Gallery in Ottawa for inclusion in the publication that accompanied her retrospective, Wieland stated “I don’t think that there that much irony in my work now as in the past…. (because it is) too frivolous… we have to get to the very essential thing now, the land, and how we feel about it…. It’s important…” Joyce Wieland and Pierre Théberge, “Interview with Joyce Wieland,” in *True Patriot Love/Véritable Amour Patriotique* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada), unpaginated sheet.

106 Located in downtown Toronto, the Open Studio is a cooperative print workshop that opened in 1970. Artists who wanted to make prints but who didn’t have access to facilities founded the studio, and it still operates today. For more information on the studio see Linda Genereux, Robert Stacey, and Liz Wylie, *A Public Room: Open Studio’s Twentieth Anniversary* (Toronto, ON: The Open Studio and King Printing, 1990).

107 Gerald Doyle, *Old Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland* (St. John’s, NF: Manning and Rabbits, 1940).
After Wieland left her mark on the stone, the master printer and director of lithography at the Open Studio, Donald Holman, fixed the impressions, applied a mixture of fire- and flame-red inks to the indices, and then transferred them to paper. In a second step, the words that correspond to each lipstick mark were printed below. Holman again inked the stone in similar colors and printed the hand-written words on large-format paper so that the words appear just below the lips. Each print in the edition of fifty prints contains fifty-five lip impressions that convey the Canadian folk song.

Wieland arranged these words and lip impressions in a circular composition. The layout recalls a formal device that the artist had employed in some of her earlier work. In *Birds at Sunrise*, 1972 (fig. 182), and the quilt *Arctic Day*, 1970 (fig. 183) for example, the artist used a circular composition for aesthetic and formal purposes. In the film, for example, Wieland opened and closed the len’s iris to move between scenes and focus on objects. The technique and mechanical aspects of the film allowed Wieland to focus attention on the birds. The iris-like opening achieves similar effects in *Squid Jiggin’ Grounds*.

The circular layout in *Squid Jiggin’ Grounds* functions as a magnifying device that focuses the viewer’s attention on the words and lip impressions. Using this technique, Wieland emphasized the fluid shapes of the lips and the fluidity of the script.

---

109 According to the Open Studio records, ten additional impression were printed on cloth. Therefore, the edition consists of fifty prints on BFK Rives paper and ten on cloth. In addition to these in the edition and per usual workshop procedure, one “right to print” lithograph, two Open Studio lithographs, two “printer’s proofs,” and eleven “artist’s proofs” were printed in addition to the fifty edition on paper and ten on cloth. The printers who pulled this image, according to Open Studio records, include Donald Holman, Steve MacKenzie, and Charles Wall. See “Artist’s File: Joyce Wieland,” Open Studio Print Record, Open Studio, Toronto, Ontario.
Both the movement and dancing cursive also recall the jiggin’ movement of the fisherman’s lines.¹¹⁰

Newfoundland fishermen have traditionally attracted groundfish (or cod) and squid by baiting and jigging (or jerking) the line. This technique is successful because it moves and looks like the squid’s pray, the prawn. By mimicking that movement, the fisherman catch squid. In Wieland’s print, the rolling script that tugs back and forth recalls the motion of the fishing line. It, therefore, evokes the fishing traditions in Newfoundland. The dancing script and circular composition also recalls, as one art historian has noted, the rolling waves in the waters off the coast of Newfoundland.¹¹¹ Thus the format and subject announce rich Canadian traditions.

For those unfamiliar with the folk song and the traditions Wieland provided guidance. By placing the words against the singing mouths, the artist enabled those who did not know the tune to follow the bouncing ball and sing along. She might have had this teaching tool in mind because, as she noted in a 1981 interview, when she was a child her teachers used this technique. She stated they held “up pictures with words on them,” and “that part of learning to read imprinted very strongly one me.”¹¹² In this print, the reader is made aware of the Newfoundland tradition as s/he reads the words while mimicking the labial, dental, and guttural speech patterns in the lips. By following the bouncing ball, the singer learns and gives a voice to the rich tradition and technique of fishing along the eastern Canadian coastline. Thus, *Squid Jiggin’ Grounds* is a print of Canada’s cultural

---

¹¹¹ Fleming, 78.
landscape. Yet image is also a landscape image because it evokes the rolling waves along the coast of Newfoundland.

Wieland also incorporated signifiers of regional identity and landscape traditions in the second print within the suite, *The Arctic Belongs to Itself*. As in the two prior prints, Wieland pressed her lips onto the stone fifteen times. The artist placed the impressions in four horizontal rows that span the surface of the stone. The words, “The Arctic Belongs to Itself,” in sans serif type, appear below the lipstick marks. When Wieland’s performance ended and after the words were added, the traces were fixed, coated with red ink, and then printed on a thirteen by seventeen inch sheet of paper.\(^{113}\) The rigid composition and architectonic font are less whimsical than the font and layout in *Squid Jiggin’ Grounds*. Yet the orientation of the work and the horizontal elements more specifically evoke a landscape.

Wieland was not the first Canadian artist who used the land north of the 42\(^{nd}\) parallel as subject matter. There is a long and established tradition of landscape painting in Canada. In the nineteenth century, it was accorded the highest status in The Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts. By the early-twentieth century it came to be celebrated as a symbol of Canadian identity.\(^{114}\)

---

\(^{113}\) According to the Open Studio’s records, this print was pulled in one process. The text and the lipstick traces did not require two separate printings. In addition to the fifty editioned prints on Arches paper, two trial proofs, two Open Studio proofs, three printer’s proofs, and two artist’s proofs were also printed. According to the Open Studio’s records, Donald Holman and Steve MacKenzie printed this image. See “Artist’s File: Joyce Wieland,” Open Studio Print Record, Open Studio, Toronto, Ontario.

\(^{114}\) When Lucius O’Brien became the first President of The Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts after it opened in 1880, he cemented the connection. Among the many mandates, he accorded landscape painting the greatest status. See Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press, 1988); see also Barry Lord,
The work of The Group of 7—formed in 1920 by Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and F.H. Varley—and Tom Thomson stimulated pride and a connection to the landscape. Landscape garnered much respect because these artists celebrated Canada’s natural resources in oil paint. They went into the wilderness, to the Arctic, and to the coasts to render the beauty and ruggedness in paint. Their use of bright colors and bold forms lent grandeur to the northern territories. Their achievements led many Canadians to look at the landscape with appreciative eyes, and the works produced generated serious attention and interest. A.Y. Jackson’s *This Beothic at Bache Ellesmere Island*, 1924 (fig. 184), was one such painting that fed this “cult of the North.” Ultimately, these landscape paintings helped shape Canadian art and identity.

These works became such a signifier of Canadian identity that between 1942 and 1963 they were reproduced into silkscreen by the firm Sampson-Mathews Limited, working in cooperation with the National Gallery of Canada. In an article on national identity in the Sampson-Mathews Silkscreen Project, Joyce Zemans has described the

---


115 Reid noted, “Slowly, first through the assertion of the primacy of Canadian subject matter for Canadians, then through the invention of a distinctive visual language, those who were searching for the ‘essence of Canada arrived at a position of complete opposition to the values, and ever the painting technique, of most of the generation who preceded them.” Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 135.

116 As a result of their work, Reid observed, Toronto became a thriving center for art activity. In addition, Reid noted that there were more than forty shows of their work between 1920 and 1922. Ibid., 151-152.

117 Ibid., 148. Jackson was the first group member to visit the Arctic. He did so in 1927.

original goal of reproducing the prints was to aid the armed services.\textsuperscript{119} Zemans’ points out that it was believed images of Canadian landscape could foster “an understanding and appreciation of Canada” among those serving their country in the Second World War.\textsuperscript{120} To that end, prints were produced for display on army bases.\textsuperscript{121} Prints of the Canadian landscape by artists such as Yvonne McKague Housser (fig. 185) were also distributed to schools, libraries, and other public institutions (fig. 186). According to Zemans, they inspired similar sentiments.\textsuperscript{122}

Since these prints were exhibited in public places for about twenty years, Zemans has pointed out that many adults and children who saw the landscape prints came to see themselves through their land. As a result, they accepted the images as manifestations of Canadian identity.\textsuperscript{123} Dennis Reid has described the impact that these prints had on the national psyche, he observes “A whole generation of Canadians who grew up following the Second World War learned of The Group (of 7) almost entirely from reproductive silkscreen prints that seemed to hang in every school, library, bank, and doctor’s waiting room in the country.”\textsuperscript{124} Thus, the reproduction of The Group of 7 and Thomson’s paintings played a major role in shaping and shifting the notion of Canadian art.

Wieland, too, felt the impact of these images. She noted in a 1974 interview that “there has been nothing more powerful than The Group of Seven. Nothing more remembered and more important to people even if they just touched upon a Tom

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 8, 10.  
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 8.  
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 10.  
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 32-37.  
\textsuperscript{124} Dennis Reid, The Group of Seven: Selected Watercolors, Drawings, and Prints from the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto, ON: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1989), 23.
Thomson print in Public School when they were twelve. For some reason those things have a terrific impact, people say that is us.”¹²⁵ Forty years later artists belonging to the group known as the Painters Eleven continued to employ the landscape in order to create a distinctive style.

Jack Bush, Oscar Cahén, Hortense Gordon, Tom Hodgson, Alexandra Luke, Jock Macdonald, Ray Mead, Kazuo Nakamura, William Ronald, Harold Town, and Walter Yarwood, known as the Painters Eleven, exhibited as a collective from 1954 until 1960, and their exhibitions often included abstract renderings of the landscape.¹²⁶ Unlike The Group of Seven, they did not share common views, but they did share an interest in and commitment to modernism, and specifically Abstract Expressionism.¹²⁷ In Jack Bush’s *Mood with Yellow*, 1959 (fig. 187), and Kazuo Nakamura’s *Early Spring*, 1958 (fig. 188) for example, the vigorous brushwork and thickly painted canvases recall the paint application in Abstract Expressionist paintings. In addition, the horizontal compositions suggest, rather than mimic, the landscape. Although there was not a collective effort to valorize the landscape among the Painters Eleven, its presence seeped into many works of art. The landscape and composition in *Squid Jiggin’ Grounds* and *The Arctic Belongs to Itself* follow this tradition.

The linear, parallel arrangement of lips and words in *The Arctic Belongs to Itself* evoke a horizon line or a shoreline, and therefore they suggest a landscape scene. In addition, the sparse imagery recalls the spare topography that defines the Arctic and images of the Arctic. For example, the austere, extreme northern landscape can be seen in

---

¹²⁵ Wieland, Magidson, and Wright, 67.
¹²⁷ Reid, “Painters Eleven,” in *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 238-263.
K. M. Graham’s painting used in an advertisement for Nordair (fig. 189). The airline took out an ad in *Artscanada* in 1971 to announce new service to the Arctic for artists “whose fascination for it” required the service. Following in these traditions, the spare color and imagery in *The Arctic Belongs to Itself* describes the sober, harsh Arctic landscape and the intemperate climate.

The harsh climate in the Far North, as Janet Berlon and Ruth Phillips have noted, required the Aboriginal people and First Nations people who populated the area to move according to the cycles of nature and the migration of the animals.\(^{128}\) When the caribou and the seals migrated because of the changing weather, for example, the inhabitants often followed in order to survive.\(^{129}\) Wieland’s print evokes this existence. The rigid letters and severe composition in *The Arctic Belongs to Itself* suggest this Spartan topography in the North, the indomitably strong forces that shape life, and the rugged inhabitants who live there.

Wieland used a similar technique in *Squid Jiggin’ Grounds*. The willowy script and the cyclical composition allude to the undulating movement in waters around Newfoundland. The elements in this larger print describe the fluidity of the sea and coastline. It, too, represents the landscape to which its title alludes. Although Wieland continued the tradition of landscape in art, the way she manipulated imagery, lettering, and color allowed her to pry open that tradition and admit different, regional conventions.

She replaced academic traditions to describe the landscape with a language that originated with her gendered body. Using her lips, she laid out the landscape. In *Squid*

---


\(^{129}\) Ibid., 142-144.
Jiggin’ Grounds and The Arctic Belongs to Itself she put her lips to work forming as well as informing viewers about the Canadian landscape. Although they allowed for a feminine form of expression, they also opened space to allow for difference; this process admitted neglected voices into the landscape tradition. By placing the syllabic patterns of lips on the stone while singing the praises of local folk traditions, Wieland expanded the traditional discourse.

She also drew attention to regional traditions and their contribution to the fabric of the cultural landscape in Canada by joining syllabic, tactile grammar to alphabetic, visual grammar. Using a tactile grammar seen in the syllabic patterns she acknowledged feminine and regional conventions. She joined these forms to traditional visual grammar of landscape conventions and language. Tactile vocabulary, which is indicative of the female experience as Irigaray theorized, can open the traditional signifying structure by allowing for difference. This practice materializes in these two prints because Wieland’s lips touched each other and sang about the two regions, then her lips touched the stone, and then those indices touched the paper. In this performance, they embraced each other and the stone but one set never dominated the other. By allowing her lips to speak together, Wieland introduced the feminine subject into the symbolic realm of language and cultural traditions. When Wieland kissed the stone and sang about regional identities, she admitted difference into the discourse of Canadian landscape traditions.

By marrying female grammar into conventions of landscape, she jammed the female signifying system into the traditional structure in order to allow for difference. In other words, by joining traditional landscape vocabulary of composition and form to the gendered vocabulary of touch, Wieland rendered a landscape that admitted a different
point of view and a unique perspective on the Canadian landscape. With the signifying structure open, Wieland brought feminine and regional voices to artistic traditions in the North. Since one grammar does not dominate another, there is an equality to the vocabulary that expands this very Canadian subject. The differences admitted into traditional landscape vocabulary reflect the diversity of the country.

Wieland enhanced pluralism by maintaining tension between the words and lips. The friction between the different speech patterns precludes the possibility that one voice could dominate another. For example, the viewer may read the alphabetic words and initially neglect the lip formations but their proximity forces an awareness of the lips and a comparison between the two forms, if for no other reason then to see if the two languages match. This fluidity (which is also a feature of feminine vocabulary) between the two languages suspends a singular reading. This lack of a universal discourse or lack of a linear narrative (which is associated with the patriarchal signifying structure) denies the possibility that one reading could fully describe Canadian identity. The non-hierarchical language makes available multiple, diverse realities. The lips and regional songs contribute to the cultural landscape and together they speak of life in the Far North and along the eastern-most coastline. In other words, the lips and mouth become part of the landscape tradition because they admit difference and thus truly reflect Canadian identity and its diverse populous.

These prints were not the first time that Wieland used the mouth as landscape. In 1972, Wieland filmed Pierre Vallières’ mouth (fig. 190). In the sixteen millimeter, color film, the journalist, writer, and activist who was involved in the October Crisis of 1970 reads a speech about what he perceived to be the oppression of women and the
Québécois. It is a film that combines, according to Wieland, politics and aesthetics. She stated in a 1974 interview that she “had chosen a different route to get to the political matter by making it ostensibly an aesthetic film about the mouth as landscape.” The mouth in this film gives time and space to voices ostracized from the political and social landscape in Canada.

Yet Wieland prevented the film from devolving into either a political or aesthetic message by maintaining a tension between the two. She noted, “The mouth’s visual qualities keep you from the titles. Then the titles may keep you from the mouth and the spoken word…” Wieland noted that this friction activated the viewing process by suggesting, “You can be selective, create the film yourself. You should see it a couple of times. See it for the mouth, and then for what you can make from it…become the camera.” There was, she believed, so much to be done with “that kind of tension.” It seems that Wieland intentionally combined speech, word, and image to maintain a suspension in order to force viewers to suspend their disbelief and reconsider his words.

Wieland brought that same tension to Squid Jiggin’ Ground and The Arctic Belongs to Itself. By juxtaposing the two different languages, the viewer naturally compares each written word to every spoken word and in so doing is forced to consider the meaning of each. As an individual pauses over each syllabic and alphabetic word, s/he is led to construct an image of the Canadian landscape. By suspending a seamless reading of the landscape and introducing tension, Wieland displaced the traditional

---

130 Wieland, Magidson and Wright, 61.
131 Ibid., 63.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
signifying structure; the new structure encourages the reader to sing the praises of regional experiences.

The color that Wieland used in these two prints furthers this reconsideration of local character in the provinces and their connection to Canadian identity. The red and white color that the artist used to depict the song and represent the Arctic joins regional experiences to national ones because the colors in both prints are similar to those colors in the Canadian flag. By bringing the red of the national emblem to bear on regional landscape imagery, Wieland linked regional and national identities. She allude to this when she stated, “There is a great deal of subconscious material and individual sense about colour.”134 By rendering regional hymns and invoking a specific locale in colors that are linked to the entire country, Wieland wove together provincial and national concepts and in so doing suggested that Canadian identity is really a sum of its parts.

Angela Miller addresses the link between regional and national identities in her analysis of George Caleb Bingham’s *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*, 1845 (fig. 191). 135 Miller theorizes that Bingham joined western vernacular expression to eastern, academic styles in order to bolster the stability and unity of the expanding country.136 In the 1840s and the 1850s when America was still being shaped there was, as Miller notes, a need for images that celebrated regional attributes and described their role in supporting the nation’s philosophies, expansion policies, and security.137 According to Miller,
Bingham contributed to that endeavor by stressing the characteristic of the landscape in Missouri, its inhabitants, and their economy and also by placing them within the broader context of the American economy and culture. When Bingham rendered the fur trappers heading down river to trade their goods, for example, he placed them and their business into the broader economic structures that defined American industry.\(^{138}\) Miller suggests that by depicting the trappers in this way, Bingham showed them as an integral part of the growing economic structure rather than aggressive hunters in the West.\(^{139}\) The rivers aided in this communication by suggesting the route taken by the traders to market their goods.\(^{140}\) The rivers also offered viewers, and mostly those in the East, a visual map to move through unknown territory.\(^{141}\) This simultaneity, Miller surmises, conflated the distance between the two realities and linked them in a common endeavor.\(^{142}\)

Wieland’s prints of the Canadian landscape operate in a similar way. She conflated the distance between regional and national identities by joining signifiers of Canada as seen in the red colors and the landscape to signifiers of regional identities as noted in the songs and the presence of difference. She used her body, or more specifically her lips, to open a dialogue that allowed multiple voices—that described life in northern and eastern Canada—to be heard. These local experiences seeped into the artist’s prints through the utterance of the folk song “Squid Jiggin’ Grounds,” for example. She noted the importance of folk traditions to Canadian psyche, stating, “The folk arts in Canada are very powerful. They may be our grass roots art at this time…. Drawing from this would

\(^{138}\) Ibid., 114-117.  
\(^{139}\) Ibid., 117-119.  
\(^{140}\) Ibid., 120.  
\(^{141}\) Ibid., 121-122.  
\(^{142}\) Ibid., 122-123.
be a great source of nutrition.”143 By admitting this tradition into contemporary art forms and marrying it to national symbols, the artist signaled the relevance of folk traditions to contemporary discourses.

As a result of bringing these disparate elements together in these prints, regional experiences were brought to bear on abstract notions of national identity. By highlighting neglected aspects of Canadian experiences, Wieland described the pluralist nature of the Canada, and in so doing, she offered a new vocabulary to describe Canada. It seems that her ultimate goal was to celebrate the disparate Canadian traditions. Wieland acknowledged as much when she noted, “in putting these kind of things together to show people, to reflect back to them the textures, the centre of what we really are.”144 Her desire to provide a fuller picture of Canadian identity—one that acknowledged regional differences—and to expand the discourse on landscape traditions may have been linked to her belief that aspects of Canadian way of life on the land and the landscape itself required preservation.

In the early 1970s environmental and land-use issues as well as Native American rights became the subject of debate among many Canadians. The James Bay Dam project, for example, became one of the most volatile issues of the period.145 The government of Quebec pursued a plan to build a hydroelectric dam at James Bay in northern Quebec within the sub-Arctic region. The dam’s construction meant the potential dislocation of indigenous populations, the possible introduction of mercury into the food supply and destruction of fragile ecosystems. The project raised the ire of

---

142 Wieland, Magidson, and Wright, 67.
143 Ibid.
144 James F. Hornig, ed. Social and Environmental Impacts of the James Bay Hydroelectric Project (McGill-Queen’s Native and Northern Series, 1999).
committed environmentalists as well as the many individuals who were becoming environmentally conscious in the early 1970s. Wieland indicated her commitment to the environment by voicing concern about the potential damage that the dam would do to the land, noting, “That land which we count on, that we keep counting on, suddenly we look up and what has happened, it is all churned up, like the James Bay Project.”

Wieland’s concern about land use and land-rights issues extended to the Native Americans. The fight for Aboriginal territorial rights was the subject of concern. In 1973, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (group representing thirty different North American indigenous communities) sued the Canadian government in an attempt to reclaim Aboriginal land and other rights. The ITC claimed land known as the Nunavut territory in the Arctic and sub-Artic regions. In the early 1970s, Prime Minister Trudeau finally yielded to protests that Native Americans be granted status and land. The government established an Office of Native Claims and passed the Indian Act granting such lands and rights to the various communities that were disappearing.

Wieland and members of the politically active Ontario branch of the Canadian Artists Representatives often expressed their support of Native American claims, their dismay about the growing threat to the indigenous population, and the lack of attention.

---

146 Wieland, Magidson, and Wright, 63.
147 In the late 1960s when Native Americans groups complained that the Indian Act was discriminatory Prime Minister Trudeau quipped, “Fine. Get rid of it.” Ferguson, 372. In addition, in a 1969 White Paper Report on the state of Indian Affairs, Jean Chrétien—Trudeau’s Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development—suggested the government abolish the Indian Act, get rid of the Department of Indian Affairs, transfer native rights to the provinces, and eliminate reserve lands and special status. The report was widely criticized and people directed their anger at Trudeau, who eventually withdrew the report in 1970. See Bothwell, Drummond, and English, “Living after 1970: Culture, Education, and Social Trends,” in Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism, 419-420.
their concerns received. Wieland expressed her frustration noting “the whole goddamn (sic) sociology department at Thunder Bay had been taken over by Americans teaching black studies when Indians were lying all over the sidewalk. They didn’t have a study program for that…”148 The artist’s sentiments suggest her concern regarding the neglect of indigenous cultures, but it also speaks to the desire to have their demands addressed. Wieland gave voice to those cultures in *The Arctic Belongs to Itself*. The severity of the sans-serif font and sober composition in this print may to allude to the artist’s strong commitment to Native American rights and the seriousness of their claims to land in the Arctic.

In addition to issues taking place in the Arctic, the protection of rich fisheries in the waters off Newfoundland and of the fisherman’s livelihood began to concern many in the early 1970s. As historian Elizabeth Brubaker has noted, cod catches off the coast declined when fishing became big business in the 1970s.149 With the newly established Department of the Environment, a debate ensued about extending the fishing line along the eastern coast of Newfoundland. This alteration, as Brubaker points out, would provide greater resources for local fisherman.150

Wieland, it seems, believed it was important to support farming and others who earned a living from the land. She noted that if art celebrated this way of life and if it was “done well, farmers might get to dig themselves and wouldn’t allow themselves to be

---

148 Lambton, 91.
shoveled into the cities.”¹⁵¹ This way of life, according to Wieland, represented regional traditions and therefore was an aspect of Canadian identity. *Squid Jiggin’ Grounds* and *The Arctic Belongs to Itself* alludes to these traditions. By juxtaposing signifiers of local customs to larger regional traditions, Wieland linked regional identities to national ones. In so doing, she allowed her lips to speak together in order to insert multiple voices into the discourse about Canadian identity. These two prints, therefore, celebrate individual experiences and their contribution to the imagined community in Canada. They dramatize Wieland’s desire for a country that should include and recognize each experience as part of the larger whole.

In the third print in the suite, *Facing North-Self Impression*, Wieland inserted her presence into that community. To create *Facing North-Self Impression*, Wieland rolled her face across a stone matrix while bracing herself with her fingertips. The indices of her performance were fixed, pink ink was applied to them, and then they were transferred to paper fifty times. After each print was pulled from the press, Wieland kissed every one placing a unique mark (her signature mark) on the prints.¹⁵² The finished lithograph, therefore, contains a trace of the artist’s presence.

Wieland was not the first artist who used a facial impression to render a particular presence. Jasper Johns’ dragged his face across a sheet of paper to create *Study for Skin*, 1962 (fig. 192). To make this image, Johns applied grease to his face and pressed it on a sheet of paper beginning at the left margin and working his way toward the right. He then rubbed charcoal across the surface to draw out the latent image, (fig. 193). As in

¹⁵¹ Wieland, Magidson, and Wright, 63.
¹⁵² According to the Open Studio’s records, not every print received a kiss. The one in their permanent collection lacks the artist’s signature lip impression. See “Artist’s File: Joyce Wieland,” Open Studio Print Record, Open Studio, Toronto, Ontario.
Wieland’s work, the image in Johns’ work includes indices of the artist’s presence that describe a unique self-portrait. This process demonstrates Johns’ interest in the skin as boundary.

The skin, for Johns, functioned like a border that separated interiority from exteriority. The artist noted in the 1959 text for *Sixteen Americans* that this “boundary of a body is neither part of the enclosed body nor a part of the surrounding atmosphere.”

It is the surface from which one aspect of perception emerges. Johns theorized that the body perceives and understands objects and conceptions by looking at things and by touching things. The different senses allow for different modes of understanding. In Johns’ work, then, the skin is a boundary that conceals but also reveals different modes of perception.

Wieland’s project, too, demonstrates the role touch may play in perception and understanding. Yet she was not specifically interested in the way touch manifests cognitive processes. Touch in Wieland’s work operated as an alternative language that recognized difference. This pluralism enabled individuals to comprehend the multiplicity that defined the Canadian community. In *Facing North–Self Impression*, Wieland exploited touch, non-mimetic imagery, and an index of her presence to insert her identity into that collective. The trace provided that link.

Yet the trace that forms the face in *Facing North-Self Impression* is so abstract that the Rorschach-like blob does not immediately suggest a face, let alone Wieland’s

---

face specifically. It is only upon closer examination of the oval, that the symmetrical impression of the two indentations describe the eyes’ terminus point; they materialize in the proper place, slightly above the impression that appears to be the tip of a nose or the nostrils and a distance away from the lip index. The title confirms that this is indeed a face. According to Georges Didi-Huberman’s theory, it is precisely the non-mimetic quality of the index and its comparison to iconic traditions and symbolic language of portraiture that confirm the works as a self-portrait. The touch of Wieland’s lips allows the artist to place her presence in the portrait. The index confirms the artist’s identity, but it also restores authenticity voided during reproduction.

Printmaking evacuated Wieland’s indexical connection to the image, but after all fifty prints were pulled she breathed life into each one with a kiss. The traces from her lips ensure that Wieland’s presence will remain with each print. In this way, she restored her existence. It is a specific existence; it is one that speaks of the artist’s desire to look North and identify with Canada rather than South to America. By evoking the northern territory, Wieland staked her claim and her desire to be included in the Canadian community.

Wieland allowed her lips to speak together of her desire for inclusion. As we have seen, Irigaray theorized that the language of touch is a uniquely feminine experience, because women, unlike men, are always touching themselves, pleasing themselves. This self-affection, according to Irigaray, demonstrates that women can be active agents in their own desire and this activity may pry open the dominant mode of the phallic discourse and allow women to contribute her voice and experiences to traditional

language and ideology. Wieland demonstrated self-affection when she kissed her *Self Impression* because this intimate form of touching expresses self-love. The red lips also introduced a feminine presence, since it is a signifier of passion. It also represents the feminine voice because, as Irigaray noted, it suggests the blood that fills a woman’s lips and renders her flush when her desire is stimulated. Wieland brought that passion to her self-impression and enlivened it by using her lips to breathe life into her own image.

The tactile quality of the marks also suggest a feminine discourse because it is different from the scopic drive that shapes male desire. When Wieland’s lips touched each other and the paper, they articulated a feminine presence. In this way, Wieland spoke as woman declaring her self-affection and allowed her lips to contribute to traditional forms of self-portraiture. Wieland also exploited this uniquely gendered vocabulary in an attempt to locate her voice with the discourse of northern artistic traditions. By “facing North” rather than South, by employing symmetry, and by exploiting the printmaking tradition, she joined folk art traditions to her self-portrait. Specifically the forms that she used recall Canadian Inuit and other Aboriginal artistic traditions.

There are many diverse Native American groups, but they share some artistic traditions and similar styles. Bill Holm, the artist and art historian, analyzed and explained these styles in his landmark book, *Northwest Coast Art: An Analysis of Form*, published in 1965. Holm studied the arts that the Haida, Tlingit, and Tsimshain communities produced. These groups living along the Northwest Coast employed, according to Holm’s analysis, three distinct forms to render humans and animals. In the

---

“configurative” style the figure is shown in profile, in the “expansive” format some body parts are left out while others are moved to different locations, and in the third “distributive” form the figure’s physiognomy is totally rearranged for decorative purposes.\textsuperscript{157} Holm also noted that these communities used, more or less, three different design templates to create the forms. They include the “ovoid,” the “U-form” and the “formline.”\textsuperscript{158}

In the “formline” style, the profile of a human form may be displaced on opposite sides of a surface so that they appear to mirror each other.\textsuperscript{159} This form, according to Berlo and Phillips, is also known as “split representation.”\textsuperscript{160} In order to create a form in this style, an artist places a black primary line down marking out the general design and then applies a secondary red “formline” to fill out the design (fig. 194). If needed, the artist applies additional colored lines called “tertiary formlines.”\textsuperscript{161} The resulting image is symmetrical, but complete symmetry is precluded by the application of slightly off-centered ovoids and U-forms. It prevents, as Berlo and Phillips have pointed out, monotony while energizing the designs.\textsuperscript{162} These designs, as the art historians have documented, spread throughout southern Canada because goods that contained the split representation were exchanged during intertribal marriages, commissions, and trade.\textsuperscript{163}

This style is apparent in the ceremonial blanket from the Tlingit people in the Northwest Territories and Alaska (fig. 195), a totem pole also from the Northwest Coast

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 35-43
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 35-37.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 43-49.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 183-188.
(fig. 196), and a mask from the Ojibwa in Toronto (fig. 197). In the ceremonial blanket, for example, black formlines indicate a face. The face on the left side of the blanket finds its mirror image on the right side. The ovoid-shaped eye located to the left of the center mimics the eye to the right of center. Yet, the shape in the corner of each eye differs slightly, and this disparity enlivens the image. The “split representation” and abstracted features in this blanket distinguish it as a Native American work of art.

Artists of the Arctic and sub-Arctic also relied on symmetry and line in their works. The Inuit artists working at the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in Cape Dorset located on Baffin Island employed symmetry in their prints. The print shop at Cape Dorset is the oldest and best-known workshop in Canada. It opened in 1959 to accommodate the recently established community; in the 1950s the Inuits’ nomadic life ended due to famine, poverty, and disease, and as a result many settled into permanent settlements. Art co-operatives were set up in this and other communities so artists could create prints that could be sold for income. The prints made in this workshop demonstrate their allegiance with other Native American art forms.

The “split representation,” formlines, and abstract shapes appear in many prints produced in the Cape Dorset workshop. For example, the esteemed leader of the Kingnaimuit people and artist, Pootagook, exploited symmetry when he created an image of a hunter in Joyfully I See Ten Caribou (fig. 198). This print represents a bearded, smiling man who holds up both his arms and extends his fingers to convey, according to

---


165 Ibid., 164.
artist and art historian James Houston, the number of caribou he has seen. The black outlines that form the body and the salmon-red color that describes the clothed body evoke the form-line style. Additionally, the symmetry used to render the figure suggests an awareness of the split representation. The shapes and contours used to render the left half of the body are mirrored on the right. This flattened, balanced visage exhibits artistic conventions utilized among the Native Americans of Canada, but its treatment in print offered a new format for these designs. These designs appear reworked in Facing North—Self Impression.

The flattened image, symmetry, and abstract forms in Wieland’s print recall Native American art forms as they were developed and reinterpreted through modern institutions such as the Cape Dorset Studio. The simplified and abstract facial features appear similar to the visage in Pootagook’s portrait as well as the forms in the ceremonial blanket, the mask, and the totem pole. Wieland’s use of mirroring also recalls these traditions. The left half of the face is mirrored in the right half. In addition, the reproductive process further asserts symmetry because with each printing a mirror image materialized.

The lack of precise symmetry and mirroring that is present in the Tlingit blanket is also present in Wieland’s print. The hands on the left hand side of the print do not exactly reflect those on the right. In addition, the lip index is not always located in the center, and therefore its shift to one side does not allow for a symmetrical image. As in the Native American art forms, however, this imbalance enlivens the form. Since the lip impression is an index it enhances the liveliness of the print. Just as Pootagook placed his

---

166 Houston, *Eskimo Prints*, 32.
signature seal on the top left of the print to signify his presence, so too did Wieland signify her presence by placing her seal on the sheet of paper.

Wieland drew on these styles to insert her presence into the discourse of artistic traditions in the North, but it was also her desire to raise artisan traditions to fine art. She noted, “we look south, not north when talking about art.”167 Wieland’s interest in northern traditions reflects the widespread support of Inuit art in the late 1960s and the 1970s. A growing number of museums and galleries displayed indigenous art. For example, the Inuit art show, “Arts of the Raven,” immediately preceded her retrospective at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1968. In addition, Avrom Isaacs (Wieland’s dealer) opened an Inuit art gallery in 1970. It is probable that the awareness and sale of Native American artifacts by her dealer, the inclusion of totem poles in the landscape, and museums dedicated to celebrating the culture informed Wieland’s self-portrait.

By referencing Native American traditions, Facing North—Self Impression demonstrates Wieland’s belief that “the folk arts in Canada are very powerful” and that “drawing from this would be a great source of nutrition.”168 Indeed, these traditions nourished her art. Although the symmetry and flattened imagery found in Native American art forms fed her style, Wieland altered them to create a new form. Wieland reinterpreted inherited traditions to include her experiences. This work, then, denotes the insertion of northern traditions into her art and her art into northern traditions. In this way, the third print dramatizes the way that Wieland’s lips spoke together to articulate her desire for inclusion in the discourse of Canadian art. By allowing her lips to work this

168 Wieland, Magidson, and Wright, 67.
way, Wieland unhinged conventional artistic language that defined Canadian art and wedged in her gendered language. In so doing, she allowed for her voice to be heard. *Facing North-Self Impression* represents the pluralism that defines Canadian artistic traditions and calls into being her desire for recognition in those practices.

All three prints in this suite, as well the print *O Canada*, describe the various traditions, territories, communities and histories that define Canadian identity. In order to assert her presence and desire in that community, Wieland exploited the “basic symbols” that she had around her. In other words, she brought her lips to bear on traditional art forms and potent Canadian symbols and in so doing allowed them to her to speak of feminine experiences and difference. Not only did she insert her voice, but she also dramatized the multiplicity inherent in female lips and in so doing, cleared the way for multiple discourses. Thus, the gendered language of touch in Wieland’s prints jammed the theoretical machine and helped displace the traditional discourse in which one voice dominates all others. Her lips spoke together to articulate her desire for a community in which multiple voices could be heard.
Chapter 5:  
Vito Acconci as Medium, His Body as Matrix

In 1969 Vito Acconci “leapt off the page” and left behind his poetry and his life as a full-time writer in order to focus on the visual arts.¹ Two years later he brought the page and his body together in Trademarks, 1971 (fig. 22) and Kiss Off, 1971 (fig. 21) In these two prints and in one additional print, Touchstone for JL, 1973 (fig. 23), the artist used his body like a stone matrix and the stone matrix stood in for his body when he placed ink on one surface and transferred that ink onto another surface. Juxtaposed to these marks are photographs and/or text describing the artist’s process of mark making. By incorporating different aspects of the sign that denote the artist’s activity or presence and by exploiting reproduction to foreground absence, Acconci split his identity into many parts. Using conventional signs—including lipstick, which is a conventional marker of femininity—Acconci exploited reproduction to undermine the fixed signifying power of the phallus and the authority of the Other. In this way, these prints manifest the artist’s larger concerns about identity, even as they link his interests to larger debates regarding equality, power, and authority, which came under increasing scrutiny during the 1960s and 1970s.

¹ Vito Acconci was born and raised in the Bronx, NY. He graduated from Holy Cross College in Worcester, MA in 1962 with Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and he earned an M.F.A in creative writing from the Writer’s Workshop at the University of Iowa in 1964. After graduation, Acconci returned to New York and while living in his native city in the late 1960s, he wrote concrete poetry as well as art reviews for Art News. At the end of the 1960s he stopped writing and he has said in interviews that in 1969 he took a “leap off the page” and into the world. See Joseph Ruzicka “Lines to be Filled in later: An Interview with Vito Acconci,” On Paper 1 (July-August 1997): 27-28. See Kate Linker, Vito Acconci (New York: Rizzoli, 1994), 15.
Acconci addressed these issues in his first two prints, *Trademarks* and *Kiss Off*. In February 1971, the artist created his first print, *Trademarks*, at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design after accepting an invitation from Gerald Ferguson, the Director of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), to transform his activity *Trademarks* (fig. 200) into print. Ferguson saw photographs of *Trademarks*, which took place during September 1970 in an apartment in New York City, when they were included in an exhibition of the artist’s work in the Anna Leonowens Gallery at NSACD. The photographs document Acconci’s act of biting himself, applying ink to those marks, and then transferring them onto different surfaces. Regarding that September activity, the artist stated that the transfer of bite marks from his body to another body, a surface, or a

---

2 Gerald Ferguson to Vito Acconci, December 10, 1970, Vito Acconci/Artist File 141/142, Lithography Workshop Archives, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia. The artist has suggested that his early works should be considered activities, not performances. They should be considered activities because he acted upon himself to test his boundaries, to apply stress to his body. Since these were performed in private, often without an audience they should not be consider performances. Vito Acconci, interview by Jennifer Noonan, May 2007.

3 The photographs of Acconci’s private performance were taken by John Gibson and included in an exhibition entitled “Accessibilities” that was held at NSCAD in the winter of 1970/1971. Acconci stated in a 1971 interview that it was not initially a public performance. See Cindy Nemser, “An Interview with Vito Acconci,” *Arts Magazine* 45 (March 1971): 20.

4 The notes on the piece, which were published in the periodical *Avalanche* in the fall of 1972, also made public his performance: “Biting myself: biting as much of my body as I can reach. Applying printer’s ink to the bites; stamping bite-prints on various surfaces.” Eight additional paragraphs describe Acconci “turning in on” his body, “targeting it” in order to open “a closed region,” and make visible his “inside on the outside.” Also included are eight photographs of Acconci biting himself, a close up image of a bite on his left bicep, and an ink print taken from a bite mark. Published in New York by the artist, critic, and curator Willoughby Sharp, *Avalanche* was a quarterly magazine that first appeared in the fall of 1970 but ceased in the summer of 1976. The magazine, edited by Liz Bear, was mostly dedicated to exhibiting works of conceptual and performance art. The sixth issue, which came out in the fall of 1972, was entirely given over to Acconci’s work. See *Avalanche* 6 (Fall 1972).
wall was a way to take the private activity, in which the artist concentrated on himself, and make it public by sharing it with others, spreading it around.⁵

Ferguson realized the similarities between Acconci’s activity and the etching process; the bite marks on the artist’s body functioned like bite marks on a plate because both could accept ink and transfer it to various surfaces. He wrote,

> In relations to the bite piece, and particularly after seeing the role documenting several of your works, I noticed that you made bite relief prints. A very nice pun on the intaglio printing. Had you thought about doing these as a serious edition of prints? As Director of the Lithography Workshop, I would be very interested in co-operating with you on an edition of lithographs, using the bite print idea.⁶

Ferguson invited the artist to translate the activity into print, and he even suggested a layout that could include transferred “bite marks located in the centre and down at the bottom, text, explanation, discussion, etc.”⁷ Since Acconci had been thinking about the process of transference from private to public and recognized the similarities to printmaking, he accepted Ferguson’s invitation and made the act of transference permanent.⁸ In February 1971, Acconci traveled in Halifax and began working with master printer Bob Rodgers to translate the activity into lithography.⁹

---

⁷ Ibid.
⁹ Acconci flew to Halifax on February 1971. In some type written notes contained in the Vito Acconci exhibition files, it seems that the trip itself was intended to be another performance. Acconci wrote “1] On February 8, 1971, I will fly Air Canada to Halifax, Nova Scotia; I’m scheduled to return, by plane, on February 21. 2] Flying scares me; I’m afraid that I will die on the trip to or from Halifax. 3] Before my trip I will leave an envelope at the Registrar’s Office, School of Visual Arts (215 E. 23rd Street, NYC); the envelope will contain a key to my apartment. 4] In the event of my death, the envelope...
Working with Rodgers, Acconci completed the transfer into print through a two-step process. The first step involved moving the bite marks to stone. Although the artist’s activity was not restaged for the making of this print, he did bite himself to make the four bodily impressions that are woven into the text.\(^1\) To achieve this first stage, Acconci greased areas of his palm and arm and then bit into the grease, transferring a portion of the grease from his hand to his teeth. The grease that remained was then impressed upon a lithograph stone. Those indices were then fixed on the matrix. Through a chemical process, the greased impressions received a bluish-black ink, while the area surrounding the prints and the spots where his teeth removed the grease repelled the ink.

Acconci’s handwritten notes and photographs taken from his original activity were added in a second step.\(^1\) Using the photolithographic process, the photographs were transferred to an aluminum matrix. In the photolithographic process, a photographic negative of the text and photograph were exposed on an aluminum plate that was chemically treated with a light-sensitized gelatin. The lines and images exposed on the plate hardened on the surface and became receptive to ink, while the unexposed area of gelatin remained receptive to water and washed away. Therefore, as in photography, the

---

\(^1\) In an interview, Acconci stated that the activity was not restaged in Halifax. He stated that the September activity was the one and only time it was completed. There was not re-staging of these works. Vito Acconci, interview by Jennifer Noonan, May 2007. According to the artist’s records at NSCAD, a fresh bite mark was made for the first step in the two-step lithograph. The records state: “blue black ink applied with hand and arm” In addition, the master printer Bob Rodgers stated that Acconci re-bite himself for the print. Bob Rodgers, interview by Jennifer Noonan, November 2003 at NSCAD Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

\(^1\) Ibid.
negative areas became positive and received black ink and the positive areas became
negative and retained the color of the paper in each one of the fifty prints.\(^\text{12}\)

Each print contains indices, language, and photographs of the activity. One
photograph shows Acconci in the act of biting himself, and the other exhibits a close-up
of a bite mark on his left bicep. The artist pressed his skin so hard that he left deep
indentations and he left his mouth open so long that he generated excess saliva, which
dribbled away from the bite mark. This image captures the indentations and spit before
they disappear. The process of the biting and its resulting signs are describe in the text:

--Biting as much of my body as I can reach: turning on
myself, turning in on myself: performance as locomotion
across a boundary: connecting to a region, absorption by
one organization, of a neighboring organization: self-
absorption.

--Applying printer’s ink to each bite and making bite-
prints: identity pegs: identifiers of a certain position I have
taken at a certain time: TRADEMARKS (title of the piece
September 1970): performance as the shaping of an alibi.

--The bite-prints can be stamped on various surfaces
(papers, stone, a possession, another body): performance as
opening a system, sharing a secret.

Since the text emphasizes the biting process, it recalls printmaking traditions. The notion
of bite marks that can be inked and stamped refers, of course, to the etching process. In
this process, the plate is covered with resin (or another material that can be carved into
and yet remain impervious to acid) and the artist pulls an etching needle through the
waxy material to produce a design. Once the image is complete, the plate is placed into

\(^{12}\) Bob Rodgers with the help of technician, printer, and fellow artist Murphy Lively
printed this image. It was printed between February 15, 1971 and February 26, 1971.
According to the workshop documentation, one right to proof was printed, five trial
proofs, five artist’s proofs, fifty artist’s editions, four NSCAD impressions, four printer’s
proofs, one cancellation proof, and two additional for display were printed. Ibid.
an acid bath, and those areas of the plate that have been exposed with an etching needle are eaten away with acid. The longer the plate is left in the bath, the deeper the bite marks. The process of biting away at the plate produces bite marks. Acconci’s September activity of Trademarks recalls this process—it was the connection that Ferguson drew. Acconci bit his body, inked the bite marks, and then transferred them to another person or surface.

Acconci’s bite marks as well the reproduction and circulation of them during the September activity seems to indicate that he knowingly employed his body as a matrix. In printmaking, the matrix refers to the surface on which an artist leaves his mark. The way that Acconci used language and the bite marks is analogous to the etching process because in each process an aggressive agent attacks or bites a surface. Since the artist bit into his own body and extracted impressions from those marks it is possible to see how he used his body like a matrix to make his mark. Yet when he translated that activity into print, it was lithography that allowed the artist to take the activity public. The switch made sense for several reasons.

Primarily, lithography proved to be a logical venue because it dominated print production at NSCAD. Acconci had ready access to it and it could be combined with photolithography to translate the original activity. Lithography also allowed the artist to move indentations from his body directly to the stone matrix. The litho surface is sensitive enough to receive the slightest impressions—dandruff, for example—so it could easily accept Acconci’s bite marks. Although Acconci’s activity of biting his skin recalled the intaglio process, that technique would not have suited his needs. Since intaglio requires digging through one surface to get to another, it would not have
permitted Acconci to transfer the bite marks from his body. The bodily impressions would not have been aggressive enough to open up the wax for biting. If Acconci had wanted to use the intaglio process to create bite marks with his body, he would have had to bite into the resin directly and this would have omitted the bite marks taken from his bodily surface. This would have altered his project of concentrating on his bodily surface (his matrix), acting on it, and then sharing it by impressing marks onto another surface. The shift from an intaglio technique on the body to the lithographic technique in reproducing the body, therefore, allowed Acconci to preserve the private activity. Lithography stabilized his bite marks and made them public through reproduction.

Many scholars have noted that Acconci’s early work explores the binary oppositions of public and private. Kate Linker, one of the leading scholars of Acconci’s work, has argued that psychological theory informed the artist’s inquiries into the public versus the private self, as well as interpersonal relationships. According to Linker, the artist’s work reflects an understanding of the work of behavioral theorists Erving Goffman, Kurt Lewin, and Edward Hall. Goffman’s theories on social interaction and Lewin’s suggestions that the dynamics of a situation governs human behavior stimulated Acconci’s interest in subjectivity. In addition, Hall’s theories about the difference between the “intimate,” “social,” and the “public” self also informed Acconci’s

---

investigations into the public versus private self. According to Linker, the activity *Trademarks* indicates the artist’s interest in behavioral theory, because he used his body as an “instrument” or “agent” acting on its own surface to affect changes. This activity allowed the artist, according to Linker, to negotiate two facets of identity.

In referencing the artist’s September activity of *Trademarks*, Frazer Ward has also argued that the artist used his body as an element to conduct experiments. The activity indicates his desire to “shuttle between public and private realms so as to disallow any clear distinction between them.” The purpose, according to Ward, was to question the relations between the public and private self and the relationship between self and other.

Although neither Linker nor Frazer discusses the changes that occurred between the private act in his friend’s apartment to the more public act at NSCAD, it is easy to see that the transfer really allowed Acconci to test and push normative boundaries. His work at NSCAD did not only stretch the limits of normal behavior, but they also tested the boundaries of printmaking practices. While repetitively biting one’s hand is a social transgression, using bite marks and bodily fluid to create a print transgresses acceptable printmaking practices. Bob Rodgers stated as much when he noted that Acconci “pushed the limits of what printmaking could be” by modernizing the tradition. If Linker and Ward are correct in assuming that Acconci was interested in negotiating the space

---

15 Ibid, 30. According to Linker, for example, Goffman’s notions that all social engagements are mediated through conventions and rules that are never fixed because an individual may use different codes for differing circumstances influenced in Acconci’s early performances.
16 Ibid., 22.
18 Ibid, 26-27.
between his public and private, then it seems logical that he would move this activity to lithography because it allowed him to further that query.

The switch to lithograph and using the lithographic stone also made sense because it stood in for the space of the original activity. When Acconci first produced *Trademarks*, he did so on the floor of a friend’s apartment. That private space allowed the artist to test boundaries and experiment using his body as material. In a 1981 interview with Jan Avgikos, Acconci stated that up to 1974 he thought of his work “being very much about the floor, about sculpture, about things you can touch” as opposed to the wall that confronts the viewer, impedes the viewer.20 The floor became a place for Acconci to stand or sit on, it was the site of investigation. By using the horizontal surface of the floor rather than the vertical space of the wall, Acconci exploited horizontality because the vector evoked his presence. When he moved that activity to printmaking he allowed the stone, the horizontal matrix to stand in for the floor. It became the space where Acconci permanently made his mark.

Lithograph and the stone not only offered a surrogate space for Acconci’s activity, but it was also accommodated the artist’s desire to manipulate signs. The litho surface became a viable site because the stone matrix mimicked the bodily matrix as both assumed, shared, and discarded signs on its flat surface. Once the artist moved the signs from his body to the stone, the matrix stood in for the absent body matrix transferring signs from one surface to another. The marks on the stone indicate the once present artist and the activity of testing his boundaries. The translation of those marks from stone to paper substantiated his claim that he endured the activity. After they were fixed and

---

circulated in reproduction, the private activity was made permanent. The reproduced bite marks, therefore, operate as “alibis.” While the “alibis” in the original activity disappeared after they were removed from another’s body or the wall, the print really enabled the artist to go public, “share his secret,” and thus permanently fix what was fleeting.\(^{21}\) By sharing the activity through reproduction, the artist pried open his bodily system to others. The printmaking process, therefore, was the perfect vehicle to share his secret because it stood in for his absent body.

Printmaking would have been appealing to Acconci at this moment because the artist became increasingly interested in exploring the ways in which the body could behave as a machine, even a medium of mechanical reproduction. In a 1989 interview with Sylvère Lotringer for *Flash Art*, Acconci concurred with Lotringer’s assessment that "the brain is a muscle, but the body is a machine. The machine is a surrogate for the mental working out of something."\(^{22}\) This seems to indicate that the artist understood how his body operated like a mechanical reproduction device in order to “mentally work” through issues. Those issues, specifically in Acconci’s prints, refer to the negotiation between the self and the environment and where the individual’s physical boundary meets and unveils its psychic limits. The signs of that engagement are worn on the body. Thus, the body is the matrix that yields these signs.

The same year that Acconci used his body in this way to create the print *Trademarks*, Kent Bloomer articulated a similar perspective in an article describing the relationship between the body and its environment. In a 1971 article, Bloomer, a professor of architecture at Yale University, expressed interest in the relationship

\(^{22}\) Lotringer, 126.
between an object and its space. He argued that the body operates like a matrix within its environment because it is the boundary where the exterior world encounters the interior. That surface, according to the author, is a “sensitized zone which can magnify or dampen forces emanating from within and without the body.”

This body matrix, as Bloomer stated, exhibits and mediates the relationship between the self and the world. Through the corporeal matrix, as Bloomer argued, individuals acquire knowledge about their place in the world, their relationship to things as well as their “memories and the rhythms which constitute…human identity.” Following Bloomer’s theories, any conception of identity must consider the body matrix, because it is the place where exterior and interior experiences or knowledge merge. Information about this meeting materializes in the signs that appear on the corporeal surface. They clue others into an individual’s identity and experiences. In this way the body functions like a mechanical matrix where signs about the self and the world are embedded and become visible.

Bloomer’s argument is applicable to Acconci’s activity and the print Trademarks as well as the artist’s activity Rubbing Piece, 1970 (fig. 201). In this activity, the artist rubbed his left forearm with his right hand for an hour. The activity was one of eight completed by various artists on a Saturday afternoon at Max’s Kansas City in New York. Although this work began at Max’s, it continued after the artist left. The three-

---

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 10.
26 This restaurant and nightclub opened in 1965 and attracted many young artists, musicians, and writers, as well as an assortment of the glitterati. Owner Mickey Ruskin permitted artists to install works of art and stage performances, and Rubbing Piece was just one of many works that occurred in the venue. For a history of Max’s Kansas City
inch sore of raw flesh that materialized on Acconci’s arm remained after the activity ended. The resulting mark suggests the body as matrix. In lithography, for example, an artist scores a stone surface with a design, that design is then fixed, and the latent image brought out with colored inks. In Acconci’s activity, the bodily matrix operated like the stone matrix because latent signs of his marking making appeared in color after the activity ended. The marks revealed the location where he tested his psychic and physiological boundaries.

The red mark that Acconci wore on his body like a Scarlet Letter also reminded viewers of his deviant behavior. The constant rubbing of a single body part evokes masturbation, which usually occurs in private where the results of one’s actions are kept secret. The index that materialized announced the artist’s naughty behavior and denoted the transgression. By rubbing himself in a gesture that recalls auto gratification and producing a visible sore, Acconci did not just make a private action public but his actions had the potential to rub people the wrong way. The reference to masturbation may not have been the only immodest aspect of the artist’s activity. The excessive and harmful self-inflicted gesture begs for either intervention or total denial, but by making it public and then wearing the mark of it around, Acconci forced viewers to confront the act. Thus, the impermanent tattoo not only tagged the artist as a deviant, but it also served as a constant reminder of the self-inflicted violence. Rubbing Piece, then, speaks to Bloomer’s theories because the artist’s forearm and the marks worn on it indicate where the artist’s interior, private self met up with his exterior, public one.

In *Trademarks* the print, the artist also worked through issues of subjectivity, and they too emerged on his body. In this piece, however, he allowed the matrix and the print to circulate his ideas. Lithography was perfectly suited to stand in for the absent body because just as this data materializes on the bodily matrix so to do latent images emerge from the stone matrix. The signs dramatize the meeting between Acconci’s self and his environment. In other words, the stone matrix operated like the bodily matrix and became the surface on which signs of his presence became visible.

Craig Dworkin has recently argued that Acconci’s early activities indicate that he used his body as an “writing instrument” to mark other surfaces.27 According to Dworkin, the artist used his body like this instrument in the *Trademarks* activity to “allegorize the printed text of the poet,” and it allowed the artist, contrary to other scholarship, to continue his work in poetry. 28 Dworkin suggests that the artist wrote with his body to continue the type of poetry he explored on paper. According to the art historian, the speech-based poetry that explored terms like “voice” and “breath,” which centered on the mouth, gained currency when Acconci was a student and it made its way into his visual art.29 In Dworkin’s estimation, the artist’s activities in *Trademark* “dramatizes and makes visible the physical, material, hard-edged, textual production of what can come from the poet’s mouth.”30 He also stated the artist’s activity demonstrates that “the poet’s voice and all its lyrical effusions, are cut off” and as a result this work conducts “the same

---

28 Ibid., 100.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 101.
aggressive denial of speech-based poetics that” the artist’s writings “had waged in less somatically violent terms.”

In addition, Dworkin also suggests that the *Trademarks* activity also mimics the printed text because it describes the process of writing. The art historian points out that it recalls the practice of “trading marks,” and even more specifically, it refers to Acconci’s role as a poet and an editor. By including the artist’s words that he used “printer’s ink” to trade these marks in the activity, the author bolsters his argument. Dworkin argues that “performances like *Trademarks* may be thought of in terms of specifically linguistic production” and suggests that the artist pursued his interest in printed language after he “lept off the page.” Although Dworkin suggests that Acconci’s activity in *Trademarks* thematized printing and explored a very literal writing from his body, he argues that the artist used his body like a writing instrument not an implement of mechanical reproduction.

Dworkin’s argument links Acconci’s activities to his work in poetry and writing from the body. This may be the reason why Dworkin does not discuss the role of reproduction in *Trademarks* or explain the way in which the print developed the earlier work. Acconci’s reference to reproduction in the activity finds a parallel in the printmaking process. As noted above, the body functioned like a matrix and the stone matrix stood in for the absent body as both accepted and translated marks onto other

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., 100.
surfaces. It is precisely because the stone matrix could accept and reproduce signs that it became a logical venue for Acconci.

The reason the switch to lithography also made sense relates to the nature of the print’s flatbed. The horizontal vector offered Acconci a logical site to negotiate and manipulate signs pulled from the body because, as Walter Benjamin showed, the flat, horizontal axis belongs to the symbolic realm. The world of signs operates in this space. Benjamin pointed out that the horizontal vector is the realm of the graphics, while the vertical vector belongs to painting.36 According the Benjamin, paintings are “longitudinal” while graphic arts represent a cross-section.37 He noted, “The longitudinal section seems representational; it somehow contains objects. The cross section seems symbolic; it contains signs.”38 These graphic marks are most often read on the horizontal page set flat. For example, words in a newspaper or fingerprints on an identity card are often read by looking down on and across a flat surface. This orientation differs from paintings, which are viewed on the vertical axis. While pictures are vertical, according to Benjamin, signs are horizontal.39

Leo Steinberg has offered a similar analysis by linking the presence of signs in modern painting and horizontality to the contemporary interest in culture.40 In his 1972 text, Steinberg asserted that artists such as Robert Rauschenberg in Third Time Painting, 1961 (fig. 202), shifted art’s orientation to the domain of the horizontal in order “to cope

36 Ibid., 93-94.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
with the symbolic.”\[^41\] This shift, according to Steinberg, suggested an interest in signs, the material of culture, and process. By incorporating signs, culture, and process in painting, artists emphasized act of creation as it occurred on horizontal surfaces rather than the process of viewing which belonged to the vertical axis.\[^42\] This new aesthetic of the “flatbed picture plane” introduced the horizontal, opaque world of signs and culture into art production of the 1960s.\[^43\]

The print *Trademarks* speaks to this convention of horizontality. Acconci exploited signs and maintained their integrity by placing them on a stone surface and transferring them to a piece of paper. The indices, for example were pressed on a horizontal surface. Since they are non-mimetic and refer to their own making, they confirm their origin on the flat surface. In other words, what was flat remained flat.

In addition to the indices, the symbolic language present in the print also confirms its horizontal position. Printed words, and specifically, scripted hand-written words are read on a flat surface, from left to right. For example, words in a letter or words on the sheet of paper are read when held flat in the hand. The paper in this work of art, which contains hand-written notes, refers to that axis of reading. In this way, symbolic realm of language printed on paper confirms its flatness and horizontality.

Along with the indices and symbols, the iconic, grainy photographs also confirm a horizontal orientation. They recall the black-and-white, low-resolution photographs that appear in newspapers. Not only are newspapers created along a horizontal axis, they are often read on a flat surface. Since Acconci exploited the three different aspects of the sign

\[^41\] Ibid., 88.
\[^42\] Ibid., 90.
\[^43\] Ibid., 84-91.
in *Trademarks*, the work definitively belongs to the realm of the graphic. In this way, it seems logical that Acconci would choose the printmaking process because signs, according to Benjamin’s theory, reside along the horizontal axis. *Trademarks* honors that orientation as well the artist’s activity. By exploiting the flat axis in the print, then, Acconci engaged an important set of connections that have historically been made around art objects and the notion of horizontality.

Rosalind Krauss has recently theorized that artists such as Jackson Pollock exploited horizontality to “strike against form”—what Krauss called the “front-parallel organization of the Gestalt”—and culture.\(^44\) According Krauss, Pollock subverted traditions that emphasized the verticality of form and orientation by taking the canvas off the wall, placing it on the floor, and inscribing the surface with stenographic marks.\(^45\) The artist made the horizontal origin of the painting apparent because he created it on the horizontal axis and let the paint dry there so that the marks that sweep across the canvas surface are coherent and do not break formation to seep down the canvas, which they would have, had they been created and finished on the vertical axis. In addition, the trash that found its way onto the surface from the floor, from the artist’s shoes, and his mouth points to the site of production.\(^46\) By allowing the axis of the painting’s origin and all its dirtiness to show through, Pollock debased the good Gestalt of painting. While Gestalt forms are based on the vertical axis of the erect body, the marks laid down on horizontal surface are graphic in nature, lack mimesis, and thus are “formless” in painting. Pollock, according to Krauss, asserted this


\(^{45}\) Ibid., 94-97.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 95-97.
aspect of horizontality to mess with the good Gestalt in order to strike against form and culture.

Acconci also emphasized horizontality in his print *Trademarks* but his project did not entail subversion by means of dirtying of a good Gestalt. Rather, the artist used the horizontal vector because it was the space of the bodily activity and because it allowed the artist to manipulate signs that would then circulate along the horizontal vector. Unlike Pollock’s canvases that moved from the wall to the floor and back to the wall to “strike against” the vertical, Acconci froze his activity on the horizontal, manipulated signs that reference it, and circulated his marks on that level. The use of the horizontal axis in *Trademarks*, thus, differs from its use in Pollock’s work because Acconci emphasized and maintained the horizontal as a reference to his body and signs that describe it.

Specifically, the artist employed the horizontal surface of printmaking to work through signs of identity that he pulled from the body. By exploiting the matrix and reproduction, Acconci negotiated these signs to describe the body and its relationship to Other entities. As described in previous chapters, printmaking mimics subject formation because both are defined by the engagement between the body and the language of the Other. As noted previously, Jacques Lacan argued that the subject comes into being when the language or authority of the Other joins the real being.\(^{47}\) The trace of that meeting defines the subject. Since the subject can never be fully present in either one and instead vacillates between them, s/he is always defined by that which is lacking. This remainder, which Lacan labeled the *objet petit a*, marks the subject as lack and split. It also reignites

the desire to locate the self in the Other. This constant search suggests that the subject can never be a complete, coherent entity because it always seeks something outside itself.

This process of subject formation finds parallels in the printmaking process. Indices pulled from the body meet the signifying structure of the Other as they morph onto the matrix. Once those signs are joined and reproduced, only a trace of the body and a trace of language that defines the subject remains. Since there is only a remainder of both, reproduction precludes the full presence of the body and language that might fully describe every aspect of the subject. The print, therefore, operates like a remainder, the *object petit a*, because it marks the subject as lacking. The process also describes subject formation because prints are by nature multiple objects; the matrix can split the traces of the artist's presence and language into many parts. This is also analogous to subject formation because it also describes the subject as split and dispersed. This medium, then, was perfectly suited Acconci's investigations about subject formation, or his investigations into the nature of his being.

The signs and the reproductive process in *Trademarks* specifically suggest that Acconci worked through the drives that structure identity. By aggressively and repetitively biting his body and attempting to break down his bodily boundary and then using the matrix to stand in for his body and mimic that behavior, Acconci enacted the death drive. The signs in reproduction speak to this drive.

Sigmund Freud first described the death instinct as the drive among all organic life to return to an earlier state, that inanimate state that existed before the living one. Individuals seek this state in the process of dealing with unpleasant experiences, mostly

---

traumatic events and particularly those events in childhood. A traumatic event, according to Freud, may be “any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield.”\(^{49}\) Freud argued that these events are usually suppressed but they emerge in repetitive behavior.\(^{50}\) They manifest this way because individuals repeat unpleasant experiences in order to master them, and take an active rather than passive role in the experience.\(^{51}\) Yet this repetitive behavior is also destructive because it wears the individual down as it aims toward total destruction.\(^{52}\) In this way, the death instinct drive exhibits features of subjectivity that exist beyond the pleasure principle, which is the principle that seeks to preserve life and maximize pleasure. Although the death instinct seeks annihilation through repeating the traumatic destructive events, the life instinct pulls it back before it goes too far; after the death instinct is “jerked” back to a certain point, it makes “a fresh start” and “prolong[s] the journey.”\(^{53}\) What each individual is left with, according to Freud, is the wish “to die in its own fashion.”\(^{54}\)

Lacan looked to Freud’s concept of the death instinct but opposed the notion that the death drive is separate from the life drives. He suggested that the death drive informs every drive.\(^{55}\) Lacan theorized that every drive involves the subject in repetition, every drive pursues its own extinction, and every drive seeks to move beyond the pleasure

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 33.
\(^{50}\) Ibid., 10-17. Freud argued that this compulsion is apparent in a child’s game of “fort/da” where the child copes with his mother’s departure by reenacting the departure and return in a game. The child threw away a string and then reeled it back in, and in this game the child takes an active role in the departure. His compulsion to repeat the game, reveals the traumatic event. Ibid., 13-15.
\(^{51}\) Ibid.
\(^{52}\) Ibid. 46-51.
\(^{53}\) Ibid., 49.
\(^{54}\) Ibid., 47.
principle to the point where excess is enjoyed. Drives, according to Lacan, are partial, fundamental to every subject, a constant force, bound up with desire, and structure behavior.\(^{56}\) They are not governed by biological needs, but rather they are shaped by the possible realization of desire.\(^{57}\) For example, the oral drive is not concerned with acquiring food but with seeking the breast, an object lost in childhood.\(^{58}\) These drives circle around an object but never obtain it.\(^{59}\) Using “the dialectic of the bow,” Lacan explained that drives entail a move outward from the subject toward an object and back again.\(^{60}\) In this “circuit,” three grammatical voices structure the drive. They include the active voice (“to see”), the reflexive voice (“to see oneself”) and the passive (“to make oneself be seen”).\(^{61}\) The first two, according to Lacan, are autoerotic and may best be understood by thinking of a single mouth kissing itself.\(^{62}\) The third element comes into being once the drive completes its course and a new subject appears. This “dialectic of the bow” describes the conventional course that the drives follow.


\(^{58}\) Ibid.


In the sado-masochistic drive and the drive toward death, according to Lacan, the aim of the drive reverses as the subject seeks to understand what it means to be the object of desire or desire for recognition by another force.\(^{63}\) In order to accomplish this, the subject seeks to begin in the place of the Other and make himself the goal of the drive.\(^{64}\) This action reverses the normal circuit of the drive. Any pleasure the subject may acquire by bringing into play the action of the Other and believing that he mastered that Other will result in pain. This suffering occurs, in Lacan’s estimation, because with the continual force of the drive, or the repeated encounter with the Other, the subject exceeds the limits of pleasure.\(^{65}\) When a subject transgresses the boundaries of pleasure, known as the “pleasure principle,” s/he experiences pain because s/he can only tolerate a certain amount of pleasure.\(^{66}\) Try as the subject might to assimilate that excess of pleasure, s/he cannot. Pleasure becomes pain—what Lacan labeled “jouissance”—through excess and repetition. Jouissance and repetition define the sado-masochistic drive and that aspect of the death drive.

When Acconci repetitively and aggressively bit his own skin he enacted the sado-masochistic drive. This drive began at the mouth and sought to break down the bodily boundary through biting. The aim of the drive began when Acconci turned to his body and bit as much as he could. The gesture, according to the artist, allowed him to focus on himself. He stated, that he focused on himself to aim at “Finding myself—

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 182-184.

\(^{64}\) Lacan stated that this drive is noted “…at that moment” when the individual becomes “the subject of the drive.” Ibid.

\(^{65}\) Ibid.

getting to a region, getting through a region—the attempt is to reach and mark, as much of my body as possible. Turning in on myself, turning on myself (my action drives me into a circle): a way to connect, re-connect, my body….”

The teeth marks on the skin allude to an Other force that aimed toward the body surface and bit at it. When the artist attacked his flesh, he attempted to open up his bodily boundary, to open up the closed system. The bite marks on the artist’s skin denote the pressure of that drive. The absorption and eventual disappearance of those indentations suggests the end of the drive and its course as a closed circuit. The bite marks foreground this action, but they also summarize the drive as a closed circuit because the bite marks dissipated. Thus Acconci’s actions activated the circuit of the sado-masochistic drive.

Amelia Jones and Kathy O’Dell have noted the strain of sado-masochism in Acconci’s early works. O’Dell, in her 1998 publication *Contract with the Skin: Masochism Performance Art and the 1970s*, employs the Lacanian model of ego development in the mirror stage to suggest that Acconci’s act of biting recalls the oral stage of childhood development, and particularly the later stages in which biting “simulates attachment and separation from the body of the maternal figure—which is to say from her skin.” For O’Dell the photographs of the *Trademarks* activity that appeared in *Avalanche* in the fall of 1972 represent the oral stage when the mouth remains attached to the mother but begins negotiating a separation. The close-up

---

69 Ibid., 18-20.
photographs of the bite mark signify the connection, while the distant photographs of Acconci suggest separation. The photographs dramatize subject development.

O’Dell also theorizes that Acconci’s masochistic acts and accompanying text in *Trademarks* denote the division between the domestic and public self, which also describes childhood development. The text, according to O’Dell, describes this separation because it begins with the “self and the private region” (often consider a maternal space) and ends in the outside world or the public sphere (which according to Lacan is the space of the father because it is shaped by language and the law that exist beyond the home). O’Dell posits that autonomy and identity were at stake in negotiating the two stages.

Furthermore, O’Dell argues that Acconci’s “trademark of masochism” could be understood also as a “critique of social institutions of art and the economy specifically.” The bite mark, according to O’Dell, is an object of “trade” because the mark functions as a signature denoting his presence. By marking himself with a unique autograph, the artist evoked the commercial practice of “(‘marking’) a product” and making it valuable “for purposes of exchange.” O’Dell concludes that Acconci’s masochistic act described agreements, or “contracts,” undertaken when negotiating relationships of power, and his enactment could be viewed as an attempt to free himself from that contract.

---

70 Ibid., 18.
71 Ibid., 20-22.
72 Ibid., 20.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
Amelia Jones has also located the presence of sado-masochistic behavior in Acconci’s early activities. Jones observes that Acconci took up the role of both sadist and masochist in this activity by biting himself and receiving those marks.  

With this action, Jones observes, the artist sabotaged the binary structure the usually divides sadism from masochism.  

By taking on the dual roles in one activity, Acconci re-staged the process of discovery in Lacan’s post-mirror stage of self/other relations.  

To flesh out her argument Jones refers to Acconci’s statements, “Finding myself…the attempt is to reach, mark as much of my body as possible./Turning in on myself……a way to connect, re-connect my body…/Stake a claim on what I have” dramatizes the process of self-discovery.  

The dynamics of that process, according to Jones, enabled Acconci to discover aspects of his selfhood and “to recover himself from the post-mirror-stage self/other relation.”  

Acconci’s struggle between self and Other, Jones notes, occurred in order to expose “the complicated and ambivalent codings of the masochist in relation to artistic genius.”  

Specifically, the conflict represents Acconci’s psychic struggle with masculinity in the wake of Jackson Pollock’s hyper-masculine performative paintings.  

Yet Acconci, according to Jones, managed to “unveil” the privileged status of the artist assumed by Pollock through “exaggerated” and masochistic behavior.  

In so doing,
Acconci “ironicized” the heroic, bombastic performances of Pollock and reconfigured identity politics.\textsuperscript{85}

Although neither Jones nor O’Dell have explained the relevance of Acconci’s translation of the activity into print or the death drive manifest in it, he exploited the reproductive process to investigate an essential aspect of all drives that structure identity, specifically the death drive. Indeed reproduction of signs pulled from the body fleshed out this drive. Since repetition, annihilation, and surplus are essential aspects the death drive and are features of reproduction, he used one to inform the other. By exploiting those characteristics represented in signs, Acconci allowed the print process to participate in his desire to work through this essential feature of identity. In other words, the artist used reproduction to foreground the mechanism of the death drive and to describe the way in which it shapes subjectivity.

As Lacan and Freud suggested, the death drive informs all drives because each one is aimed at undoing connections and destroying things. When Acconci repetitively applied stress to his body, he attempted to break down his boundaries and to weaken his resolve, driving toward death. By continually biting his skin, Acconci marked his body in a very unique way. His teeth made a unique impression that specifically refers to his mouth and his presence at the site of the mark making. Since no two dental impressions are similar, it is possible to link the indices to Acconci. By repetitively tearing away at his skin and leaving those unique marks, the artist sought to break down his body and return it to a previous state. Acconci stated as much when he offered, “I try to adapt to this external stimulus until I reach the exhaustion stage, where I can’t resist anymore. The

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 103-04, 126.
ultimate would be complete death.” If he had broken through and destroyed the integrity of that boundary, he would have realized death. When Acconci transferred the signs of this activity to the stone matrix the artist continued the drive toward destruction. The print process participated in the drive because it repetitively impressed those wounds onto another surface. It continued the act of breaking down the skin by distributing it into many parts. The reproductive process in *Trademarks*, therefore, mimicked the drive toward destruction by employing repetition.

In addition to allowing repetition to work through this drive, Acconci also exploited annihilation to craft the death drive. Annihilation plays out in the printmaking language (and specifically absence and presence) and the written language within the print. The impressions in *Trademarks* lifted from the bodily matrix and transferred to the stone matrix functioned as indices of Acconci’s presence because they mark the point of contact between the two surfaces. Once those indices were reproduced the artist’s presence vanished. With each signature placed on the lower right hand corner of the paper, he restored a trace of his presence. The exchange between absence and presence describes the aim toward annihilation in the death drive. In Freudian terms, the signature “jerks” the artist back from the brink of obliteration, and it restores his presence in order to make “a fresh start” and “prolong the journey” in another print.

Annihilation is also apparent in the three grammatical voices—active, reflexive, and passive—at work in this print. All three participate in the annihilation and restoration of the subject in the death drive. The artist’s action of biting (“biting as much as I can

---

87 Ibid., 49.
Using a first person pronoun, Acconci became the active agent in the activity. When Acconci created the print he noted, “I bit myself.” Therefore the first person subject pronoun, “I,” denotes the presence and the index confirms that link. Once the graphic mark was fixed and printed, the index lost its connection to the artist and therefore the pronoun became unhinged. Its ownership was left up for grabs. With loss of connection between the artist’s body and the index in reproduction, the “I” could not be securely linked to Acconci.

The artist relinquished his active role—as the “I”—through reproduction and the loss is obvious as the language slips from the first person subject pronoun to the first person object pronoun. The object pronoun “me” replaced the active agent “I” in reproduction. This slip between the active and reflexive voices destabilizes the certainty of presence as Acconci sees himself in reproduction: “that’s me.” The photographs help restore identity to the referent “I” troubled in reproduction, but still another slip occurs and further fades the artist’s presence. When the viewer sees the photographs they may ground the artist’s presence in the indices, noting “that’s him.” The printmaking process therefore further drove toward the annihilation of presence as Acconci passively “made himself seen.” Even more specifically, his “alibi” “made itself be seen” in this process. Reproduction, therefore, allowed the artist to negotiate the slippage between the active, reflexive, and passive voice and in so doing aimed to fatally destroy his presence. This drive toward annihilation of also plays out the drama of signs.

Rosalind Krauss has described in “Notes on the Index, Part 1,” that indexical signs (including pronouns such as “I” and “me”) posses a certain dynamic that shifts

---

meaning depending upon the user. As “shifters,” these signs are empty signifiers waiting to be filled by a particular presence. For example, the personal pronoun “I” is a “shifter,” because it does not specifically refer to one person, rather its signification depends on who uses it and it changes places with each user. It is, therefore, an empty index that awaits a referent. When two people converse the referents change; Krauss explained, “I am the referent of ‘I’ only when I am the one speaking. When it is your turn, it belongs to you.” This indexical sign is a “pointer” waiting to be filled by a referent. When Acconci manipulated personal pronouns by incorporating three voices and exploiting reproduction, he enacted the drama of this shifter.

The Trademarks print summarizes this drama because Acconci’s position slipped among the three different voices, as witnessed in the text. Yet, the shifting continued in reproduction. The print process participated in this drama because after Acconci fixed the indices of his presence and reproduced them the first person pronoun—I—denoting the artist’s active presence morphed into the object pronoun—me/him—marking the absence. This movement evokes the drama to which Krauss referred. Acconci’s statements that he used “his body as a pointer” and that “art is a pointer” also bolster the notion that he enacted the drama of the shifters. When Acconci activated the reproductive process and manipulated the signifying power of the sign, he made the print participate in its own meaning.

89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 68-69.
91 Ibid.
In addition to exploiting annihilation and repetition to dramatize the death drive, Acconci also used elements of surplus and remainder present in reproduction and the death drive to dramatize subjectivity. We have seen that surplus, the excess of pleasure, defines the death drive. This condition also describes printmaking as the image pulled from the matrix is a surplus, a leftover, of the artist’s activity on the stone. With the fifty reproductions pulled from the stone Acconci further dramatized the condition of surplus and excess as bits of his being were dispersed. *Trademarks*, then, also parallels the mechanism of the drive because it creates a surplus.

By repetitively biting himself to break down his boundaries, reproducing that activity many times in print, removing his presence through reproduction, and partially restoring it by placing his signature on surplus parts, Acconci demonstrated that the death drive aims to tear away at an individual’s boundaries. If the artist had dissolved these protective shields, removed his presence, and fatally fragmented his being, he might be able to achieve his goal of total destruction, albeit in his own fashion. In acting out the death drive in this manner, Acconci aimed to undermine or even eradicate his autonomy and authority. In light of contemporary issues it seems that the artist’s goal was to question the power of the phallus associated with the patriarchal signifying structure, which was determined by men like himself.

By the time Acconci translated the activity into print in the early 1970s, many Americans had been challenging voices of authority and the structures of power. It was the period of the Civil Rights Movement and Feminism, among other movements, and many Americans wanted their voices heard and acknowledged through changes in the legal and social structures. Acconci’s gesture of destroying the male boundary or at least
breaking it down into many parts demonstrates his desire to dissolve old structures. He acknowledged as much, stating it was “the starting time of gender other than male, race other than white, culture other than Western; I wanted to get rid of myself so there could be room for other selves.” The “alibis” produced through reproduction attest to his desire for change. They proved his presence as a participant in that discourse.

When Acconci bit into himself, he attempted to break himself down and to do away with the cohesive presence of the male voice. The aim was, in Acconci’s words, “the dissolution of the illusion of identity, because that meant the dissolution of power.” That power, he recognized, was his to give up as a “white male.” His actions manifest the desire to eradicate the power of authority figures. If we read Acconci’s activity as driving toward and circling around that goal of death then it is possible to read the print Trademarks as participating in that structure.

Acconci destroyed the cohesiveness of the male presence and those voices of authority through reproduction. By manipulating signs of his presence in reproduction, he attempted to annihilate his masculine presence. Even though he restored his presence through a signature, his identity remained in fragments as they dispersed into fifty parts in each print. Those fragments indicate that identity could literally dissolve into many parts.

---

94 Acconci noted that he created these pieces during a period when he tried to “find himself.” See Jeff Rian, “Vito Acconci: I Never Wanted to Be Political, I Wanted the Work to be Politics,” Flash Art (January-February 1994): 84.
95 Ibid., 85.
96 Acconci also noted “That 70’s performance art was meant to be a woman’s art, that its mode of operation was inherently feminist—performance art could not have happened if it weren’t for a revolution against male power-conventions of abstraction and order and public distance.” See Vito Acconci, “Performance After the Fact, April/August 1989,” in Vito Acconci: Writings, Works, Projects, 356.
parts and thus be denied a discrete existence. Furthermore, once the prints were sold and distributed the fragmentation process increased because each part existed in a distinct and separate place. By dispersing the self, this project attempted to dissolve the authority traditional controlled by men. Acconci stated as much, noting that “the center meant power, and that power had to be squelched; that center had to be dissipated.”

By enacting the death drive in this print, Acconci circled around his desire to eradicate centers of authority and break down the male body as referent of the phallic signifying structures. Reproduction, signs pulled from the body, and shifting language in Trademarks participated in that desire because it allowed him to flesh out his ideas and share his secret. Printmaking served the artist’s needs because the horizontal matrix offered the artist a place to mark his presence and reproduction allowed him to work through those signs with the aim of eradicating his autonomy and authority.

Acconci was not the only artist who enacted a drive in his work to counter the patriarchal structure. Mignon Nixon has theorized that Louise Bourgeois, Jasper Johns, and Yayoi Kusama, among others, subverted the signifying power of the phallus and enacted drives in their works of art by creating “part-objects.” The “part-object,” first described by the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein in the 1940s, refers to portions of the maternal body—the breast, the womb, the absent penis—that instigates desire and frustrates the child. For example, the child sucks at the breast to seek unity with the

maternal body, but when the child bites at it he enacts the fantasy regarding

destruction.\textsuperscript{100} Thus, the part-object originating with the mother’s body defines the child’s
psychic structure.

Nixon points out, the part-object in “post(modern)” works of art may be perceived
as a counter-patriarchal object because it operates in a “critical” and “self-conscious”
dialogue with the phallic signifier.\textsuperscript{101} Nixon theorizes that the phallus-as-signifier was
thought to be inadequate to render the modern body that is always already fragmented
and dispersed. Artists such as Jasper Johns and Yayoi Kusama articulated the modern
condition by moving away from the scopic gestalt that defines the coherent, phallic-
signifying structure and emphasized bodily fragments (and tactility) to describe the part-
object psychic structure.\textsuperscript{102} In other words, these part-objects faithfully show the modern
subject as that which is always already fragmented. When Jasper Johns posed the part-
object of phallus in \textit{Target with Plaster Casts}, 1955 (fig. 203) for example, he unveiled
penis as a fragment and highlighted its materiality linking it to the tactile drive.\textsuperscript{103}

According to Nixon, the result subverted the veiled and discrete phallus that refers to the
symbolic structure, located in the scopic drive.\textsuperscript{104} Johns’ work, therefore represents the

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{100} Klein, 116. See also the explanation by Nixon, “Posing the Phallus,” 103.
\textsuperscript{101} Nixon, “Posing the Phallus,” 98.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid. Here Klein is pitted against Lacan who argued that desire begins in language
after the child enters the symbolic structure. Lacan, 104.
\textsuperscript{103} Nixon, “Posing the Phallus,” 101-103.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
death drive because it destabilized the coherence of “phallic symbol as an emblem of patriarchal authority.”

While Johns’ fragmented the phallus to undermine its authority as a patriarchal symbol by rendering it as a part-object, Yayoi Kusama incorporated numerous posed phalluses, as seen in Aggregation: One Thousand Boats Show, 1963 (fig. 204), to deny its singular presence and thus authority. Nixon argues that Kusama exploited fragmentation and reproduction to craft the death drive. For example, the artist’s process of stuffing, cutting, sewing, and splitting not only produced fragmented objects but it also activated the mechanisms of fragmentation through compulsive, repetitive, and exhaustive actions. The violent splitting presented in the part-object quality of the posed phallus and the process of its making, according to Nixon, allude to the death drive because the process is “all-encompassing and depressively all-obliterating.” Nixon surmises that artists reduced the body to part-object as a means to destroy the power of the phallus and “to negate the sublimatory aesthetics of high modernism.”

Like Johns and Kusama, Acconci exploited fragmentation (or surplus), repetition and reproduction to enact the death drive in order to undermine the power of the phallus. As he tore away at his skin, he sought to break down his protective boundaries. This desire to collapse and annihilate his presence found a logical outlet in lithography, because traces of his presence disappeared through reproduction. The surplus that remained as a print after Acconci’s activity ended manifests the death drive. The dialectic

\[\text{(footnotes for citations)}\]
of death drive in *Trademarks* then had a certain pedigree that Acconci exploited, and he employed it to disallow the signifying structure, which was under attack when he created this print. By exploiting signs manipulated on a horizontal surface and allowing the aspects of reproduction—repetition, annihilation, and surplus—to play a role in the meaning of signs, Acconci worked through his desire for the dissolution of a singular presence, unity, and power. *Trademarks*, therefore, crafts and stands in for the absent male artist that is fragmented and lacking.

Acconci addressed similar themes in his next print *Kiss Off*, 1971 (fig. 21). He produced this print in the lithography workshop at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design at the same time that he produced *Trademarks*. For this print the artist also used his body like a print matrix, and he allowed it to stand for his absent body. Once again, the matrix provided a space for the artist’s activity, while also offering him the space to manipulate signs of identity. This time, Acconci exploited icons, indices, and symbols to address feminine identity. In this print, the artist assumed and discarded gendered signs as a form of camouflage into order to fit into the social background. His project dramatizes his desire to cope with masculinity during the rise of Feminism. His failure to assimilate, as witnessed in this print, reflects a missed encounter with the real of the other gender. Acconci exploited aspects of reproduction and signs to work through this condition, and again, the matrix became the site of negotiation.

Working with the master printer Bob Rogers at NSCAD in Halifax during a two-week period, Acconci performed *Kiss-Off* on the litho stone. The four, black and white photographs on the print’s top register show Acconci applying lipstick and then kissing it onto his hand. Although not seen in the photographs, he rubbed his hand onto the matrix
in order to transfer the lipstick; the bright red marks in the center of the paper represent that transference. These red traces bleed into the text along the bottom of the print that describes the activity:

1. Putting on lipstick—taking off male lips, putting on female lips.  
2. Kissing my hand and wrist—‘Putting a stamp on it,’ closing myself up in my choices, ‘coloring my actions,’ ‘spreading example.’  
3. Rubbing my hand on the lithograph stone—Using the stone to wipe my hand, rubbing off my female characteristics, ‘cleaning myself up.’

When Acconci approached Rodgers with the idea to incorporate lipstick into an image that also included photographs and text, the master printer assured the artist that it would not be a problem. Two months prior, Rodgers had successfully incorporated lipstick in Joyce Wieland’s print *O Canada*. In order to achieve the desired results in Acconci’s piece, Rodgers decided to use two aluminum plates. Using the photographic transfer process, Rodgers fixed four photographs onto one plate. A second aluminum plate was reserved for the lipstick transfer. The manner in which Acconci transferred the lipstick to the plate, however, produced problems that Wieland avoided.

After applying lipstick, Acconci kissed his hand, but instead of just leaving the lipstick marks he left a layer of saliva. When he transferred the lipstick marks from his hand to the matrix, the water in the artist’s salvia created a barrier between the aluminum surface and the lipstick. Since the lithographic process is based on the antipathy of grease and water, the water in Acconci’s saliva prevented the lipstick grease from sticking to the surface and allowing the grease to receive the chemicals in the fixing process. Rodgers suggested that they recreate the activity on a litho on stone, since the surface is more
sensitive.¹¹⁰ After switching from aluminum to stone, re-rubbing, and even trying Noxzema, the red marks had to be redrawn directly on the stone with grease because the initial activity did not register intensely.¹¹¹ The alteration worked, the indices were fixed, and the stone received bright red ink. The artist chose the color red because, in his words, for a male it was probably the most obvious color of female lipstick.¹¹² The color-coated indices on the stone and the aluminum plate were printed in an edition of fifty on February 11, 1971.¹¹³ As was the case for Trademarks, an earlier activity may have inspired this print.

The artist has suggested that the activity Applications, (fig. 205) completed in December of 1970, was probably on his mind when he created Kiss Off.¹¹⁴ Applications entailed a twenty-minute activity in which Kathy Dillon, the artist’s girlfriend at the time, applied lipstick and kissed Acconci’s torso. The lipstick impressions, which created the appearance of a scarred or tattooed body, were then rubbed onto Dennis Oppenheim’s back. The activity situated Acconci in the position of power because Kathy kneeled

¹¹¹ Ibid. During the interview Rodgers compared the process of editing and touching up to the editing process that occurs in “Hollywood.”
¹¹³ According the to NSCAD documents, Kiss Off was printed on white Arches paper. In addition to the fifty, the shop printed one “right to print,” one trial proof, five artist’s proofs, four NSCAD proofs, four printer’s proofs, fifty artist’s edition, one cancellation proof, and two marked as dead—not for sale and retained by workshop for display and sample purposes. Vito Acconci/Artist Files 141/142, Lithography Workshop Archives, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia.
¹¹⁴ Although Acconci might have had Applications in mind when he created Kiss Off, he stated that the print was not an extension of the earlier activity. Vito Acconci, interview by Jennifer Noonan, May 2007.
before him and kissed his body, and Oppenheim assumed a submissive position by leaning against a wall and allowing Acconci to rub up against him.

Describing the activity in a 1981 *Art News* article, Ellen Schwartz has noted that “on the simplest level Applications was about people as supports. Dillon was the originator of color (like a paintbrush), Acconci became the means of displaying the graphic information (like paper or canvas), and Oppenheim became a secondary surface (a paint rag, another canvas).”\(^{115}\) She described the performance as “redolent with symbolic and psychological overtone….both Dillon and Oppenheim were Acconci’s slaves, performing tasks in public which they may have found distasteful”\(^{116}\) In that same interview, Acconci intimated to Schwartz that “Dennis was pretty shaken up…Applications was about dominance, submission, and control.”\(^{117}\)

In light of Acconci’s statement, it may be more accurate to say that he exploited his body as an aggressive agent rather than as a passive support. Using his body as a mediator and driving force, Acconci physically dominated Dillon and Oppenheim by assigning them submissive positions. He also dominated the activity by controlling the spread of color; specifically, he took color away from Dillon and gave it to Oppenheim. Acconci physical affected Oppenheim by coloring his back with red lipstick, but he also adversely colored his emotional state. Acconci’s actions recall the printmaking process in which the matrix acts as an agent that receives and spreads colors, images, and text. In *Applications*, therefore, Acconci employed his corporeal matrix as mechanical matrix.


\(^{116}\) Ibid.

\(^{117}\) Ibid., 97.
Sheila McGuire has also pointed out that this activity provided the impetus for *Kiss Off*. She notes the print, unlike the activity, was a way of "indirectly making a private act public." Eric Cameron, an artist and scholar who most frequently writes about the history of printmaking at NSCAD, alludes to influence of *Applications* on *Kiss Off* when he noted that the print “relates to graphic layouts used elsewhere by the artist.” In a subsequent publication in 1982, Cameron suggests that Acconci pursued in *Kiss Off* “the possibilities for intimate involvement of the artist with his materials to the point where the autographic slips over into the auto-erotic.” The print “achieved unprecedented visual impact” not only because of its appearance but also due to the manner in which Acconci subtly exploited the link between body and matrix.

In *Kiss Off* Acconci used his body as a matrix, but instead of relying on someone else’s lips, as he had in *Applications*, the artist used his own. He stated, “When I started to make prints it was me who physically applied something to the plate—I applied myself to the plate.” As the bite marks in *Trademarks* parallel the printmaking process, so do the lips in *Kiss Off* mimic the lithographic process because of the way they receive and transfer color. Lips receive ink, or lipstick, that can then be impressed onto another

---

118 McGuire, 72.
121 Cameron, “NSCAD Prints,” 246.
123 There exists a printing process known as ‘kiss printing.’ It is a process in which two rollers are used to print textile designs. A design is carved in relief and wrapped around a roller. Pressure from another roller, acting as a squeegee, pulls the material through the press while impressing the design onto cloth. The process is often used in mass production, not small workshops so it is not likely that Acconci invoked the kiss printing.
surface, including another set of lips or a collar. The process is analogous to mechanical reproduction in which a stone, or metal, matrix receives inks and then transfers inked images to another surface. In both, a flat inked surface meets another flat surface. In *Kiss Off*, Acconci inked his lips, transferred the color to his hand, and then impressed the stone surface with red marks. Long after Acconci’s activity ended the mechanical apparatus stood in for the absent artist and mimicked his actions.

In addition, the red marks in the center register further demonstrate the link between the bodily and mechanical matrix. The use of the body as matrix materializes in the color and text. Although the photographs and text suggest that lipstick rubbings produced the red marks, it also looks as if the marks resulted from ‘cleaning up’ a bloodied wound. The haphazard appearance of red marks might suggest that Acconci wiped blood onto the matrix, perhaps in order to stop bleeding; it refers to color spilling from the body’s surface. “Bleeding” does not only refer to fluid emerging from the body, it also refers to the printmaking process in which the inks “bleed” (or are pushed) to a paper’s edges so the image runs off the page. The indication of bleeding in *Kiss Off* also refers to the horizontal printing press and the lithographic process. As such, the representation of bleeding in *Kiss Off* speaks to the symbolic cross-section. Since the red marks are not confined to the middle register but bleed into the text below and since the printing documentation describes a step to “bleed the image,” it seems apparent that Acconci drew an analogy between mechanical and bodily processes.

Helen Molesworth has described a similar operation at work in painting. She argues that the medium of painting and the body work together in Robert Rauschenberg’s process. It is more likely that Acconci employed his body as a matrix mimicking the lithography technique as he had in *Trademarks.*
“Black Paintings” and “Red Paintings” to say something about the body. In *Untitled (Black Painting)*, 1953 (fig. 206), and the bloodstains in the Red Paintings of 1954 (fig. 207) for example, Rauschenberg exploited the viscosity of paint and its capacity for staining and smearing to describe and record bodily functions. The scatological references in the “Black Paintings,” according to Molesworth, reflect the artists “attempt to know the interior through the autoerotic pleasures of shit.” The “Red Paintings” operate similarly as they, in the author’s estimation, unveil “the horror of the body exploded, dispersed, and flowing over the surfaces of everything.” By exploiting the color and materiality of paint to reference bodily fluids, Rauschenberg “desublimated” these functions and provided an intimate knowledge of the body. Molesworth surmises that this process demonstrated that Rauschenberg joined the world of fantasies that come from lower body to upper body where perception lies, and in so doing provided an intimate understanding of the self.

Like the smeared color in Rauschenberg’s paintings, the messy red marks in *Kiss Off* suggest that Acconci’s body exploded on the matrix. The allover marks describe, as we have seen, blood that bleeds across the stone. Yet those marks also suggest the bodily fluids and make-up that move from one body to another when two lips lock in a passionate embrace. Since Acconci’s salvia prevented those marks from sticking to the surface, the process may underscore the bodily presence. The activity may have been so passionate that the artist worked up and expelled bodily juices. The messy marks and the saliva in *Kiss Off* link the interior and exterior; they dramatize the rendezvous.

125 Ibid., 80.
126 Ibid.
The lipstick traces in this print describe the bodily surface, but they also slip easily onto the horizontal vector of the matrix. As signs, they belong along the flat axis. Acconci honored the cross-axis by using graphic marks and by allowing those marks to remain non-mimetic. The allover action of color also recalls Abstract Expressionist painting. Acconci stated that a lot of work came from this source, which he had probably seen in reproduction. His statement that “Pollock was acting on canvas and acting in the role of an artist” suggests that he was interested in the activity of making marks. He may have exploited this pedigree because he believed that his activities, as well as those by other artists working in the late 1960s and early 1970s, were “the continuation and renovation and last gasp of Abstract Expressionism…” Yet Acconci’s use of lipstick to create these marks and the representation of himself wearing a feminine identity is the very antithesis of the hyper-masculine performances that Pollock staged.

Rather, Acconci manipulated gendered signs and reproduction to explore feminine identity. In order to assume femininity, the artist applied lipstick. This material allowed Acconci to don the appearance of a female because make-up is a masquerade that women wear to assert their gendered sexuality and their desire for recognition. As we have seen, different color lipsticks indicate disparate notions about the wearer’s identity. For example, red suggests passion and lust while pink indicates innocence. Information about a person can, therefore, be gleaned from what appears on the body. Although lipstick is just one way to convey femininity, Acconci realized its power and exploited it.

---

Using this sign, the artist posed as female. He mimicked the appearance of a woman by putting on “female lips.” He could conform to feminine identity through the use of colored lipstick because it is a sign that can be assumed to enact the feminine gender. Signs, objects and gestures worn on the body, according to the literary theorist Judith Butler, construct gender. Rather than being biologically determined and essential, gender is determined by conventions and social relations.

Butler also argues that gender requires performance, noting “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.” So, for example, when an individual wears make-up, a skirt and exhibits excessively refined gestures, s/he seek to assert him/herself as a female. According to Butler’s theory, the drama of gender that everyone enacts is not biologically determined but rather “free-floating” and therefore open to manipulation.

Furthermore, Butler theorizes that identity is fluid, it is variable, and it shifts according to context. Different situations and social engagements will determine how feminine or masculine an individual chooses to be. Although gender is fluid, as Butler asserts, it also determines the position and power one has in the social structure. A change in this structure demands, according Butler, a subversion of gender or “gender

---

131 Ibid., 3-45
132 Ibid., 43-44.
133 Ibid., 9-11.
134 Ibid., 18-22.
135 Ibid., 181-190.
If individuals throw off the yoke of these conventions then they can challenge traditional definitions of gender and destabilize the hierarchical, patriarchal system in which the male gender holds the most power.\textsuperscript{137}

Acconci exploited the conventional sign in order to wear the female gender. By troubling gender in his activity, he made obvious gender construction. By using lipstick, a sign of femininity, Acconci imitated and mimicked the female gender. The application allowed him to assume a female gender, which he then removed by physically kissing it off. The representation of gender performance in \textit{Kiss Off}—the photographs that show the artist assuming the signs of female sexuality, the indices that recall the performance, and the text to describe the process—indicates that gender identity is not biologically determined or fixed. The false lipstick impressions on the stone, the marks that suggest he used the indices from his hands to indicate the presence of his lips, underscore this idea. These signs did not come from his lips—the saliva barrier prevented the lipstick from sticking—rather they were redrawn to allude to the body. In this way the signs are truly constructed, even false. In addition, the artist’s exaggerated use of lipstick suggests feminine identity is not natural or biologically determined. The artist noted that such physical alterations to himself and his environment allowed him to “set up conditions that require a new identity so that the conditions could be coped with.”\textsuperscript{138}

By coloring his lips Acconci strove for likeness of the female gender. The use of the red lipstick, which for Acconci suggests female identity, allowed the artist to mimic femininity. Lacan noted that the human subject often isolates and plays with mimicry to

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid, 101-180.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
blend in or cope with the Other. Lacan argued that coloration, in particular, is a way to defend oneself against the gaze of the Other. The subject achieves protection not by imitating the object it seeks to mimic but by assuming its features. It does this through the function of the stain. According to Lacan’s example, the small crustacean known as *caprella* settles among other crustaceans and imitates their colored center. By mimicking the stain of other small sea life, the *caprella* seeks to cope with its background.

This process of mimicry can best be noted in the three effects of travesty, intimidation, and camouflage. Camouflage, according to Lacan, entails “becoming mottled—exactly like the technique practices in human warfare.” Travesty is another form of mimicry, but it is sexual in nature. According to Lacan, the effects of disguise and masquerade produce it. The third element of mimicry involves intimidation and in this dimension the subject seeks to attain another’s appearance. He does this by “isolating the function of the screen” and “playing with it.”

Lacan noted that man’s manipulation of mimicry demonstrates “…in effect, (that he) knows how to play with the mask beyond which there is the gaze.” This process plays out across the screen or the meeting place between the self and the Other. On the

---

139 Ibid., 98-99.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., 99.
144 Ibid., 99.
145 Ibid., 100.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid., 100-101.
148 Ibid., 99.
screen an individual manipulates these three aspects of mimicry to cope with their
environment and to accommodate the gaze of the Other. Therefore, mimicry allows the
subject to take on difference in order to defend against the light of the gaze.

Acconci exploited this mechanism to blend in as a woman in order to cope with
his environment. He stained his lips and then stained the stone in order to mark his
integration into the world of the feminine. On the matrix screen, he isolated and played
with signs of or the mask of femininity to defend against the increasing threat to his ego
boundary as a male. Masculinity had come under attack in the late 1960s and early 1970s
when women and others demanded a change in the social structure. Feminism and the
Civil Rights movement had gained a strong voice by the early 1970s. More individuals
began to hear the demand for equality. Acconci may have mimicked those identities in
order to blend in with his background.

The artist stated that his early works incorporated “camouflage.” He stated, “the
performer can alter shape, coloration, in order fit the background,” and “performing
something—going through something; performing as the absorption, by one organization
of a neighboring organization,” “performance as looseness—dissolving the contours of
one thing so that it resembles another thing—color change as protection, color-change as
submission.” These ideas materialize in *Kiss Off*.

In this print, the artist attempted to dissolve the boundaries of masculinity through
camouflage of the feminine. He changed his lip color and with this stain it seems he tried
to fit into the background of femininity, to be absorbed by this neighboring organism.
The artist’s body met the highly coded gender language on the surface of the stone. The

---

150 Ibid.
matrix stood in for the bodily matrix as it operated like Lacan’s notion of the screen where self meets the Other. At that site, Acconci worked through this issue by joining indices of his presence with the conventional signs of femininity, namely lipstick. The artist’s statement that these early pieces came about when “much feminist writing was coming out and I probably felt amazingly embarrassed at being male” and that “The pieces probably tried to deal with that” further speak to this notion. Camouflage and staining allowed Acconci to adapt to the changes in his environment. In this way, mimicry may have eased his embarrassment of gender.

It was not the first time that Acconci employed camouflage to cope with his background. In *Run-Off*, 1970 (fig. 208), the artist used his body as a matrix to assume the stain of his surroundings. For this activity Acconci removed his clothes, positioned himself in front of wall of blue paint, and ran in place for two hours to work up a heavy sweat. After the appointed time ended, he leaned his body against the wall. The sweat from his body reacted with the wall paint and the paint moved to his body. Although the artist sought to test his limits, he stated that he aimed to “change” and “adapt… to the background.” That background was a wall of blue paint, but the background may also refer to an artistic heritage, a tradition that happened on the vertical axis, on the wall.

The wall, in Acconci’s estimation, meant painting and that belonged to a bygone art practice. The artist’s activity in *Run-Off*, however, cleared a road back to the past. He stated the work of art was “A way to gain color, color my motives—color here can

---

151 Rian, “Vito Acconci: I Never Wanted to Be Political, I Wanted the Work to be Politics,” 84.
152 Acconci stated, “The run should wear me out—I need a rest, have to fall back against the wall—I retain momentum, draft around against a wall.” Vito Acconci, “Runoff,” *Avalanche* 6 (Fall 1972): 36.
function as knowledge of the consequences of my behavior—my body as a storehouse of past activity—I can use the color as an easy way back onto the wall.”\textsuperscript{153} Although the artist’s body did not exactly operate like a matrix because he did not transfer the blue paint to another surface, his body still recalls a print matrix that is treated with liquids to receive ink. In the case of Acconci’s bodily matrix, it was his sweat. Craig Dworkin suggests that Acconci transferred paint from the wall to his body in this work “with the explicit intention of converting his body into a writing instrument, which can mark other surfaces.” Through this action, Dworkin argues that the artist realized “Sol LeWitt’s proposal that ‘the artist must be (as Acconci put it) ‘a kind of dumb copying machine.’”\textsuperscript{154}

Rather than using his body like a writing instrument (perhaps a blue ball point pen), the artist employed his body like a reproductive matrix to receive color, in order to examine his place in art’s history and traditions preoccupied with the wall. His presence and artistic production, which had been confined to the floor, met the wall when his sweat activated the wall paint and adhered to his torso. With this activity, he inserted his presence into that artistic pedigree.

The performance of a nude body applying and receiving blue paint recalls Yves Klein’s \textit{Anthropométries}, 1960 (fig. 33). Both performances incorporated nude figures and blue paint. Klein’s work, however, is radically different from Acconci’s. Klein, fully clothed in a tuxedo and with a perfectly coiffed appearance, directed nude females to apply paint to their bodies and press them against paper. At times the women assumed a prone position, as they were dragged across the floor, and other times they pressed their torsos against paper hung on the wall. Through directives and distancing himself from the

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{154} Dworkin, “Fugitive Signs,” 100.
messy act of painting, Klein assumed a position of power over the women as he directed the women to press their bodies against the wall to make a unique print.

Acconci, on the other hand, designed and executed the activity himself. Since he was nude, inflicted stress on himself, and moved his body in space, the artist revealed his vulnerability and trauma as it unfolded across his body. While Klein’s performance was misogynistic, Acconci’s was sadomasochistic because he applied and received pain, even enacting the death drive again. At the end of the performance, Klein came across as a refined dandy and an esthete. When Acconci’s activity ended, he appeared worn and a bit dazed by the events that had transpired. Indeed, photographs register that shock.

A similar psychological effect occurred in Barry LeVa’s *Impact Run—Energy Drain*, 1969-1970, and in both performances the artists tested their physical and psychological endurance. During a ninety-minute performance at Ohio State University, LeVa ran back and forth between two walls smashing his head and body into the surface. In the process of this activity, the artist worked up a sweat and drew blood from his body, both of which transferred to the wall. Instead of taking color off the wall as Acconci had done in *Run-Off*, LeVa put color (his blood) on the wall. The color suggests that LeVa inflicted pain and harm on himself and, according to Nancy Princenthal, this gesture literalized the action of hitting a wall during physical activity.\(^\text{155}\) Rather than blending into the background by staining his body with its color, LeVa fore-grounded his presence by leaving his bloody mark. In this way, his performance differs from Acconci’s activity.

The notion of applying color to the body in order to adapt to the environment suggests two things about Acconci. First, that he understood signs could be assumed.

---

Second, the act of adopting and removing signs might alter his social being or status and, in the case of Run-Off, might mark him as successor to artistic traditions. He manipulated the sign’s signifying power to achieve this condition. For example, Acconci manipulated process and language in Runoff to suggest that meaning is not fixed. As a noun, “runoff” means “the portion of the precipitation on the land that ultimately reaches a stream, esp. water from rain or melted snow that flows over the surface.” In this case runoff can refer to the sweat “run off” and the blue color that flowed from Acconci’s body. “Run off” also describes “a final race, context, or election to decide one competitor in favor of another.” In this instance, perhaps Acconci could be viewed as a victor in the artistic competition because he inventively reworked indices and signs through actions that recalls prior artistic traditions. The verb, ‘run off” means “to carry away or to steal,” as in carrying off artistic conventions for and by devising new styles. Lastly, “run off” means to produce rapidly as in “running off copies on a copy machine.” It may be that this last definition refers to Acconci putting his body to use as a mimeograph machine.

Acconci was certainly familiar with the mechanical apparatus because he used one to print the small, avant-garde periodical 0 to 9. Between 1967 and 1969, Acconci co-published the magazine with poet and activist Bernadette Mayer, and during that time the six issues were printed on a mimeograph machine. The magazine included texts by the influential composer John Cage, dancer Yvonne Rainer, and fellow conceptual artists Sol LeWitt and Adrian Piper. In fact, LeWitt contributed a text that consisted of thirty-five “Sentences on Conceptual Art” for the January 1969 issue. In sentence number twenty-seven, LeWitt emphasized the important role that process can play in meaning of
a work of art. He wrote, “The concept of a work of art may involve the matter of the piece or the process in which it is made.”

Acconci may not have implemented LeWitt’s ideas, but the process used in Run-Off recalls the mimeo-graphic process and its reproductive capabilities inform the artist’s activity. A mimeographed text is produced when a tissue-thin piece of wax paper with stenciled letters is wrapped around the drum of the machine, and the ink that is inside the machine is forced through the stencils onto the paper. Before the invention of the photo-based Xerox machine, the mimeograph machine reproduced text and bluish ink was often used. Due to the cheap ink quality, the blue often smudged off the paper and onto other surfaces, including the fingertips. When Acconci worked up a sweat and took on blue ink that could be transferred to another surface, he imitated the machine and the mimeograph sheet.

In Run-Off Acconci used his body like a matrix and employed color to camouflage his presence to exist within an established art environment. By staining his body, he adapted to prior artistic traditions that used the body as an implement to spread color. He also colored his body to cope with the traditions that placed art on the wall. When he assumed the color of the wall on his body a connection to prior traditions became apparent. Acconci used camouflage and the stain to similar ends in Kiss Off. He exploited red to stain his body in order to cope with his environment.

It is obvious, however, that Acconci’s stain could never completely camouflage his real body. Although Acconci put on female lips in order to take off his male lips in

---

157 The artist acknowledged this reality in an interview, stating that he knew he could never really become a woman. Vito Acconci, interview by Jennifer Noonan, May 2007.
an attempt to camouflage his real body, he did not alter his biological make-up. The photographs, false lipstick traces, and text make apparent his inability to completely remove one gender and replace it with another. For example, Acconci’s masculine attributes of a faint beard, receding hairline, masculine hands, and hairy arms seen in the photographs could not be removed during his trans-gendering performance. Even though lipstick codifies femininity, it could not act as a complete erasure. Since lipstick always falsifies lips, it was not powerful enough to override the real aspects of Acconci’s body. The lipstick marks may even be read as an act of de-facement that destroy any illusion that red lips naturally describe female identity.

The conventional sign’s failure to change Acconci into a female points to the reality of gender construction. The lipstick signs construct gender and it usually, as Butler points out, seamlessly equates gender with biology when it is worn by the female sex. Signs acquire meaning through repetitive use. For example, there is nothing essentially feminine about lipstick, but because women (mostly) use it to enhance their femininity it has become equated with that gender. Its failure to transform Acconci into a woman points to the fact that there is nothing natural about the sign. The artist’s failure to become a woman suspends the notion that gender describes an authentic, essential self. It seems that Acconci understood that gender construction materializes through the repeated adoption and removal of conventional signs because the written text in the print describes the gender drama. By “taking off male lips, putting on female lips,” Acconci troubled gender; the repetition signs and repetition in printmaking underscores this drama. Both signs and reproduction acquire identity through repetition, he used one process to underscore the other. In addition, the reproduction of conventional signs that traditionally
describe the female body and evacuation of the masculine real body allowed Acconci to enhance the construction of and distance between the two genders.

It is precisely because the artist could not, or perhaps because he chose not to, lose those aspects of his masculine gender when he assumed the female gender that moved his performance into the realm of drag. “The performance of drag,” according to Butler, “plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed.” 158 She notes that drag performances summarize “the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence.”159 Indeed in Kiss Off the presence of Acconci’s male anatomy—slight beard, receding hairline, and hairy arms—and the exaggerated use of a high sexualized female sign—the lipstick application, its bright red color, its messy removal, and description of the performance below—foregrounds the gender play to which Butler refers.

By assuming the sign for female gender on his biologically male body, this print indicates that there is no such thing as a natural or original gender. Rather they are worn, they are a masquerade, they are a lure that describes an individual’s subjectivity in relation to others. In Kiss Off, then, the photographs, lipstick traces, and performance mimic the social construction of gender. The artist made that act apparent by exploiting his body like a matrix, and the allowing the matrix to stand in for his presence in order to dramatize how the psychic and the physical meet on the body and shape identity according to conventions. Repetition drove that point across because it is the means by which signs and lithography acquire signification.

---

159 Ibid.
Acconci was not the only artist who used parody and masquerade as a means to question gender identity. For example, Robert Morris used a masquerade to parody masculinity in the poster announcing his “Labyrinths-Voice-Blind Time” exhibition at the Castelli-Sonnabend Gallery, 1974 (fig. 209). Posed in chains, a helmet and sunglasses with his body coated in grease, Morris imitated gay cultures appropriation of working-class and military attire in order to draw attention to the discourse of masculinity in the hyper-masculine art world.\footnote{For a thorough discussion of Morris and masculinity see Anna Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” \textit{Arts Magazine} (January 1990): 44-63. Amelia Jones has also addressed Morris, masquerade and gay culture. See Amelia Jones, “The Body in Action: Vito Acconci,” in \textit{Body Art Performing the Subject}, 114.} Acconci, like Morris, assumed signs of gender to engage in a dialogue, but his performance is perhaps closer to Lynda Benglis’ performance in drag.

Benglis and her dealer Paula Cooper ran an ad in the November 1974 issue of \textit{Artforum}, (fig. 210).\footnote{They paid to run this image because the editors would not publish it as part of their series that reproduced artists works in the magazine’s center.} In the ad the artist posed with a dildo held at her crotch, her body greased, hair short and slicked back, and wearing sunglasses. The paid advertisement was also a parody and her satire was aimed at the art system that prized such individuals.

Benglis told Susan Krane during an interview in 1991 that “placing the gallery’s name on the work strengthened the statement, thereby mocking the commercial aspects of the ad, the art-star system and the way artists used themselves or their persona, to sell art. It was mocking sexuality, masochism, and feminism.”\footnote{Susan Krane, “Lynda Benglis,” in \textit{Dual Natures} exhibition catalog (Atlanta, GA: The High Museum of Art, 1991).} Benglis’ gender bending troubled traditional systems. In this way, her performance manifests Butler’s belief that if gender were deconstructed society might alter the way it views these roles.\footnote{Butler 148-149.} Benglis’ project is
similar to Acconci’s project because both artists sought to explore difference through the performance of gender.\textsuperscript{164}

In addition to Benglis, Jack Smith exploited drag in his notorious and highly regarded underground film \textit{Flaming Creatures} (fig. 211).\textsuperscript{165} In this forty-two minute, black-and-white film, Smith presented an assortment of men, women, and men dressed as sultry women, as Spanish dancers, odalisques in an Arabian harem, and vampires. The characters revel in an orgiastic display of sexuality. The beginning of the film focuses on a man applying lipstick as he dresses for his part. The application evokes the lipstick application in \textit{Kiss Off}. Although the movie was made while Acconci was living in Iowa, the film continued to receive critical acclaim and unwanted legal attention until the end of the 1960s.\textsuperscript{166} This film, like Acconci’s print, eschewed film’s conventional structure by suturing together scenes that do not unfold in a linear narrative. As a result, Smith created a tableau of hedonism. Although some scenes in the film look similar to Acconci’s

\textsuperscript{164} Of course Benglis investigation is slight different from Acconci’s because she played with male anatomy, a fixed aspect of biological differences, to stage gender differences. This differs from Acconci’s activity because he used conventional signs of gender.

\textsuperscript{165} For example, the director and film critic Jonas Mekas wrote stated that \textit{Flaming Creatures} was a great movie. In his review of the film for the \textit{Village Voice}, he stated the film is “so beautiful that I feel ashamed even to sit through the current Hollywood and European movies. I saw it privately and there is little hope that Smith’s movie will ever reach the movie theatre screens. But I tell you, it is a most luxurious outpouring of imagination, of imagery, of poetry, of movie artistry, comparable only to the work of the greatest, like Von Sternberg.” Jonas Mekas, “Movie Journal,” \textit{Village Voice} (January 16, 1964), 149.

\textsuperscript{166} For example, the theaters where the film ran were shut down in 1964 in an attempt to clean up New York before the World’s Fair began. In addition, the film became a pawn in politics and feminism when Senator Strom Thurmond used it attack President Lyndon Johnson’s nominee of Justice Fortas to the position of Chief Justice the Supreme Court. In 1968 Thurmond screened the film in the United States to draw attention to what he perceived to be the effects of Justice Fortas’ liberal stance on pornography. For a description of the film’s reception and legal battles see J. Hoberman, \textit{On Jack Smith’s Flaming Creatures (And Other Secret-Flix of Cinemaroc)} (New York: Granary Books and Hips Road, 2001).
activity, they differ. Acconci’s actions and the print focus on gender construction, while Smith’s work celebrates drag.

Acconci’s lipstick application and its repetition in print dramatizes his attempt to fit in with the female gender. His failure to do so, which is evident in the obvious appearance of his masculine physiognomy, indicates that the self is a social construction. The artist’s inability to transform also suggests a missed encounter with the real. The real, according to Lacan, is located with the body, but it belongs to that aspect of the existence that is beyond description. He explained, “The subject in himself, the recalling of his biography, all of this goes only to a certain limit, which is known as the real.” Since the real of the body exists outside articulation and is an undifferentiated presence, it is excluded from the signifying chain. Yet, the subject’s thoughts, according to Lacan, and thinking about the self always avoids the real because the language of the Other emerges to describe the real. Yet it is also true that the real “always comes back to the same place—to the place where the subject in so far as he thinks, where the res cogitans (thinking thing), does not meet it.”

Since the real exceeds the symbolic, Lacan observed, the subject always misses it. The subject repeats that which is missed in an encounter with the real. The desire to encounter the real entails repeated behavior as the subject repeats that which is missed. In other words, the real is both the cause and the reason for repetition. Lacan argued

---

168 Ibid.
170 Ibid., 54.
171 Ibid., 54-55.
that this missed encounter is traumatic and the *tuché* marks the point where that trauma appears unveiled as that which is “unassimilable”  

Thus, repetition projects the real as traumatic and the traumatic moment ruptures the repetition as it unveils the real.

Hal Foster has argued that the mechanisms of repetition and *tuché* appear the work of Andy Warhol. Foster succinctly states that Lacan’s explanation of the repetition operates to “screen the real understood as traumatic. But this very notion also points to the real, and at this point the real ruptures the screen of repetition.” Repetition in Warhol’s work “produces” and “reproduces” traumatic effects. Foster observed that *Ambulance Disasters, 1963* (fig. 212) and *White Burning Car III, 1963* (fig. 213) craft these two operations.

In *White Burning Car III*, for example, the repetitive aspect of silkscreen, made obvious by the mis-registration of margins and the bleeding of color, screens the real as traumatic. The damage done during printing meets up with accident and the blasé attitude of the passerby as they join together on the surface of the paper. The paper is the screen where the trauma emerges. Although the victim impaled on the telephone pole and the passerby is disturbing, it is Warhol’s emphasis on the material qualities and the careless mis-registration that Foster finds traumatic, even “galling.”

Foster also suggested that Warhol produced and reproduced trauma in *Ambulance Disasters* by manipulating the paper. The lower image in this print is torn, and it cuts

---

172 Ibid., 55-56.
174 Ibid., 132.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid., 134.
177 Ibid.
across the face of the woman killed in the accident. The crash and the slumped woman are disturbing, but the trauma is heightened, for Foster, by the “obscene tear that effaces her head.” This moment, according to Foster, unveils the traumatic point, the *tuché*.

It describes the moment when a viewer sees or remembers something or someone that ruptures the cohesiveness of the image. The *tuché* and repetition in *Ambulance Disasters* and *White Burning Car III*, according to Foster, screen the traumatic real and produce it.

These two elements may be at work in Acconci’s print *Kiss Off*. As we have seen, Acconci’s attempt to encounter the real of the feminine failed and this missed encounter with the real of the feminine materializes in the photographs. The black and white colors in the photograph make that failure even more disturbing as the black color of the artist’s hair and beard stubble jumps out from the white and gray tones of his skin. The rupture renders Acconci’s attempt jarringly wrong, and the gnarly image proves that something has gone awry. In particular, the fleshy, densely colored lips appear completely out of place on such a body. The reproduction of it in the photographs and the focus on the lips screen that trauma. It denotes that missed encounter with the real.

The red marks produced in reproduction also operate as the *tuché* in *Kiss Off*, marking the traumatic moment and producing traumatic effects. The red marks may be viewed as the real because as indices they are beyond the symbolic; their formless structure dramatizes that which is impossible to think and conceptualize. As they resist symbolization, they unveil the real because of their formlessness. They also work through

---

178 Ibid.
179 It can also be conceived of, Foster offers, according to Roland Barthes’ description of *punctum*. Ibid., 132.
180 Ibid. 134-136.
the real because the intense hue ruptures the image. Since the saturated red marks are vastly different from the black and white background, they scream out from page. As the marks screech and squirm across the black and white screen, they produce traumatic effects. They are a visual shock to the senses, but they also jolt one’s perceptions of gender. In this way they function as the traumatic point, the *tuché*. As the tear in the sheet functions in Warhol’s screen-prints, the red marks in Acconci’s *Kiss Off* fix on the traumatic moment and as such they screen traumatic effects.

It was not the first time that Acconci screened the missed encounter with the real. In *Conversions*, 1971 (fig. 31), Acconci pushed his penis between his legs and proceeded to move about the room *sans* appendage. According to Amelia Jones, the masochistic act of castration demonstrates the artist’s “desire to mimic the feminine in order to explore the masculine.”*181* Although the activity has been considered misogynistic, Jones posits that the presence of both masculine and feminine traits indicates that the “staging of desiring subjects” could be read as an “effacement” that reveals “the reciprocity of gender identity and the fundamental lack installed at the core of all subjectivity.”*182* Acconci subverted the authority of the male artist by showing how his body could be feminized, but the staging failed to produce a coherent identity and in that rupture lies a missed encounter with the real.

The art critic Robert Pincus-Witten noted that *Conversions* employs puns and androgyny in the Duchampian tradition. Primarily for Pincus-Witten, this piece projects

---


*182* Jones, 144-45.
“a notion of the androgyny that had earlier been set by Duchamp within his conception of his mythical alter ego, Rrose Sélavy.”183 In the photograph Rrose Sélavy, 1921 (fig. 60), Duchamp appears dressed in the guise of a woman, as an androgynous figure. According to the critic, Duchamp evoked an ancient tradition that describes the person capable of changing the state of physical matters as the androgyny; it is this person who often assumes the cultural role of shaman or seer.184 Conversions and Kiss Off may be situated along this trajectory, because the artist sought to transgress gender boundaries and alter his identity. That he failed dramatizes a missed encounter.

Acconci reworked similar Duchampian traditions in the third print, Touchstone (for JL), (fig 23). In this print, which he completed a year after Kiss Off, the artist used the matrix like a body, albeit not his own, and exercised Lacan’s notion of his desire for the Other. On March 15 1972, Acconci wrote to Gerald Ferguson to inquiry about producing another print. He asked, “What I want to know is: is there a chance to do a lithograph? Obviously the idea is from Dennis (Oppenheim), I don’t want to make a print of an old piece; I want to do a more specific ‘lithograph.’ Probably without photos.”185 One month later in April, Acconci arrived at the workshop. With the assistance of the workshop printer Wallace Brannen, he created a third lithograph, Touchstone (for JL).

In this print, Acconci also used the stone for his activity. Using body grease and rubbing ink, Acconci massaged the stone with his fingers and forearms while a voice recorder taped the words he enunciated during the activity. He stated,

184 Ibid.
185 Vito Acconci to Gerald Ferguson, March 15, 1972, Vito Acconci/Artist Files 169, Lithography Workshop Archives, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, NS
You’d say I was hurting the back of your neck here as I kneaded the skin between my thumb and forefingers.

I couldn’t press into your shoulders like this—you’d resist me as I clenched your skin, as I leaned the heels of my hand into you.

And now I could pull your skin, scrape it as much as I want to, need to—you’re not here to soften the pressure of my forearm.

You’d like it now the way I was gliding my fingers softly down your spine.

You would never let me squeeze your arm so tightly into your side as I can do here.

But if you were here you would stop me now as I raked your skin, dug my nails into the small of your back.

I don’t have to worry here that you’d tell me to be more gentle—you can’t move away now as I circle my hands around your ass as I draw your cheeks apart and push my fingers into the groove.

After the activity ended the marks that Acconci made on the lithograph stone were fixed, covered with yellow ink, and printed on Arches paper. These words were transcribed, transferred to an aluminum matrix through the photographic transfer process, and printed over the marks.

Although Acconci used grease form a woman’s back, torso, and buttocks, it seems as if perspiration produced the impressions on paper. “JL” refers to a woman with whom Acconci was close when he made this print. It seems that with a few exceptions, early accounts title the piece “VL,” not “JL.” This misreading might have been caused by the appearance of the “J” as a “V.”

186 Acconci confirmed in an interview with this author that the initials are “JL” and they refer to a woman. Vito Acconci, interview by Jennifer Noonan, May 2007.
documentation, substantiates that he had indeed turned the stone into a woman’s back.¹⁸⁷

That back belongs, in the artist’s mind, to a woman whose initials are “JL.”¹⁸⁸

Eric Cameron wrote in his 1982 essay, “Originally he (Acconci) had wanted to use the sweat of his skin as the drawing medium, but when this proved impractical, the fact that the ink was labeled ‘rubbing ink’ gave some linguistic consolation.”¹⁸⁹ The ink, according to Cameron, provided Acconci with material needed to rub the stone as “if he were massaging a woman’s body, all the while speaking out his thoughts to a tape-recorder, trying to imagine that VL was there beneath his hands”¹⁹⁰ In an earlier article, Cameron referred to the print as “Touch-stone (For J.L.)” and concluded that Acconci massaged “the stone while mentally transforming it into the body of a woman.”¹⁹¹

Sheila McGuire has also titled the print “Touch Stone (for VL)” and she observes that Acconci rubbed the stone. She states that “As Acconci massaged a lithographic stone’s surface, he imagined it was a woman’s body and verbalized his fantasies into a taper recorder”¹⁹² In addition, Heather Smith in her master’s thesis, “Conceptual Art and the Lithographic Workshop, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design,” has also pointed out that Acconci “smeared his hands and forearms with grease and rubbing crayon and then rubbed the stone as though it were a woman, or ‘VL.’”¹⁹³ In addition, Bob Rodgers described the artist’s actions, noting “Acconci “interacted with the stone as if massaging

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.
¹⁹¹ Cameron, “NSCAD Prints,” 246.
¹⁹² McGuire, 72.
Rodgers also indicated that while the artist “caressed the stone, as if caressing a body,” he “spoke to it” as if he was speaking to a person “whose back he was caressing.”

Acconci has stated that he rubbed and worked the stone using a lot of pressure in a way that “JL” would not allow. According to the artist, he was not just creating the image of JL’s hips and back, but he was actually rubbing those bodily areas. The surface, therefore, became an ideal Other for Acconci. In his writings about the piece in the fall 1972 edition of *Avalanche*, he states that the surface in “TOUCHSTONE (FOR JL)” was a “solid” a substitute,

Lithograph stone-something to lean on, hold onto—the stone could function as an emissary, a substitute for someone: with her I might have been on shaky ground, with the stone my ground is solid

The room where I did the lithograph: an escapist’s space, a compensation area—a magic space, where I could bring someone to life—a reconsideration zone (since the results don’t meet my desires, I might not want you after all)

The stone, for Acconci, became the ideal Other (fig. 214). It was the place or person that provided a solid ground. It offered coherence and certainty, that was not possible with the real body. In addition, Acconci considered the space to be “magic, where” he “could bring someone to life.” His notes suggest that he used the stone as a place where he could create, or at least express his desire for, an absent ideal Other. In addition, the title exploits a pun to indicate his activity and his desire for an ideal Other.

---

195 Ibid.
The title refers to its own making, the act of touching the stone. Acconci touched the stone to rub the woman’s back; his actions and words attempted to call her into being. Cameron describes this play on words, stating that “a good deal (of works meaning and performance) depends upon the verbal pun of ‘touchstone’ and the nomenclature of the materials contributes further: the ink with which he marks up the stone is ‘rubbing ink.’” Cameron makes an insightful connection between the act of rubbing and the idea that the rubbing required Acconci to touch the stone. Yet it would seem that Acconci also intended the pun to inform the meaning not just the process.

A Touchstone is a very smooth, fine-grained variety of quarts or jasper used for testing the quality of gold and silver alloys. Rubbing quartz and alloys together will produce streaks and reveal the quality of gold and silver present in alloys. This process will ascertain the presence of precious materials. In a similar way, Acconci rubbed his hands and the stone as body together and this resulted in streaks of gold. The yellow or gold streaks, seen in the print, assume the shape of Acconci’s ideal person; it is the gold standard of a female. On the “solid ground” of the lithograph stone, Acconci could bring an ideal person “to life,” and with that person he could impose himself anyway he wanted without being told to stop.

The print also recalls a philosopher’s stone, which is an imaginary stone for chemical preparation believed to have the power of transmuting baser metals into gold. Through the chemical process on a real stone, Acconci’s turned his creation into gold. The use of the philosopher’s stone in Acconci’s work, according to Pincus-Witten, finds a precedent in Duchamp’s work. The stone indicates Duchamp’s interest in the Salt

---

198 Cameron, “NSCAD Prints,” 246.
Merchant. Pincus-Witten noted the “salt of the salt merchant may well be symbolized by the philosopher’s stone of the alchemist—the esoteric catalyst without which such changes in matter cannot be made.”\textsuperscript{199} The salt merchant’s salt symbolized the philosopher’s stone, and for Pincus-Witten it was the “catalyst” that enabled Duchamp to morph into \textit{Rrose Sélavy}. The connection, for Pincus-Witten, became obvious in Duchamp’s pun: in French the Salt Merchant is called “Le Marchand du sel,” which is “a transpositional pun on the syllables of Duchamp’s name.”\textsuperscript{200}

If the lithographic stone used in \textit{Touchstone (For JL)} is considered in the same way, then it can be interpreted as the catalyst that enabled Acconci to create an ideal person and his pun might suggest his prowess in crafting such a person. By rubbing the stone, Acconci became the touchstone that transformed a person into an ideal Other. Like Duchamp’s Salt Merchant, Acconci became the alchemist who used the stone to affect change. His desire for an ideal Other came into being on the lithographic stone. The color and paper chosen to create this Other person helped the artist call this person into being.

Acconci chose a specific ink color and paper color to produce this perfect woman. He stated that the flesh color, like a yellow flesh-colored crayon, would create the warm tone of a woman’s skin.\textsuperscript{201} The color of the paper would further bring to life this ideal body. He stated that a buff color paper, rather than a stark white, would suggest the warmth and softness of a woman’s body.\textsuperscript{202} Unlike the other prints in which the object represented the artist’s absent body, this print points to an absent ideal Other. The warm inks and the buff-colored paper represent that Other.

\textsuperscript{199} Pincus-Witten, 44.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{201} Vito Acconci, interview by Jennifer Noonan, May 2007.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid.
In addition, the language present with *Touchstone (for JL)* dramatizes Acconci’s desire for an ideal person and his failure to achieve such a person. An ideal person would let Acconci “dig,” “squeeze,” and “rub” as he pleased. An ideal person would not protest. The artist noted, however, that the creation of such a person would end in failure due to his inability to truly create such a person and due to his lack of fulfilled desire. He wrote, “since the results don’t meet my desires, I might not want you after all.” Try as he might to produce an ideal Other, his actions and language did not fulfill his desires. Smith alludes to the discrepancy between Acconci’s desire and its fulfillment, noting, “The futility of the action, given the difference between a warm, real body and a cold, hard stone seem to reflect the distance between the players in this relationship.”

It is in the space between creating another warm body and the hard reality of a body denied that Acconci’s desire surfaced.

When the artist rubbed the stone, he massaged areas of a woman’s back. In the process, he articulated his desire for an ideal woman who would allow this hard pressure. The reason Acconci desired a woman who would let him do this was because he lacked that person. He stated, “I couldn’t press into your shoulders like this—you’d resist me as I clenched you skin, as I leaned the heels of my hand into you” and “You would never let me squeeze your arm so tightly into your side as I can do here.” Acconci’s desire for this Other is related to his lack. Lacan stated that desire is always desire for something else, for that which we lack; we do not desire what we have. Desire is also, according to

---

203 Smith, 20-21.
Lacan, called into being through articulation because signifiers convey desire.\textsuperscript{205} The words and the indices in \textit{Touchstone} are signifiers that demand the fulfillment of an ideal Other. They represent Acconci’s desire for that which is forbidden to him and that which is lacking.\textsuperscript{206} Desire articulated in demand can always only be partial, because according to Lacan, language can never fully represent all aspects of desire. There is a remainder or surplus left over from the articulation in signifiers. This aspect of desire materializes in reproduction.

Acconci called his desire for an ideal Other into being on the stone surface, yet that person could never materialize. Unlike Pygmalion, Acconci could never transform the stone into the ideal Other woman. Since only the signifiers of the artist’s desire remain in the print, it is obvious his desire remains unfulfilled. The paper further dramatizes this lack because it acts as a surplus; it represents that which is leftover. The print, therefore, materializes the remains of Acconci’s desire and its lack of fulfillment. Surplus, remainder, and lack define Lacan’s concept of the \textit{objet petit a}. The print manifests the \textit{objet petit a} because it represents the lack of fulfilled desire, that which is left over from the demand, and the remainder of the introduction of the Other into the real. In other words, \textit{Touchstone (For JL)} manifests the \textit{objet petit a} because only a trace of the artist’s body and the language of ideal Other remains.

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 154.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., Lacan also stated that mad desires are “based on nothing more than the fact that thing in question has been forbidden you. By virtue of the very fact that it has been forbidden you, you cannot do otherwise, for a time, thank think about it. That, too, is desire.” Lacan, “Of the Subject Who is Supposed to Know, Of the First Dyad, and of the Good,” in \textit{The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI}, 243.
The body in this print is only a portion of the desired body, and the incomplete form further dramatizes that fragmentation and lack are aspects of desire. Since the woman here is merely a torso, her status as partial object materializes. This part-object status continues in reproduction as the ideal Other disperses into fifty parts. This print as part-object Lacan’s theories as it describes the fragmented condition of ideal, absent Other. In *Touchstone (For JL)*, Acconci worked through his desire and the printmaking process participated in the artist’s demand.

This desire to find an ideal Other in an icon, index, and symbol on a support matrix recalls the *Shroud of Turin* (fig. 215). As in the Shroud, the indices in *Touchstone* take on the shape of a human form. Just as Acconci’s traces activate his desire to see an ideal person, Christians want to believe that the shape on (or in) the shroud indicates Christ’s presence and miracle. The theorist Georges Didi-Huberman has observed that the desire to believe in the presence of Christ works through perception and interpretation of the index, icon, and symbol. The belief that the *Shroud* manifests a trace of Christ’s body is substantiated by the iconic images of the Christ figure and the written text that describes his death and resurrection. A similar process is at work in Acconci’s print. He employed indices, icon, and symbols to articulate his desire for an ideal Other. His activity and the subsequent prints dramatize his desire to see, feel, and believe in the existence of an ideal Other. It is possible to see a trace of that Other in the torso, the text speaks to that ideal being, and by reproducing those indices Acconci helped creation along. Reproduction and the splitting of this subject into many parts defers the realization his desire. The signs and the printmaking process in *Touchstone (For JL)*, therefore, participate in articulating Acconci’s desire and its lack of fulfillment.
The prints *Touchstone (For JL)*, dramatizes Acconci’s interest the relationship between self and Other. The signs and reproduction here, as well as in *Trademarks* and *Kiss Off*, activate what drives behavior and the desires that shape it. After Acconci left the world of the literary arts and entered the visual arts, he exploited the mechanisms of the matrix to negotiate his presence, signs of his presence, and his relationship with Other entities. Since the properties of printmaking parallel features at work in subject formation, it proved to be a viable means for Acconci to work through issues of identity. The document participated in that dialogue.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that printmaking, when used as a participatory document in performance, conceptual and body art, offered Vito Acconci, Bruce Conner, David Hammons and Joyce Wieland a potent means to work through issues of artistic, ethnic, gendered, and nationalist identity. The reproductive process proved to be a logical venue for a couple of reasons. It provided artists working in the late 1960s and into the 1970 with an alterative to painting and sculpture. Since artists at that time were not tied to a particular medium—they used ephemeral, non-traditional, and other reproductive material—printmaking offered a viable option to flesh out ideas. With the simultaneous print boom and access to lithographic workshops, artists who were not trained as printmakers could produce multiple, relatively inexpensive objects that could easily circulate outside traditional art spaces. Printmaking, therefore, offered artists a substantial venue to stage and think through their ideas.

This dissertation has more specifically argued that printmaking became a powerfully appropriate choice to negotiate these ideas because each artist used his or her body like a matrix. When each artist applied ink or a greasy substance to their lips, hands, torso and other body parts and then impressed it onto a stone, paper, or screen matrix, they put their body to work like a machine. This transfer process recalls the printmaking process in which ink is transferred from one surface to another. Reproduction mimicked the body in action, so it seems logical that these artists would exploit printmaking to represent and stand in for the absent bodies.
The lithographic matrix also became a suitable location for such activity because it was sensitive enough to receive indices pulled from the body, and yet it transformed those signs during reproduction. When Wieland kissed the stone, for example, the marks clung to the stone. They could be fixed and transferred to another surface. In that transfer process, the supposed authenticity of the indexical sign began to stretch away from the body of the artist. As lipstick traces were conveyed onto stone, and then onto paper, and more paper throughout the edition, the indexical traces left the body and entered into a set of social relationships. They became icons, even symbols.

By playing with the boundary between the index and the icon in reproduction, the artist’s discussed in this dissertation unveiled the way that indices that promise an authentic presence could never produce an unmediated subject because something beyond the subject always conditions its being. In other words, once those indexical signs were called into being and while they were being transferred onto stone, they became informed by a signifying structure that pre-existed them. As the indices morphed into icons, they entered into the social realm. As discussed previously, for example, Hammons dramatized this condition by joining indexical signs to conventional signs. During this transfer process, he dramatized that identity is constructed by traces of both signs. By marrying indices pulled off the real body to the iconic symbols informed by conventional language, Hammons mimicked the process of subject formation.

Jacques Lacan’s description of subject formation, in which the self is constructed through joining the real body to the language or authority of the Other, structured the argument in this dissertation. As Lacan pointed out, the subject comes into being when s/he articulates his/her desire. Since language can only represent a portion of that
desire and since the Other can never fulfill his/her desire, the subject is always lacking. The traces or remainder leftover from the encounter between the real self and the Other defines the subject; since this entails lack, the subject is always incomplete and alienated. Although Lacan suggested that this condition describes all subject formation, some scholars have suggested otherwise. Many individuals have recently argued that difference affects subject formation. Therefore, this dissertation has also relied on Frantz Fanon’s psychoanalytic description of the subject as conditioned by the Other that is a racial or social Other. In addition to Fanon, Luce Irigaray’s theories, which drew from Lacan’s psychoanalysis, proved helpful because she interpreted the Other in terms of gender. These approaches allowed for the acknowledgement of difference in subjectivity and therefore informed the reading here that women and African Americans come into being under the alienating gaze of the racial and gendered Other. By using these theories it was possible to show that Hammons, Wieland, Acconci and Conner used signs of their identity to abrade traditional signifying systems.

As this analysis has also shown, the reproductive process participated in these investigations because it entails mediation and as such it could be used to think through the process of subjectivity. As we have seen, the matrix operated like a screen where the self (indicated by the indices) and the Other (denoted by the conventional signifiers) came together. Since the matrix and the reproductive process operates in that interstitial space between the self and Other, it functioned as the go-between; it cleaved the body of the artist from the Other while producing a remainder of that encounter. The remainder produced during this process recalls the remainder that defines subjectivity after the real of the body joins with the Other and leaves a trace of both behind. In other words,
the mediated aspect of printmaking allowed Acconci, Conner, Hammons and Wieland to work through and reconstruct the subject as mediated.

In addition, prints are objects that are split into many parts so they also recall the condition of the subject. As the preceding text has shown, Lacan theorized that the subject becomes divided and alienated after an encounter with the Other because it leaves him/her lacking coherence. As a result, some aspect of subjectivity is always elsewhere as unfulfilled desire. This dispersal of the self is analogous to the distribution of the subject into many prints. In the works discussed here, the multiplicity of prints staged the body as divided. Furthermore, since prints reproduce the marks taken from the artist’s body, they absent a real presence. The object produced in the process denotes the lack of a full presence or the lack of a complete, whole subject. Since these four artists investigated various aspects of identity, it seems logical that they would use a process that mimics identity formation. This analysis has shown that reproduction suited these artists’ needs and allowed them to think through their ideas regarding subjectivity.

The reciprocal relationship between the print process and subject formation that Acconci, Conner, Hammons, and Wieland negotiated suggests that the document is not neutral. The document as print, for example, carries aesthetic and conceptual weight. By assessing the way that artists exploited it to craft identity formation, this analysis has argued that the print was not a transparent document merely transcribing ideas and revealing concepts. Rather it formed and informed the self as a social construction. While the post-structuralist theories used in this dissertation describe subjectivity generally, the social contextual approach also offered here lodges these issues of subjectivity within specific socio-historical conditions under which the former approach operates. All
four artists staged the condition of the subject as it existed in broader discourses of the late 1960s and 1970s.

In this era of Feminism, the Civil Rights Movement, the Gay Rights Movement, counter-culture movements, and the Vietnam War, many individuals questioned the relevance and effectiveness of traditional social, political, and legal structures. It was a period when individuals tested and pushed boundaries. As many sought the decentralization of conventional signifying structures and institutions, many also sought to question and redefine their position within these structures. The works discussed in this dissertation chart those issues, take up a position in relation to traditional signifying structures, and at times destabilize them.

In light of these issues, this dissertation has argued that printmaking and signs of identity worked together to stage the condition of the post-structuralist subject as that which is always mediated. This analysis suggests that the print far from being neutral contributed meaning to the work of art. Since the document distributed these ideas, it mimicked similar practices in other reproductive media. Like photography, video, and other time-based media, printmaking offered artists the means to flesh out their ideas. Its use, therefore, accords with concurrent changes in artistic practices around 1970.

In spite of the commonalities between printmaking and other reproductive media, scholars have traditionally neglected the way that prints operate to generate meaning. As this dissertation has noted, scholars writing about photography, video, and performance have described the document’s importance. They have suggested that artists used its inherent qualities to form and inform their concepts. Yet these scholars have mostly ignored how the reproductive qualities of printmaking functioned in a similar
manner. This dissertation redresses this narrative by showing that artists used the printmaking process to flesh out their ideas and in this manner it operated like photography or other reproductive media to mobilize certain concepts. This thesis, therefore, contributes to the scholarship that describes the relevance of reproductive media to conceptual, body, and performance art. The documents allowed Vito Acconci, Bruce Conner, David Hammons, and Joyce Wieland to work out their ideas regarding artistic, ethnic, gendered, and nationalist identity. These print documents, therefore, illustrate the tenor of that era.

The reading provided in this dissertation could be applied to other prints in order to link them to contemporaneous works of art. This process of unpacking the slippage between index and icon in reproduction could, and will, provided a model to analyze other works produced by artists discussed in this dissertation. David Hammons’ print Rabbi, for example, exploits the instability of the sign and aspects of reproduction to dramatize the connection between Jewish and African-American identity and parodies of it. The model provided in this dissertation is not only applicable to the works produced by these four artists.

In addition to the artist’s discussed here, this format could also draw out meaning in prints produced by other artists. A reading that considers the way that signs and the transfer process operate in other Dennis Oppenheim’s print Reading Position for Second Degree Burn, (fig. 216) for example, could show that the artist manipulated form and content to dramatize the condition of subjectivity as it existed during the Vietnam era. This model would also work with those artists who investigated conventions of language and modes of representation. Iain Baxter/N.E. Thing & Co in $P+L+P+L+P=VSI$
Visformula No. 10, 1970 (fig. 217) and Pat Kelly in Shot in the Dark, 1970 (fig. 218) for example, exploited the language of reproduction and concepts to say something about the perception and operation of images.

Beyond the prints that these artists produced, those prints produced by other artists could also benefit from this model. Given that artists beginning in the mid-eighties began dramatizing the way in which identity is a construction based on signifiers, this model could provide the means to analyze print production during this period. It could show that artists exploited signs and reproduction to examine the conventions of language, the meaning of representations, and the perception of images. The analysis provided here, therefore, could be broadened and used to massage meaning from prints that fall out side the scope of this dissertation.
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 1. Robert Rauschenberg, *Abby’s Bird*, 1962, Lithograph
Figure 2. Larry Rivers and Frank O’Hara *US* from *Stones*, 1957-59
Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 3. Jasper Johns, *O to 9*, 1963, Lithograph
Figure 4. Jasper Johns *Skin with O’Hara Poem*, 1965, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 5. Robert Rauschenberg, *Accident*, 1963, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 6. Robert Rauschenberg, *Booster*, 1967, Lithograph and silkscreen

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 7. Claes Oldenburg, *Profile Airflow*, 1968-69, Molded polyurethane over two-color Lithograph,
Figure 8. Roy Lichtenstein, *Reverie* from *11 Pop Artists*, 1965, Silkscreen
Figure 9 Josef Albers, *White Line Squares: White Line Square XII*, 1966, Three-color lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 10. Andy Warhol, *Jackie* from *11 Pop Artists*, 1965 Silkscreen

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 11. Ed Ruscha, *Chocolate Room*, 1970, Silkscreen with Nestlé’s Chocolate
Figure 12. Paul Jenkins, *Tide Finder*, 1970, Off-set lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 13 Richard Anuskiewicz, *Yellow Reserved*, 1970 Offset lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 14. Alexander Calder, *Spirals*, 1970, Offset lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 15. Peter Dechar, *Pears*, 1970, Offset lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 16. Ray Parker, *Untitled*, 1970, Offset lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 17. Robert Rauschenberg, *Wart*, 1970, Offset lithograph
Figure 18. Richard Hamilton, *Kent State*, 1970, Silkscreen

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 19. Sol LeWitt, *Squares with a Different Line in Each Half Square*, 1971, Etchings.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 20 Bruce Nauman, *Studies for Holograms*, 1970, Silkscreen

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 21. Vito Acconci, *Kiss Off*, 1971 Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 22. Vito Acconci, *Trademarks*, 1971, Lithograph.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 23. Vito Acconci, Touchstone (For JL), 1972, Lithograph
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 25. Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Hammers*, 1965, Hammer and photographic enlargements.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 26. Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, Porcelain, Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz.
Figure. 27 Robert Morris, *Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal*, 1963, Paper, lead, wood, imitation leather

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 28. Carl Andre, Xerox Book, 1969
Figure 29. Ed Ruscha, Standard Station, 1966, Photobook

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 30. Jan Dibbets, *Perspective Corrections*, 1969 Photograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 33. Yves Klein, *Anthropometries (Ant 100)*, 1960, Dry pigment in synthetic resin on paper

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 34. Dan Graham, *Two Correlated Rotations*, 1969, Photograph.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 35. Dennis Oppenheim, *Identity Stretch*, Artpark, Lewiston, New York, 1970-1975, Photograph of Ink, elastic, wood, rope, hot tar

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 36. Gina Pane, *Discours mout et mat*, 1975, Photograph of activity
Figure 37. Carolee Schneemann, *Interior Scroll 1970-1975*, Photographs and text,
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 38. Eleanor Antin, Carving: A Traditional Sculpture, 1973. 144 Photographs and text.
Figure 39. Praxiteles, *Aphrodite of Knidos*, 350-340 BCE, Roman marble copy

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 40. Dennis Oppenheim, *Reading Position for Second Degree Burn*, 1970. Color and Black and white photographs
Figure 41. Richard Long, From Nile Papers of River Muds, 1990 Book of paper handmade from the muds of fourteen rivers and screenprinted with name of each river

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 42. Bruce Conner, *Mandala*, 1965, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 43. Bruce Conner, *Untitled*, 1965, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 45. Bruce Conner, *Untitled*, 1965. Lithograph
Figure 46. Bruce Conner, *Rain*, 1965, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 47. Bruce Conner, *Landscape*, 1965, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 48. Bruce Conner, *Green Line*, 1965, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 49. Bruce Conner, *Untitled*, 1965, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 50. Bruce Conner, *Sunset Strip*, 1965, Lithograph
Figure 51. Bruce Conner, *Landscape*, 1965, Lithograph
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 52. Bruce Conner, *This Space Reserved for June Wayne*, 1965, Lithograph
Figure 53. Bruce Conner, *Cancellation*, 1965, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 54. Bruce Conner, *Jelly Fish*, 1965, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 55. Bruce Conner, *Thumbprint*, 1965. Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 56. Bruce Conner, *Prints*, 1974, Xerox, prints, lock box
Figure 57. Bruce Conner, *Untitled*, 1957, Assemblage

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 58. Bruce Conner, *Child*, 1959, Assemblage
Figure 59. Bruce Conner, “Letter to Alan Charles Alan,” 1957.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 60. Marcel Duchamp, *Rrose Selavy*, 1921, Photograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 61 and Figure 62. Bruce Conner, *I Am Bruce Conner, and I am not Bruce Conner*, 1964, Buttons

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 63. Marcel Duchamp, *Bottle Rack*, 1914, Metal

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure (bottom) 64: Marcel Duchamp, *Female Fig Leaf (Feuille de vigne femelle)*, 1950, Cast
Figure (top) 65: Marcel Duchamp *Objet D’ard, (Dart Object)*, 1951, Cast
Figure 66. Marcel Duchamp, *Coin de chastéte (Wedge of Chastity)*, 1954, Cast

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 67. Marcel Duchamp *Tablier de Blanchisseuse (Couple of Laundresses Aprons)*, 1959, Cloth

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 68. Bruce Conner, *Marcel Duchamp Traveling Box*, 1963, Glass, wax, string

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 69. Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even*, 1915-1923, Glass and mixed media

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 70. Bruce Conner, *Octopus protecting a chest of valuable coins*, c. 1945, Linoleum print

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 71. Bruce Conner, *Geryon*, 1957 Etching
Figure 72. Bruce Conner, *Bloody Hand*, 1965, Blood on paper

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 73. Spotted Horses and Negative Handprints, Pech-Merle, France, 22,000 BCE

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 74. Jean Fautrier, *La Jolie Fille (The Pretty Girl)*, 1944, Oil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 75. Bruce Conner, *Dark Brown*, 1959 Mixed media

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 76. Bruce Conner TOUCH/DO NOT TOUCH, 1964, Stencil on Canvas

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 77. Godefroy Engelmann *Manuel du Dessinateur*, 1824, Lithograph
Figure 78. Charles Hullmandel, *The Art of Drawing on Stone*, 1824, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 79. Kenneth Noland, *Eyre*, 1962, Oil
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 80. Sam Francis, *Cross*, 1960, Oil
Figure 81. Frank Stella, *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor*, 1959, Oil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 82. The Art Gallery Magazine, November 1966
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 84. Pablo Picasso, *Paloma et Claude*, 1950, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 85. Bruce Conner, *The Dennis Hopper One Man Show* series, 1971-7, Etching
Figure 86. Bruce Conner Physical Services, 1964, Photograph
Figure 87. Bruce Conner and Dennis Hopper, 1973, Photograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 88. Jackson Pollock, *Number I*, 1948, Oil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 90. Andy Warhol, *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*, 1964 Silkscreen on masonite.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 91. Bruce Conner, *Prints, Locked Boxes*, 1974

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 92. David Hammons, *Back to Black*, 1969 Body Print

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 93. David Hammons, *America the Beautiful*, c. 1968/69. Body Print and silkscreen

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 94. David Hammons, *Black Boy’s Window*, 1970 Silkscreen and mixed media.
Figure 95. David Hammons, *Ebony Kiss*, 1974 Body print and mixed media.
Figure 96. David Hammons *Creating a Body Print*, photograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 97. Phillip Lindsay Mason, *Woman as Body Spirit of Cosmic Woman*, 1970

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 98. David Hammons, *Rabbi*, 1968 Body Print.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 99. (top left) Hammons, *Three Spades*, 1971 Body print (and silkscreen/stencil?)
Figure 100. (bottom left) Hammons, *Spade*, 1974, Body print (and silkscreen/stencil?)
Figure 101. (right) Hammons, Spade, 1970 Body Print and Silkscreen
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 102. (left) David Hammons, Spade, n.d. Body Print (and silkscreen?) Figure 103 (right) David Hammons, David Hammons, Spade, 1972 Body Print (and silkscreen?)
Figure 104. Betye Saar, *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*, 1972. Assemblage
Figure 105. Cheryl Donegan *Kiss My Royal Iris Ass (K.M.R.I.A)*, 1993, film still

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 106. Polykleitos, Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer), 450 BCE, Marble.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 107. Torso of a Youth, 118 BCE, Marble.
Figure 108. Robert Rauschenberg and Susan Weil, Sue, 1950, Photogram

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 109: David Hammons, *The Door (Admission’s Office)*, 1969, Silkscreen and mixed media

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 110. Betye Saar’s *Black Girl’s Window*, 1969 Mixed media

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 111. Window Bars, Photograph
Figure 112. David Hammons, *American Hang Up, 1968/69*. Body Print and silkscreen

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 113. David Hammons, *Injustice Case*, 1970. Body print and mixed media

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 114. Faith Ringgold *Flag For the Moon: Die Nigger*, 1969, Oil
Figure 115. Dana Chandler, *Land of the Free*, c. 1968, Oil
Figure 116. David Bradford, *Yes, LeRoi* 1970, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 117. Peoples Flag Show Poster, 1970, Poster
Figure 118. John Outterbridge, *Traditional Hang Up*, 1969, Mixed media

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 119. David Hammons, *Pray For America*, 1974. Body print and silkscreen
Figure 120. Monin Brown and/or Hattie Mitchell, *Improvisational Block*, Maco, Georgia, 1832, Cloth

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 121. Eldzier Cortier, *Room, No 5*, 1948, Oil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 122. David Hammons, *Delta House*, 1985, Mixed media

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 123. Romare Bearden, *Prevalence of Ritual*, 1964, Collage

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 124. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, 1921-1958. Watts, California

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 125 (top left) August Rodin, *The Kiss*, 1886, Bronze
Figure 126. (top right) Constantine Brancusi, *The Kiss*, 1909, Stone
Figure 127. (bottom left) Evard Munch, *The Kiss*, 1897-1902, Woodblock print
Figure 128. (bottom right) Gustav Klimt, *The Kiss*, 1907-1908, Oil

Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 129. Sargent Johnson, *Mother and Child*, n.d. conté crayon.
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 130 (top left) David Hammons, *Untitled (Man with Pierced Ear and Toothpick)*, 1974, Figure 131 (top right) Hammons, *American Costume*, 1970, Body Print,
Figure 132 (bottom left) Hammons, *Untitled*, 1977, Body Print,
Figure 133 (bottom right) Hammons, *I Dig the Way This Dude Looks*, 1971, Body Print
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 134. (top left) Hammons, Pray, 1970. Body Print,
Figure 135. (top right) Hammons, The Wine Leading the Wine, 1971 Body Print
Figure 136 (bottom left) Hammons, Untitled, 1976. Body Print
Figure 137. (bottom right) Hammons, Untitled, 1975 Body print
Figure 138 (top left) Hammons, *Sunday Morning Mass*, 1969 Body Print
Figure 139 (top right) Hammons, *Untitled*, 1973. Body Print
Figure 140 (bottom left) Hammons, *Defend Your Walk*, 1974, Body Print.
Figure 141 (bottom right) Hammons, *Untitled (Woman with Mop Hair and Lace Shawl)*, c. 1975 Body Print

Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 142 (top left) Hammons, Don't Bite the Hand That Feeds, 1974, Body Print
Figure 143 (top right) Hammons, Untitled (The King’s Show Has Ended…), n.d., (c. 1970) Body Print
Figure 144 (bottom left) Hammons, Blue Angels (Penises), n.d. Body Print
Figure 145 (bottom right) Hammons, Untitled (Penis Print), n.d. Body Print
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 146. David Hammons, (Untitled) Body Print
Figure 147. David Hammons, (Untitled) Body Print
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 151 (top left) Hammons, *Untitled (Man with Flag)*, n.d. Body print (and silkscreen?)
Figure 152 (right) Hammons, *Black First America Second*, 1970  Body Print and silkscreen
Figure 153 (bottom left) Hammons, *Untitled (Body Print)*, 1975 Silkscreen and pencil on paper.
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 154 (top left) Hammons, *A Cry From Inside*, 1969 Body Print (and silkscreen?) on Gold Paper
Figure 155 (top right) Hammons, *Close Your Eyes and See Black*, c 1970 Body Print (and silkscreen?) on Gold Paper
Figure 156 (bottom left) Hammons, *Close Your Eyes and See Black*, Body Print (and silkscreen?) on paper
Figure 157 (bottom right) Hammons, *Ragged Spirit*, 1974 Body print and pochoir
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 158 (left) Hammons, *Untitled (Body Print)*, 1973 Body Print (and stencil?).
Figure 159 (top right) Hammons, *Mop Series I*, 1976 Body Print (and stencil?)
Figure 160 (bottom right) Hammons, *Waiting*, 1974 Body Print and pochoir
Figure 161. David Hammons, Caution, c. 1970. Body print and silkscreen
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 162 (left) Hammons, *Couple*, 1970, Body print (and silkscreen).
Figure 163 (right) Hammons, *Pray that we are not of the Western World*, 1974 Body print and collage.
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 164 (top left) Hammons, *Untitled (Body Print)*, n.d. Body print/mixed media
Figure 165 (top right) Hammons, *Untitled (Body Print)*, 2975 Body print/mixed media
Figure 166 (bottom left) Hammons, *Untitled (Blue Female)*, n.d. Body print/mixed media
Figure 167 (bottom right) Hammons, *Untitled (Man With White Headress)*, n.d. Body print/mixed media
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 168 (left) Hammons, *Untitled*, 1975 Body prints and mixed media
Figure 169 (middle) Hammons, *Untitled*, 1975 Body prints and mixed media
Figure 170 (right) Hammons, *Black Mohair Spirit*, 1971 Body Print and mixed media
Figure 171. Joyce Wieland, *O Canada*, 1970, Lithograph.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 172. Joyce Wieland, *Squid Jiggin’ Ground*, 1973 Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 173. Joyce Wieland, *The Arctic Belongs to Itself*, 1973 Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 174. Joyce Wieland, *Facing North--Self Impression*, 1973 Lithograph
Figure 175. Joyce Wieland, *O Canada Animation*, 1970, Embroidery on cloth

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 176. Joyce Wieland, *Reason Over Passion*, 1967-1969, 82 minute, 16mm film.
Figure. 177 Photograph of Joyce Wieland and *O Canada*, 1970

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 178. Joyce Wieland, “Ad for O Canada,” Artscanada (August-September 1971)
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 199. Joyce Wieland, “Ad” in *Artforum*, April 1972
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 179. Joyce Wieland, Creating O’Canada
Figure 180. Willem de Kooning, *Woman-Lipstick*, 1952, Mixed media

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 181. Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Monroe’s Lips*, 1962 Silkscreen

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 182. Joyce Wieland, *Birds At Sunrise*, 1972, 10 min, 16mm.
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 183. Joyce Wieland, *Arctic Day*, 1970 Color pencil on cloth.
Figure 184. A Y Jackson, *This Beothic at Bache Ellesmere Island*, 1924, Oil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 185. Yvonne McKague Housser, *Evening-Nipigon River*, 1943. Silkscreen.
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 186. Class at Y.M.C.A. Saturday Morning Class and Picking Images for School, Reproduction
Figure 187. Jack Bush, *Mood Yellow*, 1959 Oil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 188. Kazuo Nakamura, *Early Sprint*, 1958 Oil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 189. Ad for Nordair, *Artscanada*, 1971
Figure 190. Joyce Wieland, Pierre Vallèrè, 1972 30 min. 16 mm.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 191. George Caleb Bingham, *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*, 1845 Oil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 192. Jasper Johns, *Study for Skin*, 1962, Lithograph

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 193. Jasper Johns, *Drawing of Face Latent Image*, 1962, Photograph
Figure 194. Formline design from Bill Holm, *Northwest Coast Indian Art*, 1965.

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University.
Figure 195. *Ceremonial Blanket*, Tlingit People, Northwest Territories, Late 19th Century, Wool and cloth

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 196. *Totem Pole*, Northwest Coast, Wood

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 197. Mask from Ojibwa, Mixed media
Figure 198. Pootagook, *Joyfully I See Ten Caribou*, 1959 Stone cut and stencil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 200. Vito Acconci, *Trademarks* September 1970, reprinted in *Avalanche*
Figure 201. Vito Acconci, *Rubbing Piece*, 1970 Photographs of activity at Max’s Kansas City

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 202. Robert Rauschenberg, *Third Time Painting*, 1961, Mixed media

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 203. Jasper Johns, *Target with Plaster Casts*, 1955 Encaustic and collage on canvas with objects

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 204. Yayoi Kusama Aggregation: One Thousand Boats Show, 1963, Mixed media

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 205. Vito Acconci, Applications, 1970 Photographs of the December activity with Kathy Dillon and Dennis Oppenheim, Photograph
Figure 206. Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (Black Painting)*, 1953, Oil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 207. Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (Red Painting)*, 1954, Oil

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 208. Vito Acconci, *Run Off*, 1970, Photographs of Activity
Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 209. Robert Morris, *Untitled*, 1974, Poster
Figure 210  Lynda Benglis, *Untitled (Artforum)*, 1974, Advertisement

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Images on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University

Figure 211. stills from Jack Smith’s *Flaming Creatures*, 1962-1963
Figure 212. Andy Warhol, *Ambulance Disaster*, 1963, SIlkscreen

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 213. Andy Warhol, *White Burning Car*, 1963, Silkscreen

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 214. Vito Acconci, Touchstone (For JL), *Avalanche* 1974

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 215. Shroud of Turin, Cloth

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
Figure 216. Dennis Oppenheim, *Reading Position for a Second Degree Burn*, 1972 Lithograph.
Figure 217. Iain Baxter/N.E. Thing & Co’s $P + L + P + L + P = VSI$ Visformula No 10, 1970 Lithograph.
Figure 218. Pat Kelly, *Shot in the Dark*, 1970, Etching

Image on file in The Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:
Conner, Bruce., Papers. Tamarind Archives. University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research.
Wayne, June., Papers. Tamarind Archives. University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research.
Wieland, Joyce., Collection. Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections. York University, Toronto, ON.
Wieland, Joyce., Artist Files. Lithography Workshop Archives. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, NS.
Wieland, Joyce. Files. Open Studio Print Record. Open Studio, Toronto, ON.

Secondary Sources:
———. Avalanche 6 (Fall 1972).


Acconci, Vito, Terry Fox and Dennis Oppenheim. “A Discussion with Terry Fox, Vito Acconci, and Dennis Oppenheim.” Avalanche V (Winter 1971): 96


——. “Bruce Conner.” *Arts Magazine* 39 (September-October 1965): 64.


——. “Getting the Warhol We Deserve.” *Social Text* 59 (1999): 49-66.


Doyle, Gerald. *Old Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland.* St. John’s NF: Manning and Rabbits, 1940.


———. “Keeping up with Conner.” *Art in America* (June 2000): 105-10, +134.


Fuller, Mary. “San Francisco Sculptors.” *Art in America* 52 (June 1964): 52-59.

———. “You're Looking for Bruce Conner, the Artist, or What Is This Crap You're Trying to Put over Here?” *Currant* (May-July 1976): 8-12, +58-59.


———. *Body Art Performing the Subject*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998


——. “Ritual in Transfigured Time.” *Film Comment* 41 (January/February 2005): 62


Rodgers, Margaret. “Joyce Wieland Interview.” *Gallerie* 1 (Winter 1988): 4-7
Rodriguez, Juan. “A Conversation with Bruce Conner.” *Artweek* 31 (July/August 2000): 13-14


Senefelder, Alois. *La Lithographie Fut Decouverte En Baviere Par Al Senefelder 1796*.


*Artscanada* 166/168 (Spring 1972): 78-81

Tuchman, M. “Amos Vogel and Bruce Conner: Two Views of the Money Crunch (Interview).” *Film Comment* 17 (September/October 1981): 70-76.


W.B. “In the Galleries: Bruce Conner.” *Arts Magazine* 39 (September-October 1965): 64.


Wieland, Joyce, Debbie Magidson, and Judy Wright. “Interviews with Canadian Artists: Debbie Magidson and Judy Wright Interview Joyce Wieland.” The Canadian Forum (May 6, 1974): 61-67


Wooster, Ann-Sargent. “Why Don't They Tell Stories Like They Used To?” Art Journal 45 (Fall 1985): 204-12.


VITA
JENNIFER H. NOONAN

EDUCATION
Ph.D. in Art History, Pennsylvania State University, University Park
Major: Modern and contemporary American art and theory
Minor: History of photography
Minor: Italian Renaissance art

M.A. in Art History, City University of New York at Brooklyn College
Major: Nineteenth-Century French art

Deutsche House, New York University, New York
1996-1998: German I and II

B.A. in Art History, State University of New York at Stony Brook
Major: Art History and Criticism
Minor: Studio Art

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS
2005-2001: Grants, Awards, Fellowships and Dissertation Fellowship Award from Penn State, University Park, PA

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Fall 2006-2008: Visiting Instructor, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY
Fall 2006-2008: Visiting Instructor William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ
Fall 2006, 2003: Lecturer, The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
Summer 2003: Instructor, Penn State University, University Park, PA

GRADUATE AND TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS
Spring 2003-2002: Graduate Teaching Assistant, Penn State University, University Park, PA
1998-Spring 2002: Graduate Assistant, The Palmer Museum of Art, Penn State University, University Park, PA

RELATED AND CURATORIAL EXPERIENCE
Summer-Fall 2004: Exhibition Contributor and Research Assistant, The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
1995-1998: Curatorial Assistant, Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
1995: Gallery Intern, The Art Gallery, City University of New York at Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, NY

PUBLICATIONS

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
College Art Association, Association of Historians of American Art, American Association of Museums